

FSC CONSULTATION LETTER Feb 2014

SECTION 1: PG HILL TRAINING PROPOSALS.

1. Top Landings and Slope Landings

At the October 2013 meeting the FSC considered further input from schools (and a club) who wish to see the PG top landing and slope landing tasks moved from the Club Pilot syllabus to the Pilot tasks.

There have been a few schools who have advocated this for quite some time. (Most of you will remember this having been debated more than once previously.) In the past the concern has been that the logic for change seemed to be based on the individual school's current lack of availability of suitable sites, and other schools trying to avoid exercises they claimed to have higher risk. Neither were convincing grounds for change.

The more recent requests have put forward rather more persuasive arguments for change, so both exercises were reconsidered.

The FSC considered the following points:

- a) It is well known that completing exercise 25 (Top Landings) and exercise 32 (Cross wind and slope landings) can result in significant training hold-ups and resulting issues. The student reaches the required skills level, then the UK weather intervenes, and weeks and months drag by before the right conditions exist on the nice easy site. By that time the student has lost currency or lost interest. Or gone rogue.
- b) We now have a number of schools either based permanently abroad or who run a lot of their courses abroad. And there are lots of happy customers (members) who have trained this way. But again, Ex.25 and Ex.32 cannot be completed due to a lack of suitable sites.
- c) We have a club in Cyprus where there are no top-landable or slope landable sites, but where pilots can have an entire flying career soaring and bottom landing. But unqualified and uninsured because Ex.25 and Ex.32 have not been completed.
- d) We know that a whole tranche of BHPA members do all their flying abroad, on trips. So the top-landing skill is never required.
- e) In hang gliding the top landing task has never been part of the CP syllabus. It is a Pilot task. And this has not produced problems. (There has never been a HG slope landing exercise.)
- f) The known killer of student / low-airtime pilots is 360 degree turns. We are in the habit of talking about top landings as if they are a difficult / dangerous affair. But again there is no evidence of this. If the student can soar, and can land, and can ground-handle in a breeze, then it is doing the three in succession. The difficulty is getting the right site and weather - whilst the student is still current.
- g) Over the past few years, several hundred pilots have joined the BHPA from abroad, using the Alternative Entry Scheme and their IPPI3 or above status.

Most of these pilots have not previously top-landed. There is no reported incident trend arising from this.

- h) There is a concern that if the top landing exercises were removed, then this will inevitably reduce the amount of flying the student undertakes during training, resulting in a new pilot less likely to survive the transition to club flying. This would be allayed by adjusting Ex.24 'Soaring Flight' accordingly.
- i) Slope landings: Most of the points above apply. Modern EN A gliders have actual trim speeds of 36-38kph. With these speeds and the modern glide angles, slope landing has become an increasingly demanding skill – and one that is less and less relevant as pilots either top land or bottom land. Also, the Instructor Notes clarify that the practical element of this exercise has always been optional. So this is not a change. It is also clear that the confusing title of exercise 32 'Cross wind and slope landings', which implies that two separate skills were to be taught, was never the intention. It is simply that slope landings tend to be cross wind.
- j) The FSC's Coach Panel has been working on a new Post CP Coaching Structure, which will include additional Coach training options and guidance. This will ensure that there are Coaches able and willing to provide guidance to new pilots on these exercises if and when required.

Having considered all of the above, the FSC is minded to change the training programmes such that these two exercises are theoretical in the CP, and required in the Pilot exercises. Schools would still be allowed to teach the practical skill if the opportunity presented itself. The soaring time requirement would also be raised slightly to ensure that this change would not negatively impact on the total experience level of the student. And the Hill Environment examination would get beefed up with more slope landing and top landing questions (hopefully schools and coaches will submit question suggestions).

Proposed Revised Exercises:
PG Hill STRB

24. Soaring flight

The student should reach a reasonable and consistent level of competence at utilising ridge lift to maintain or gain height. This will include flying beats in a controlled manner and with good lookout. A minimum of 5 flights of approx.10 minutes (or equivalent) must be completed, at least one of which must be completed either on a separate site or on a separate day.

25. Top landings (Theoretical)

The student should gain a full understanding of all the factors involved in top landings, such that he is fully ready to attempt the exercise practically. This briefing will include: Site suitability, fastest beat evaluation (wind direction), positioning, lookout, 'crabbing' approach, abort/overshooting option, post-landing canopy control and demonstrations of top landings.

If a suitable combination of factors (site and weather etc) are available, then the student should also complete this exercise practically.

Top landing Theory completed: _____ / _____ / _____

Top landing practical completed: [] Yes [] No

32. Slope landings (Theoretical)

The student should gain a full understanding of all the factors involved in slope landings, such that he knows when and how this technique might be used and is fully ready to attempt the exercise practically.

This briefing will include: Site suitability (hill shape, rocks and other obstacles, fastest beat evaluation, positioning, lookout, crabbing approach, abort/overshooting option, canopy control and post-landing canopy control. The problems and hazards of landing on sloping ground with modern canopy speeds should be highlighted.

If a suitable combination of factors (site and weather etc) are available, then the student should also complete this exercise practically.

Slope landing Theory completed: _____/_____/_____

Slope landing practical completed: [] Yes [] No

Pilot Tasks

B 2) 2 top landings at each of three different sites. *This is the existing requirement. There seems to be no need to change it.*

D All PG pilots must:

3) Safely demonstrate a slope landing. *New task*

The logic of adding this here is that, having stripped this exercise from the CP because with modern canopy performance it is becoming fraught (and no longer a key skill), it is believed that the pilot who has gained some post CP club flying experience will be suitably experienced to be able to tackle this exercise in his/her own time, in optimal conditions, at Pilot level.

2. Ground Handling

It has always been the case that good ground-handling skills are a fundamental part of paragliding. **Phase 2: Ground handling** is supposed to lay the fundamental foundations of this skill, whilst Exercises 29 and 30 deal with ensuring that all students have acquired both forward and reverse launching skills. But it does seem that students can get through a CP course without acquiring good ground-handling skills. To counter this a CFI has proposed a new exercise that unequivocally focusses on ground-handling skills.

CP Phase 8 Exercise X: Ground Handling

The student should reach a reasonable and consistent level of competence at ground handling in winds from 5 mph to 16 mph. This should include setting out the canopy, inflating (forward and reverse), controlling above the head, collapsing and making safe. Students should also be aware of the dangers of ground handling and know techniques to de-power the canopy when it gets out of control, both as the pilot and as a fellow pilot.

Light wind ground handling competency achieved: []

Soarable wind ground handling competency achieved: []

This new exercise, if adopted, would be included in both hill and tow environments.

However, over the past year the FSC has also been working up the scheme to allow students to practice their ground handling skills outside the school. This was again a

suggestion from a CFI, as a way of students maintaining and improving skills when there are unavoidable breaks in training. During chats with other CFI's it became clear that several already allow this. (But the student has no insurance, and as this is not presently in line with policy, those CFI's may be exposed if anything were to go wrong.) The FSC intend to incorporate a 'sign off' authorisation form into the STRB which allows students who have reached a certain level to ground handle outside the school, subject to the listed criteria:

Ground Handling outside the School for pre-CP pilots.

1. *Student must be EP+*
2. *Student must be signed off for both reverse and forward launches.*
3. *Drag back actions (theoretical) must have been briefed and understood.*
4. *A helmet must be worn at all times and all equipment worn properly.*
5. *Ground handling (GH) must take place either:*
 - a. *on flat ground or in an area where normal flight is impossible or*
 - b. *at a pg site with a Senior Coach or Coach directly supervising.*
6. *The ground handling must be done so as not to endanger other people or livestock, in an area suitably clear of hazards and obstructions, especially downwind.*
7. *Landowner permission (where appropriate) should be sought.*
8. *Ground Handling must be carried out in winds of less than 15mph (anemometer should be used).*
9. *Student must be assessed by CFI as suitable to do GH outside the school.*
10. *Student must sign to say they accept the risk of GH practice without the instructor present and that they agree to abide by the criteria set out.*

Additionally, the FSC Coach Panel's new Post CP Coaching Structure will include additional Coach training options and guidance – and one of the skill areas they are focussing on is ground handling skills consolidation, but at the post CP stage.

So there seems to be a three way choice here between whether students should spend more time gaining greater ground handling skills whilst under instruction in schools, or hone their GH skills partially outside the school (whilst still pre CP), or hone them post CP. Or some combination of the three.)

Whilst reflecting on the above, it will be important to bear in mind that increased tasking within the STRB usually means increased training costs and delays for the student. We could easily require students to stay at school until they have reached the Pilot level of skills: But such a move would be far more likely to produce lots of unskilled 'rogue' teach-yourself PG pilots than produce highly-skilled new club members. The cost and duration of training has to be at a level that the market will accept – because there is no legal requirement to be trained.

It is also worth noting that 'Ground handling competency' means different things to different people. It will continue to mean different things to different people even if the requirement to 'attain competency' is written down. So almost certainly an objective test / measure of 'competency' would need to be agreed.

3. Mountain Environment

A further Proposal from another CFI is the creation of a Mountain CP, distinct from the Hill CP. This option has been debated by the FSC repeatedly over the past few years and had actually been decided upon, before being abandoned. Whilst it would initially remove a

problem for the schools training abroad wishing to issue a CP, the newly qualified pilots would then return to the UK and would be required to complete a Hill Conversion at a school. So they would be straight back into the never-ending wait for ideal weather on ideal sites, but in an even worse position: the schools would have little reason to prioritise these students who would almost certainly have already purchased equipment. And there would be an even bigger temptation for CP (mountain) qualified pilots to attempt to go it alone on hills in the UK (uninsured). The FSC decided that moving the top landing and slope landing tasks to Pilot achieved the same aim, but with greater elegance and less chance of unwelcome side effects.

The FSC invites feedback from School CFIs and Club Chief Coaches on the above proposals.

SECTION 2: PG TOW TRAINING PROPOSALS.

A PG Tow CFI has noticed that some of the theory material early on in the EP exercises is likely to overload the student with information, and some of this info is not relevant until later on in the training. He has made the following proposals:

Phase 1

Ex 1 - no change

Ex 2 – no change

Ex 3 – no change

Ex 4 – move to Phase 2

Ex 5 – no change

Phase 2

Ex 6 – no change

Ex 7 – no change

New Ex – Initial inflations (forward /reverse as appropriate), collapsing the canopy, (facing it) post-flight control and moving of the canopy.

Ex 4 – moved from phase 1

Ex 8 - remove “nodding dog” as too much going on at this stage and put it into the tow briefing,

Phase 3

Ex 9 –move to Ex 12 A

New Ex – Tow briefing to include basic principles, who does what, variables, importance of staying in line, nodding dog, dangers of lock out, dangers of too high an angle of attack

(excessive use of brakes), dealing with line breaks, weak link breaks, power failure – stability and recovery. *This removes the following items: releasing, checking separation, dealing with trailing tow lines, danger of releasing under tension and control line failures. The rationale is that at this stage the students are not yet releasing and are in any case too low to deal with any such issues.*

Ex 10 – no change

Ex 11 – no change

Ex 12 – no change

New Exercise - Release briefing – checking separation - dealing with a release failure – dangers of releasing under tension.

Ex 13 – no change

New Exercise – Eventualities briefing – dealing with trailing tow line – recap on line breaks/weak link breaks - recap stability and recovery – recap importance of staying on line / nodding dog / dangers of lockout – recap dangers of to higher angle of attack all taking into account higher tow pressures.

Ex 14 – no change

Ex 15 – no change

Phase 4: No changes

Phase 5: No changes

Phase 6: No changes

Phase 7: No changes

Phase 8

New Exercise - Be confident and competent at the basic skills of ground handling in both forward and reverse in normal flying conditions. This should include setting out the canopy, inflating (forward and reverse), controlling in the air, collapsing and making safe. Students should also be aware of dangers of ground handling and techniques to control the canopy when it gets out of control both as the pilot and as a fellow pilot. *THIS WILL DEPEND UPON DECISIONS ABOVE*

Ex 32 – Remove. The rationale is that if they are going to undertake this duty, the tow group they join should train them to their own procedures. (Hang Gliders are not required to do it.)

The FSC invites feedback from School CFIs and Club Chief Coaches on the above proposals.

SECTION 3: SENIOR INSTRUCTOR LICENCE CHANGE NEWS.

At the October 2013 FSC meeting it was decided to update the Senior Instructor Licence to reflect the fact that many schools are now one-man bands.

Presently when an Instructor wants to start a new school, they have to become a Senior Instructor first. But this SI licence is mainly about managing a large school with a team of instructors and as well as being inappropriate for a 'one man band', it is also almost impossible to achieve.

The plan is that the requirement to be able to train Tis will be removed from the 'standard' SI licence, whilst a new 'Instructor Trainer' licence extension will be created that experienced SIs will be able to gain (with appropriate pre-requisites and examination.)

This system has been in use with BHPA Paragliding Power schools for a few years, and seems to work. So once the detail has been created this will be rolled out.

M Dale
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