

Paramotoring in the UK

2011 Annual Report to CIMA from the UK Alternate Delegate

Introduction

Despite the absence of a Class 1 FAI competition this year, competitive paramotor pilots have been active in the UK and abroad. We're excited at the prospect of a World Championships in Spain next year and look forward to seeing the rest of the competition community there.

Whilst I submit this report as the UK Alternate Delegate, I also chair the UK Paramotor Competitions Committee and have directed the National and Open Championships in the UK for the last four years.

Competitions

British Open Championships

The British weather reduced the number of flyable days to two, but our 2011 Task Director, Michel Carnet managed to set and run seven valid tasks for the field of 50 pilots. Once again, we had a high proportion of pilots from overseas and for the first time ever in the UK, a valid WF1 class.

Once again, with the huge amount of space afforded by the turf farm at which we've held the championships for the last three years, we used very large decks wherever possible. Combined with free take-offs (still well-managed by marshals), we routinely launched 50 pilots in less than an hour with no incidents at all.

We used Cisco Flip video cameras for precision tasks as back-up evidence and this proved highly successful. Queries were dealt with swiftly and with certainty. This small investment was well worthwhile and we'd recommend the use of these cameras in FAI competitions.

British National League

This was the second year of running a League to decide the British Champion, with all three legs directed by Michel Carnet. Again, the third leg was also the British Open. Poor weather meant that we only flew two tasks on the first leg and the second was cancelled.

We used an order-based scoring system, similar to the French system. Scores from the minor legs were then multiplied and carried forward to the final leg which used the FAI system for the purpose of the League.

For the first time, we used the SMS task cancellation system that we've had in place for the last three years. Pilots are allowed to carry a basic mobile phone, incapable of providing any positional or movement data to the pilot. In the UK, these are easily available for about £10 and present no advantage to the pilots. We use Skype to store the mobile numbers and send messages to pilots. It was also useful to update pilots who were stood down due to poor weather.

USSR

This was the third year of the USSR, but once again, the British weather conspired against us, resulting in only two pilots, one foot-launched paramotor and one paramotor trike completing the 50-hour event.

In outline, pilots meet at Sywell aerodrome (site of the 2010 EMC) and set off to fly as far as possible, returning no later than 50 hours after leaving. Flights are validated using AMOD loggers and there are prizes for the longest series of flights, the furthest points reached and the longest duration of a single flight.

Overseas events

British pilots competed in the following events:

- French Open Championships
- Belgian Open Championships
- Czech Open Championships
- Salton Sea Precision Competition, California, USA
- Fly Games World, Brazil
- Slalomania, France
- Icarobatix, France
- King's Cup, Thailand

Continental League Cup

Whilst British pilots have competed in the League, the UK Competitions Committee decided not to bid for the British Open to be included in the CLC this year. We are very supportive in principle and would still be very keen to be part of the CLC in the future, but one major factor has affected our decision.

The dynamics of a team-based international competition are completely different to an individual competition, even when, like ours, there is a 'fun' team element. With team prizes come team tactics and joint planning. If we could either find a way to avoid the effects of a team-based event on our competition or eliminate the team prize altogether, this would definitely affect our decision.

Results of British events

The prize-winners for the British Open and League were as follows:

British Open Paramotor Championships 2011

Class: PF1

1 st	Pascal Vallee (FRA) – Open Champion
2 nd	Pavel Brezina (CZE)
3 rd	Phil Jennings (GBR)
Top Lady Pilot:	Laura Turner (GBR)
Team prize:	Adventure Paramoteur (FRA)

Class: WF1

1 st	Peter Jones (GBR)
2 nd	Alan Pugh (GBR)
3 rd	Norris Sheldon (GBR)

British National Paramotor League 2011

Class PF1

1 st	Barney Townsend – British Champion
2 nd	Phil Jennings
3 rd	Henry Glasse
Best Newcomer:	Roger Finnigan

Records

Michel Carnet has set a new World record of 127.7km for distance flown with limited fuel in the foot-launched paraglider with thermal engine category.

Michel has also submitted two claims for world speed records on a solo, foot-launched paramotor:

- Speed over a closed circuit of 50km: 72.8km/h (65.4km/h)
- Speed over a straight 15/25km course: 75km/h (64.85km/h).

The claims are currently with the FAI for ratification.

Safety

At time of writing, there have been no fatal paramotoring accidents in the UK in the last twelve months. I'm aware of three serious accidents. Whilst a number of independent schools have very competent instructors and excellent reputations, some do not. Two of these accidents occurred at an independent school, operating its own syllabus and instructor accreditation scheme. The third was a novice self-taught pilot.

Conclusion

Paramotoring continues to grow in the UK and the competition community continues to thrive. Although numbers of British pilots competing in this year's Open were down on the previous year for the first time we can remember, this was almost certainly due to the forecast poor weather. We continue to try to attract both experienced pilots and newer pilots – our greatest example of this being Phil Jennings who competed for the first time last year, then came third overall in the Open and runner-up in the British League this year.

Andy Phillips

UK Alternate Delegate