



Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV/Drone) Filming Guidance Document

Overview

This document will provide an overview of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or commercial drone filming and how the Westminster City Promotions, Events and Filming (CPEF) Team review and process requests to use this equipment.

1. Initial Considerations / Requirements

- a. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Permissions
- b. National Air Traffic Services (NATS) Permissions
- c. Police and Sensitive Locations
- d. Building Surveys and Rooftop Flights

2. Application Process

- a. Required Information
- b. Road Closure
- c. Stewarding and Pedestrian Management
- d. Engagement

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1. Initial Considerations and Requirements

Any commercial, or hobbyist, drone pilots who wish to operate in the City of Westminster may need to go through the City Promotions, Events and Filming application process.

As the team assess, and help crews mitigate impact to the public highway, we will likely request to see a copy of your flight plan and wish to understand the lowest height the UAV will be flown at, as well as information on the take-off and landing point.

Our key consideration is helping operators ensure their activity takes place with suitable management and as little impact to businesses, residents, and pedestrians.

a. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Permissions

New legislation was introduced from 31st December 2020 that broke down UAV operators into three categories – *Open, Specific and Certified*.

While most operators within the Open category do not require CAA permissions, depending on their flight plan or shoot location they may still require review and approval from Westminster City Promotions, Events and Filming Team.

According to CAA guidance, operators who fall into the other categories must also have landowner permissions or approval for their flight, as well as CAA permissions that may be issued.

b. National Air Traffic Services (NATS) Permissions

UAV/drone operators will need to apply for a Non-Standard Flight to NATS for flights in controlled or restricted airspace.

According to the NATS website:

“A Non-Standard Flight is an aerial task that does not follow published routes or notified procedures.”

NATS permission does not automatically provide pilots/operators with landowner permission so we do ask that we are contacted when you approach NATS for flight approval.

c. Police and Sensitive Locations

The Metropolitan Police Film Unit (MPFU) need to be informed of all commercial drone filming in London and be provided with a flight plan to review.

Three areas in London, as shown in the map below, require Metropolitan Police approval due to sensitivity around locations including Government and Security buildings and land.

As shown, the majority of Westminster is included, and information on any flights within this space should be shared with both the MPFU and ourselves.



d. Building Surveys and Rooftop Flights

Building Surveys

If you are carrying out a building survey with a drone, the works site is fully hoarded, and the drone will remain within this area you do not need to apply to the City Promotions, Events and Filming Team. However, you should contact the Highways



Licensing Team on highwaysoperations@westminster.gov.uk as they will need to be made aware and may be able to assist you.

Rooftop Flights

Flights conducted from a rooftop higher than 30m (approximately 6-8 stories) from street level, and where the flight is taking place higher than the building roof. So, moving up from the roof and along but not down towards the road or street, does not require an application.

If your flight path comes within 30m of any open public spaces, pavements or roads please contact us, providing details for your site and we will review and advise accordingly.

2. Application Process

If you are intending or exploring using a drone (of any weight) for your filming, on or impacting the public highway in Westminster, you will need to submit a Filming Application on our website.

As a rule of thumb, we currently consider 'impact' as any drone flights within 30m of public space, this could be increased to 50m depending on the CAA permissions.

Please ensure you also review our timescales around road closures and resident/business engagement when making your application to ensure you have sufficient time.

If you are taking off from a private rooftop and intend to stay more than 30m above ground, we would like to be informed to ensure there are no other conflicting activities and your flight plan is appropriate and does not require our review based on CAA permissions.

You do not need to apply to the City Promotions, Events and Filming Team if:

- Your flight, take-off and landing points are more than 30 or 50m away from people, roads, pavements and Westminster parks
- Your operation will be taking place solely on private land
- You are carrying out a building survey (please contact the Westminster Highways Licensing Team instead).

a. Required Information

With your initial application you must submit:

- Flight Plan – including UAV weight, flight path and maximum/minimum height during filming.
- Shot/scene requirements – what is being filmed, this should detail why a drone is required to obtain the desired shot.



- Pilot/Drone Operator Information – including company and contact information.

The following information is required through the planning process for drone requests:

- Copy of CAA permission – preferably supplied with application
- NATS (National Air Traffic Control) Permission – Non-standard flight application, if required
- Risk Assessment and Method Statement – based on location, may include flight plan
- Stewarding plan
- Area of control map.

This list is not exhaustive and further information may be requested or required depending on the nature of the flight and area the operation is proposed to take place.

b. Road Closure

Depending on the flight and height of the UAV, you may require a road closure, especially if the UAV will be flown directly adjacent, overhead or within a carriageway or crossing point.

We do not support drone flights supported by or within traffic holds due to the timing limitations and lack of legislation to enforce a traffic stop/hold.

We require a minimum of 12 weeks' notice prior to a proposed filming/closure date, along with suitable traffic management and stewarding plans.

Depending on the location, date, times or parallel activity, we may not be able to support your request in full so we advise contacting us as early as possible in the planning process so we can work with you and provide the necessary guidance.

Closures and traffic management plans must be drawn up and implemented by a CSAS accredited traffic management company.

c. Stewarding and Pedestrian Management

As pavement closures are not covered under road closure legislation, due to the right of way pedestrians have on the public highway, the stewarding and pedestrian management plan for your shoot needs to be robust and take this into account.

We highly recommend stewards for pedestrian management are SIA trained.



It is important to understand a production cannot physically prevent pedestrians from walking through the filming area, or accessing their private property or place of business, if they insist to do so. Your risk assessment should include consideration for this occurrence (where relevant), especially during take-off and landing.

Crew and stewards must inform pedestrians of the activity and safety reasons for requesting them to stop for a reasonable time. If a member of public wishes to continue their route through the filming area, the drone operator must be informed immediately and carry out a safe landing so the pedestrian(s) waiting can be escorted through. This must also be evidenced in your documentation.

Signage can be placed around your filming area to inform pedestrians of the activity and that they may be asked to pause or use an alternative route if they do not wish to wait.

The wording on such signage will need to be shared with and signed off by your assigned officer in advance.

d. Engagement

Your engagement area will be the residences, buildings and businesses affected by your shoot. For drone filming this includes those within the controllable space for landing and take-off and could also include the flight path, depending on the height of flight.

Any buildings within the controllable space will need to initially be contacted in person to explain the proposed filming activity and be provided with a letter detailing this and contact information for the production company.

This process needs to be signed off and agreed by your assigned officer.

3. Key Contacts and Links

Key Contacts

Westminster City Promotions, Events and Filming –
eventsandfilming@westminster.gov.uk / 0207 641 2390

Westminster Highways Licensing Team – highwaysinspectors@westminster.gov.uk

Metropolitan Police Film Unit - filmunit@met.police.uk / 020 3054 5555

Links

CPEF Filming Application - <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/licensing/city-promotions-events-and-filming/filming-and-photography-westminster>

Film London Aerial Filming Guidance - <https://filmlondon.org.uk/resource/aerial-filming>



CAA Drones site - <https://www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Unmanned-aircraft-and-drones/>

NATS Drone Information - <https://www.nats.aero/airspace/drones/>