

Response to the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee report on Commercial and recreational drone use in the UK

The Science and Technology Committee's report states '***It is vital that the Government respects recreational drone user and model flying communities and ensures that any further regulation or legislation does not dissuade people from joining such communities.***' This is absolutely crucial and we completely agree. Apart from being a hobby enjoyed by over a hundred thousand people (according to the DfT's estimates); building and flying drones and model aircraft is a key STEM activity which is a starting point for tomorrow's designers, aerodynamicists, programmers, scientists, mathematicians, engineers, pilots, air traffic controllers, and more.

We wholeheartedly agree with the report's statement '***The Government should acknowledge that the proposed registration scheme will do little to mitigate the risks from nefarious drone users who will simply bypass registration and testing***'. Drone registration is a multi-million pound waste of time.

We agree that the proposed cost for drone registration is so high that it will dissuade individuals from registering. And, if a drone registration scheme is unavoidable, we welcome the committee's recommendation for the period of registration to be three years rather than one. In fact we would go further; a licence to drive a car or motorcycle, or to fly an aeroplane or helicopter is for life. The same should be true for a drone.

We also agree with the committee's recommendation that the drone registration scheme should allow an organisation to register as one entity, with each of the individual members bound to adhere to the prescribed safety standards. This provision is set out in article 16 of the EASA regulations which will come into force in July 2020.

The committee's report rightly calls into question the validity of drone airprox reports, which we agree are highly unreliable, and calls on the government to ***complete a substantive risk assessment of the risks drones pose to manned commercial aircraft and publish the findings of this assessment by the end of 2020.*** We support such an assessment providing it is unbiased and open to peer review (unlike one previous widely discredited 'study' which was neither of those things).

We also welcome the committee's recommendation that ***The Government should act to improve public perception and awareness of drones by launching a public awareness campaign, no later than Summer 2020, that highlights the opportunities presented by drones and informs the public on the reality of the risks posed by drones.***