

# SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR DRONES ACROSS LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR

*The benefits of drone technology are now being increasingly realised by emergency response, public safety and environmental monitoring applications. An international best practice report on Dublin City Council's new initiative to accelerate the potential of drones across Ireland's local government sector has predicted that thousands of such UAV flights will be in operation by 2030.*

**D**rone technology is seeing significant evolution and market growth – with widespread use across public services internationally. This is now to be seen more frequently across the Irish public sector, to enhance and support operations such as emergency response, surveying and mapping, planning and enforcement, pollution control and traffic monitoring.

Dublin City Council's Smart Dublin team\*, which has been leading a new initiative to accelerate the potential of drones for local government, recently launched its International Best Practice Report for Local Government.

Supported by the Department of Public

Expenditure and Reform's Public Service Innovation Fund (PSIF)\*\*, the project received €35,000 under the 2021 Public Service Innovation Fund and has brought together key stakeholders across multiple sectors to position local government as a leader in the application of drone technologies.

On launching the report 'Accelerating the Potential of Drones for Local Government' at Dublin City Council's head office in June, Minister of State for Public Procurement and eGovernment, Ossian Smyth TD, said: "I am delighted to see organisations such as Dublin City Council, the Local Government Management Association (LGMA), the Irish Aviation

Authority (IAA), Maynooth University and others come together to review current and future applications of drone technology and to maximise the benefits of these technologies. The Public Service Innovation Fund was designed to support projects like this that are driving innovation across the sector."

This project aims to provide a focal point for drone users to work collaboratively, instilling better practice and ensuring that local authorities play a leading role in driving forward drone innovation for the local government sector.

Several key challenges relating to drone operations have been addressed, including compliance, business models, health





**Prof Tim McCarthy, GIS researcher at Maynooth University, Jamie Cudden, DCC’s Smart City Programme Manager, with Ossian Smyth TD, Minister of State for Public Procurement and eGovernment, who launched the report in mid-June at DCC’s head office.**

and safety, privacy and understanding innovation potential. The funding of €35,000 has supported the development of a series of best practice guides, frameworks, case studies, online learning materials and workshops for the sector, accelerating new opportunities and innovation potential for drones across Ireland.

The results of a national omnibus survey of 900 respondents, released at the launch, found that 84% of respondents felt positive about drone technologies and pointed to a confidence that drones could deliver mail (67%) and takeaways (55%) across Ireland by 2025.

Concerns identified by respondents included the importance of trust (75%), privacy (54%) and safety (50%), and key issues that need to be addressed before the technology realises its full potential.

**SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY BENEFITS**  
Leading international drone expert Philip Butterworth Hayes, and joint author of the best practice report, noted that drones are being deployed globally by local

governments, fire services and emergency responders to deliver significant benefits to communities.

“We are just at the start of this revolution happening in our skies. Increased technology advances will make it possible to automate and scale these services globally, while it’s only a matter of time before we see passenger services being rolled out. Paris is likely to be the first city in Europe to operate electric air taxi services, as early as 2024, in time for the Olympic Games.

“Ireland and Dublin are at the forefront in the use of drones across Europe thanks to progressive policies by the IAA, and programmes such as Smart Dublin and Dublin City Council showing leadership in thinking ahead and future proofing the city.”

Owen Keegan, Chief Executive of Dublin City Council, stated that the city council’s fire services, building control and survey and mapping teams are using drone technologies to allow safer and more efficient work practices.

“As we start to consider how we scale

these operations it is critical that we continue to do so in a way that builds trust with our communities. I am delighted to see the Smart Dublin team drive this project with the support of such a wide range of collaborators across industry and academia,” he noted.

**IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION**  
Philip Butterworth Hayes was joined by Prof Tim McCarthy, Maynooth University’s leading Geographical Information Science (GIS) researcher, to present their findings on drone best and emerging practices internationally and how Ireland is positioning itself. They outlined the set of recommendations to navigate and explore the opportunities this technology brings, while highlighting challenges that need to be considered, discussed and implemented.

Prof McCarthy, one of Ireland’s top drone researchers who is leading multi-million-euro projects with Science Foundation Ireland and Airbus, highlighted the importance of collaboration, if Ireland is to realise the potential of drones.

# ACCELERATING THE POTENTIAL OF DRONES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

INTERNATIONAL BEST AND EMERGING PRACTICE REPORT



SUMMARY REPORT



Dublin City Council’s Smart Dublin team is leading the new initiative to accelerate the potential of drones for local government. To download the report summary, click <https://bit.ly/3B4jPir>

“To move to the next stage there needs to be significant collaboration with local authorities, industry, the IAA, communities and other government agencies to collectively roll out these new technologies and to shape a future where drones are helping to support communities in automated environmental monitoring and specialist support services.

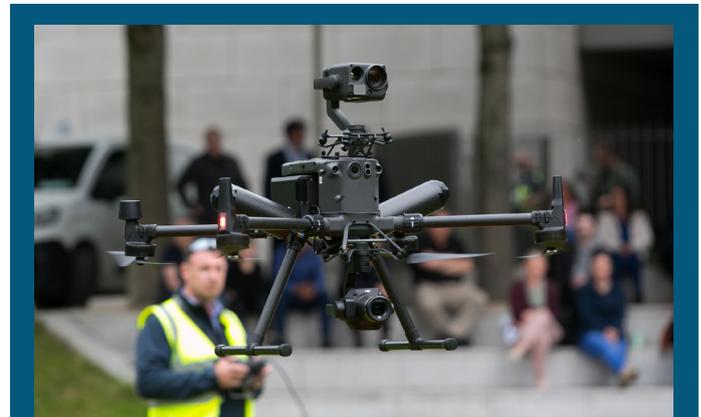
“We are already witnessing an increasing array of developments in the drone industry including robotic platforms, multimodal sensor technologies coupled with machine learning processors which are helping us to monitor and manage our urban spaces, delivering more efficient services and improving our overall quality of life. These new technologies and services also give rise to real opportunities, to create new jobs and drive innovation.”

*\*The Smart Dublin team explores new and emerging technologies to help future proof city services, through collaboration with academia, industry, citizens and public entities. [www.smartdublin.ie/](http://www.smartdublin.ie/)*

*\*\*The Public Service Innovation Fund supports innovative ideas across public service organisations, with funding from €25,000 up to €60,000 available. It is focused on impact, scalability, transferability, learning and collaboration between public service organisations. [www.ops.gov.ie/what-is-ops2020/overview/](http://www.ops.gov.ie/what-is-ops2020/overview/)*



Philip Butterworth-Hayes, international aerospace consultant, Minister Ossian Smyth TD, and Prof Tim McCarthy, GIS researcher at Maynooth University, pictured at the report’s launch.



## DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL’S INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATORS:

- \* **Maynooth University’s U-Flyte Research Partnership** will provide expert advice and research support for the delivery of this project.
- \* **The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA)** will guide the direction of the project as well as provide input to the development of training resources and content.
- \* **The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)** will support dissemination through their wider innovation network.
- \* **Smart Dublin** will open wider stakeholder engagement through their network of innovation and industry partners.

