UK REMOTE AERIAL SURVEYS TO PROCEED

The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) – often referred to as drones – to help combat the threat of flooding has been given the official go-ahead to operate on a commercial basis by the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Urban flood specialist Richard Allitt Associates (RAA), based in Haywards Heath in the south of England, has pioneered the use of UAVs, having worked alongside the Environment Agency and a number of water companies, including Severn Trent and Thames Water. The company’s new Remote Aerial Survey business (www.remoteaerialsurveys.co.uk) already has three qualified pilots and a number of UAVs capable of carrying imaging equipment designed to conduct diverse aerial surveys.

Commenting on the new service, RAA Associate Director Martin Allitt said, “We are delighted to be able to offer this new service which will help us gain images with a greater perspective and depth of imagery with fantastic levels of accuracy. UAVs will allow us to undertake surveys of areas we would never be able to reach on foot, such as marshland, rivers and industrial sites.

“RAA is one of the first companies in Europe to be able to offer such a service which will provide a way to assess more accurately the impact of climate change and floods such as those caused during last year’s exceptionally wet weather. We work to provide schemes to manage flood water better, diverting it away from businesses, residential homes and, of course, people.”

Allitt added, “UAVs fitted with thermal imaging cameras have a level of thermal sensitivity that allows them to detect the most subtle differences in temperature, making the photography ideal for use in a wide range of applications including inspection of power lines and solar panel farms and the identification of damp in insulation.”

The UAVs (an example of which is illustrated here) are able to fly at a low enough altitude to operate effectively it is understood, but high enough not to infringe on individuals’ personal space. RAA operates strictly in accordance with the CAA procedures and complies with the Data Protection Act.

Concluded Allitt, “We are delighted to have obtained the permission of the CAA, which is not a simple process. Operators must prove that they are flying with the safety and privacy of the public as a fundamental concern, which involves demonstrating high levels of insurance and having all remote pilots qualified by a CAA-approved body.”
About Richard Allitt Associates