

From : Alan FEATHERSTONE
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Chief Constables

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AF/se/UAS1

I am writing to you in my capacity as the portfolio-holder for the development of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) for ACPO.

These systems, as the name suggests, are unmanned aircraft that can be used for a multitude of purposes in both general policing and counter-terrorism arenas - e.g. the automated patrol of MANPADS sites. Their use is strictly controlled by the CAA, and I chair the ACPO UAS steering group which meets quarterly to oversee the development of these systems into policing, upon which they sit. UAS range in size from units that are as small as a 1kg micro-helicopter up to full-sized unmanned airships.

The main area of interest we have seen from police organisations so far has been at the smaller end of this scale, since they can be deployed now under existing regulations, and you may be aware of some pioneering trials undertaken by Merseyside and Staffordshire in testing some of these systems.

The steering group I chair sits under, and reports to, the Air Operations Working Group (AOWG) chaired by Bernard Hogan-Howe, which manages the police use of aircraft - especially helicopters. It is important to make clear from the outset that there is no intention to replace established police helicopter units, but rather that UAS are seen to offer an additional resource that can be considered as a part of the police service's mixed air assets. UAS can be useful in very close ground support, for dynamic incidents such as firearms operations, and in this regard offer entirely different - and complementary - options to the current helicopter fleet.

My primary purpose in writing is that I wanted to bring to your attention the existence of this steering group and ask that we be provided with a single point of contact (SPOC) in your force, for future contact. It is, however, opportune to emphasise that the use of any UAS by the police service must be appropriately controlled and managed. Should your force embark on a project concerning one of these systems, I should be obliged

if you would first register your interest with the group. Any correspondence on this matter can go through my staff officer for UAS - Inspector Vaughan Clarke, contactable on vaughan.clarke@northants.police.uk.

Secondly, I have attached for consultation purposes a document that seeks to standardise the governance of UAS by police forces. The document has been prepared by the Police Aviation Advisor at the Home Office and presents clear lines of responsibility up to Chief Officer level. I would seek any views that your force may have on the structures presented, so that I can return to the AOWG with a mandate to represent the views of the wider service.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'A' followed by a vertical line that loops back to the top of the 'A'.

Alan Featherstone
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Northamptonshire Police

Cc Inspector Vaughan Clarke, Northants Police