INFORMATION

Safety Alert

M25 Junction 10 – Drone Incident

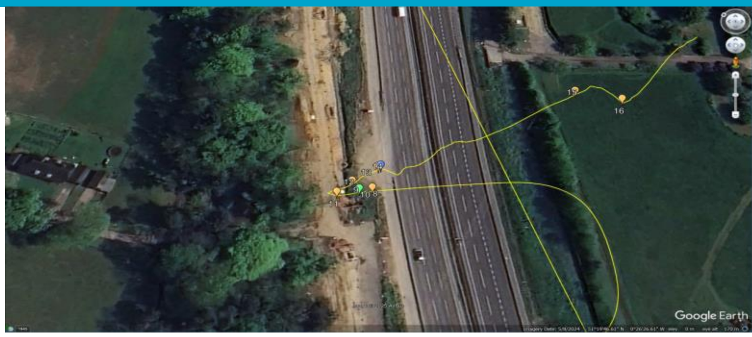
05 June 2025

Background information

On 26 November 2024 a DJI Mavic 3 Enterprise drone suffered a mid-air incident during a mapping flight, resulting in an uncontrolled decent and crash landing. Whilst over the A3 carriageway, the Remote Pilot received an ‘Obstacle Detected’ warning on the drone’s controller, at which point the drone became largely unresponsive. With what control remained, the Remote Pilot was able to steer the drone towards a safer location, resulting in a hard-landing in a nearby field.

The National Highways Drones Governance Hub (DGH) were not notified as per GG 954 – Drones Operations & GG 128 – Requirements for Reporting Incidents, nor were the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) / Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) in accordance with CAP 722 UAS Operations in UK Airspace – the incident only came to light in January 2025.

Additionally, the drone was undertaking mapping activities, an activity type outside of the project’s accepted plan of work .The Operator was suspended from operating on behalf of National Highways on 8 January 2025, pending a full investigation.
The DGH, working alongside the UAS Operator and the project’s Activity Manager, oversaw an investigation.



The 3 possible causes included:

- Bird strike
- Cable strike
- Drone hardware failure

However, due to the likelihood of the Remote Pilot not maintaining Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) of the drone and its surrounding airspace for the purposes of avoiding collisions, the exact cause could not be determined. The DGH investigation concluded the following:

- VLOS was not being maintained by the Remote Pilot, the drone was being flown approx. 325m from its take-off location at the point the incident occurred.
- The Remote Pilot was not operating in accordance with the mitigations in their ‘accepted’ GG 104. The drone was approx. 10m from overheard cables, rather than the minimum 50m that should have been maintained
- There was a lack of understanding as to National Highways (GG 954 & GG 128) and CAA (CAP 722) incident reporting requirements within the Project Team.

If you have any queries about this safety alert information announcement or any other safety announcement then please contact Drones@nationalhighways.co.uk

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Lessons Learnt

Drone activities on the M25 J10 project have recommenced now, that the following actions have been undertaken and evidenced by the Operator:

- Formally reported the incident to National Highways via HART, as well as the CAA and AAIB
- Attended an Incident Review Panel, providing evidence in relation to each possible cause e.g. flight logs, pylon/cable clearances
- Update of the project's system of work to include mapping activities
- Briefed all Remote Pilots on this scheme and others where the Operator flies on behalf of National Highways, covering the:
  - Definition of VLOS
  - Importance of pre-flight checks
  - Contents of the 'accepted' GG 104 Drone operation risks and associated mitigations e.g. separation distances from tall structures
  - The additional requirements of GG 954, over and above those of CAA's CAP 722

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Map Size: **Small** | Medium | Large

▶1x ■

Time	Flight Mode	GPS	IMU Altitude	VPS Altitude	Speed	Home Distance	Battery	Battery Voltage	Cell 1	Cell 2	Cell 3	Cell 4	Cell Deviation	Message
1m 49.4s	Go Home	30 satellites	375.3 ft	N/A	6.2 mph	1,154.9 ft	77%	15.351 V	3.84 V	3.85 V	3.85 V	3.82 V	0.034 V	
1m 49.6s	Go Home	30 satellites	374.7 ft	N/A	6.3 mph	1,155.5 ft	77%	15.351 V	3.84 V	3.85 V	3.85 V	3.82 V	0.034 V	
1m 49.8s	Go Home	30 satellites	374.7 ft	N/A	5.4 mph	1,157.1 ft	77%	15.351 V	3.84 V	3.85 V	3.85 V	3.82 V	0.034 V	
1m 50s	Go Home	30 satellites	374.3 ft	N/A	4.3 mph	1,158.5 ft	77%	15.244 V	3.81 V	3.85 V	3.80 V	3.79 V	0.054 V	
1m 50.2s	Go Home	30 satellites	374.3 ft	N/A	4.8 mph	1,160.2 ft	77%	15.244 V	3.81 V	3.85 V	3.80 V	3.79 V	0.054 V	
1m 50.4s	Go Home	30 satellites	374.0 ft	N/A	6.7 mph	1,161.3 ft	77%	15.244 V	3.81 V	3.85 V	3.80 V	3.79 V	0.054 V	
1m 50.6s	Go Home	30 satellites	373.7 ft	N/A	8.4 mph	1,162.9 ft	77%	15.244 V	3.81 V	3.85 V	3.80 V	3.79 V	0.054 V	

- To view how the incident unfolded, please click here

NHa360

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