

UK NOISE ASSOCIATION MANIFESTO

PAPER 10:

DRONES AND AIR TAXIS

Over the next few years there are likely to be many more drones and air taxis in the sky. They will have noise implications. Governments will need to take decisions on how to regulate them.

Air taxis and drones are different. The collective term Advanced Air Mobility is confusing. Air taxis are a type of aircraft which can carry both passengers and freight. Drones are relatively small machines which buzz around above our heads. They are promoted on their ability to deal with health emergencies and deliver goods in countries with poor transport infrastructure (which they do) but the business case is built on the delivery of meals, coffees and beers. At present, drone noise may not be a problem but a swarm of drones buzzing overhead will be very different. And air taxis are not quiet. The drone industry acknowledges it is not known if the noise of swarms of drones will be acceptable to the public.



Our recommendations:

A public debate needs to take place

Currently a lot is happening behind closed doors but most politicians and much of the public are unaware of the developments taking place. What will drones sound like? How noisy are air taxis? Where will they take off and land? If road noise is reduced, will noise from drones become more inclusive? This public debate should inform the regulations on drones and air taxis.

The commercial use of drones and air taxis should follow a clear regulatory framework

This might sound obvious but there is pressure across Europe from the drone and air taxis industries for their introduction as soon as possible. They are working on the basis that people may grow to accept the noise.

Manage the revolution!

If the number of drones and air taxis do grow significantly, it will represent the biggest change to our airspace since the growth of aviation and potentially the biggest change to our built environment since mass car ownership. It will be a revolution. It needs to be a revolution based on regulation.