

(UK) Members of Parliament launch new inquiry on drones

In the Westminster Parliament, the Lower House (the Commons) Transport Committee has launched a new inquiry to consider how the benefits of drone technology can be maximised within a robust safety framework.

Background

Use of civilian drones in the UK – both recreational and commercial – is increasing. Drones are now used for a wide range of purposes and there is a significant scope for expansion in the future. A report by PwC* found that the emerging global market for business services using drones is valued at over \$127 billion.

However, the increasing use of drones also raises a number of regulatory and operational issues. This includes risk to other aircraft – an area where laser pens are also an increasing concern. The Department for Transport has recently consulted on its drones policy.

Louise Ellman MP, Chair of the Transport Committee said: *‘Civilian drones have the potential to fundamentally change how many industries – including the transport sector – work. This inquiry will consider the implications of this technology. We will also be asking whether enough is being done to ensure drone technology can reach its potential without compromising the safety of other aircraft and the public in general.’*

Terms of reference

The Transport Select Committee is launching an inquiry into Civilian Drones. The Committee is particularly interested in receiving written evidence submissions addressing some or all of the following:

- The safety and security risks posed by drones, particularly to manned aircraft;
- The role of technology in enabling safe and sustainable growth in the civilian drones sector;
- The likely effectiveness of key government proposals in its recent consultation, including pilot training and the proposed online registration scheme;
- The current enforcement arrangements for misuse of drones in the UK;

- Insurance issues and actions needed to create a viable market for drones insurance;
- The economic growth potential of the drones industry in the UK and the Government's role in enabling that growth.

Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill**

In addition to the evidence sought on drones the Committee would be interested in evidence on the likely effects of measures in the Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill on the dangers posed by the use of laser pens to distract the pilots of aircraft.

The Committee would be grateful to receive written evidence submissions by 26 May 2017.

Transport Committee membership:

Mrs Louise Ellman (Labour/Co-operative, Liverpool Riverside) (Chair);

Clive Efford (Labour, Eltham);

Robert Ffello (Labour, Stoke-on-Trent South);

Karl McCartney (Conservative, Lincoln);

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (SNP, Glasgow South);

Mark Menzies, (Conservative, Fylde);

Huw Merriman (Conservative, Bexhill and Battle);

Will Quince (Conservative, Colchester);

Iain Stewart (Conservative, Milton Keynes South);

Graham Stringer (Labour, Blackley and Broughton);

Martin Vickers (Conservative, Cleethorpes).

* PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP is a multinational professional services provider.

** Summary of the *Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill 2016-17*. A Bill to make provision about automated vehicles, electric vehicles, vehicle testing and civil aviation; to create an offence of shining or directing a laser at a vehicle; and to make provision about fees for courses offered as an alternative to prosecution for road traffic offences.

To see progress on this Bill readers are invited to visit:

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/vehicletechnologyandaviation.html>