

LAA Technical Leaflet TL 2.32 Return to Service Post Coronavirus (Covid-19)

We're sure that all LAA members would agree that it is essential, both for our individual well-being and the health of those around us, that we all heed ongoing government advice which, essentially, says that we should all stay at home unless a journey is absolutely necessary.

Because of the unusually windy and wet weather suffered by UK aviators, the 2019/2020 winter lay-up has already been a long one. In many parts of our nation, it's only in the last few weeks that grass runways have dried out sufficiently for the safe operation of even the lightest aircraft, so many of our aircraft won't yet have flown in 2020.

It is very likely that necessary government restrictions on travel, indeed on GA aircraft operation in general, will be in place for many weeks ahead, still further increasing both you and your aircraft's period of aviation inactivity.

Though, as an owner, your concerns is likely to be focused on the engine, the issues surrounding a return-to-service inspection involve the whole aircraft. Wood, composite and metal airframes will all suffer when left unattended for extended periods. Some problems are shared by all types, some, for example humidity related expansion/contraction issues on wooden aircraft, are particular to type.

LAA Engineering has published a Technical Leaflet (TL 2.32) which offers timely advice about ensuring your aircraft is indeed fully fit for flight when the time comes for you to get yourself airborne again.

The important thing is that you stay safe during this national emergency: once we're through it, and we will be, we can do whatever is necessary to get our aircraft (and our, no doubt, rusty pilotage skills) back to a fully airworthy state.

In a recent Skywise publication (available on-line <https://www.caa.co.uk/Our-work/Newsroom/COVID-19/>) the CAA define what they consider to be an essential maintenance flight.

The UK DfT's most recent advice about GA operations can be downloaded [HERE](#).

TL 2.32 – Return to Service Post Covid-19 can be downloaded [HERE](#).



Fig. 1 Who knows what you might find lurking inside your aircraft after a relatively long lay-up – the owner of this aircraft wouldn't have spotted the wasp nest if he hadn't taken the time to remove the panel and take a look.

Though, for many of us, our aircraft, perhaps flight itself, form the centre-piece of our lives: for sensible reasons, current government guidance precludes recreational GA flying.

Advice about staying at home will also restrict access to our aircraft – this means, by the time restrictions are relaxed, many aircraft will have been laid-up for an unusually long period. To ensure a safe return to full airworthiness, in most cases, very thorough inspections of all airframe and engine components and systems will be required before the aircraft can be safely flown.



Fig. 2 'Where there's an available space, something in nature will try to occupy it'. LAA'er, Paul Shenton, left his Chipmunk aircraft alone in his hangar for just a few weeks; when he next had an opportunity to fly the aircraft, this nest had appeared – he wasn't sure what particular creature had built their home in the aircraft's engine bay but, needless to say, he paid particular attention to the rest of his pre-flight inspection.