

Tej Mehta

Reykjavík, 11. apríl 2024  
UST202402-459/P.V.B.  
09.04.00

**Subject: permit to fly fly a drone in Hornstrandir**

The Environment Agency of Iceland has received an application from Tej Mehta, dated February 29<sup>th</sup> 2024, for a permit to fly a drone within Hornstrandir.

Hornstrandir is protected as a nature reserve by act no 60/2013 on nature conservation, cf. Regulation no 332/1985. Disturbance to geological formations, vegetation and wild animal life in the protected area is prohibited. According to the management plan for Hornstrandir, filming and photography that can affect wildlife and visitor experience and flying an unmanned aircraft/drone within the boundaries of the protected site is subjected to a permit from the Environment Agency.

**Description of the project:**

Permit is requested for four droneflights within Hornstrandir Nature reserve. Map showing flight routes was attached to the application and detailed destination of the flight. Purpose of the flights is visualization of landscape. No direct photography of animals will be pursued. Flight plan 1 - Take off on western side of Hornbjarg (approximate GPS location 66.448200, -22.443618). Promptly fly over water along eastern part of Hornvik. Return to take off site using same flight path and land. Flight plan 2 - Take off on eastern side of Hornbjarg (approximate GPS location 66.458144, -22.430228). Promptly fly over water along eastern side of Hornbjarg. Return to take off site using same flight path and land.

For both flight plan 1 and 2 minimum distance from Hornbjarg would be maintained at 200 meters from the cliffs. Flight altitude would range from 15-100 meters. Drone would not loiter overland at takeoff/landing location. Would also maintain line of sight distance of 100 meters from operator to any nearby people during takeoff/landing so as to reduce disturbances to any people. The operator is willing to extend the minimum distance maintained from Hornbjarg cliffs from 200 meters to up to 500 meters if the Environment Agency prefers, though the operator would prefer a minimum distance of 200 meters. Flight plans 1 and 2 will be conducted on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will last approximately 30 minutes each and may occur between the hours of approximately 1200-2000.

Flight plan 3 - Take off near peak of Hafnarskard trail (approximate gps location 66.390096, -22.563710). Fly over land around southern portion of Hafnarskard trail avoiding campsites along southern portion of Lonhorn/Veiðileysufjörður. Return to take off site and promptly land. Would not fly directly overhead of any people. Flight plan 4 - Take off near southern trailhead of Hafnarskard trail (approximate gps location 66.367770, -22.605282). Fly over water around Veiðileysufjörður maintaining minimum distance of 100 meters from campsites along southern portion of Lonhorn/Veiðileysufjörður. Return to take off site and promptly land. For both flight plan 3 and 4 would flight altitude range from 15-100 meters. Line of sight would be maintained of sight distance of 100 meters from operator to any nearby people during takeoff/landing so as to reduce disturbances to any people. Flight plans 3 and 4 will be conducted on June 18th, 2024, would last approximately 30 minutes each and may occur between the hours of approximately 1000-1700.

**Impact assessment:**

The applicant requests a permit to fly a drone in four locations within the Nature Reserve. Within three of them (flightplans 1, 3 and 4), the project is assessed as not having a negative impact on nature if conditions below are followed. In the case of the fourth flightpath at Hornbjarg (flightplans 2), the project is deemed as possibly affecting cliff birds and their flightless young in a negative way, where flying a drone near the cliffs may cause disturbance in the settlement. It is not allowed to fly a drone anywhere close to the cliffs this time of year. From the farmhouse at Horn, and while on the path up to Horn over Miðfell and back down from the cliff, drones are forbidden. The Environment Agency stresses that full consideration is taken with regards to the fact that the guiding light for Hornstrandir Nature Reserve focuses on protecting a vast area with unique nature and wildlife where tranquility reigns. The Environment Agency considers drone flights as having possible negative affects on other visitors and it is emphasised that utmost care is taken so others will not notice, when it is flown. Furthermore, Hornstrandir Nature Reserve is one of few in Iceland where the arctic fox is protected and its habitat is dense so full care must be taken with regards to not disturbing the fox in any way.

**Conclusions and conditions:**

The Environment Agency of Iceland hereby declines Tej Mehta request to fly a drone along flight plan 2 within Hornstrandir on the period requested.

The Environment Agency of Iceland hereby grants Tej Mehta N/A permission on its behalf to fly a drone along flight plan 1, 3 and 4 within Hornstrandir as described above on June 17-18<sup>th</sup> 2024 on the following conditions:

- Keep this letter with you on site during the project.
- The applicant shall inform rangers in the area about their arrival and departure. This is to be done 48 hours before entering the area and again before leaving it.
- If the project dates or description changes the Environment Agency shall be notified as soon as possible.
- Applicant must follow rules of conduct that apply to the area.

- If any complications occur during the project, please contact the ranger or the Environment Agency of Iceland, tel. +354 591 2000.
- If the material is meant for public viewing it must be noted in the video/subtext that permission from the Environment Agency was obtained for the filming/photography.
- An unmanned aircraft should never be flown in close proximity to people. Please take precaution not to disturb people's experience, their safety or personal privacy nor the general peace of the protected areas being filmed.
- Flight time should be kept to a minimum and flight should be avoided during the area's busiest times of the day.
- If the use of unmanned aircraft causes disturbance to wildlife in the area, its use should be ceased at once.
- The conductor of the unmanned aircraft is responsible for the aircraft within the protected area. This includes taking responsibility of any possible risk of harm to people, fauna and nature and leaving no permanent marks on the site in question. Should the aircraft crash, all components from it must be collected and removed from the area.
- It is forbidden to fly drones next to bird cliffs in a closer proximity than 200 meters.
- If falcons or eagles are seen in the area, it is not allowed to fly the drone there.

If the applicant causes damage to nature, according to art. 87 in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013, the Environment Agency of Iceland can, according to the Nature Conservation Act, f.e. order the licensee to fix damage to nature and vegetation and/or stop the project.

The Environment Agency of Iceland can according to art. 89 in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013 change conditions of the permit, add new conditions or withdraw the permit in order to prevent damage to nature if environmental conditions change.

According to art 89. in the Nature Conservation Act no. 60/2013 the Environment Agency can withdraw the permit if conditions of the permit are not complied to.

Unmanned aircraft should take off and land in a safe distance from other visitors according to regulation 990/2017 on unmanned aircrafts.

The usage of a drone shall be according to regulation no. 990/2017 on the operation of remotely piloted aircraft (<https://www.icetra.is/aviation/drones/>).

A permission from the landowners and/or the municipality might be needed for the project.

### **Conclusion**

The decision may be appealed to the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources according to art. 26 of Act no. 37/1993 on Administrative Procedures, based on Art. 91 of Act no. 60/2013 on Nature Conservation within three months from the date of this letter.

**Permission fee:**

Environment Agency of Iceland charges a fee for processing applications for permits in protected areas based on Article 92 of Act no. 61/2013 on Nature Conservation. The fee for droneflight for recreational flight in up to two areas is **41.600 ISK** according to art. 29. c. in the agency's tariff no. 1410/2023.

**Supervision:**

The Environment Agency will supervise the project. The supervisor will be a ranger from the Environment Agency.

Sincerely

Kristín Ósk Jónasdóttir  
**teamleader**

Þórdís Vilhelmína Bragadóttir  
**advisor**