



USE OF DRONES AT CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL AND ITS PRECINCTS

Flying a drone near Canterbury Cathedral is strictly regulated, and doing so without explicit permission is a criminal offence due to the presence of both congregations, protected wildlife and many listed buildings (as well as a Scheduled Monument) which, in the case of the Cathedral, includes ancient fabric and priceless, irreplaceable stained-glass.

The rules regarding these two factors are as follows:

Nesting Peregrine Falcons (Wildlife Protection)

Peregrine falcons are protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

- **The Law.** It is a criminal offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a Schedule 1 bird whilst it is building a nest, or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young chicks
- **The Penalty.** Disturbing these birds can result in an unlimited fine and up to six months in prison
- **Drone Risk.** Drones are perceived by falcons as airborne predators or territorial threats. Flying near the Cathedral's towers can cause the birds to attack the drone, abandon the nest or accidentally crush their eggs / chicks out of panic

Congregations and Visitors (CAA Assembly Rules)

Canterbury Cathedral continuously hosts large crowds, services and public gatherings, which completely changes legal flight categories.

- **The Assembly Rule.** Under UK Civil Aviation Authority Open Category regulations, it is strictly prohibited from flying over an "assembly of people" regardless of the size or weight of the drone (even sub-250g models). An assembly is defined as any crowd that cannot easily move away from a falling drone
- **Overflying Private Precincts.** The Canterbury Cathedral Entry Terms explicitly ban the use of drones anywhere within the public areas of the Precincts or inside the Cathedral. It has ancient fabric and priceless irreplaceable stained-glass windows

Summary of What is Required

To legally film or fly a drone within the Cathedral Precincts, the standard "Open Category" rules do not apply. The following is required:

- Prior written consent from the designated responsible officer (**Head of Estates & Fabric**), or a deputy responsible officer in this person's absence (i.e., The Dean or Receiver General)
- A Commercial Unmanned Aircraft Services (UAS) operational authorisation from the CAA
- Proof of comprehensive public liability insurance (typically £10 million minimum for historic sites)
- RAMS – a comprehensive, site-specific Risk Assessment and Method Statement which has been reviewed and approved by both the Fire, Health & Safety Manager and the Head of Estates & Fabric
- A wildlife disturbance licence issued by Natural England if flying anywhere near the active nesting windows (typically March to August)

CAA Flight Rules

- **Weight and Registration.** Drones weighing 100g or more with a camera require an Operator ID. 250g or heavier require both an Operator ID and a Flyer ID
- **Altitude Limits.** It is not permitted to flying above 120m (400ft) and the drone must remain in the line of sight of the operator
- **Buffer distances.** Heavier drones (250g+) must remain at least 50m away from uninvolved people and properties and 150m from residential properties. Sub-250g drones can be flown closer but never near crowds

Privacy and Trespass

Take-off / Landing. Standing on private land without permission is trespassing

Privacy The use of drones at the Cathedral may involve the collection of personal data where individuals can be identified in images or video footage. Any drone operations should therefore consider data protection requirements alongside aviation safety regulations, namely the principles of Data Protection, as laid out in the UK GDPR:

1. **Lawfulness, Fairness & Transparency:** Processing must be lawful, fair and transparent.
2. **Purpose Limitation:** Personal data must be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes.
3. **Data Minimisation:** Only data that is adequate, relevant and necessary should be collected.
4. **Accuracy:** Personal data must be accurate and kept up to date where necessary.
5. **Storage Limitation:** Personal data should not be kept for longer than necessary.
6. **Integrity & Confidentiality:** Personal data must be handled securely.
7. **Accountability:** The controller must be able to demonstrate compliance with the principles.

Before any flight:

- Clearly define the purpose of the drone operation and ensure it is necessary and proportionate.
- Consider whether individuals are likely to be recorded and, where possible, minimise the capture of identifiable people.
- Ensure appropriate privacy information is provided where drone activity is planned in areas accessible to the public, for example via prior notice through signage or privacy information made available on the day
- Retain images or footage only for as long as necessary for the stated purpose and ensure they are stored securely with access limited to authorised individuals.
- Any sharing of footage should be limited to what is necessary and carried out in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

It is important to note that compliance with CAA requirements does not remove the need to comply with UK data protection legislation where personal data is processed.

Where drone flights are likely to involve regular recording of individuals, capture sensitive locations, or present a higher privacy risk, advice should be sought from the Governance Officer before the flight takes place. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) may be required depending on the nature, scope, and purpose of the operation.



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