

Speed gliding

The FSC have been monitoring the development of sub-20m paragliding since these gliders first emerged and have now decided to formalise the situation within the BHPA Pilot Rating system.

It is clearly the case that a number of paragliding hill pilots wish to soar smaller canopies when conditions are a bit breezy for normal paragliders. The evidence shows that this activity is, in its essence, no different to 'normal' paragliding, and seems to require effectively the same knowledge and skills set. Therefore the qualifications required for this activity have been fixed at Club Pilot PG (hill). If you already hold that qualification you can simply go ahead and enjoy yourself. However the FSC strongly recommend that any qualified PG (hill) pilot who has not previously flown a sub-20m wing should, at the very least, obtain a briefing from a Coach who is familiar with the characteristics of small wings.

The other activity that involves sub-20m wings is whistling down steep slopes at high speed with minimal ground clearance. The FSC have decided to reserve the term 'Speed Gliding' for this activity. As this kind of flying has few similarities, and many important differences, to other BHPA activities it is being treated as a separate discipline. A specific 'Speed Gliding (non soaring: max wind speed 20mph) Club Pilot' training programme has been created and is currently being trialled. This will enable those new members coming from skydiving and other outside adrenaline sports to acquire the specific skills needed for this activity. Conversion from Speed Gliding (non-soaring) to PG (or PA or HG) will require the pilot to cover the full training programme for their new discipline (ie. starting their training from scratch).

Clearly there will be occasions when PG (hill) qualified members, soaring their sub-20m wings, will find the wind dropping and may end up whistling down the hill front at high-ish speed. The FSC is confident that a PG (hill) qualified pilot will have the knowledge and skills required to deal safely with this situation.

In all cases, if the wing is uncertified then the standard BHPA rule applies: the uncertified wing must be registered.