

Committee(s): Public Relations & Economic Development Sub (Policy & Resources) – for decision Culture Heritage & Libraries – For information	Date: 19 October 2017
Subject: Permitting the use of drones for commercial filming on public highway in the City	Public
Report of: Director of Communications	For Decision
Report author: Joanna Burnaby-Atkins, Film Liaison Manager	

Summary

Until now the City has not supported or encouraged the use of drones for filming over the public highway in the City.

Drones are regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the guidelines surrounding them have changed greatly over recent years to the point that they can now legally fly under the terms of their permission from the CAA in congested zones without requiring the authorisation of the local authority.

Filming with drones is now supported in several London boroughs.

In future we wish to support filming in the City by drones in very restricted circumstances.

Recommendation(s)

Members of the Public Relations and Economic Development Sub-Committee are asked to recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee that:

- requests to use drones for commercial filming purposes should be assessed on a case by case basis and supported where strict safety measures and guidelines are in place. We would require a road closure to be in place, satisfactory advance notice to allow consultation with departments and properties affected and all the correct Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and NATS (National Air Traffic Systems) permissions obtained and relevant risk assessments and method statements provided.

Members of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries are asked to:

- note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City has received several requests over the past years to use drones to film over the highway. We have continued to say no to these requests on the basis of safety and concern over privacy. The City is classified as a Congested Area and it has not been possible for operators to fly here without our assistance to close roads off. However many other boroughs have moved forward with a policy for them and have successfully been supporting shoots using drones for several years now.
2. The CAA regulation of drone operators has continued to evolve over recent years and whereas it was once not possible for drones to fly in the city due to its congested nature, in the last couple of years the CAA has created a process for specialist skilled operators to prove their competence to fly and thereby obtain an approval termed a 'Permission' to fly in congested areas such as the City.

Current Position

3. The standard distances drone operators have to maintain is a minimum of 50 meters from people, buildings and vehicles that are not under their control. To obtain a Permission from the CAA to fly within the City (a Congested Area) a drone operator will need to have demonstrated to the CAA an increased technical capability and increased pilot competence and thereby satisfied the CAA that they can operate their drones at further reduced distances and can fly as close as 10 meters to people, buildings and vehicles not under their control.
4. A drone operator must have permission from the location he takes off and lands from. This acquired, currently a drone operator who has been granted a Permission by the CAA and NATS to fly within a Congested Area can fly legally over public streets at a minimum height of 50 meters whilst the roads are open to people and traffic without needing to notify or seek permission from the City of London Corporation. In spite of these legal rights commercial drone operators – and the productions companies who hire them – would prefer to work together with the local authorities and as yet we are not aware of drones being used for commercial filming in the City by any productions we have worked with.
5. In place of drones helicopters are frequently used to film moving shots and cranes are brought in to film overhead shots. There is an increasing number of complaints regarding helicopter noise, which affects a much larger area.

Proposals

6. It is proposed that the Film Team engages with the relevant City departments – including Police, Highways and Environmental Teams to produce clear guidelines to include consultation, safety and application procedures.
7. It is proposed that we assess drone requests on a case by case basis, consulting with relevant departments, and where the relevant safety measures and

permissions are in place and satisfactory advance notice has been given that we support their use for commercial filming purposes in the City at weekends or bank holidays only. In the first quarter of 2018 a large scale feature film has already expressed an interest in using drones to film their driving sequences in the City, their current option is to use helicopters.

Implications

8. By putting a process in place where drone operators are able to engage with us in the spirit of good practice we provide ourselves and the City community with the opportunity to ensure that the filming is carried out both safely, in consideration of the impact of local neighbours and with consultation whilst reducing the likelihood of drones being used without our knowledge.
9. City workers, visitors and residents will not be used to seeing drones in the City and it will be necessary to consult well in advance and have effective stewarding on the day. Police, Highways and Environmental Teams would need to be informed in advance to ensure consideration of all relevant security, safety and environmental matters in the context of each application.
10. Whilst we trial the use of drones we would require that road closures are in place which take a minimum of 12 weeks to book. It will therefore be mainly large scale TV drama and feature films, who are able to provide this sort of notice, who will be able to apply for our support to use drones for filming.
11. The use of drones will, without doubt, provide some reduction in the use of helicopters for filming. There is also likely to be a reduction in the use of cranes being placed on the highway for aerial shots.

Conclusion

12. We propose Members agree we support drones for filming in the City where the operator fulfils the strict criteria set out by the CAA and the City Film Team.