

UK Drone Flyer ID Renewals Collapse: 43:1 Expiry Ratio Signals UK Drone Compliance Crisis

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New [Civil Aviation Authority figures](#) show a dramatic collapse in Flyer ID renewals, with over 100,000 competency certificates expiring in 2024 against just 6,954 renewals—raising fears of mass non-compliance among UK drone operators.

Key Insights

- New UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) figures [released under FOI \(Ref: F0007412, letter dated 23 June 2025 obtained by HireDronePilot\)](#) show a dramatic fall-off in Flyer ID renewals, the competency credential required to fly drones in the UK.

- The Flyer ID system was introduced in December 2019 with a five-year validity period. **2024 therefore marks the first major renewal cycle**, providing the first opportunity to see how many pilots are actually renewing their competency credentials.

- In 2024, CAA recorded **100,739 Flyer IDs expiring without renewal against only 6,954 Flyer ID renewals** (a 14:1 expiry-to-renewal ratio).

- In the first **five months of 2025 alone (to 31 May 2025)**, **98,601 Flyer IDs expired**, while just 2,296 were renewed — **a 43:1 ratio**. If that pace continues, 2025 expiries would annualise to roughly 237,000.

- By contrast, Operator ID renewals (the registration for the person or business responsible for a drone) appear far more robust, **yet churn remains high: 256,410 Operator IDs had expired since launch as of 31 May 2025**.

The Flyer ID is the UK's mandatory competency certificate for drone pilots, introduced in December 2019 with a five-year validity period. 2024 marked the first major renewal cycle, providing the earliest insight into whether pilots are maintaining their qualifications.

What the numbers show:

- 2024: 100,739 Flyer IDs expired vs 6,954 renewed (14:1 ratio)
- 2025 (Jan–May): 98,601 expired vs 2,296 renewed (43:1 ratio)
- Since launch: 256,410 Operator IDs (drone registrations) have also expired

"Hundreds of thousands of people took the Flyer ID test in 2019, but the renewal data shows the system is losing them at scale," said Peter Leslie. ([linkedin](#)), a GVC-certified drone pilot and director of [HireDronePilot](#), which obtained the FOI data. "We're heading for a compliance cliff—and a communications failure."

Why it matters

Flying a drone in the UK without a valid Flyer ID is illegal in most circumstances and can void insurance cover. The sharp drop-off suggests tens of thousands of pilots may be operating without realising their credentials have lapsed.

The UK's drone registration system splits responsibility into two IDs:

- **Flyer ID:** proves the *pilot* has passed a competency test (£10.88, valid 5 years)
- **Operator ID:** registers the *person or business* responsible for the drone (£10.88 annually, or £33 for 3 years)

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While Operator ID renewals remain relatively steady, Flyer ID renewals have collapsed—suggesting confusion between the two systems, ineffective renewal reminders, or a large cohort of one-time test-takers who never intended to fly regularly.

Possible drivers

Experts point to several factors:

- Public confusion between Flyer ID (competency) and Operator ID (registration)
- Weak renewal reminders or friction in the renewal process
- Rule changes and terminology shifts since 2019 that have outpaced public understanding
- A significant number of people who passed the test once but never continued flying

Methodology

Data source: Civil Aviation Authority response to FOI Ref F0007412 (dated 23 June 2025), covering calendar years 2019–2025 (year-to-date as at 31 May 2025). Full datasets and visualisations: <https://hiredronepilot.uk/how-many-drone-pilots-uk>

Ends

Notes to editors:

- Flyer ID was introduced 30 November 2019 alongside Operator ID as part of new EU-derived drone regulations
- The CAA's systems record expired IDs cumulatively; figures above use annual breakdowns supplied in the FOI response
- **2024 was the first year where large numbers of initial (2019–2020) Flyer IDs reached their five-year expiry**

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About HireDronePilot:

[HireDronePilot](https://hiredronepilot.uk) is a UK managed marketplace connecting organisations with vetted, insured drone pilots nationwide.

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