

To All Pilots,

Sent by the Chairman UHPC

This email is triggered because of the unfortunate accident at Slieve Gullion on Sunday 5th February 2017. Apparently the pilot concerned hit some sink near the hill and then hit a rock, After surgery he will hopefully be released from hospital this week. As a club we send our best wishes to the pilot and hope he makes a speedy recovery. The incident however has raised some other concerns which all pilots need to be aware of. These are:

Flying at Slieve Gullion - Sensitive Flying Site

Prior to 2010 Slieve Gullion was in restricted Military airspace, any flying at the time required permission from the MATC. When Military airspace was lifted to normal airspace the UHPC negotiated flying at the site with the land owners, the NI Forest Service. I wanted to make you all aware that Slieve Gullion is considered a designated area of special scientific interest and flying the site has been negotiated with the attached conditions:

- 1) The Forest Service stipulated they required Third Party insurance for the landowner of £5 million (The only site in NI that stipulates this amount).
- 2) Pilots must park off the main driveway and keep the road clear for emergency vehicles.
- 3) Pilots should clearly display a card with their name, contact telephone number in the car windscreen.
- 4) Pilots should avoid climbing fences, avoid disturbing heather and where possible stick to pathways.
- 5) UHPC have assessed the site as CP+ 10 hours minimum.

To date the Forest Service and the FS Warden have caused us little concern and we have only had very limited contact with them, however a high profile incident involving an air ambulance evacuation will not have gone unnoticed. I hope by putting this email out pilots will consider their own situation and realise how sensitive sites could easily be closed if used irresponsibly. I would like to be in a position to at least be able to counter any inquiry from the Forest Service by demonstrating that we are all responsible individuals who are aware of the sensitivity of the site. Parking on the lane causing an obstruction for example, where a farmer can't get his tractor past or

where an ambulance can't recover a walker with a sprained ankle could be enough to put this great flying site in jeopardy.

In writing this I have sought the advice of other experienced pilots both North and South, many have different solutions of how to maintain our flying at this and other sites for years to come. What is clear is that the solution primarily rests collectively with ourselves. The big issue at this particular site is the insurance. I hope the £5 million element will never be tested and most of us think that this is over the top. The IHPA pilots have an informal reciprocal agreement with the UHPC to fly each other's sites; their insurance cover is for Euros 1.5 million and it could be argued that this is plenty and any insurance is better than none. UHPC pilots are covered by the £5 million element through the BHPA. There is no intention for the UHPC to become the paragliding police, so individual pilots need to assess their own situation and consider the overall effect of their decisions when balanced against the landowners' wishes and any consequential effect on other pilots. We are a small community and all of us want to keep flying!

There is of course a instant solution if you live in the UK - join the UHPC and BHPA. It will cost you around £120 per year and give you insurance cover at all UK and NI sites plus 120 days cover outside the UK. BHPA cover is not as attractive for non UK residents who can still join and are covered for UK sites but are not covered for any days outside the UK. There are of course other advantages in joining one of the clubs. The UHPC will always welcome new members and when you consider the club fees help to keep the flying sites open for your shiny new wings it is a small price to pay.

I am aware that IHPA pilots have different insurance arrangements and a suggestion has been made that the UHPC re-negotiate the insurance cover at Gullion with the Forest Service, however unless we are forced into a negotiation I would prefer not to draw attention to our flying by raising the issue as any contact could be wrongly construed. There is a potential game changer on the horizon currently being negotiated by the BHPA which may in the future allow BHPA members to fly in all European countries under the same insurance conditions, however this is currently not available.

We all want to fly, so it is no one's interest to have a site closed. So please let us all work together to ensure that Slieve Gullion stays open now and into the future.

Steve Hill, UHPC Chairman, February 2017

For anyone considering joining the UHPC please contact Tom Carson; email: treasurer@uhpc.co.uk. An application form is on the UHPC website - <http://uhpc.co.uk/Joomla25/>.