

# 4

## Local Airspace for Glider Pilots

We are, by the standards of many UK clubs, blessed with relatively unrestrictive airspace. However it is also complex in that different limits apply at different times and in different circumstances. What's written here is an attempt to describe it from a glider pilots perspective – it is not the law and may not be definitive – the UK Air Pilot is the where you will find the authoritative version (among a very great deal else ...). This is written on and reflects the situation as we understand it as of mid-March 2012 so beware of changes that may occur after this date. It also goes without saying that any airspace may be temporarily changed by NOTAM – so always check before you fly – there is now the facility to check these on the clubhouse computer. **Text in red is applicable to weekend flights only.**

Please note that as of November 2014 there have been changes to airspace over Scotland: particularly previously class F routes currently identified as N560. The BGA (SGU) is still challenging the validity of these changes and amended letters of agreement are pending. (Details on p. 30)

All pilots should:

- Familiarise themselves with current maps
- Read and sign the airspace agreement book kept in the office
- Understand the 'in place' crossing procedures with or without transponders.

### Local Airspace Factors

- 1. **Directly above the airfield is the weekend only airway N864.**
- 2. **Immediately to the east of the airfield is the Glenrothes parachute drop zone active from 17:00 (local) on Friday and all weekend.**
- 3. Approximately 4 nm south of the airfield lies the **Scottish TMA and the Edinburgh CTR.**
- 4. Approximately 6 nm west of the airfield lies the Northern section of the **Scottish TMA.**
- 5. Approximately 7 nm northwest of the airfield lies airway **P600.**
- 6. There are **parachute drop zones** at Glenrothes (a mere 4 nm E), Strathallan c. 16 nm NW) and Errol (14 nm NNE).
- 7. There are **active airfields** at Glenrothes, Perth (Scone), Dundee and Leuchars.
- 8. At the south edge of the Aberdeen TMA, the new airway **P18** routes offshore to Newcastle. This airway is effective from 05:30 to 09:00 (local) on week-days and from 17:00 Friday to 09:00 (local) on Monday (i.e. all weekend).
- 9. All airspace **above FL195** is now class C and gliders are excluded unless operating under the conditions of a special agreement.
- 10. **Special Agreements.** There are four arrangements which permit us to enter specific areas of controlled airspace by using specific procedures.

Taking these in more detail:

### 1. N864

This exists every Saturday and Sunday regardless of anything else. The airway is directly overhead our airfield and Bishop Hill. Over the airfield it starts at FL65. If you are overhead or W of St Serf's Island in Loch Leven you are clear to the West of the airway. If you fly N along Bishop the base rises from FL65 to FL85 as you reach the bowl above Kinnesswood village. *From there on (the gully, West Lomond itself and all of the N face) you remain under that FL85 base. You need to be fully 1 mile W of the trig point on W Lomond summit before you are clear W of the airway.* This is an area where good wave often gets really going – usually in combination with strong head winds (low ground speeds) – so pilots need to be on their toes to avoid being carried upwards or backwards into the airway. Unless you have read, signed and activated the airway crossing procedure *stay clear of this airspace under all circumstances at weekends.*

### 2. Glenrothes Parachute Drop Zone

At present this drop zone is notified up to 6000 ft QNH. There are plans to increase the upper limit into N864 if satisfactory operating arrangements can be negotiated. Keep an eye on the NOTAMs for potential changes.

### 3. Scottish TMA and the Edinburgh CTR

At lower levels the Edinburgh Zone consists of a 20 nm diameter circle centred on Edinburgh airport, class D from surface to 6000 ft, surrounded by an angular box of Scottish TMA which is a mixture of class D and class E airspace below 6000 ft. Above 6000 ft the entire area is class D.

Gliders are currently permitted to fly in class E airspace so long as they maintain VMC. Holders of RT licences may request permission to enter class D airspace from the appropriate air traffic controller.

There is a letter of agreement giving gliders an improved chance of negotiating a clearance through the class D airspace to the west of the Edinburgh zone.

### 4. Northern Section of Scottish TMA

This airspace is class E from 4000 ft up to 6000 ft and class D above 6000 ft. *Part of this airspace (together with a section of the Scottish TMA) may be opened to allow gliding at weekends – see Letters of Agreements below.*

### 5. P600 Airway

This airway has a range of different base heights, from FL55 at either end through FL85 to FL105 in the central section.

From Portmoak a good visual reference for the SE edge of P600 is a line joining the southern end of Glenfarg Reservoir with the point at which the Earn flows into the Tay. The area of P600 covering the E end of the Ochils, Gleneagles and Strathallan has a base at FL55.

If you proceed on a NW course then a crossing N and E of Dunning has a base of FL85. Further N and E still a crossing N and E of Scone airfield (not Perth itself – that's still FL85) has a base at FL105. Further N again and the bases slant down again as the airway routes commercial aircraft into Aberdeen. **The southernmost**

sections of P600 may be opened to allow gliding at weekends – see Letters of Agreements below.

If you are flying during weekdays then unless you have read, signed and activated the airway crossing procedure *stay clear of this airspace under all circumstances*. If you are flying on a Saturday or Sunday you may be able to enter some of this airspace if and only if it has been opened per the agreement (see below).

## 6. Parachute drop zones

Unless you have positive information that any drop zone is inactive you must remain outside a circle of 1.5 nm radius up to FL150 (6000 ft QNH for Glenrothes) centred on each of the notified parachute sites. If you are within 3 nm of either Strathallan or Errol drop zones, they would appreciate a call on 129.9 MHz. You do *not* need an RT licence to call on 129.9 MHz. If they do not reply, this does *not* mean that the zone is inactive. Glenrothes frequency is 130.45 MHz. They will be expecting gliding activity up to the edge of their drop zone.

## 7. Active airfields

The ATZs at the local airfields are active to 2000 ft above surface; a simple rule of thumb is 2100 ft above Portmoak. The zone at Leuchars is 2.5 nm radius, while Perth, Dundee and Glenrothes are only 2 nm. Pilots should be aware the Auchmuirbridge is already some distance inside the Glenrothes ATZ.

## 8. Airway P18

This airway became effective in 2005. The main impact on gliding is to lower the airway base to 4500 ft over the Todhead Lighthouse turnpoint (near Montrose). Fordoun (FOD) has been created as a good alternative.



