Members at Pontefract and District Aeromodellers since 1973 have been privileged to be able to fly in the centre of Pontefract’s beautiful Park when many UK council managed parks are reviewing bylaws regarding model flying and especially done flying. We have also already experienced the UK National Trust taking the line to prohibit all Drone flying and this type of swift action is a minimal cost simple fix for most authorities to protect themselves from liabilities.

Pontefract and District Aeromodellers are affiliated to the BMFA who provide individual pilot and club insurance and operate an extremely high standard of safety in comparison to other model flying clubs and everyone must remember our insurance is conditional on pilots operating within the BMFA guidelines. This is because of where we fly and our unblemished safety record is due to following BMFA guidance, club rules, regulations, dedicated club trainers and club examiners and also responsible pilots. All of which is continually monitored, reviewed and managed by committees in office since 1973.

Our BMFA achievement schemes were recently revised to include 20 mandatory questions and at the same time recognising the introduction of new technological advancements in model aircraft where self-stabilisation, low take-off weight with foam constructed models, electrically powered gliders, multirotor models and those that fly autonomously are all now firmly imbedded within our hobby and to embrace these the BMFA introduced new achievement schemes that include Basic Proficiency Certificates (BPC’s), FPV and Multi Rotors.

Like some, but not all BMFA clubs. Pontefract and District Aeromodellers apply the “A” achievement scheme as a minimum standard of competency for any club member to fly in Pontefract Park unaccompanied (Club Rule 4). To enable our club to embrace the changes in different model aircraft, following attendance at BMFA achievement scheme workshops, our committee are supporting the introduction of BPC’s in all disciplines. The test for a BPC is identical to that for the A certificate and on successful completion of the test the examiner awards either an A certificate or a BPC depending on whether the aircraft meets the requirements of the A certificate test or not. This maintains the high safety standard set through the A achievement scheme test to satisfy our club rules for unaccompanied flying while permitting the club to embrace new technologies and welcome membership from individuals who may never own an aircraft suitable for an A certificate. The introduction of BPC’s will be continually reviewed and reported back at club nights to members present. Then in November at our AGM a vote on whether to fully accept BPC’s can be made based on an informed decision at that time.

Our recent safety improvements with the Fixed Wing flight line distances being permanently marked on the grass have been well acknowledged and we shall be applying these to the Rotary and Multi Rotor Wing flight line to create a consistent approach to safety.

Those who wish to fly FPV either Fixed, Rotary or Multi Rotor Wing must do so with a Spotter (Club Rule 22) and club members who disregard this safety requirement place the whole club at risk of losing its flying site.

Pilots who use FPV systems must ensure other FPV users are not on the same 5.8Ghz frequency before plugging in batteries and arming their models.
Our flying site boundary areas for both Fixed and Rotary or Multi Rotor Wing are agreed with Wakefield Council Parks Division and every club member and visitor must abide by these and if you are unsure what the boundaries are then ask any committee member or examiner because by not knowing these areas. Club members place the whole club at risk of losing its flying site.

Can I also remind all club members that the general public have the right to walk and use any area within Pontefract Park and our safety signs are there to warn members of the public of models flying which is why our flight boundary areas are important. We will always experience those members of public who will disregard any safety warnings or advice provided to them by club members and in these situations, we must take responsibility to not place those public in any additional danger and allow the public to pass by out of our flight boundary areas.

It is important that any dangerous occurrence, incident or accident is recorded in the Dangerous Occurrence, Incident and Accident book that is located in the club cabin.

As part of our continual review of safety systems and controls. With 140 plus members to date and rising. We are considering how best to monitor which pilots hold BPC, A or B Achievement scheme certificates and in what discipline and this notice from myself as Chairman is a call to all club members to feel able to come forward with your suggestions that will then be considered by our committee to be discussed at a future club evening.

I hope the above has provided reassurance that our club committee is acting positively and responsibly to the changes acknowledged by the BMFA and to maintain the highest level of safety to protect Pontefract and District Aeromodellers flying in such a beautiful and spacious council park.

Adrian Appleyard (Chairman)