



Scottish Hang Gliding & Paragliding Federation

Covid19 Guidance on Safe Free Flying 01-05-2021

Introduction

The aim of this document is to equip the free flying community with the information that they may need in order to reach their own decisions about free flying during the Covid19 pandemic in Scotland, while adhering to the new Scottish Government's Covid19 Framework. Information on the Scottish Government's approach to managing COVID-19 is available at [Scottish Government: Coronavirus in Scotland](#).

The Scottish Hang Gliding and Paragliding Federation (SHPF) exists to represent the sports of hang gliding and paragliding within Scotland. The SHPF represents seven constituent clubs and schools, and is itself a member of the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA), which represents free flight sports at the UK level. The SHPF is not a regulatory body and does not seek to create or enforce rules governing free flight. It is, however, a strong proponent of the BHPA-led approach to free flying.

Sporting activities can be undertaken, providing all activity is consistent with current Scottish Government guidance on health, physical distancing and hygiene – you will also need to make sure that your club, facility and participants are made aware and can adapt to changes in guidance at short notice.

People who are symptomatic should self-isolate for 10 days and household members for 14 days as per info on NHS guidance. No one who is self-isolating should attend a sports facility or activity.

The Scottish Government introduced a new [strategic framework document](#) for managing COVID-19 which became effective from 2 November 2020. This provides a 5-Level approach to restrictions with each local authority area (or sub-area) placed in a relevant protection level depending upon its COVID-19 status which will be reviewed weekly.

Clubs and participants should be aware of their local area protection level and associated restrictions which may be in place and should consider this as part of risk assessment planning. Broad guidance for sporting activity which should be followed within each Level is set out in Table A below.

Further information on protection levels that will apply in each local authority area are available at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): allocation of protection levels to local authorities](#). A local post code checker is also available at [COVID restrictions by protection level in areas of Scotland](#).

Travel

Participants can travel freely for organised sport and physical activity or informal exercise within their own Local Authority area. See Table A for information on what organised sport or physical activity is allowed at each Level. For informal exercise general household rules should be followed.

- **Level 4 guidance**

- Participants (all ages) should not drive/be driven in or out of Level 4 areas for the purposes of exercise. Travel in and out of Level 4 areas should only take place during the course of outdoor exercise where it requires the crossing of boundaries, such as walking, cycling, that straddles the boundary of two areas and starts/finishes at the same place.

- **Level 3 guidance**

- Participants 18 years of age or over (adults), living in a Level 3 area, can travel to other Level 3 areas.

- **Level 0-2 guidance**

- Participants aged 18 years or over (adults) who live in a Level 0, 1 or 2 area should, where possible, minimise unnecessary travel between areas and not travel to a Level 3 or 4 area to take part in organised sport or physical activity.

Other Information

- Car sharing – You should not share a vehicle with anyone from another household, unless you absolutely have to. For further information [visit the Transport Scotland](#) website.
- If using public transport adhere to Scottish Government physical distancing and travel [Transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-how-to-travel-safely/](https://transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-how-to-travel-safely/)
- Public toilets may be open, subject to meeting the government guidance for their operation, however not all toilets will be open.

All activity must be consistent with current [Scottish Government guidance on health, physical distancing and hygiene](#).

Definitions:

- **Organised sporting or physical activity'** refers to activities which are undertaken in a structured and managed way following specific rules and guidance of SHPF, local authorities or businesses, who in turn have fully applied related Scottish Government and **sportscotland** guidance. All organised activity should be overseen by a Covid Officer with documented risk assessments undertaken and mitigating actions put in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of participants, coaches and officials.
 - Flying schools and club coaching can resume, while observing physical distancing measures. Guidance for coaches, leaders, personal trainers, and instructors is available at [Getting your coaches ready for sport](#).
 - Club level and 'online league' competitive flying
- **Contact sport or activity** is defined as "a sport or activity in which the participants necessarily come into bodily contact or as a matter of course encroach within 2m of one another". Tandem flying is considered a contact sport.
- **Non Contact sport or activity** is solo flying, when 2m distancing can take place.

Table A: Sport & Physical Activity Protection Levels

			Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Informal Free Flying Activity	Informal Activity can take place, subject to the details in this table and the protection measures outlined in this document	Adults	Solo Flying activities which maintain 2m distancing can take place.				
			Tandem flying when the pilot and passenger are from the same household				
Organised Club Coach or School led Free Flying Activity	Note 2 applies.	Adults	Tandem flying when the pilot and passenger are from different households. See note 1.				
			All Organised Activities* can take place.		Organised Activities* which maintain 2m distancing can take place.		
			This includes activities which could lead to less than 2m distancing from people out with your household.				
Organised Indoor Coaching Events	Note 2 applies.	Adults	Indoor coaching events e.g. organised low airtime indoor coaching events or reserve repack events. If possible, online coaching events should be arranged. Note 2 applies.				

Where possible, flying should remain local to the take-off site - i.e. cross country flying is only advised when there is a defined plan for retrieval keeping within physical distancing guidance.

Note 1: Tandem flying when the pilot and passenger are from different households. Tandem pilots should not fly with members of more than one separate household per day, face coverings should be worn when physical distancing cannot be maintained and equipment such as helmets, passenger harness, spreader bars should be cleaned appropriately between flying with different passengers.

Note 2: Organised Activities and Events refers to activities and events which are undertaken in a structured and managed way following specific rules and guidance of SHPF, local authorities or businesses who in turn have fully applied related Scottish Government and **sportscotland** guidance. All organised activities and events should be overseen by a Covid Officer with documented risk assessments undertaken and mitigating actions put in place to ensure the health, safety and welfare of participants, coaches and officials.

Club COVID19 officer

It is the responsibility of each club committee, and/or deliverer to appoint a responsible person/s, referred to as the [COVID officer](#), to act as the point of contact on all things related to COVID-19. An [e-learning module for COVID officers](#) is available to support those undertaking the role.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with any updated Scottish Government guidance on health, physical distancing and hygiene. Facility operators, clubs and participants should be aware of and can adapt to changes in guidance at short notice. Information on Scottish Governments approach to managing COVID-19 is available at [Scottish Government: Coronavirus in Scotland Guidance](#) .

Clubs and Facilities

To manage a safe return to sport and leisure activities it is a mandatory requirement that all clubs, facility operators and deliverers put in place comprehensive Test & Protect procedures to help break chains of transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Further information is available within this guidance and at [Scottish Government: Test & Protect](#).

Test and Protect

[Test and Protect](#), is Scotland's way of putting into practice NHS Scotland's test, trace, isolate and support strategy.

- Containing outbreaks early is crucial to reduce the spread of COVID-19, protect the NHS and save lives, and avoid the reintroduction of social and economic lockdown. This will support the country to return to, and maintain, a more normal way of life.
- It is a mandatory requirement that sport facility operators collect the name, contact number, date of visit, time of arrival, and where possible the departure time of all those attending facilities or activities. Where attending as a small household group, the contact details for one member – a 'lead member' – will be sufficient.
- Facility operators should store information for 21 days and share it when requested to do so by public health officers.

A leaflet providing information on the Test and Protect service from NHS Scotland is also available [here](#).

Meeting Rooms

If it is essential that meetings and training takes place in person, [Scottish Government guidance for general workplaces](#) must be followed and a risk assessment should be completed, however we advise against the use of meeting rooms if possible.

IMPORTANT: Do not leave your home to undertake exercise or outdoor activity if Scottish Government advice means you should stay at home because you or someone you live with has or has had symptoms of COVID-19, or you are in the most vulnerable category and have been advised to shield from the coronavirus.

Flying Law

The CAA's position on General Aviation during the lockdown [was published here](#). General Aviation was precluded by the "Stay at Home" order. Once that order is lifted or eased so that pilots can reach launch, **there is no legal obstacle to free flight**, as we understand it. The SHPF have been in liaison with the BHPA on this matter and will update the community if anything changes.

BHPA and Insurance

The BHPA's advice will be updated on its [website](#) and [Facebook page](#). Please bear in mind that some guidance issued by the BHPA relates to England and is not necessarily compatible with guidance in Scotland, which may differ from England.

BHPA members' third-party liability insurance has not changed throughout the lockdown period. However, it is vital to remember that your BHPA insurance only covers you if you are adhering to BHPA rules and the law, and 'take reasonable precautions to prevent any occurrence which may give rise to liability'. The advice of the SHPF to its members is that if you fly out with the guidance

offered in this document, with regard to the phases, you *may* find yourself uninsured in the event of an incident.

Communication

The SHPF will also seek to inform members as the situation changes. This will allow pilots to respond rapidly to the changing environment, based on the best information available. The SHPF Facebook page [is here](#) & [website here](#) and also refer to your Club Facebook channels and social media.

Key Risks

The SHPF perceive three main risks in the return to free flying in a Covid-19 environment. They are:

1. Risk of spreading Covid-19.
2. Risk of accident and the impact on both pilot and emergency services.
3. Risk of reputational damage to our sports.

1. Risk of spreading Covid-19

Until a pilot launches, they are basically a hill walker. Please follow the [Mountaineering Scotland website](#) for excellent advice on accessing the hills in a Covid-19 environment.

Physical Distancing

As we go out ground handling and to flying sites. It will be important to adhere to the Scottish Government's physical distancing guidelines of staying at least 2m away from other hillwalkers, pilots and the general public.

Some things to consider:

- Stay at home if you are showing symptoms of Covid-19 or should be self-isolating from contact with someone suspected to be infected with Covid-19.
- If you fall within a high-risk group, do not risk infection through joining others, even though it is outdoors and with special measures in place.
- Bear in mind that you may be asymptomatic, and act accordingly, maintaining social distancing.
- If you wish to fly cross country, think about your retrieve. Hitchhiking and public transport are not good options for the time being. Can you arrange a private retrieve? Fly an out and return or triangle? Be prepared for a long walk!
- Avoid sites with a high footfall of the general public - so-called 'honeypots'.
- Don't share vehicles or equipment with other pilots.
- If driving, park your car in such a way as to facilitate physical distancing.
- After completing your exercise/activity return directly to your car (if appropriate) and leave.

Health, Safety & Hygiene

- Until better data is available, assume the virus is resilient outdoors and take measures to avoid transmission. Follow [Health Protection Scotland's guidance](#) regarding hand-washing. Be vigilant with hand hygiene when touching surfaces, such as gates, equipment etc. In particular, use of gloves or alcohol gel/wipes after touching any surfaces.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before leaving home to go to the facility/venue (or use an alcohol gel if washing hands is not possible). Information on hand hygiene is available at: [Health Protection Scotland: Hand hygiene techniques](#)
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve. Dispose of your tissue into an appropriate bin supplied at the venue or place in a plastic bag and take home.
- Avoid touching your face and ensure to clean your hands with at least 60% alcohol gel when you finish participating
- Hand sanitiser should be at least 60% alcohol based and detergent wipes are appropriate for the surface they are being used on. Cleaning products should conform to EN14476 standard or any detergent is followed by chlorine releasing agent
- Please ensure the first aid equipment has been updated appropriately for the COVID pandemic and first aiders have undertaken appropriate additional training
- Bring your own food and water out with you, as local shops and cafes are only starting to open, and bear in mind that many public toilets may still be closed.
- Further guidance is available at;
 - [Health Protection Scotland: General guidance for non-healthcare settings](#)
 - [Health Protection Scotland: Cleaning in a non-healthcare setting](#)
 - [Health Protection Scotland: Hand hygiene techniques](#)
 - [St. John's Ambulance: Covid-19 advice for first aiders](#)

2. Risk of accident and the impact on both pilot and emergency services.

Currency and Risk Management

The following tools are advised for pilots of all levels as they approach their first flight after a long period of lay-off during lockdown.

- Every activity you partake in should be dynamically risk assessed with the key consideration being safety first, particularly your safety and minimising the risk of infection or transmission.
- Low airtime pilots should consider seeking advice from club coaches.
- One or more sessions of ground handling before your first flight would be an excellent idea.
- Thoroughly check your kit, including that your reserve is secure, and conduct comprehensive pre-flight checks.

After a long period of less flying, none of us is current as we have been. On launch, ask yourself some hard questions:

- Am I unfamiliar with the site?
- Is the launch difficult, daunting, or unforgiving of mistakes?
- Have others ever been concerned about my attitude, competence, or safety?
- Are the forecast or actual conditions even slightly concerning to me?

Now more than ever, avoiding an accident is vitally important. Think about your margins. Temper your ambition. Now is not the time to be pushing your limits, nor to be drawn off the hill just because others are flying and you don't want to miss out. If you answered yes to any of the above questions, consider waiting for a better opportunity to fly with more margin for error; perhaps a morning or evening flight off a known local hill.

If you decide to fly, let someone know your intentions, discuss conditions with other pilots (while adhering to all government advice on safe physical separation), use your SPOT or inReach, and fly with others.

The Impact of an Accident on You and Emergency Services

The following advice is issued through consultation with Chris diRollo, Chief Medical Officer of the Dundonnell Mountain Rescue Team.

The pressures and restrictions that Covid-19 place on medical staff and emergency services will have a significant impact on the way you would be rescued and treated in the event of an accident.

It is important to consider the following:

- Mountain Rescue assistance may be limited, so plan to be self-reliant in the mountain environment, and should you need assistance be prepared to wait several hours for rescue.
- Familiarise yourself with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the rights and responsibilities that exist for the public and for land managers.
- Remember that in the Covid 19 environment, a rescue is likely to place unique stress on the members of all agencies involved. The [Scottish Mountain Rescue website](#) is a good source of information about the challenges of mountain rescues in the Covid-19 environment.

“The single biggest issue in rescuing a casualty from an outdoor setting during the current situation is the amount of personnel involved. All rescues are multi-agency, usually involving the Police, Mountain Rescue, Ambulance Service, Coastguard SAR and possibly the Air Ambulance and Fire Service. A casualty that is Covid positive could expose all those people involved and their families that they return to. All rescue personnel will assume that a casualty is positive, so will require full PPE.” Chris DiRollo, Dundonnell MRT

3. Risk of reputational damage to our sports.

Landowner Relationships

Remember that our behaviour during the Covid-19 crisis may affect our relationship with landowners for a long time into the future. This will be particularly relevant where special arrangements and vehicular access has been negotiated historically. The key will be to communicate with farmers and other landowners as appropriate. Regional Clubs will know which sites require conversations with particular landowners.

Outdoor Access

While the Scottish Outdoor Access Code remains in place, please be aware that the access that you have enjoyed across private land previously may not be automatically granted during this crisis.

[Please read the guidance issued for access during the pandemic.](#)

Please be aware that Forest and Land Scotland (formerly Forestry Commission) car parks were closed under the lockdown and are only starting to open - keep an eye on the [Forest & Land Scotland website here](#).

Public Perception, PR and Press

Also be aware that, even after flying is legal again, public perception towards pilots may vary. Think about how you would react in the event of being challenged. Also think before you post flying photos or videos on social media. It only takes one person to copy your images to the wrong place and we could have a public relations problem, which could negatively affect us all.

SHPF Support

In the event of an incident or if you encounter a problem that you think could have repercussions on the free flying community, please contact us. We are here to help if we can - committee@shpf.co.uk