

Peter Fitzgibbon, Editor

Safety-first for drones



The benefits of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in applications as diverse as environmental monitoring, conserving historic buildings and managing assets across water networks, are described in some detail in this issue. Yet less welcome news continues to hit the headlines.

Even as we went to press, a drone was reported as coming within 15m of a Boeing 737 making an approach at Stansted Airport. According to the UK Airprox Board which investigates near misses, the situation was one “where providence had played a major part in the incident and/or a definite risk of collision had existed.”

Needless to say, safety was a major talking point at last November’s Commercial UAV Show in London, with much discussion around the addition of two new laws in the latest version of the Civil Aviation Authority’s Drone Code. The first makes it a criminal offence to fly a drone within 1 km of airport boundaries; the second prohibits flying above 400ft (120m) without CAA clearance.

It is also the Government’s intention to introduce more safety-driven legislation (the long-awaited Drones Bill) over the coming year. This will require the registration of drones weighing 250g or more, for which

purpose the CAA has just conducted a survey to find out how it can build an online registration service in line with pilots’ needs.

Professional drone operators will, of course, be well acquainted with and abide by the rules that govern safe flying. The question is, how do you stop those who, whether by accident, design, or sheer ignorance, will be launching their Christmas presents into the sky without a second thought? Perhaps it’s just as well that, according to new research from the CAA, a third of clumsy Brits admit to breaking their Christmas gadgets within hours of opening them!

NEWS EXTRA

Data validation from 1Spatial helps support Rural Payment Agency

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) – and its sponsor, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) – have an aim of becoming more digital and data-driven; using data to support faster, more accurate decisions. To achieve this, the LMS data must be kept accurate and current. In 2016, 1Spatial, in partnership with IT solutions provider Version 1, was awarded the contract to provide live service support for the Portal and LMS. Version 1 took responsibility for the Customer Portal while 1Spatial brought its expertise in the management of geospatial data infrastructures to the LMS. The provisioning of geospatial services, for example mapping and aerial photography, as part of the LMS, ensures that digitisers and other RPA decision makers have consistent access to digital data. www.1spatial.com

Bluesky Aerial Mapping Features in Orbx Flight Simulator

Orbx Simulation Systems, one of the original producers of flight simulation add-ons, is working with Bluesky to develop new products and technologies for the UK. Utilising nationwide coverage of Bluesky’s aerial photography, Orbx will use its in-house developed tools to create realistic in-flight imagery of the underlying landscapes. Additional detail, derived from Bluesky’s National Tree Map and Heighted Building datasets, is being used to add 3D objects to produce accurate and realistic simulations. The Bluesky data used by Orbx includes unique National Tree Map database, which details the location, height and canopy cover of nearly 300 million trees and its Heighted Building database, which provides accurate height measurement for around 40 million buildings. www.bluesky-world.com



L3 ASV to Conduct Autonomous Navigation Study for U.K. Government

L3 ASV announced that it has received U.K. government funding for a pioneering project on autonomous navigation of maritime vessels. The company will conduct a study with its partners in the Maritime & Coastguard Agency and United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, focusing on the future of marine navigational data and charts. The project is funded by the Department for Transport’s Transport Technology Research Innovation Grant (T-TRIG) and aims to promote early-stage science, engineering or technology innovations with the potential to advance the U.K.’s transport system. The project will identify the technical data requirements to enable the development of a Smart Chart system, which will then provide information to autonomous vessels to enable safer navigation. www.asvglobal.com



Saber Online Surveys Aid Forward Planning for West Sussex Highways

The West Sussex County Council is utilising the latest cloud technology to improve the planning of highway maintenance and road safety improvement schemes. Developed by Saber, ReGen collects and stores live highway survey data for immediate analysis via the Internet using a Google Map interface. Using ReGen, West Sussex Highways can instantly access condition and inventory survey results to generate forward works programmes, budget reporting and planning. Saber has captured in excess of 2,500 kilometres of highway survey data for West Sussex Highways, who maintain the roads in the County. David Kitt, Highway Information and Pavement Manager commented, “Working with Saber we have a consistently high level of accurate, detailed and timely information which gives us confidence in delivering a range of highway services.” www.saber-uk.com