# Guidance on drone filming

**UAV\* footage is…**

* a wonderful eye on the world
* a way of understanding space: a moving camera gives an image depth; moving in two axes is especially good to understand, say, a new building
* something you might be able to sell as stock-footage…
* something with side-benefits: UAVs can monitor stonework on spires without you having to put up scaffolding, for example

*\*boring-and-interesting point: a remote-control helicam is a ‘UAV’, ‘drone’ should technically describe an aircraft operating autonomously under its own control; I’ll use drone from now on just since that’s what the usage has become*

**Cost and practicalities**

Drone operators tend to work by the half-day (actually much less filming time, due to setup, moving location, waiting for weather).  But that should be plenty: often you only want a few seconds of aerial footage in videos, or as looping gifs. This will also last you for years: the above is for good-quality, reasonably future proof Ultra HD footage (so-called ‘4k’).

Bigger UAVs are the size of a small trampoline and have two operators (one for the camera, one for the drone). They’re very noisy: think several mowers attached to each other.

Smaller UAVs look more like the commercial models you can buy as a hobbyist, and might be the size of a large dinner plate. They might have a single operator, and sound like a strimmer.

While you’ll get a lot of footage, you might not have time to film multiple locations that are far apart.

**Basic rules to keep safe**

First of all, consult your operator as the rules are evolving and we’re not experts. Please treat these as some basic rules-of-thumb, which you can use for planning:

* you’ll need landowner permission from where you’re taking off
* you should have an area of 50m around you ‘under your control’ – including persons, vehicles, structures or buildings. This shrinks with more highly-qualified drone pilots.
* you shouldn’t even get close to big gatherings (like outdoor concerts) – 150m is the basic rule
* the operator should keep within line of sight of the drone – to keep tabs on the drone, and to make it easier to identify the operator if someone’s curious
* you shouldn’t get too high – 125 metres for a basic operator (more highly qualified pilots can go higher).
* obey common sense. Don’t go near airports, or MoD sites; and don’t film things that you wouldn’t with any other camera: people going into hospitals, etc.

**The law**

We’re not lawyers, and even actual lawyers recognise that this is an evolving area, but here are some things to think about:

In terms of hitting people and smashing things, following the rules above should minimise any risk, and a commercial operator will have public liability insurance (and should demonstrate that to you).

Privacy is a bit trickier.

the Information Commissioner’s Office has issued guidelines treating UAV footage in the same category as CCTV cameras. Data protection legislation might apply – with you as the data handler, so you’d need to keep the footage securely (where someone can’t get at it inappropriately), have it proportionately (so just keep what you need, think about deleting stuff that you got accidentally of people looking on as you took off…) and try and make it as clear as possible who it is that’s taking the footage and how to contact them (have your operator in a hi-vis jacket, maybe post/check in on social media to say you’re filming so people can find out whose was the drone). This sounds a bit unworkable to us (the last part especially) but your drone operator will have more advice.

We’ve had a very good response from people who watched us film, but you will encounter the frightened and the nervous. It’s probably better to be gracious rather than reasonable with people: even if you’re within your rights to use a clip, be ready to shoot it again or frame out a particular area if someone kicks up a huge fuss.

**Final points**

Go with a reputable supplier, they’ll be certified, insured, and able to give better advice than we can.

Go for it! If the rules are tightening, then this might be a golden age of drone filming…