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## Northern Challenge Trophy (2018)

The Northern Challenge Trophy (NCT) is a fresh approach to both competition and pilot development. It has the support of all six northern clubs who have been involved in its development and attempts to provide new solutions to the problems that beset fixed date/venue events in the UK ... primarily the weather. It unashamedly pimps off what makes the UKxcleague a huge success – its flexibility. By the time you read this you may already have been directed by various sources to links which give you all the detail you need to understand the aims, structure, how it works and the possible rewards. What this article tries to do is provide an extra personal layer, especially the thinking behind it from inception to tasking. It also hopefully provides the inspiration for people to get involved because without the active participation of pilots it's just a pipedream.

At UK, local and regional level I've been involved in competitions for over 35 years, mostly as a humble competitor and occasionally on the organising side. Getting pilots, venues and weather to all coalesce around a set place and time is almost impossible. I've seen competitions come and go, lots of them - National, manufacturer sponsored, regional and club based. I won't list them ... but it's a long list. Currently there are really only three that buck the trend, the LCC, BCC and the BPC. Just to illustrate ... after 7 years absence the Championships came back to the UK for a round this year (2017) – out of seven days it managed a single task. The BPC managed two main and two minor tasks that got squeezed in out of 11 possible days. In 2016 it got none! It has now partly accepted the inevitable and taken its main round abroad for 2018. Even the LCC is not immune and it's remarkable that it's lasted 27 years. Partly the answer is that it has, like other events been rebranded ... ever optimistic, we choose to run well organised social meets and accept that the flying is actually a bolt-on luxury. The dream is always of an event date coinciding with some great flying weather, we are ever the optimists because when it does all come together the fun is immense. I am a great fan of such days – but I'm also a realist and I'm coming to the conclusion that there may be a better – or at least an alternative way. Be in no doubt I still support some fixed date events – I just think we need to supplement them with something else to overcome the difficulties.

If you fly paragliders in the UK you'll be painfully aware that we are extremely weather dependent, generally the further north you go the worse it gets. It isn't getting any better either as our climate becomes increasingly predictable only in its unpredictability. Sorry to spoil your day. I recently did a review for the Dales looking back at 2017. I used all available sources and spent some time on it ... and my own log confirms one basic truth. The number of flying days during the summer months is actually quite small, between 5 and 10; that they coincide with a weekend is a rarity; that they

also provide taskable weather, makes running any fixed date comp at a weekend very slim. This is just the way it is ... so it seems best to accept it and move on.

### **So what's the answer?**

My suggestion is essentially to accept the weather and work with it by providing something offering maximum flexibility in terms of marrying pilot convenience to flyable days. The NCT does this through season long, standing tasks (I prefer to call them challenges). As evidence this more flexible approach works, I'd point to the highly successful – UKxcleague. The leagues format is essentially quite simple. Pilots can simply choose from a bucket list of flight types, select their days, their site, make their own plans - everything is at a pilots convenience and a slick website does all the hardwork when it comes to scoring, ordering and filtering. The numbers entering has been rising steadily, this year it's over 320. It's growing, it's popular, it works and is a major driver in pilot standards ... and works for pilots at almost all levels. Why? Simple ...to reiterate, total pilot flexibility that takes account of the main variables in our sport..

### **So to the NCT and how it's set up.**

At the heart of the NCT is **XCMAP**, developed by Chris Foster. Many of you will have possibly discovered it as the host for the GRID Challenges that cover five main northern sites. Some of you may have actually tried one of the GRIDS and uploaded to the website. What it essentially does is store and map the task (for you to download), allow you to upload your flight and provides automatic scoring and ordering. Chris is keen to see XCMAP used more extensively and to develop it further. My only contribution is to see its possible potential as host for my own ideas. Between us Chris (doing all the techie hard graft) and me (just creating work) we feel we are onto something that is at the core of making the NCT accessible utilising an easy to use web based tool.

### **In short I believe the NCT will work because:**

- It provides huge flexibility – you attempt set tasks when it best suits your availability and the weather.
- The tasks are standing tasks for a full season ... they don't change and can be attempted under a variety of conditions.
- It is a **competition** (see below) for those who are of that inclination.
- It can be seen as focused **pilot development** challenges, either as an individual or as a coaching activity.
- The tasks/challenges are designed to be inclusive in terms of pilot experience/skill level.
- The type of challenge encompass the small and simple to major hike and fly undertakings.
- It has substantial rewards from personal achievement to financial. It depends what motivates you.

**Competition:** One thing that kept coming up was “I’m not interested in competition, not my thing ... I don’t like crowds/a busy sky/ hooters and timings etc”. Well, the NCT is on your terms, none of the busy skies, being shepherded to tasks, etc. If you wish, just regard the tasks as a challenge to bring a focus to your day, something to try. Actually, having a focus is a great way to relieve the anxious moments we all occasionally feel. I meet very few pilots who say they aren’t up for trying something.

**How NCT standing tasks are structured:**

## MAIN tasks (12)

T1 GRID (Parlick)	T7 (Windbank)
T2 GRID (Clough Head))	T8 (Cross Fell)
T3 GRID (Dodd)	T9 (Wherside)
T4 GRID (Model Ridge)	T10 (Far Whitestones)
T5 GRID (Cross Fell)	T11 (Blease)
T6 (Pendle)	T12 (Coniston)

## SUBSIDIARY tasks (2)

H&F 1 (Dales Three Peaks)
H&F 2 (Lakes Three Summits)

- The MAIN and the SUBSIDIARY are run and scored as completely separate events.
- For both the start/end dates are the same (1<sup>st</sup> March – 30<sup>th</sup> September incl)
- Only best 8/12 tasks on MAIN score. You can pick and mix tasks to suit. It allows for **task dropping**
- See task notes for task details.

CLUB/S	TASK DISTRIBUTION by SITE	Wind directions
Cumbria SC	Clough (GRID), Blease Coniston, Far Whitestones	NW, W, SSW, SSE, E, NE, ESE
Northumbria	Cross Fell (GRID), Cross Fell FAI	SW, W
Sir George Cayley	Model Ridge (GRID)	NNW, NNE
Pennine SC	Parlick (GRID), Pendle FAI	SW, W, NW
Dales HPC	Dodd (GRID), Windbank, Wherside	NW, W, SW, E, SE.
North Yorks Sailwing	Model Ridge (GRID),	NNW, NNE.
Lake District	H&F - The Three Summits	E, S, W
Yorkshire Dales	H&F - The Three Peaks	E, SE, W, WNW

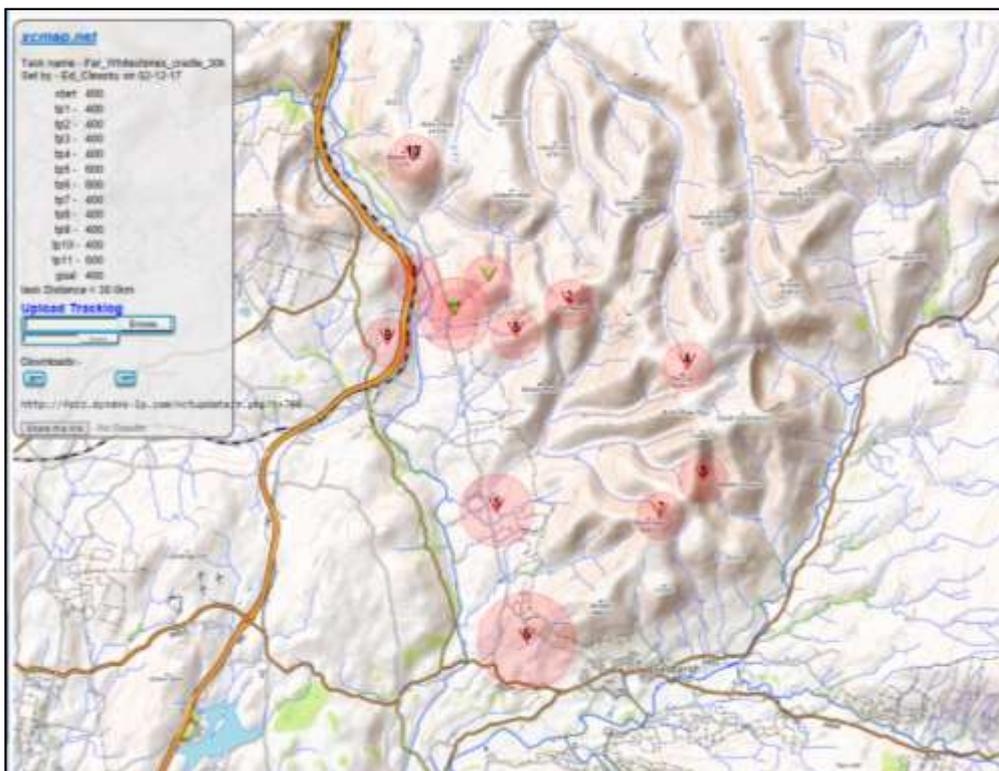
### On the design of the MAIN tasks.

- The site and location gives a fair geographical spread across the northern regions. That is between the M62 and Hadrian's Wall. Full inclusion for all clubs as far as possible.
- They had to cover most wind directions, but especially the prevailing SW / W winds
- They couldn't be 'members only' unless requested (by a club) or have lengthy closed periods.
- They had to be free of airspace or any known hazards or impediments (permissions)
- **Only full members of the SIX NORTHERN CLUBS (See banner header) are eligible.**

### The tasks are designed with the following in mind

- The GRIDS are popular, established and accessible to all pilots. They are in at the request of the various clubs.
- ALL tasks are roughly based on levels, they get harder as you progress through them and the scoring reflects this. Completion then takes account of time.
- Some tasks are CATS CRADLE (back and forth) and some are based around double FAI triangles; the inner is a lot easier than the outer.
- They are multiple cylinder with usually an end of speed (ESS) cylinder outside the goal.
- They allow (see rules) multiple attempts.
- None are xc based to allow multiple attempts, no retrieve hassle and include CP rated pilots
- Only a maximum of eight tasks will score – or your best eight if more flown.

### T10 Far Whitestones (example only – screen dump from XCMAP)



## On the design of the SUBSIDIARY tasks.

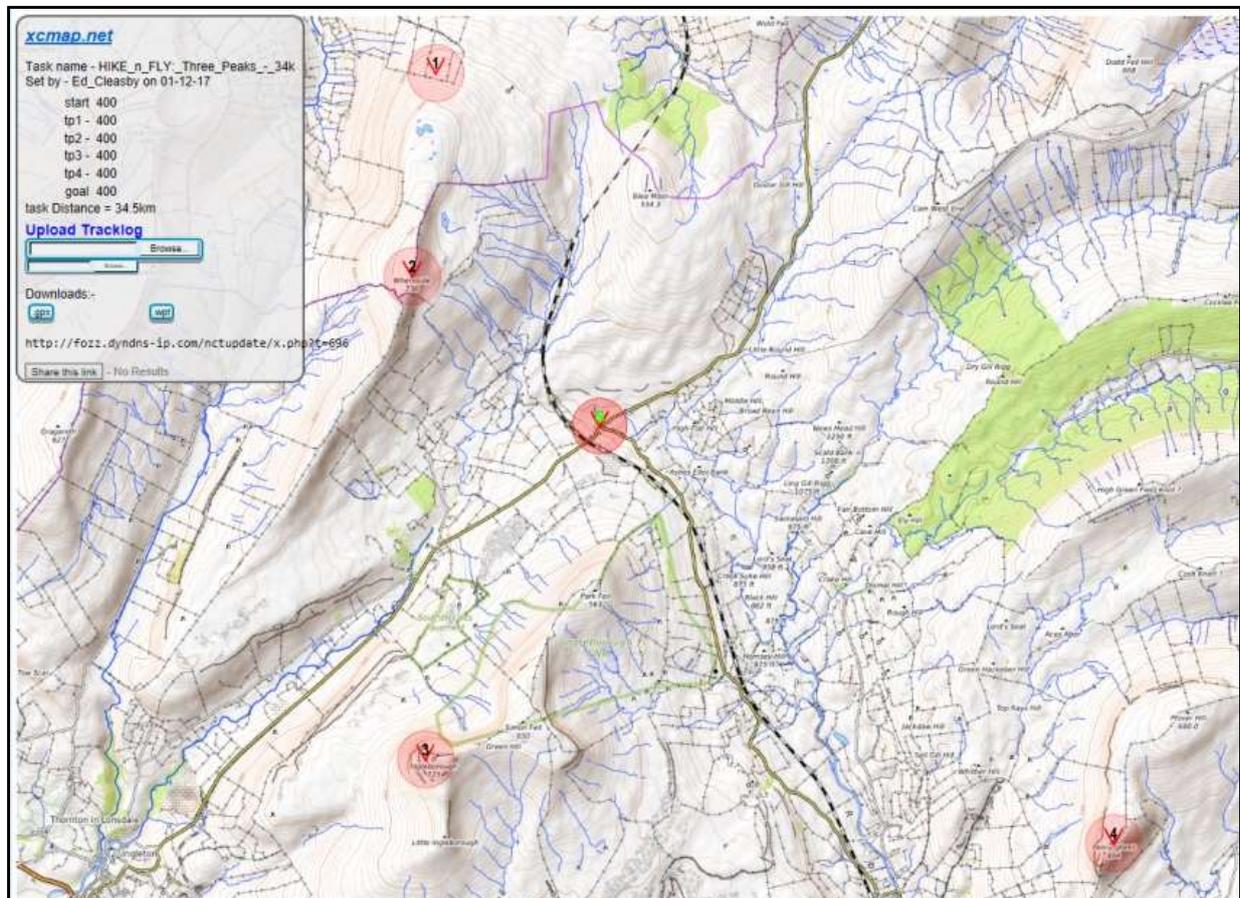
Hike and Fly is becoming increasingly popular amongst some pilots and living in a mountain region it was felt useful to include them, yet because of the unique nature of the challenge to keep separate.

- **Both Hike & Fly challenges are open to ALL members of the BHPA.** This was a request made once the idea got out and there seemed no reason to not have wider inclusion.
- Special separate rules apply which need to be read.

The two chosen are well known and obvious. One is considerably easier than the other so it leaves it up to the pilot how much they wish to take on. Both can be attempted under a variety of conditions.

They both have fixed starting points and within the rules there is enough flexibility to allow a variety of strategies. Starts for example can be ground or air starts – each brings its own rewards or penalties depending on conditions.

## Hike & Fly (HF 1) Dales Three Peaks (includes TP1 to conform with FAI rules)



## **Rewards!**

Maybe contentious – I've found people who really do hate money!

I wanted the NCT to have some kudos, so to that extent I've put £100 into the prize fund as a starter. Other clubs and some individuals have also committed into the fund so that in the early stages it stands at around £400. Any donation/sponsoring is welcome, however small, there is no entry fee and any donation promises only get called on after the end date of 30th Sept 2018. Within the rules you will see how this is allotted in percentage terms between MAIN, SUBSIDIARY and a DRAW.

100% is to be given over to prizes and a full list of donations will be published.

If you can't bear the thought of winning some money, then being a true pilot the sense of achievement at completing a challenge will bring its own rewards.

## **In conclusion**

That is in essence the broad thinking and structure behind the NCT for 2018. Below is a link to where the more detailed rules/notes/task links are held, this is currently my own site, but they may migrate to XCMAP if time allows.

<https://www.xcflight.com/northern-challenge-trophy-2018/>

Please consider the task list (especially T6 – T12) as merely exemplars for now, the 2018 final list will be available after the end of January.

I'd welcome any comment but having batted the rules around for two months they are pretty much set. The tasks are still being tweaked so useful input is always welcome over the next few weeks. I'd especially welcome reaction from less comp orientated pilots to see if it addresses their comp aversions or is viewed as useful challenges to push them a little more.

With others I've worked on this for the past few months and tried to draw it together into what I hope is a workable format. Brief details will appear in Skywings and some local clubs have requested an article for their Newsletter, others preferred a presentation which has the advantage of gauging reaction. Having made a commitment to the project and put in the graft it's now down to pilots to actually make it work ... and that is the great unknown.

Ed Cleasby

Dec 2017