

UK government extends airports' drone-restriction zone

New UK legislation will enter effect next month which will extend the restrictions on drone use in the vicinity of airports, putting in place a ban on flights within 5km of runway ends.

The exclusion zone will be introduced on 13 March, the government states, in the wake of the serious drone-related disruption to London Gatwick operations last December.

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It says the change will "better protect" the country's airports from operators who misuse the unmanned aerial vehicles.

The government adds that it intends to supplement this restriction with extended police powers, to stop and search people suspected of breaching the restrictions, with a new piece of legislation to be introduced "in due course".

Police would also be able to access, with a warrant, electronic data stored on a drone.

"The law is clear that flying a drone near an airport is a serious criminal act," says UK transport secretary Chris Grayling.

"We're now going even further and extending the no-fly zone to help keep our airports secure and our skies safe."

The previous operating restriction, introduced in July last year, restricted drone flights above 400ft and within 1km of

an airport boundary. But this left open the possibility of conflict with aircraft on final approach.

UK cockpit union BALPA, which has been calling for an extension of the drone exclusion zone, describes the new rule as a “significant improvement” to air safety around airports.

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