



Department for Transport

UPDATED Recreational General Aviation Covid-19 Guidance

Date: 15 May 2020

Recreational flying

Updated government coronavirus advice means that recreational GA flying is now allowed:

- from English airfields
- if social distancing measures are strictly observed

In practice this means solo flights only or flights where everyone is from the same household. This is because observing social distancing during a GA flight is not generally possible.

Recreational general aviation is currently still not allowed in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales.

Why is some GA flying being permitted in England?

The government has stated that from Wednesday, some sports, in which it is possible to observe social distancing, will be permitted. The Government takes the view that recreational General Aviation is a permissible recreational sport and, from Wednesday, it can also be undertaken in a manner consistent with [guidance on staying safe outside the home](#).

Regrettably, this excludes most training flights, as social distancing measures require people not in the same household to maintain two metres of separation. While these flights are a key source of income for many aerodromes, they cannot presently be undertaken in a way that reduces the risk of Covid-19 transmission to an acceptable level.

Whilst noting that online training and socially-distanced training on the ground can take place, the inability to undertake training flights will mean that some pilots will not be able to resume flying until further easing of restrictions is possible. We advise those affected in this way to monitor this page and wider government guidance for further updates.

Reopening of airfields in England

Updated government advice actively encourages people to go to work where it is not possible to work from home. This advice applies to aerodrome operators, with [guidance for transport operators](#) having been published on 11 May. However, the question of

whether any individual aerodrome should open (or reopen) remains a business decision for aerodrome operators to take. While some GA operations are now permitted under current guidance, aerodrome operators are best placed to decide whether opening is in their best interest, either from a commercial or health and safety standpoint, including their ability to maintain safe socially-distancing consistent with current PHE guidance. It is also to be expected that some airfields will require time to implement [guidance on making their sites Covid-secure](#), and that there may therefore be delays to reopening.

GA Maintenance Check Flights

The CAA has published advice on maintenance flights under the above heading at <https://www.caa.co.uk/Our-work/Newsroom/COVID-19-guidance-for-commercial-and-recreational-aviation/>. This advice applies throughout the UK.

Maintenance workshops

Workshops which carry out essential maintenance are entitled to continue throughout the UK (in line with guidance regarding car workshops) provided PHE guidance is followed:

- follow [social distancing advice](#)
- [frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly](#), using your standard cleaning products

Communications for English airfields

Aerodrome operators and others involved in GA are encouraged to enter into a dialogue with local communities to ensure that the easing of restrictions on GA activity are explained to and understood not just by the GA community, but also by the general public – particularly those living near to airfields. This is to avoid people becoming concerned by the gradual increase in airfield activity. However, the onus is also on pilots to act responsibly, for example by avoiding noise-sensitive and built-up areas.

Both the CAA and stakeholder organisations within the GA community are valuable sources of information about managing the challenges of flying in the current environment, and members of the community are encouraged to consult both for more detailed advice and guidance where applicable. The CAA's advice and tips for a safe return to flying can be found here. [\[link to be updated\]](#)

Other forms of General Aviation throughout the UK

Search and rescue operations and some GA activity, for instance where it is absolutely necessary to fly to or for work, are exempted from the above conditions on shared cockpit operations. In all of these activities, we expect pilots and operators to be socially responsible in the decisions they make, and to apply social distancing guidelines as far as possible.

Air traffic management

Pilots resuming recreational GA activity are asked to be mindful that air traffic services are still limited, with NATS trying to reduce non-essential activities, including services

to GA. This is to ensure the resilience of the critical air traffic management services while complying with current guidance by not having more people on site than necessary.

While most GA activity occurs outside of controlled airspace, and therefore does not involve NATS, pilots should therefore be mindful of the strain their activity places on other essential services.

The lower airspace radar services which NATS provide are also offered on a when possible basis, so could be turned off if necessary. Similarly, access to Class D could also be simply refused by the relevant air navigation service provider if it has to prioritise other airspace users.

Return to business as usual

The general aviation sector is an important contributor to skills, jobs and growth. This government is committed to helping this important STEM sector back on its feet after restrictions are lifted.

The GA team in the Department for Transport is well aware of the structural threat this period poses to recreational GA, including with regards to flight training (given that training flights are not currently possible due to directions on social distancing). We are therefore working closely with the sector to mitigate any long term negative consequences. Similarly, we are taking steps to ensure that when it is safe to do so, we will continue to fully support the GA sector.