

Brussels Airport and skeyes test use of drones for bird control during normal operations

Brussels Airport and skeyes continue to explore the possible uses of drones at the airport with a second series of testing days. These test days specifically focus on the use of drones for bird control at the airport, to monitor the presence of birds and to direct them away from aircraft when necessary. The tests happen in safe conditions during normal operations and will have no impact on the air traffic.



In normal circumstances drones are prohibited at and around the airport, as a stray drone can create dangerous situations for air traffic. However, in order to explore the possibilities of innovative use of drones, Brussels Airport and skeyes are organising testing days with drones in safe and secure conditions. After a successful test in April with a safety drone, this time the possibilities of a drone for bird control will be further investigated.

During the test days, that started on 9 September, a drone, operated by Citymesh, is used for bird control: to detect, monitor and if necessary, direct birds away from the airport. As much as we love and, through several initiatives, support the biodiversity around the airport grounds, birds have to be kept away from the runways for their safety and that of the

aircraft. The airport's Bird Control Unit regularly circles the airport to prevent and monitor animal presence and to keep them at a safe distance. During these test days, the use of a drone as an additional tool to support the Bird Control Unit is tested.

Given the large surface area of the airport and the fact that certain areas are more difficult to reach by car, a drone can be a useful means of inspecting the airport grounds. The drone is used for monitoring, inspection and mapping out locations of birds and other animals. Additionally, it is equipped with a speaker that replicates the sounds made by birds of prey, acting as a natural deterrent to keep the birds away from aircraft operations. The goal is to find out if the use of a drone for these tasks can increase the efficiency and to test and evaluate the possibilities of using a drone during normal airport operations.

Drones are normally not allowed in the vicinity of the airport for the safety of the air traffic and skeyes is responsible for authorising drone flights in the airspace around Belgian airports. Thus, during these carefully planned test days, the drone flights are carried out in optimal safe conditions, applying efficient and reactive operational coordination procedures established in close cooperation between the air traffic controllers in the skeyes tower and the staff of the Airport Operations Centre at Brussels Airport. The drone is used during normal operations and only operates at a safe distance of the aircraft and in between the take-off and landing of the aircraft. Airport operations and runway use will not be impacted by these tests.