



British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association

Oliver Dowden CBE
Secretary of State
Department for Culture Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

Wednesday, 6th May 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

We understand that the government is considering a phased relaxation of the current UK lockdown as the Covid-19 epidemic in the UK is brought under control. As part of the phased relaxation the government will be considering which sporting activities can safely be allowed to resume subject to social distancing rules. As the governing body for hang gliding and paragliding in the UK we would urge the government add those sports to the list of those activities which can safely resume from the 7th of May 2020.

There are 7000 active hang glider and paraglider pilots in the UK. The BHPA provides training programmes and regulates the instructors and training schools by which individuals wishing to take up these sports in the UK can achieve pilot qualifications. Typically, pilots will train for two weeks in a school setting before gaining their "Club Pilot" rating following which they will join their local club and continue to work towards their full pilot rating under the club coaches. Britain is well represented in international competitions boasting several world champions.

The nature of our sports necessitates large distances between participants both on the ground and in the air so that social distancing rules can be easily adhered to. The sport operates mainly, but not exclusively, from hillsides in sparsely populated parts of the UK. Experienced pilots will typically plan their flying the day before and arrive at their chosen site when they think the conditions will be most suitable. There is seldom any need for discussion between pilots once they arrive at the site and individuals carry their equipment to the site, set up, take off and land without any assistance from any other people. Social distancing is easily achievable as there is no need for participants to break the 2 metre rule. Pilots want and need a far greater separation than 2m between them on the ground and in the air for safe operations.

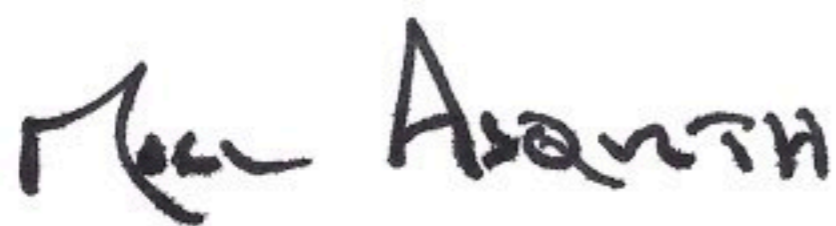


Contrary to popular stereotypes hang gliding and paragliding are safe sports which reward patience and training. Pilot training has a primary focus on safety and identifying and mitigating risks. We would be concerned about restarting activities if there was any likelihood of those activities leading to an increased load on the NHS but hang gliding and paragliding in the UK have excellent safety records with very few accidents requiring medical intervention.

We recommend that any relaxation of the lockdown rules initially only applies to qualified pilots and that schools, instructing and dual/tandem flying operations remain prohibited until government decides how people can safely interact at a distance of less than 2m.

We stand ready to provide any further information you may require in order to consider our request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Asquith'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Marc Asquith
Chairman