



Hang gliding and paragliding policy

The Malvern Hills offers opportunities for a wide range of activities including hang gliding and paragliding.

Hang gliders and paragliders (referred to as 'Pilots' in this policy) take off from a number of sites around the Hills and many are members of the local Malvern Hang Gliding Club. Pilots launching from the Malvern Hills have flown over 100 miles to both the west coast of Wales and the east coast of England.

This information provides a background to the Hang Gliding and Paragliding policy which can be found at the end of this document.

History of flying on the Malvern Hills

There is a long history of flying from the Hills, going back to the 1970s resulting in the formation of the Malvern Hang Gliding Club (MHGC) in 1975.

In the early days, the only gliders were hang gliders with aluminium frames and 'fixed' wings. Paragliders were developed later with flexible parachute wings and are now the most popular craft.

The original agreement between the Trust and the MHGC has been lost however a specific byelaw (1995) relates to the flying of gliders on the Hills.

11 (a) No person shall, except in the case of accident or other sufficient cause take off from or land on the Hills any glider manned or unmanned or any other aircraft, save that this byelaw shall not apply, subject to clauses (b) and (c) hereof

- a. To a glider weighing 10 kilograms or less*
- b. To a non-mechanically powered hang glider*

(b) No unauthorised person shall except in the case of accident or other sufficient cause take off from or land any hang glider on any part of the hills lying to the north of the Wyche Cutting or any part of the Herefordshire Beacon (British Camp).

(c) No person shall fly any glider or aircraft on or over the Hills in such a manner as to be likely to cause undue interference with the use or enjoyment of the Hills by persons or animals lawfully thereon.

Hang gliding here refers to both paragliders and hang gliders.

In the beginning, permissions were granted for pilots to launch from the Hills south of the Wyche Cutting (excluding British Camp). Land to the north of the Wyche Cutting was reserved for the flying of model aircraft.

In 1999/2000, permissions for pilots were extended at the request of MHGC to allow the use of the Worcestershire Beacon as a launching site and discussions relating to this are recorded in the Trust's minute books. This permission was granted with some conditions (including the number of permitted take offs per year) which were lifted following a successful initial trial period.



Current usage and information

Launch Sites

Over time, pilots have self-selected the best take offs from the ridgeline and these are some of the same launch sites used today.

These are:

- **Swinyard Hill** – A quieter site is used mostly by less experienced pilots largely due to the fact that there is a large expanse of open common to land on if the pilot is unable to catch a thermal. It is also a short walk back up to the launch site should the pilot wish to attempt another flight.
- **Kettle Sings/Pinnacle Hill** – A site mostly used with an easterly wind. Recognised by pilots as one of the best east-facing ridges in southern England and as many as 80 pilots can gather in good conditions. Restrictions: Pilots must be Club Pilot (CP) rated (or foreign equivalent) and have at least 15 hours post-qualification flying experience to use this site or be under the supervision of club coaches.
- **Worcestershire Beacon** – A site used most in a westerly wind. A smaller launch site with no more than 20 pilots flying in suitable weather. Thermal opportunities can be limited and there are fewer options for landing sites in the west. Restrictions: Pilots must be Pilot rated (or foreign equivalent) to use this site.
- **Black Hill** – A launch site that is often preferred when the wind is stronger and because there is less of a climb to carry equipment. More technically difficult than the other launches, but continuing tree clearance by club members in collaboration with the Trust is ensuring it continues as a safe launch.

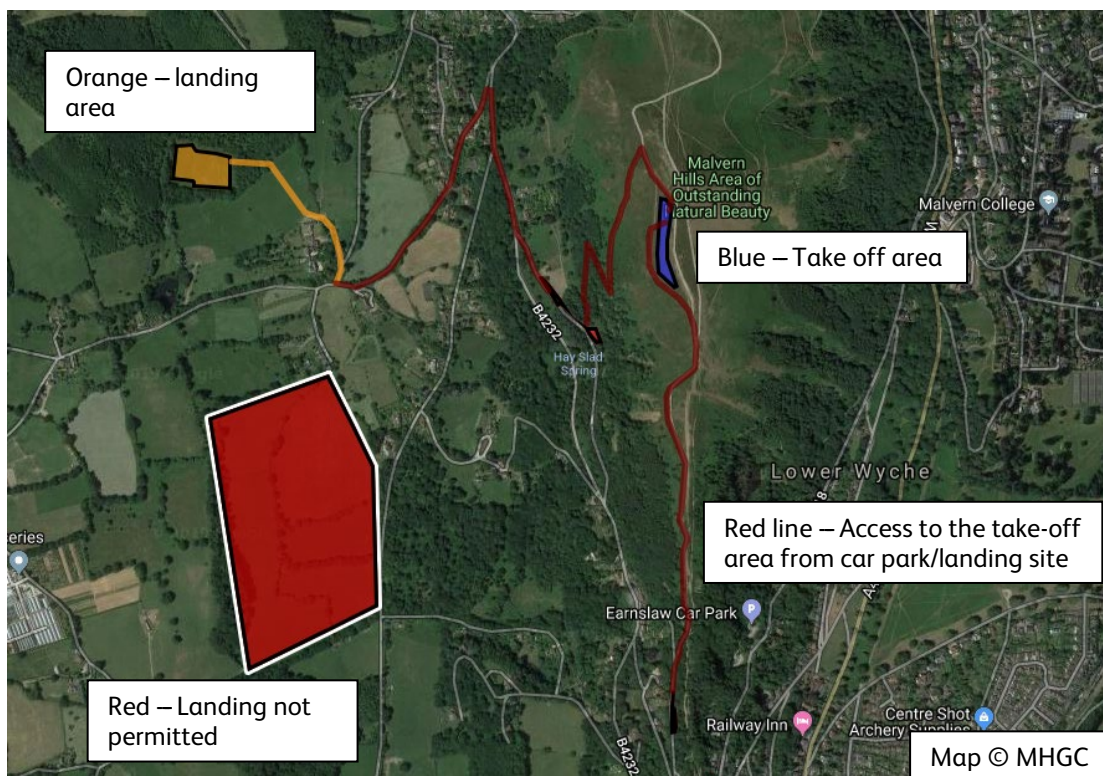
Once-popular launch sites at Pinnacle Hill (west side) and Black Hill are no longer regularly used. This is mostly due to changes in vegetation around the sites although clearance work is being undertaken to bring Black Hill back into full use.

Landing sites

Suitable landing fields around the Malverns are limited but the following are used with permission.

- **Castlemorton Common (MHT)** – Pilots are permitted to land on the Common directly below the launch site. Used from Swinyard Hill launch site.
- **Eastern fields (Private)** – MHGC has an agreement with a local landowner to allow for landing in these fields provided a donation is made to the air ambulance. Used from Kettle Sings launch site.
- **Three Counties Showground car park (Private)** – Can be used when the car park is not in use. Mainly suitable for hang gliders due to its distance from the Hills. Used from Kettle Sings launch site.
- **Western fields (Private)** – MHGC has an agreement to use fields to the west of the Worcestershire Beacon but these are becoming unsuitable due to tree growth around the site. Used from Worcestershire Beacon launch site.
- **Upper Malvern Common (MHT)** – Paragliding pilots are using the upper section of Malvern Common to land. Used from Worcestershire Beacon launch site.

Up-to-date maps are available from the MHGC website www.malvern-hang.org.uk of the agreed take-off and landing sites. An example of the map can be seen below.



Current MHT management of the activity

The Trust does little to manage hang gliding and paragliding activities on the Malverns as this is primarily undertaken by the local club – Malvern Hang Gliding Club.

There is a good record of MHGC's involvement and further management and intervention by the Trust is very rarely required.

Malvern Hang Gliding Club - The MHGC are registered with the British Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association as being responsible for the Malvern Hills launch sites.

A website provides detailed information on the club, launch sites and what is required by pilots wishing to fly from the Malverns <http://www.malvern-hang.org.uk>

MHGC do not insist that pilots are members of the club before flying but do ask pilots to sign up to the site rules and demonstrate that they have done so by buying a helmet sticker. A one off- payment of £5 covers the administrative costs of the MHGC.

MHGC has no legal power to stop pilots flying without a sticker but members may approach those who don't have one to ensure that the pilots are aware of the site rules and to discourage those that don't meet the training requirements. This is done for the safety of the pilots and other visitors.

The Trust provides little information for visitors wishing to fly from the Malvern Hills other than providing a link from the Trust's website to the MHGC website.

This information and policy will be provided on the website for both pilots and others.

Although there is a legacy of good self-regulation by paragliders and hang gliders, the impact of this activity on the important features and special qualities of the Hills and Common should be considered.

With regard to this particular activity impacts include:

1. Access –

The byelaws provide information on the regulation of hang gliding and paragliding so therefore it is presumed that the activity is permitted. Access on foot is permitted across the land under the care of the Trust.

All of the launch and landing sites, site rules and further information are provided on the MHGC website. The Malvern Hills Trust are working with the MHGC to ensure this information is up to date and links will be provided to this information from the Trust's website. This information is provided for both pilots and for other visitors to the Hills and Commons.

2. Safety –

Paragliding and hang gliding are potentially dangerous activities for both the pilot and for other visitors to the Hills.

Malvern Hills Trust and MHGC recognises that such activities are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own involvement.

MHGC members are covered by British Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association insurance.

The MHGC website has detailed information about each of the launch sites including their difficulty and what training and flying experience is required for each site. MHGC members may also approach pilots new to the area with information and advice.

As the Hills and Commons are open access for walkers, members of the public could be anywhere at any time which could affect the pilot's landing (planned or unplanned).

Other activities by other visitors may impact paragliders and hang gliders, including drones. Drones or UAVs are not permitted without prior permission from the Trust and collision with paragliders or hang gliders could cause a serious accident. The Trust will alert the MHGC to the location and timing of permitted drone flights to reduce the risk of collision. Further information relating to drones can be found here: <http://www.malvern hills.org.uk/media/1124/drone-policy-mht.pdf>

3. Habitats and species –

The open hillside and commons are home to a number of species including ground nesting birds which are susceptible to disturbance. The months of April to August are the times when it is most important that disturbance is kept to a minimum. Due to the small number of flights throughout the year which are dependent on the right weather conditions, the impact on wildlife is a minimum. Where possible, landing sites on MHT land are restricted to minimise disturbance to ground nesting birds (e.g. Malvern Common).

4. Livestock –

Cattle and sheep graze the Malvern Hills and Commons and are essential in keeping the upper slopes open and suitable for flying.

Pilots should be reminded that temporary electric fencing is present on the Hills which may include some of the launch sites. The Trust provides a weekly Stockwatch update on the website www.malvern hills.org.uk/stockwatch/ which provides information on where the livestock are grazing at any time. Pilots should be aware of these locations but remember that the Hills and Commons are registered common land and that livestock could be found anywhere at any time.

When landing, consideration should be given to the cattle and sheep that can be easily disturbed. Landings should be planned to avoid causing the sheep to scatter to land, especially from December to March when the sheep are likely to be in lamb. In severe cases, worrying sheep could result in ewes aborting lambs.

Hang gliding and paragliding Policy

Pilots do not have to be members of the Malvern Hang Gliding Club in order to fly any of the sites managed by the Club. However, to fly from anywhere on the Malvern Hills, they must:

- Hold at least a current BHPA Club Pilot rating (or foreign equivalent – IPPI level 2 for hang glider pilots, IPPI level 3 for paraglider pilots) – for all launches apart from the Worcestershire Beacon
- Hold at least a current BHPA Pilot rating (or foreign equivalent – IPPI level 4) if launching from the Worcestershire Beacon
- Have third party liability insurance (BHPA membership provides this, but if a pilot is not a BHPA member then he/she must obtain separate insurance of at least equivalent scope and value)
- Obtain and display a helmet sticker, acknowledging their undertaking to comply with the site rules which apply to the Malvern Hills as a whole and each part of them.
- Have at least 15 hours' post qualification flying hours logged, except:
 - if flying from Castlemorton (also known as Swinyard Hill), or
 - if a Club member and under coaching from one of the Club's BHPA qualified coaches
- Pilots must observe the following general rules:
 - No take offs or landings are permitted on the Herefordshire Beacon (also known as British Camp) or on Malvern Common to the East of St Andrews Road (a Site of Special Scientific Interest).
 - All take-offs, final approaches and landings must take place a safe distance from other users and livestock
 - Pilots should call out in good time to visitors if approaching landing from above to avoid surprising other users.
 - No landings are permitted along the top of the ridge
 - If flying north of the Worcestershire Beacon, pilots must (except in case of emergency) avoid flying into the airspace reserved for the Malvern Soaring Association modellers, who fly their models from North Hill and Table Hill. For details of that airspace, see the relevant maps in the site guides.
 - The Malvern Hills Trust permits slope landings on the sides of the Hills, landing and ground handling on Castlemorton Common and on the parts of Malvern Common west of the railway line or between the railway line and St Andrews Road. Use of Malvern Common for landing is particularly sensitive; only the relevant parts of it may be used and particular care should be taken not to startle other users and animals when doing so.

All permissions apply to both hang gliders and paragliders. Further information on individual sites and helmet stickers can be found here: <http://www.malvern-hang.org.uk>.

Adopted – 21/11/2019

Beck Baker

Community and Conservation Officer