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To: all pilots

Dear Glider Pilot

### **Airspace**

This is very important information that all glider pilots are urged to read.

Consider a UK half million scale chart. Cross-country pilots know how tricky it can be planning a task to avoid all the controlled airspace. Now look again and imagine swathes of Class D over the remaining regional airports, eg Kidlington, Carlisle, Farnborough, Inverness, Cranfield, Cambridge, Exeter, etc. It doesn't take much imagination to see there would not be much class G remaining.

The economic upturn is leading to a renewed development of regional airports. Many believe their future lies in attracting increasing volumes of business traffic and even new low cost operators. They need to demonstrate a safety case before they will be granted any airspace request but, as they develop, they will aim to attract more and larger aircraft and it is not uncommon now to see aircraft as large as a Boeing or Airbus manoeuvring in Class G around these airports. It can take just one alleged airprox for the CAA to grant 'emergency airspace'.

The CAA argues that Class D is not closed to VFR traffic but, in practice, gliders without a transponder are regularly refused transit requests, and we also know that it is not prudent to plan to task through a control zone.

As an association of responsible clubs and pilots, we trade on our reputation and every pilot who flies cross-country needs to uphold that. Yes, many love to race and notch up an extra one or two kph over our friends on the National Ladder, but we need to be prudent and take more care in the vicinity of busy airfields by ensuring that we always adopt good airmanship practices. Please read on.

### **Do not bust an ATZ!**

An ATZ is as much controlled airspace as Class D. Avoid it with as much care as you would avoid the major international airports, with a sufficient buffer so as not to raise the blood pressure of the local traffic and controllers.

### **Talk to controllers**

An airport shown on a ½ mil chart with ILS chevrons is high on the aspirational list for future Class D and these instrument approaches will be used in all weather conditions by potentially very large and very fast passenger airliners. These guys are used to being in a 'known traffic environment' and at least 3nm from anyone else, so they'll be unnecessarily concerned if they even SEE a glider, even if you're safely out of the way. Many such airprox reported by commercial traffic involve a glider 1000ft or more ABOVE the published ATZ and well out of the way. If you can at least talk to a controller to let them know your intentions, it helps hugely.

### **Avoid flying through ATZ overheads and lingering on approaches**

We have been advised that regional airports with radar dislike unknown traffic passing through their overhead as this is a radar blind spot. A simple call can really help everyone. Similarly it's not good practice to set a task with a turn point close to one of these instrument approaches, or to hang about thermalling near or on one. A controller seeing a swarm of racing gliders closing on his busy airport with a Boeing 737 on final will not know that you all intend to turn that point just 1nm outside his ATZ and retreat rapidly!

### **Be aware of instrument traffic**

We have made it clear to the CAA and chart providers that the current VFR charts do not offer enough information as to where the main instrument approaches outside controlled airspace lie. The dimensions are pretty similar across all regional airports – traffic will typically join for a 7 to 10nm final approach on a 3 degree descent, ie around 3000ft agl at 9nm, 2000ft at 6nm and 1000ft at 3nm (as they enter the ATZ). Arriving traffic will be manoeuvring around 30 degrees off that final track on downwind and base, leaving a sort of bow tie shape. If you need to fly in these areas, please take particular care. Remember that controllers like to know who is there.

### **Teach good practices**

If you are an instructor, you need to emphasise the key airmanship points to your students, and encourage pilots to recognise and be aware of others operating in shared airspace.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. All glider pilots need to be more aware that airspace is a shared space and we need to take some responsibility in busy areas to ensure it stays open to us. If we all follow good practice, we can maintain risk at a reasonable level, demonstrate that gliders do not pose the level of risk that some incorrectly assume, and have a much better case to oppose future airspace grabs.

Kind regards

John Williams, Sarah Kelman and Andy Roch – Airspace Committee  
Mark Holden – Competitions Committee  
Pete Stratten – Safety Committee