Latest Advice from BMFA on Permitted Model Flying during the COVID-19 Situation

The UK government has indicated that there will be some ‘relaxation’ of the current restrictions and that from Wednesday 13th May it will be possible to leave home and drive somewhere to engage in a sporting/recreational activity.
**Please note that at the present time, this ‘relaxation’ applies only to England.**  The advice for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales remains ‘stay home’.

This change in government advice will permit the resumption of some model flying activity in England subject to compliance with certain guidelines and social distancing.  Points to note include:

1. We remain in the midst of a pandemic.  The updated government advice must not be regarded as meaning a ‘return to normal’.  The situation is dynamic and current government advice must be followed.

2. The effects of the COVID-19 virus are most serious in men over the age of 60, especially those with other underlying health problems.  As many of our members fall into this group, we would urge careful consideration before venturing out and risking any potential exposure to the virus, however small the risk may be.

3. At no point during the lockdown has model flying been prohibited.  It is mainly the government’s blanket restrictions on non-essential travel which has precluded our activity (which remains the case in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), although some landlords have imposed their own restrictions on activity on their land.  Therefore, regardless of any changes to the government’s advice, any such local restrictions must also be considered.

4. Should Clubs/members in England decide to resume model flying then they must follow government advice.  Some simple measures to consider may include:

* Social distancing in accordance with government guidelines **ensuring the minimum 2 metre (and preferably greater) separation** from other people (unless from the same household) is always maintained (including in the carpark, pits & pilot box).  Clubs need to consider measures to ensure compliance with this requirement, which in some instances is likely to require limitations on the number of members on site at any one time.
* Latex/Nitrile/Vinyl gloves to be worn or hand sanitiser used immediately before and immediately after opening/unlocking and closing/locking access gates and padlocks
* Latex/Nitrile/Vinyl gloves to be worn or hand sanitiser used immediately before and immediately after using any club site maintenance equipment.
* No sharing of model flying equipment and aircraft (apart from by those sharing a household).
* Unless both instructor and pupil share the same household, if an individual has not yet reached a “safe solo” competence and still requires supervision, a buddy system **must** be employed, preferably wireless and with the instructor and student using their own equipment.  If a wired system is used it must allow the instructor to maintain a minimum 2m separation from the student and appropriate sanitation measures should be taken when handling the buddy lead.
* Clubhouses and any shared facilities (e.g. toilets) to remain closed.
* Hand sanitiser should be considered an essential item in every model aircraft flyer’s flight box.
* Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19, or who shares a household with any individual displaying symptoms, must not fly and should stay at home to maintain social isolation in accordance with government advice.

Ultimately, it has to be the individual’s decision whether to go flying or not and to take responsibility for their own safety.

We will issue further guidance as details become available.  **The health and wellbeing of our members remains our first priority, so please stay safe.**