



A Guide to Landowners' Rights on Drones in the UK



Are you unsure of your rights when it comes to drones? If so, you are not alone. With the rapid rise of drone use across both towns and rural areas, many landowners are increasingly concerned about privacy, nuisance, and safety. While drones can provide valuable services for agriculture, surveying, and inspection, rogue or careless operators can create understandable worries—particularly in rural communities where thefts have, on occasion, been linked to drone activity.

The Legal Framework

At present, the law* treats drones much like other aircraft. This means that landowners **do not own the airspace** above their property and generally cannot prevent a drone flying overhead. However, there are important restrictions on how drones may be used. Any drone fitted with a camera, or weighing more than 250g, must be registered with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Operators are required to hold a flyer ID and, on request, legitimate pilots should have no issue showing you their registration details.

Privacy and Nuisance

While drones may pass over land, they must not infringe on your privacy. Capturing identifiable images without consent could breach UK privacy laws or data protection legislation. Additionally, if a drone's activity causes harassment, alarm, or distress, there may be grounds for action under **public order laws**. Where damage is deliberate or reckless, **criminal damage laws** could also apply. If a drone crashes on your land, it should display a registration number. This can be checked with the CAA or reported to the police—particularly if damage or injury occurs.

Take-off and Landing Rights

One important protection for landowners is that a drone operator **cannot legally take off from or land on your property without your permission**. They are also liable for any damage caused while doing so. You can refuse permission to take off or land on



your land if you wish too and this may be important for reasons of safety Eg at a Caravan site, a private park or close to areas like a site of special scientific interest (SSSI)

Engaging with Operators

If you see a drone being flown near your land or property, you are entitled to approach the operator and ask what they are doing. Many professional pilots will carry ID, branded equipment, or safety paperwork and will often explain their purpose. However, it is important to avoid confrontation, and operators may ask you to wait until they can land safely before talking, as distraction during flight can itself create risks.

If you feel unsafe or suspect unlawful activity, the best course of action is to **contact the police** rather than intervene directly.

Summary

The law is not ideal and there is no simple guidance that covers all cases. Rogue drone pilots will always exist. It is about common sense and having a measured approach. If you have a problem with a legitimate operator, (such as inappropriate conduct, dangerous flying, an accident or damage) ask for their complaint's procedure or at least their operator ID. You can contact the drone Department of the CAA to make a complaint, and they have the power to investigate the operator, initiate prosecutions or revoke licences. If you have any evidence of the incident such as video footage of the drone or details of any loss, make sure you retain that information. It can be compared later with the "black box" flight information linked to the drone.

If you have any doubts over your safety DO NOT confront the pilot but instead call the local police on 101 or visit the Civil Aviation web page at www.caa.co.uk/drones

Most operators of drones are legitimate businesses or keen hobby pilots and have no wish to cause alarm or distress and are happy to listen to your observations. As for the minority the current rules go some way to helping but things will change as the number of drone flights increase.

You can stay in touch with drone law changes via the CAA website or follow us at www.imagesurveys.com

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