



ABOUT THE BRITISH PARACHUTE ASSOCIATION

The National Governing Body for Sport Parachuting

History

The British Parachute Association (BPA) was founded in 1962 to organise, govern and facilitate sport parachuting within the United Kingdom. In 1966, the BPA was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (registered in London, number 875429). The BPA is the governing body for all sport parachuting in the UK, both civilian and military. It is the only sport parachuting organisation in the country approved by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The BPA is recognised by the government agency UK Sports Council.

National and international representation

The BPA is well positioned within the organisation of parachuting competition and safety on a global basis. Parachuting is the largest of the aviation sports with over 70 countries represented on the International Parachuting Commission (IPC). The IPC is a Commission of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI), which represents all aviation sport in the world. The BPA is affiliated to the FAI through the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom. The BPA has influence on these organisations through holding the Chairmanship of an IPC subcommittee, and two delegates to the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom. The BPA is a founder member of the European Parachuting Union (EPU), of which the UK delegate is the current Treasurer.

Composition and structure

The BPA has a core Membership of around 5,000 Full (voting) Members, who elect its governing Council of Management, which takes office at the Annual General Meeting each January. In addition, the BPA has over 30,000 Student and Temporary Members each year. The vast majority - around 95% - of 'full' members are active skydivers in the UK. The BPA Council meets six times a year to direct the affairs of the Association. The Council has Committees that oversee the Association's main areas of activity: Safety and Training, Competitions, Communications and Development. An employed staff of 9 carries out the day-to-day running of the Association. It includes two qualified and experienced sport parachutists who manage the Association's safety, technical and training functions, and an administrative support team. The contact details of the BPA Office are: *British Parachute Association, 5 Wharf Way, Glen Parva, Leicester LE2 9TF, telephone +44 (0)116 278 5271; fax +44 (0)116 247 7662; e-mail: skydive@bpa.org.uk.*

Safety, operations, and the legal framework for sport parachuting in the UK

The BPA is recognised internationally as having an enviable safety record. This has been achieved by dedicated work over the years, which continues unabated. The legislation covering parachuting in the UK is the Air Navigation Order (ANO), which was enabled under the Civil Aviation Act 1982. Article 57 (Dropping of persons) states that before parachuting can take place an operator (club/team) must have a written 'Permission' from the CAA. It is the operators' own responsibility to put in place a satisfactory operations manual. All UK sport parachuting Clubs, Centres and Display Teams, both civilian and military, operate in accordance with a single, shared Operations Manual – the BPA Operations Manual – supplemented by local Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The CAA must be satisfied regarding the fitness and competence of applicants for parachuting Permissions. The BPA has the expertise to monitor and inspect clubs and teams, and to make reports and recommendations to the CAA. All 'Permissions' issued by the CAA to sport parachuting clubs and teams in the UK are issued on the recommendation of the BPA. The BPA also operates to an 'Exposition and Civil Aviation Authority Schedule of Approval', reference GA/101/96. This sets out the organisation and procedures acceptable to the CAA and describes the responsibilities, control and inspection procedures by which the BPA assures compliance with the terms of its CAA Approval.

Historically, the BPA has been regulating sport parachuting since 1962. Prior to 1984, parachuting from an aircraft in flight was prohibited in the United Kingdom (other than in an emergency) and could be conducted only under the terms of exemptions from the Air Navigation Order. With the Air Navigation (Second Amendment) Order 1983, having effect from 31 January 1984, parachuting became a permitted activity, subject to the grant by the CAA of a written permission, and in accordance with appropriate conditions specified in such CAA permission documents. A comprehensive parachuting manual was required, incorporating various provisions relating to aircraft and operational safety procedures. In 1996, the BPA produced its Exposition and CAA Schedule of Approval to meet this requirement.

Today, the required operating standards for sport parachuting in the UK are set out in a cascade of documents comprising:

- CAP 660 - the CAA's minimum requirements for the grant and renewal of parachuting permissions;
- the BPA Operations Manual that represents the accepted standard for sport parachuting in the UK. Clubs and Centres may achieve an acceptable standard for operations by compliance with the BPA manual;
- individual Club and Centre Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that amplify the BPA Operations Manual in the light of conditions that apply specifically to that Club or Centre.

Collectively, these documents represent a Code of Practice that was, in the main, developed by the BPA itself. All of the above involves a vast amount of work and fortunately the BPA is ideally placed to carry this out to a consistently high quality. If the CAA had to carry out the work itself, the cost may be so high that the continuing existence of sport parachuting in the UK might be threatened.

Parachute ratings (qualifications)

The BPA runs a regular programme of courses to train and qualify instructors, who currently operate at some 27 BPA-Affiliated Parachute Clubs & Centres. The BPA has a well-established progression system of ratings (qualifications), which is constantly evolving to meet the developing needs of the sport.

Communications

The BPA publishes six issues a year of its Members' magazine *Skydive Magazine*, which is lively, informative and highly regarded both in the UK and as one of the top skydiving magazines in the world. Its success has been underlined by the addition of a special *Skydive Starter Mag* to encourage those who have made their first jump to progress in the sport. The BPA and *Skydive Magazine* have sister websites - www.bpa.org.uk and www.skydivemag.com that offer Members, as well as the public at large, a wealth of online information about all aspects of this exciting sport - with something for everyone from those contemplating their first jump to the most experienced skydivers.

Competitions

Through an active Competitions Committee, the BPA promotes excellence in skydiving, funding national teams and individuals to World Championships. It also supports major events such as the British Open National Championships in all of the major skydiving disciplines, together with a circuit of Regional Competitions held at Clubs & Centres throughout the UK. Current UK World and current and previous UK National Champions travel to BPA Affiliated Drop Zones across the home countries to run a programme of Skills Coaching Roadshows to develop the skills of upcoming Junior and Intermediate athletes in the various competitive disciplines - including Formation Skydiving, Canopy Formation, Style & Accuracy, Freestyle, Skysurf and Freely. These Coaching Roadshows have become extremely popular and have undoubtedly contributed to increases in competition entries in both Regional and National skydiving competitions in the UK, particularly in Formation Skydiving - for which the UK boasts the Women's FS 4-way team *Storm* that took Gold to become World Champions at the skydiving World Championships in 2008. British Team *Volairkix* took Bronze in Freely at the World Championships in the same year