

Dear Competitor

One of the competition committee's main tasks is to review and adjust the competition rules each year. In October 2025 we again asked for inputs to this process before we started. We had some 40 ideas put forward. All of these have been considered along with inputs from directors of competitions during the season and from the BGA Executive.

In this document you will find details of the issues that we considered, our reasoning, and the decisions we have made. All have been agreed by the full committee and the document is approved by the BGA Executive for circulation to pilots for comment.

A major issue that we have is that LXNAV instruments and the program that we use for scoring, See You, calculate bisectors and display sectors using different algorithms. We recognise that this raises issues for LXNAV users. This year we have included advice for these pilots within the rules. If you are fully conversant with geospatial geometry and are willing to assist the competitions committee in drafting rules for 2027, please contact me at compscommittee@gliding.co.uk

I do not expect that everyone will agree with all of the decisions, but we have tried hard to deliver our terms of reference to the benefit of the sport and competition scene as a whole. We welcome your feedback. However, unless you identify errors or omissions, your suggestions will now go into the pot for 2027.

As I said before, one of the key areas of concern is safety and the behaviour of pilots in the air. I am sure that you agree that we all want to go home with ourselves, and our gliders, in one piece at the end of the competition. I hope that all pilots will engage positively with the safety initiatives coming forward this year.

I wish you all a successful and safe competition season.

Jim White

Chair of the BGA Competitions Committee

Rule Changes for 2026

Drawing upon directors' reports, pilot inputs, and our own observations the following 40 topics have been considered by the rules subgroup and the full committee. The BGA Executive have approved the document for circulation and the changes are incorporated in the 2026 draft rules. Below is what we decided. In no particular order (input / Issue shown in italics):

1. Data transmission

Pilots increasingly have tools for assisting in-flight decision making that make use of data downloads. Detecting infringements of rule 5.12.2 is difficult or impossible. SC3a now allows receipt of data. Should we?

It is acknowledged that tactical information delivered to the cockpit is inevitable and unavoidable, in time. More head down time akin to a computer game is considered to be a retrograde step for the sport and increases risk. The CC decided to engage with pilots on this issue for the 2027 rule book.

2. PSC review of tasks and finishing procedures

This was a change in 2025 which had the desired outcome but was tricky to manage. Some PSC members widened the brief commenting on sporting issues as well as safety. We should refine the brief to better guide PSC members and give advice in the OG / OBNs on how to manage the process well.

The CC agree. Rule 5.1.1 will be edited to emphasise that the PSC should concern itself only with the safety of tasks and procedures.

3. Sector Definition

*In 2025 a pilot argued that he was 'in' when by our rules (and SeeYou) he was scored 'out'. This is a problem caused by a round earth and the fact that his instrument and See You use different algorithms to define and display sectors. The bearing **to** a point and **from** a point along a geodesic line are not reciprocal.*

The CC discussed changing the sector definition to allow control by comparing the bearing of the logged point to the turnpoint to the reciprocal bearing of the radial shown on the task sheet. This would increase the workload for the scorer. It was decided to strengthen our definition in the rules to remove ambiguity on how control of sectors is to be scored. This item will be considered again for 2027.

4. Turbo relight and self launch process

The new turbo relight rules were appreciated but there are niggles:

- 1) Confusion about what is allowed between the start up zone and the shut down zone. Not sure this is actually a problem.*
- 2) Size of shut down zones too small.*
- 3) Should shut down zones be separated from launch drop zones?*
- 4) Self-launchers lose a lot of height shutting down. Should we change the rule so that engines may be shutdown 300ft above launch height but a point must be logged under launch height within the drop zone afterwards.*
- 5) Confusion about self-launcher status if an aero tow is taken.*
- 6) What airspace code and colour should be used for drop zones in airspace files?*

The new turbo relight rules were considered a success but need a little tweaking:

- 1) It was felt that there was no need to clarify what can be done between start up and shut down. Pilots will work this out for themselves with experience.
- 2) Rule 5.22.4.2 change to specify 2k radius as minimum
- 3) Not considered necessary
- 4) Both self launchers and turbos may climb to 200ft above designated launch height before shutting down their engines but must log a point in the shut down zone below designated launch height immediately and before continuing the flight
- 5) A self launcher that takes an aerotow is to treated the same as a turbo for the purpose of engine testing and relighting.
- 6) The organisation will use airspace class B or F for drop / shut down zones.

5. Circle with PEV start

The CC had an input suggesting new rules for starting. Last year The CC decided to wait until the IGC decided their own new rules and consider those for inclusion. Start circles with PEV start have been included in SC3a for 2025 but there is ongoing argument and no scoring software able to score it automatically.

The inability to score these starts automatically prohibits the use of them still.

6. Maximum start height

Setting 1000ft above cloud base encourages prolonged high speed flight near or in cloud or wisps (the 'moronosphere'). We should review and consider setting 100ft below cloud base at first launch. Also concern expressed about airspace busts when setting max start height at airspace boundary.

The current rule was established to prevent pilots climbing and diving around the start. Whilst flight in the wisps is dangerous it is considered less dangerous than the behaviour that the previous rule allowed. No change proposed.

7. Visibility of comp numbers *Some comp numbers are effectively invisible!*

Directors will be reminded to scrutineer the aircraft in this regard

8. Windicapping

Some pilots consider this is unfair in unhandicapped nationals. Also when setting DHTs, barrel sizes are significantly affected. If wind is estimated incorrectly this leads to unfairness. Paul Candler has been consulted on post flight adjustment, or possibly applying windicapping post flight for land outs.

Windicapping was established before any of us were in the CC. We feel that it should stay to reward pilots more for the effort needed to fly into wind. It may be too generous and may skew results in AATs. The CC decided to ask volunteers to analyse the effects of the rule and report back on possible changes and their implications.

9. Cloud flying endorsements

The Instructing and Examining committee have suggested we insist that pilots have cloud flying endorsed SPLs if they cloud fly. Our present position is that we do not expect directors to police the laws (other than airspace infringement).

It is the responsibility of the pilot to comply with the law. It would be too onerous for the organisation to check all the pilot's licence privileges and aircraft limits.

10. Link to Sc3a *The link is faulty*

This will be checked and updated if necessary

11. Multiply by 100

Rules 4.2.3 and 4.3.4 are wrong.

The CC agree that these rules are correct.

13. Maximum height loss rule

Suggestion that we set a height loss from start to finish rule that mitigates against the need to start as high as possible e.g., at cloud base. See item 5 above.

The CC agree that this would be a positive change but, as it cannot presently be scored automatically, it cannot be implemented.

14. Day results

Suggestion that we mandate the publishing of day results on paper for the briefings

Organisation can publish on paper if they wish but the CC will not mandate it.

15. Finish ring height

Do we need more clarity that finish height is scored using take off pressure datum?

The CC consider that the rules are already clear. Note to be added to the OBNs

16. Release height

Should pilots release at stated release height even if not waved off? 100ft margin?

Organisations should brief all tug pilots to wave off at release height. Pilots should still be able to release at will but are entitled to stay on until waived off.

17. Flarm in tugs

Should we mandate and recommend audio warnings coupled to headphones?

The CC decided not to mandate but recommend in the OBNs / OG. CC will also ask Safety Committee to consider.

20. Change to selection procedures

In 2024 / 25 it was decided to review our team selection procedures but it did not happen. The CC will address this with team pilots again during the 2026 season.

21. Handicaps

All handicaps should be IGC

IGC handicaps are compressed for International competition. The CC consider them unsuitable for Regional competition in the UK.

22. Length of service

Committee members should retire after 5 years

This is a matter for the Exec not the CC. 6 of the 10 members of the CC have been on the committee for over 5 years, including both IGC delegates, all of the handicap sub group,

where experience is important, and 3 of the rules group. Experience of previous discussions and decisions is important. Without these 6 members the CC would struggle to deliver its objectives at all.

23. AATs

No more than 1 per competition

Internationals recommend that 1/3 of tasks be AATs and 1/3 racing tasks. The CC sees no point in restricting AATs if the organisation wishes to set them.

24. Tasks and Airspace

Task legs should be allowed near and through airspace and without control points

This matter was considered in 2023 and decided against (see below from that time). That decision is reconfirmed:

“Tasks should be allowed that route through ATZs or near any other prohibited airspace as using control points causes dangerous pinch points.”

The rules sub-group do not accept this argument. The submitter was unable or unwilling to provide evidence that this has happened. In the 2022/23 cycle, the rules sub-group examined every task set in 2022 competition and found that all but one of those that routed near or through airspace could have been re-tasked at a similar distance in the same general area without doing so, and without significant additional control points.

Furthermore, the CC felt that routing through airspace, in itself, creates pinch points and increase the risk of infringements.

No change was made in 2023 and none is proposed now.

25. Unsporting and unreasonable pilot behaviour

The CC discussed adopting the IGC SC3a position that includes unsporting and unreasonable behaviour towards BGA staff, competition organisations, and volunteers outside of competition. On advice from the BGA Exec the CC decided to leave the existing rule unchanged.

26. Unused drop zones

We had a suggestion that we write to the holders of unused drop zones that directors have difficulty in establishing status to ask when they will be active e.g. South Cerney and Chalgrove

This was considered a good idea. We will write to both asking them whether they use the DZ at all, only on weekdays, or on certain dates.

27. Start Height near airspace

Where the start zone is under airspace, the maximum height should be at least 450ft below the airspace to allow a buffer and the 250ft penalty zone.

The CC agree that the max start height should be set below airspace but think that 450ft is excessive. We will put a note to this effect in the OBNs for 2026

28. Mandate Flarm and Transponder use

All gliders should be fitted with Flarm which must be switched on, unattenuated, and correctly identified. Gliders fitted with transponders should have them switched on. Safety of GA is affected.

Whilst most gliders are equipped it is presently BGA policy not to mandate.

29. Mandate MORs when airspace is busted

The law requires an MOR when airspace is busted. Should we mandate or urge people to submit?

Our current policy is that we should not act as CAA police. Compliance is the responsibility of the pilot. Note in the OBNs will offer advice to organisers and CFIs.

30. Proficiency of 2nd pilot in 2 seat glider

We already deal with this in rule 2.1.6 however it was agreed that the rule should be strengthened to include IGC ratings and that in the event that P2 is the more proficient that the performance should be scored hors concours.

31. Cloud flying

Request that we prohibit cloud flying. Several reasons given.

This is a difficult issue with widely varying views amongst pilots. The CC are also keen not to police licences nor certifications. The CC intend to consult with the competition community during 2026 on this issue for consideration in 2027.

32. Team Flying

If team flying is to be allowed, radio should be in plain language, times should be actual (not code), and Flarm codes must not be changed.

Some years ago we tried prohibiting team flying which was successful but unpopular with some. Pilots must be allowed to obfuscate but the CC do not think that this affects sporting fairness any more than allowing team flying in the first place.

33. Use of Flarm

Flarm must be on and in normal mode

As we do not mandate Flarm, this rule change could cause pilots to disable or remove their Flarm. With the use of data transmission on the horizon being tracked could also be a sporting disadvantage.

34. Team Vote

Selection by vote is affected by issues other than performance (politics). Selection would be better on merit alone.

The CC tend to agree especially when the voting panel is small. This is a topic for wider consultation in 2026.

35. Reduce numbers of entries to improve safety

It has been proposed that numbers are limited on safety grounds.

It would certainly be safer if only a small number of gliders compete. The CCs remit is to increase participation. The greatest issue is in the start zone and we already have many rules to mitigate this.

36. Hard floor

It has been proposed that we set a hard floor.

This was considered recently and it was deemed impractical.

37. Short course, multiple laps

It has been suggested that races of several short laps would be more fun e.g. Red Bull

Directors are already able to set such tasks but do not presumably because it does not represent cross country gliding performance. No change needed.

38. Simplified Rules

Directors have reported that pilots are put off entering Regionals because of complicated rules.

We already have a set of simplified rules but clubs are not using them. A reminder will be sent to clubs and, possibly, an offer to run / help run them.

39. Red/Yellow/Green Safety briefings

Directors have reported that the Red/Yellow/Green safety system used at one competition should be rolled out to others

More information required.

40. Handicaps

Measured data has been obtained for the AS33 (18), Ventus 3, and the Duo Discus.

Following consideration of the new data, the CC intends to increase the handicap for all the 3rd generation 18m gliders and their 15m variants. The Duo Discus handicaps for all variants will also be revised. A separate paper will be published to explain these changes.

End.