

An Overview of Responses to the Inquiry

| Inquiry Area | National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) | Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) | Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Safety Governance | Information Held (But Not Provided) | No Specific Information Held | Answered |
| National Incident Data | Information Held (Since June 2024) | Refused to Confirm or Deny | Answered |
| Isle of Sheppey Incident | Redirected to Local Force | Answered | Answered |
| BVLOS Trial Safety Cases | Refused (Exceeds Cost Limit) | N/A | N/A |

The responses reveal a fractured system of accountability. While some information was provided, key safety data was either withheld on legal grounds, impossible to retrieve due to data management issues, or redirected elsewhere.

There is no single repository for this information

The NPCC explained that the request for information on BVLOS trials (Question 4) was the primary reason for the refusal. Their response revealed:

- Data is not held in a central repository.
- A manual review of mailboxes and folders for at least 28 individuals would be required.
- A 'dip sample' search by just one individual for the terms 'BVLOS' and 'Drones as First Responders' returned **13,003** and **10,331** results respectively.

> *"Owing to the way information is held by the NPCC means that there is no automated way to retrieve this information... Given the scale of the searches required, the NPCC is unable to undertake all necessary checks."* – NPCC FOI Response, 5 December 2025

A Wall Built From Regulation

The CAA invoked Section 44(1)(a) of the FOI Act, which applies where disclosure is prohibited by other legislation. In this case, the CAA cited [Assimilated Regulation \(EU\) No. 376/2014](#), stating that occurrence report data can only be disclosed for the purpose of “maintaining or improving aviation safety,” not for public transparency via FOI requests. This effectively shields all police drone accident and incident data submitted to the national reporting system from public scrutiny.

> “The CAA is therefore unable to confirm or deny whether the requested information is held, as doing so would disclose information prohibited from release... Aviation safety relies on... trust between reporters and the entities responsible for collecting and assessing data.” – CAA FOI Response, 5 December 2025

A Hidden Pattern of Serious Incidents is Revealed

10

Notifications involving police-operated UAS received by the AAIB since 1 January 2023.

6

Formal safety investigations into police UAS incidents launched by the AAIB during the same period.

Source: AAIB FOI Response, 5 December 2025.

This data confirms that the Isle of Sheppey incident was not an isolated event. On average, a police drone incident serious enough to be notified to the AAIB occurs every 2-3 months, with a formal investigation being required every 4 months.

Synthesising the Evidence: A System Divided

A coherent view of police drone safety is impossible to **obtain** because responsibility and transparency are fractured across the **three key national bodies**.

The Coordinator (NPCC)



Admits safety governance documents exist but claims national incident data is too disorganised to retrieve efficiently. A national reporting system is only months old.

The Regulator (CAA)



Legally prohibits the release of any national safety data it holds, citing regulations designed to protect reporter confidentiality. Confirms it is not investigating the Sheppey incident.

The Investigator (AAIB)



Is the only source of public data on serious incidents, revealing a significant number of formal investigations are underway, hidden from view by the other bodies' policies.

Accountability in the Dark

The rapid adoption of drone technology by UK police forces has outpaced the mechanisms for public oversight. This investigation reveals a system where:

- National-level data management is too immature to support basic accountability.
- The statutory regulator uses #DC3545 legal barriers to prevent the release of vital safety statistics.
- Only an independent accident investigator can provide a glimpse into the true rate of serious #DC3545 safety occurrences.

The result is that the public, policymakers, and other airspace users are unable to form an evidence-based view of the safety of police drone operations. While each agency acts within its remit, the collective consequence is a profound lack of transparency.