



## Community in Spotlight

# British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association

General Aviation is a diverse and varied sector made up of multiple different communities. The successes and challenges for one community - such as the sailplane community - may be vastly different from others such as those operating powered aircraft for recreation or by training organisations. The new Community in Spotlight initiative is led by the CAA GA & RPAS Unit to provide an opportunity for General Aviation Partnership (GAP) members to talk about their community and membership organisation. This work forms part of the regular GAP meetings and is used to highlight particular communities to share and highlight what is happening in their community. Each area is unique so the GAP and CAA are keen to hear about demographics, how the community might be changing, where they see themselves in 5 years' time and recent successes and challenges.

These community presentations are combined with an on-site visit by the General Aviation (GA) team to get to know members of the community and membership organisation and to talk about any current successes and challenges.

The **British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association** (BHPA) is a members' organisation managed by volunteers, which supports a UK wide network of recreational clubs and BHPA registered schools, and which provides the infrastructure within which hang gliding and paragliding in the UK thrive. Representing a broad range of different types of aircraft, from hang gliders and paragliders (both powered and non-powered) to parascending parachutes, the Association has over 7,300 members, making it one of the largest UK General Aviation organisations. One of the benefits of membership is third party insurance which is extended to owners of land from which the Association's members operate. The vast majority of hang glider and paraglider pilots are BHPA members, but there currently exists a sizeable percentage of paramotor pilots in the UK who are not BHPA members.

Our meeting on Monday 17 October 2022 was held at the BHPA headquarters in Leicester. Here we met with Marc Asquith, BHPA Chairman, Angus Pinkerton, FSC Chairman and Mark Shaw, one of the Association's Senior Technical Officers.

The BHPA has in the region of 70 registered flying schools in the UK which are monitored for safety, the quality of the training they offer and the equipment they use. Their instructors are licensed by the Association. Whilst there is no official CAA licence system, the BHPA has a well-developed rating system for pilots to progress through, from the novice "Club Pilot" rating, through to the fully qualified "Pilot" rating. With training at a BHPA school it is possible for pilots to achieve Club Pilot status, which, after about 10-12 days training (and the successful completion of a practical

# BHPA highlights

Formed from the amalgamation of two predecessor bodies the BHGA and BAPC in 1992

Headquartered in Leicester

## 9 staff members

**7,300 members**, every member has their own aircraft - syndicate sharing is not a feature of these airports.

Many members own more than one aircraft.

assessment and written exams) entitles pilots to continue flying and practising the sport at their local flying club. It is from this step that it is possible to go on and achieve more ratings and further skills like cross country flying, competition or tandem flying, should that be the ambition. Opportunities for qualified pilots such as structured Pilot Development courses are offered by BHPA licensed Coaches, with Coach revalidation every 5 years to remain current with the BHPA once this status is achieved.

The BHPA holds the current presidency for the European Hang Gliding and Paragliding Union (EHPU) with Marc Asquith, as President and Mark Shaw as General Secretary. This has provided the opportunity to continue the relationship with European colleagues despite the UK's departure from EU and EASA. It allows the UK community to maintain close contact with their European brethren. Due to the unique portability of hang gliders and paragliders, flying "tourism" is common amongst the community of European pilots. BHPA membership of EHPU ensures the UK continues to have input into EASA working groups on topics that have a significant impact on hang gliding and paragliding operations, such as electronic conspicuity (EC) and drones.

Our meeting went into some of the concerns the BHPA has previously raised around EC. The BHPA has undertaken several trials to understand how best EC devices can be attached to the various types of aircraft they represent. There are concerns that the lightweight open cockpit nature of hang gliders and paragliders result in devices required to be strapped to the pilot. This has been shown to result in significant signal obscuration. Hang gliders and paragliders can also fly in large gaggles and the BHPA has concerns about signal saturation from many (regularly over fifty) hang gliders and paragliders pinging in close proximity around a flying site. The slow speeds that hang gliders and paragliders fly at require hang gliding and paragliding pilots to use "see and avoid" methods to maintain good lookout and separation. Concerns were raised that reducing a good lookout through the reliance of a screen would result in an increased risk of Mid-Air Collision, with other hang gliders and paragliders.

In order to explore further what other options are available, the BHPA is participating in the Obstruction Beacon Trial. A trial, the first of its kind, to use ADS-B to enhance the safety of glider, hang gliding, paragliding and model flying operations at various sites throughout the UK.





As with other organisations we have met as part of our Community in Spotlight series, the BHPA also expressed a concern on the levels of young people coming into the sport. The average age of a BHPA member is 53 years of age. This is in contrast to the mainland Europe where there is a thriving paragliding community in the under 30s. Activities and engagements the BHPA is keen to replicate in the UK.

The BHPA also raised the Sub 70 self-propelled hang glider undercarriage exemption, which includes powered paragliders, and developments in this exciting area of the sport. The CAA looks forward to further discussions with the BHPA on issues surrounding training in these aircraft.

Mike MacDonald, Co-Head of the General Aviation & RPAS Unit said;

*“It was great to sit down with the BHPA and learn about more their fantastic sport. Although the CAA does not regulate this area of the GA community in the same way as other sectors, it is still vitally important that we understand the unique capabilities and airspace requirements of the BHPA to ensure we can all safely use G-airspace.”*

Marc Asquith, BHPA Chairman said:

*“The BHPA was very pleased to welcome the CAA GA and RPAS Unit to its offices. We had a helpful and constructive session presenting the diversity of BHPA activities, the numbers*

*of aircraft (in the region of 25% of the GA fleet), the locations we can be found in (almost anywhere in the open FIR up to 15,000 ft ) and the issues and opportunities facing our sport, in particular the issues surrounding EC equipment (encapsulated on the BHPA’s EC Position Paper, published on its website). We were grateful to have a Flylight Adam Sub 70 hang glider trike and a paramotor on display so that the CAA were able to see for themselves these exciting new aircraft types, and to discuss possible developments in Sub 70 pilot training, and power training generally.”*

**Thank you to the BHPA for taking part in our Communities in Spotlight initiative.**

