

27 January 2015
Reference: F0002180

Dear XXXX

I am writing in respect of your recent request of 29 December 2014 for the release of information held by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your request:

Estimates of the numbers of drones (small unmanned aircraft) in the United Kingdom by year since 2005.

Our response:

Having considered your request in line with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) we are able to provide the information below.

Small unmanned aircraft (SUA) are defined as unmanned aircraft with an operating mass of 20 kg or less. In January 2010 we introduced new regulations that require operators of SUA used for aerial work purposes and aircraft equipped for data acquisition and/or surveillance to obtain permission from the CAA before commencing a flight within a congested area or in proximity to people or property.

SUA that are not operated for these purposes do not require any permission from the CAA, and we therefore do not hold any information on the overall numbers of SUA that there may be in the UK.

The number of operators of unmanned aircraft receiving permission since 2005 are as follows:

2005 - 3
2006 - 6
2007 - 4
2008 - 12
2009 - 10
2010 - 43
2011 - 46
2012 - 86
2013 - 170
2014 – 486

Civil Aviation Authority

Aviation House Gatwick Airport South Gatwick RH6 0YR www.caa.co.uk
Telephone 01293 768512 foi.requests@caa.co.uk

We are of course aware of the large increase in drone sales in the UK over the last 12 months. However, we think the safety rules that are currently in place are sensible and proportionate. They fulfil their function of protecting members of the public without being overly-restrictive and should not affect the recreational user's enjoyment of flying a drone. Ultimately, it's up to the individuals using drones to behave in a reasonable manner and abide by the laws that are in place. In serious cases people can, and have been, prosecuted. We work closely with the police and other bodies to ensure that activities relating to public protection from drones are fully co-ordinated.

The CAA has also produced an awareness leaflet to advise recreational drone users of the safety rules. This leaflet (www.caa.co.uk/droneaware) is now being distributed and promoted by drone retailers and manufacturers.

The unmanned aircraft industry is evolving rapidly and as a result we will monitor developments closely to ensure the rules remain fit for purpose.

For the record, the CAA is funded by the organisations and individuals that we regulate. We receive no public funding other than under contract by government departments to provide specific services.

More information on the regulation of unmanned aircraft can be found on the CAA website at www.caa.co.uk/uas.

If you are not satisfied with how we have dealt with your request in the first instance you should approach the CAA in writing at:-

Caroline Chalk
Head of External Information Services
Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
Gatwick
RH6 0YR

caroline.chalk@caa.co.uk

The CAA has a formal internal review process for dealing with appeals or complaints in connection with Freedom of Information requests. The key steps in this process are set in the attachment.

Should you remain dissatisfied with the outcome you have a right under Section 50 of the FOIA to appeal against the decision by contacting the Information Commissioner at:-

Information Commissioner's Office
FO/EIR Complaints Resolution
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF
www.ico.gov.uk/complaints.aspx

If you wish to request further information from the CAA, please use the form on the CAA website at <http://www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?catid=286&pagetype=65&appid=24>.

Yours sincerely

Mark Stevens
External Response Manager

CAA INTERNAL REVIEW & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- The original case to which the appeal or complaint relates is identified and the case file is made available;
- The appeal or complaint is allocated to an Appeal Manager, the appeal is acknowledged and the details of the Appeal Manager are provided to the applicant;
- The Appeal Manager reviews the case to understand the nature of the appeal or complaint, reviews the actions and decisions taken in connection with the original case and takes account of any new information that may have been received. This will typically require contact with those persons involved in the original case and consultation with the CAA Legal Department;
- The Appeal Manager concludes the review and, after consultation with those involved with the case, and with the CAA Legal Department, agrees on the course of action to be taken;
- The Appeal Manager prepares the necessary response and collates any information to be provided to the applicant;
- The response and any necessary information is sent to the applicant, together with information about further rights of appeal to the Information Commissioners Office, including full contact details.