



SPHG Code of Conduct for paramotor pilots and pilots of other types of SPHG.

1. Preamble

This document is intended to give general guidance, and unless otherwise stated, its contents are not mandatory. Although the term “paramotor” is used throughout this document, the term is intended to encompass all aircraft defined in the UK Air Navigation Order as “Self-Propelled Hang Gliders” (SPHG), including those falling under the UK CAA’s General Exemption for wheeled SPHG. If an SPHG is launched by means other than foot-launching (for example a wheeled undercarriage), there is a legal requirement for aircraft operators to ensure appropriate third-party insurance is in place for each flight.

2. BHPA Requirements

In addition to the legal requirements, the BHPA may introduce requirements from time to time. Pilots should maintain their membership of the Association to keep up-to-date with existing and new regulations and guidance, and to maintain third party insurance (note: for some launch types, third party insurance is a legal requirement).

The BHPA strongly recommends that all paramotor pilots holding the BHPA Club Pilot (Novice) rating undertake training to obtain the full “Pilot” rating. “Pilot” rated pilots are seen as being fully qualified, and therefore able to plan and execute cross country flight with the necessary skills and knowledge. Holders of the CP (Novice) rating who fly out of the range of sight of their launch may find themselves uninsured.

3. Taking off - General

Wherever possible a paramotor should take off from a non-public area. One possibility is an existing microlight airfield which has the appropriate Local Authority permissions.

When pilots take off from existing microlight areas, they should familiarise themselves with and comply with local rules, particularly those relating to noise sensitive areas and numbers of aircraft movements per day.

If a paramotor takes off from other areas the following procedures should be taken:

- a) Where possible, permission should be obtained from the owner of the land.
- b) The area should be secure from the possibility of animals and/or spectators being in an area of danger.
- c) Any spectators should be properly marshalled, and any dogs should be firmly attached to a lead (they have been known to chase a paramotor when it starts to move).
- d) The take-off area should be closely inspected for possible trips and holes (to at least expected take-off distance + 50%).
- e) Where appropriate, any neighbours should be informed of your future activities.

3.1 Taking off - Planning Approval

Land designated as agricultural can be used as a temporary take-off area for up to twenty-eight days in a twelve-month period (unless the land is part of a special zone such as a conservation area). If you fly on more than twenty-eight days without Planning Approval the owner of the land may be served with an enforcement notice by the Local Authority and could be subject to a fine. Local Authorities will generally include all of the land in one ownership in an enforcement order.

Do not try to argue that you are taking off from different fields and they each have a twenty-eight-day dispensation. The Local Authority may also have local bye laws which should not be contravened.

3.2 Taking off - Hang Gliding and Paragliding Sites

Do not use hill or tow sites for powered flight unless you have permission from the BHPA Registered Resident Club.

4. Powered flying - General

If you regularly take off from one place, vary your flight path to avoid annoying the general public. In particular, powered paragliders flying against the wind will remain in view and earshot for a long period of time. If they fly higher to make less noise, they may fly slower due to the wind gradient. If you are not making much headway it may be better to land and get a lift back to base.

It should be noted that German research has shown that an aircraft is a greater source of annoyance if it can be seen.

4.1 Flying – Airspace

It is strongly recommended that: every pilot possesses an up-to-date airchart of the area they intend to fly in, is equipped with an altimeter capable of displaying altitude and height, and understands how to use the airchart and altimeter to avoid flying into controlled airspace.

As well as permanent areas of controlled airspace, there are temporary restricted and prohibited areas through which you cannot fly a paramotor. The BHPA's CANP web page (<https://www.bhpa.co.uk/documents/safety/canp/>) contains information on how to obtain temporary airspace notifications, and how to notify the military of your intention to fly midweek.

If you are intending to fly in an area of uncontrolled airspace under a UK TMA or CTA, the general rule is that you set your altimeter to the QNH of that TMA / CTA (Local QNH) to be able to understand your altitude in relation to the controlled airspace above you (and avoid popping up into it!). Making an airspace infringement like this may have significant safety implications, may cause emergency diversions of other aircraft and may lead to your prosecution.

In addition to knowing your position relative to any nearby controlled airspace, it is essential that you respect the low flying rules. In the UK you are required to keep at least 500ft away from any person, vehicle, vessel or structure – this means not entering a 500ft radius 'bubble' around any person, structure, etc (unless you are taking off or landing). The CAA prosecutes paramotor pilots who break this rule. Powered ground-skimming within 150m (500ft) of walkers would not only be an illegal activity, you may well find that you have invalidated your BHPA insurance and be personally liable for any third party claims made against you for injury or loss.

4.2 Flying - Hang Gliding and Paragliding Hill Sites

It may be very tempting to buzz your mates who are grounded on a nil wind day. Please do not do this! A number of Hang Gliding and Paragliding Clubs have introduced rules which generally exclude SPHGs (paramotors). In at least one case there is a self-declared exclusion zone around each site. Most such sites were negotiated with landowners on the basis of the activity being silent. Unless you actually know that powered machines are welcome on a particular site, treat all such sites as PPR (Prior Permission Required), just as you should if planning to visit alternative airfields or strips. The general rule to be followed is use your common sense and stay away.

4.3 Flying - Livestock

Adherence to the General Exemption should mean that livestock is not disturbed. However, you should particularly avoid bird sanctuaries and riding stables. If you are taking-off from a field, you

should check that there are no horse riders in the vicinity. If there are, wait until they are well away from the area before starting your engine and ensure that you will not be overflying them at low level.

4.4 Flying – cross country

The BHPA Club Pilot rating allows pilots that hold it to fly unsupervised, but they are strongly advised to restrict their flying to a familiar local area that is free of any controlled airspace, and to stay within sight of their landing area to avoid getting lost. The BHPA Pilot rating covers cross country flying. A pilot holding this rating is seen as being properly trained in navigation and airspace recognition, and able to plan and execute cross-country flights with the necessary skills, knowledge and diligence.

5. Landing

For a variety of reasons, you may decide to 'land-out'.

If you are landing on private land you must find the landowner and tell him/her of your arrival. Courtesy takes five minutes of your time and usually results in a pleasant experience.

Always remember that you are an ambassador for your club, the Association and the sport. If confronted by an aggrieved landowner, try to de-escalate the situation by being polite and reasonable. Explain your reasons for landing there and say you will leave as soon as you have packed your kit up.

6. Display flying

The laws on display flying require each pilot to hold a CAA Display Authorisation (DA). Obtaining a DA involves having your planned display evaluated by a Display Authorisation Evaluator (DAE) appointed by the CAA. The BHPA Head Office will be able to give you the names of Display Assessment Evaluators authorised to evaluate SPHG display pilots. You will also need to become acquainted with CAP 403, the CAA Air Display bible.

7. Conclusion

Any breach of common sense or good manners is potentially a breach of this Code of Conduct.

8. Further resources

The CAA's Skyway Code is a useful resource for information on air law and flight planning. It is available as a download from the CAA website (link: <https://www.caa.co.uk/General-aviation/Safety-information/The-Skyway-Code/>). NATS AE is a useful app-based resource for understanding the UK's layout of controlled airspace.

The BHPA Pilot Handbook contains essential information, flight theory and specialist techniques relevant to paragliding and hang gliding.

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