

USE OF A RADIO CONTROLLED DETHERMALISER FOR FREE FLIGHT MODEL AEROPLANES ON LAND OTHER THAN THE DESIGNATED AREA FOR RADIO CONTROLLED PLANES

Report of the: Downs Manager
Contact: Sam Beak
Annexes/Appendices (attached): None
Other available papers (not attached):

REPORT SUMMARY

This report details a request from Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC), for their members to use a radio controlled dethermaliser for free flight model aeroplanes on land designated for the flight of free flight model planes.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

- (1) That the Conservators consider whether to allow Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC) members the use of a radio controlled dethermaliser for free flight model aeroplanes on land designated for the flight of free flight model areoplanes.**
- (2) That subject to the Conservators agreeing recommendation (1), all members of EDMAC wishing to use a dethermaliser must wear an identifiable arm band.**

1 Background

- 1.1 Anyone flying a model aircraft (whether radio controlled or free flight) on the Downs is required to be a member of the Epsom Downs Model Aircraft Club (EDMAC) which was formed in 2005 with the support of the Conservators.
- 1.2 Only members of EDMAC are licensed and therefore permitted to fly on the Downs. Pilots must have their EDMAC & British Model Flying Association membership cards with them at all times for identification purposes when flying on the Downs.
- 1.3 The area for flight of model aircraft and rules relating to their flying are controlled under the byelaws.

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- 1.4 There is currently a designated cut grass strip on which all pilots of radio controlled models must stand when flying.
- 1.5 Free-flight flyers may fly from anywhere within the area permitted by the byelaws, and their location on any day will be dependent on the wind direction.

2 Proposals

- 2.1 The Downs Manager has received a proposal from EDMAC requesting the use of a radio controlled device called a dethermaliser which effectively tips up the tailplane on free flight models to bring the model safely and gently to the ground without damage. Dethermailisers are used by free flight model plane flyers across the world to prevent fly-aways and by doing so, restrict a free flight plane's flight circuit within a given area.
- 2.2 The radio controlled dethermaliser operation only moves the tailplane and by doing so causes the plane to gently stall and descend to the ground in a slow and predictable manner. It cannot control direction, position or height of the model during its normal flight pattern therefore the model is not under radio control guidance at any time.
- 2.3 A dethermaliser is operated via a hand-held transmitter, held by the model aircraft's operator. The physical size of the transmitter is no larger than a smart phone and has no aerial or any other protruding parts. EDMAC are convinced that the facility to safely control the free flight plane's descent and place of landing along with the flight circuit restriction helps to address safety issues whilst free flight flying on the Downs.

3 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 3.1 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** None for the purpose of this report.

4 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 4.1 Byelaw 7. (1) states:

A person shall not release any radio controlled power driven model aircraft for flight or control the flight of such aircraft or shall not cause such an aircraft to take off on any part of the Downs other than the cut strip of grass designated for this purpose and maintained by the Conservators.

- 4.2 Byelaw 7. (2) states:

A person shall not without reasonable excuse fly a model aircraft over or cause such an aircraft to land on any part of the Downs other than that part which is enclosed by the following boundaries (but excluding the Mile Post Car Park) that is to say

(a) The guard railings on the inside of the Race Course

(b) The eastern side of Langley Vale Road from the underpass to its junction with the footpath leading to Rosebery Road and

(c) The line of that footpath from its junction with Langley Vale Road to a point in line with the guard railings on the inside of the Race Course.

- 4.3 If EDMAC members are granted permission to use a transmitter along with a dethermaliser for free flight model aircraft, it may cause confusion for the Downkeepers and members of the public.
- 4.4 Although the aircraft is not technically being radio controlled throughout its flight, the use of a transmitter may look like the flyer has a radio controlled model. If the flyer is then positioned away from the designated strip for radio controlled model aircraft this could be perceived as in breach of the byelaws.
- 4.5 In light of this, Conservators may wish to consider a condition that all free flight flyers wishing to use a transmitter and dethermaliser must wear some form of identifiable arm band only issued by EDMAC.
- 4.6 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** The legal implications are considered within the body of the report.

5 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this report

6 Partnerships

- 6.1 None for the purposes of this report

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 The introduction of a radio-controlled dethermaliser could help to eliminate fly-aways during free flights and would therefore control the area in which the model aircraft landed. This would help to prevent accidental collision and other Downs users from being injured or hurt.
- 7.2 The use of a transmitter by a flyer that was not stood in the designated radio controlled area could lead to other members of public wrongly assuming that anyone could fly a radio-controlled model aircraft anywhere on the Downs.

8 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 8.1 EDMAC have requested the use of a radio controlled device known as a dethermaliser on free flight model aircrafts.
- 8.2 Although this would not control the direction, position or height of the model during its normal flight pattern, it would help to gently stall the plane and allow it to descend to the ground in a slow and predictable manner.

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- 8.3 The use of a transmitter to control the dethermaliser could be mistaken for that used for a radio controlled model aircraft leading to confusion and difficulties in monitoring the use of the Downs by the Downskeepers.
- 8.4 The Conservators are asked to consider whether to allow EDMAC members the use of a radio controlled dethermaliser for free flight model aeroplanes on land designated for the flight of free flight model planes.
- 8.5 The Conservators are further asked that subject to agreeing the proposal in paragraph 8.4 above, they consider the use of an identifiable arm band for all members of EDMAC wishing to use a dethermaliser.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: College Ward; Woodcote Ward;