

Miscellaneous

No: 1667

[Air Navigation Order 2016](#)

Publication date: 15 September 2026

UK SERA and the Rules of the Air Regulations
2015

General Permission and Exemption E6698

Balloon Pilots – Congested Area Take-Off, Becalmed Landing and Open-Air Assembly

Background

- 1) This general permission and exemption is being issued for compelling reasons and applies to balloon pilots who hold either a Part-BFCL Balloon Pilot Licence or a UK Private Pilot's Licence (Balloons and Airships). It covers congested area take-offs, landings and overflights, becalmed landings and take-offs or landings near an open-air assembly in hot-air balloons.

Interpretation

- 2) In this permission and exemption,
 - a) the "Order" means the Air Navigation Order 2016 (as amended),
 - b) the "CAA" means the Civil Aviation Authority.

Permission and Exemption

- 3) The CAA, pursuant to SERA.3105 and SERA.5005(f) of the Annex to UK Regulation (EU) No. 923/2012, hereby permits, subject to the conditions specified in paragraph 5 below:
 - a) any hot-air balloon (the 'balloon') to fly over, a congested area of a city, town or settlement below a height of 1,000 feet above the highest fixed obstacle within a horizontal radius of 600 metres of the aircraft.
- 4) The CAA, pursuant to Article 266 of the Order, hereby exempts the balloon operator and pilot-in-command from Rule 5(1)(b) and Rule 5(2)(b) of the Rules of the Air Regulations 2015 subject to the conditions specified in paragraph 5 below.
- 5) Except in the event that the balloon is landing within a congested area because the balloon is becalmed, this permission and exemption is granted subject to the following conditions.
 - a) The balloon is:
 - i) taking off from within, or in the vicinity of, a congested area;
 - ii) taking off or landing within 1,000 metres of an organised open-air assembly of more than 1,000 persons.
 - b) The pilot-in-command of the balloon must be the holder of a valid Part-BFCL Balloon Pilot Licence or a valid UK Private Pilot's Licence (Balloons and Airships) with a minimum total

flying experience in command of balloons exceeding 35 hours which includes three ascents from a congested area site under supervision from another pilot-in-command of that balloon, as detailed in sub-paragraph c.

- c) The pilot-in-command supervising those ascents must:
 - i) be the holder of a valid Part-BFCL Balloon Pilot Licence or a valid UK Private Pilot's Licence (Balloons and Airships);
 - ii) have a minimum total flying experience in command of balloons of not less than 75 hours and which includes six ascents from a congested area site.
- d) Flights must only take place with the prior permission of the owner of the take-off site and, when applicable, the organiser of the assembly.
- e) Before any flight from within a congested area:
 - i) the operator of the balloon must notify the local police force of the intended flights; and
 - ii) the pilot in command of the balloon must reasonably satisfy themselves that the height of any fixed object within the sector 45 degrees each side of a line vertically below the intended flight path does not exceed 30% of the horizontal distance between the fixed object and the point of take-off.
- f) The flight must only be made by day and in weather conditions which will enable the balloon to remain clear of cloud, in sight of the surface, with a visibility of at least 3 kilometres and which will ensure that the landing will be clear of any congested area, except in the case of the balloon becoming becalmed.
- g) Following a take-off this permission and exemption applies only to the first 5 minutes of any flight during the climb immediately after take-off and within 1.5 kilometres of the launch site. Thereafter the balloon must not be flown over any congested area of a city, town or settlement below 1,000 feet above the highest fixed obstacle within a horizontal radius of 600 metres of the balloon.

6) This permission and exemption supersedes Official Record Series 4 No. 1610, which is revoked.

Date in Force

7) This permission and exemption has effect from the date it is signed until 30 September 2028, both dates inclusive, unless previously varied, suspended or revoked.

E Bellamy

for the Civil Aviation Authority

14 September 2026

Explanatory Note:

As defined in Schedule 1 of the Air Navigation Order 2016, a congested area in relation to a city, town or settlement means any area which is substantially used for residential, industrial, commercial or recreational purposes.