

NORTH DOWN MODEL AIRCRAFT CLUB

MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

Revised January 2018
Addendum, January 2025 (Article 13)
Minor revisions, August 2025 (Section 5 & Section 18)



1. INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been compiled to inform all members, especially new members, of a number of rules and regulations, which pertain exclusively to the North Down Model Aircraft Club.

The rules have been accumulated from a wealth of model flying experience and are primarily aimed at making our hobby as safe and enjoyable as possible for everyone.

All documents referred to in this handbook can be found at:

[BMFA Document Downloads](#)

[The Air Navigation Order 2016](#)

[CAP 658 Model Aircraft: A Guide To Safe Flying](#)

[The Drone Code](#)

This handbook should be read in conjunction with the latest edition of the British Model Flying Association (BMFA) members' Handbook, and in relation to the BMFA Approved Training Manual "A Flying Start".

2. NDMAC COMMITTEE

The NDMAC Committee consists of:

Chairman

Secretary

Membership Secretary

Treasurer

Individual members as voted for at the AGM

3. BRITISH MODEL FLYING ASSOCIATION

The Club is affiliated to the BMFA and all members* are covered by their insurance. The Club along with a number of other clubs throughout the province form the 'Northern Ireland Committee' of the BMFA. The Northern Ireland area retains its original name, 'The Northern Ireland Association of Aero modellers'. The area committee meets at least four times a year. Your committee forms part of the area group. The NIAA is responsible for many aspects of aeromodelling in Northern Ireland including allocation of Sports Council Grant Aid and the organising of area competitions and championships.

* Not applicable to non-flying members.

4. MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

The categories of membership are as follows:

Adult Full

Junior

Family (Adult + Junior)

Non Flying and Honorary

The subscriptions are determined each year at the club's AGM, and are inclusive of membership of the BMFA (which provides third party insurance) and running costs of the club such as ground rent to the land owner.

5. BMFA CLUB EXAMINERS

At present the Club has four BMFA qualified club examiners. The examiners can examine your discipline to 'B' certificate level. Although The mba has a requirement for only one examiner to test you to 'A' certificate level, the committee have decided that, in the interest of fairness, two examiners will conduct the test at both 'A' and 'B' level. To arrange a test, simply ask one of the examiners to set it up.

The current examiners are Barry Aspinall, Ian Butler and Michael Brown.

6.LEGISLATION

All members must fly and act in a safe and responsible manner. Everyone must be aware of and adhere to the relevant legislation which includes:

CAP 658 Model Aircraft: “A Guide To Safe Flying”.

The Air Navigation Order 2016

Chapter 4 Article 94 “Small Unmanned Aircraft”

Chapter 4 Article 95 “Small Unmanned Surveillance Aircraft”

Chapter 10 Article 240 “Endangering Safety of an Aircraft”

Chapter 10 Article 241 “ Endangering Safety of any Person or Property”

7. GENERAL FLYING

The site is leased from the land owner on a yearly basis. Flying may take place Monday to Saturday, but a condition of our lease is that there will be no flying on Sunday under any circumstances.

Flying will be suspended when horse racing is taking place in the adjacent field.

A vehicle speed limit of 10 mph applies to the site and will be enforced by the committee. When arriving at the flying field all car drivers should hold at the end of the entrance track and wait to be waved at from the flight line to indicate it is safe to enter the active flying area.

The active runway is designated by the use of the arrow sign located at the exit of the pit area; the designated active runway may be changed during a flying session depending on weather conditions. Dead airspace areas are shown on the appended sketches as well as the Pits and Parking areas.

Members must keep children and pets under control at all times.

Members will ensure that the flying site, shelter and clubhouse are kept clean. All litter must be taken off-site after each day of flying.

When sheep are grazing on the areas surrounding the runways, it is imperative the inner lane way gate is closed. When sheep are not present, the gate may be left open for the duration of the flying session. The last person to leave the site is responsible for storing the windsock in the shelter, closing the shelter barriers, securing the gate in the inner fence and closing the lane way gate.

The Club does not recommend lone flying. Our site is quite some distance from any medical resources, though there is a first aid box in the shelter. Please don't have the attitude, 'It will never happen to me'. Accidents do happen. It might happen to you when you are alone. If you wish to fly, let someone know on your arrival and again that all is well on your departure. We need to plan for health and safety.

If, for some reason, your model lands in the fields outside our boundary fence, please use the stile to assist you over the fence. When crops are growing in the fields, then only **two** people are permitted to walk in that area, thus reducing the risk of damaging the crop and complaints from the farmer. If possible, try to walk down tractor tracks when retrieving the model.

Dedicated slots for Aircraft, Helicopters, Gas Turbines, Multi Rotor and any Test Flights can be allocated on the active runway. Please ask for a slot, if there are no natural breaks a yellow flag is available for these slots to advise other flyers a dedicated slot is in use.

Helicopters and fixed wing may fly together by mutual consent of the pilots.

8. FLYING

Committee members and instructors are to liaise and decide which runway is to be used and change the pit arrow sign accordingly.

The arrow sign at the pit exit designating which runway in use is to be changed only when there is a break in flying and not whilst flying is in progress.

Pilots should fly only from designated runway, no flying to be performed on both runways at the same time.

Almost all members are now using 2.4GHz radio equipment and so a peg board system is no longer used. However anyone still operating on 35MHz should carefully check that no one else using 35MHz is on the same frequency before switching on.

All flying will be performed with due regard to the dead airspace areas. (see Sketches 1, 2 and 3)

All pilots under tuition must be accompanied by a pilot holding a minimum of an 'A' certificate until informed of permission to fly solo by a Club Examiner. Pilots under instruction should choose their instructor wisely. Watch him/her fly and if you like their style then make the approach.

9. GENERAL FLYING ETIQUETTE

All pilots to respect the needs and safety of fellow pilots and observers at all times.

Always check your model and controls thoroughly before flying. It should be remembered that your insurance will cover you, **only** if your actions were reasonable.

NDMAC recommends that members use only well tried and tested control equipment.

Always maintain a good lookout when walking on to the active runway to place aircraft for take off or retrieve aircraft. Do not rely on the fact that even if you have shouted a warning that everybody has heard you. Carry out another lookout check before clearly shouting "take off".

Do not take off, land or perform flight manoeuvres close to other pilots.

Do not overfly the Pits area.

Always shout a verbal warning to fellow pilots when you perform a landing, an overshoot, a low fly-by or dead stick or are in an emergency situation.

Taxiing in and out or within the Pits is forbidden.

Two and Four Stroke engines are to be started only in the designated engine start area, this area is not to be used as your aircraft parking area.

Transmitter aerials (35 MHz) should be retracted in the pits area to minimise the possibility of interference.

Transmitters should not be taken on to the runway, to minimise the risk of interfering with the control of other models.

Prolonged engine run-ups and adjustments should be carried out well away from the pits area and the pilots' box. There is nothing more off-putting and guaranteed to spoil one's concentration than that of the constant sound of a high pitched engine.

10.FAIL-SAFE

Any powered model aircraft fitted with a receiver capable of operating in fail-safe mode (i.e. PCM receivers, Digital Signal Processing (DSP) receivers or 2.4 GHz equipment) should have as a minimum the fail-safe set to reduce the engine's speed to idle on loss or corruption of signal.

The use of 'hold last position', which is the default setting out of the box on almost all fail-safe equipped transmitters, is not permitted on the throttle channel.

Always check your fail-safe settings before test flying a new model and at regular intervals thereafter

All models, including gliders, over 7 kg must be fitted with a fail-safe system.

11.THE WIND TURBINE

Pilots are to keep clear of the wind turbine whilst flying. If unsure a flight cannot be performed safely either do not fly or ask a fellow pilot to act as a spotter for you.

12.MULTI ROTOR AIRCRAFT (DRONE) FLYING

All drone pilots should read the legally binding [Drone Code](#).

Drone pilots are legally responsible for the safe operation of their drones

Always keep your drone in sight

Maximum altitude to be below 400 feet (122 Metres)

Maintain the correct safe distance from people & property:

People & Property 150 feet (46 Metres)

Crowds & Built up areas 500 feet (152 Metres)

Do not overfly crowds & built up areas.

Stay clear of any full size aircraft

Not everybody likes to be photographed or videoed, seek their consent.

13. GAS TURBINES

Only those members who possess a fixed wing "B" certificate are permitted to operate and fly a gas turbine equipped model aircraft.

The safe operation of gas turbines is complex. All gas turbine pilots should read and comply with the BMFA "Code of Practice for the Operation of Gas Turbine Powered Model Aircraft". Prior to the maiden flight of a club member's first turbine powered aircraft, the installation of the power train and electronics must be inspected and approved by one of the Club Examiners (Turbine) PRIOR to the flight.

During the maiden flight one of the Club Examiners (Turbine) will also supervise the pilot on the flight line to give advice and to evaluate that the pilot is conducting the flight in a safe manner. If the Examiner is satisfied with the flight he can, at the termination of the flight, sign off on the pilot to fly solo. If the Examiner is not satisfied at any time during the flight, he will take control and terminate the flight. The pilot can then be given further experiential flights under the buddy system with one of the Club Examiners (Turbine) until he is satisfied the pilot is safe to fly solo.

These above rules will also apply to visitors, with the exception that where one of the Club

Examiners (Turbine) has previous knowledge of a visiting pilot's Turbine flying experience, the requirement for the inspection of the aircraft and the supervision of the pilot MAY be waived at his discretion.

14. LOUGH COWEY

NDMAC Members are only authorised to fly at Lough Cowey in properly organised and authorised Club events, which will be notified to and authorised by the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs through the mutually agreed contacts.

Anyone using the recovery boat on such occasions must wear a life jacket / buoyancy aid. The boat must only be used to recover stranded models or in emergency situations.

Members will ensure that the flying site is kept clean. All litter must be taken off-site after each day of flying.

Reasonable efforts must be made to inform any anglers, bird watchers or other members of the public on site of our activities before flying begins. Their safety and their rights to enjoy the facilities must be respected.

Dead airspace areas are shown on the appended Sketch No 4. Pits and launching areas are also shown.

15. GENERAL

The full annual (January to December) benefits of membership, in particular BMFA insurance, which is mandatory if the member wishes to fly, are only available to those members who have paid the annual club subscription. Members who are in arrears at the 1st January must not fly under any circumstances.

Club liability insurance can be extended to cover 'first time flyers' on the site. The first time flyer is entitled to have three 'hands on' visits after which membership must be applied for.

16. BMFA ACHIEVEMENT SCHEME

The Club strongly encourages all modellers to participate in the BMFA Achievement Scheme. Passing your 'A' Certificate proves that you are the essential rules for safe flying. It is likely that in the near future it will be compulsory to have the 'A' certificate if you wish to fly solo. A 'B' Certificate is more complex and shows a higher level of skill and knowledge. It will also qualify you for flying at public events. Our examiners are very approachable if you require guidance or any further information.

17. MOBILE TELEPHONES

Mobile phones must not be used or switched on at the flight line. The Committee recommends that mobile phones are left in your vehicle.

18. OTHER EVENTS

You are encouraged to attend and to take part in as many events as possible. There will be a number of events throughout the year. Details of these will be circulated by your club secretary. It is compulsory that you have proof of insurance and you may be required to hold either an 'A' or 'B' Certificate depending on the nature of the event.

19. WHATSAPP GROUPS

The Club runs two WhatsApp groups for the benefit of members. New members are encouraged to join the group "Kirkistown Crowd". In this group a weekly booking sheet for flying is posted which enables members to organise their flying slots and let others know when they intend to fly. The group also provides a forum for chat, advice and sales of modelling items. The Membership Secretary will be pleased to assist new members with joining this group.

The second WhatsApp group is for Committee members only, allowing them to discuss and organise Club activities.

Members are reminded that all posts on both these groups should be respectful to others. Any issues or difficulties should, in the first instance, be referred to the Club Chairman.

It is the responsibility of all members to make themselves aware of all club rules and regulations and to adhere to them.

"Happy Flying"





Lough Cowey Layout



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