



Midland Gliding Club

# Sport Development Plan

February 2013



## Introduction

Midland Gliding Club was formed in Handsworth, Birmingham in 1930, moving to its current site on the Long Mynd, Shropshire in 1934. Apart from a couple of years during the war when flying was curtailed the club has operated from its 150 hectare airfield without a break for 79 years.

MGC is affiliated to the British Gliding Association, its governing body, and operates under the BGA's laws and rules. MGC is a limited company, registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 (Register No. IP1189R Staffs.) but is in the process of changing its status to that of a Community Amateur Sports Club. As such it is owned by its members who are currently all shareholders. It is managed by an annually elected committee which is effectively the Board of Directors. The officers of the club: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, are elected annually but generally serve a term of not less than 5 years.

As well as being one of the oldest clubs in the UK MGC is the highest gliding club at 1450 feet above sea level, sitting on top of a 5 mile long west facing ridge that allows good gliding throughout the year. MGC is open for flying on every suitable day of the year.

Gliding, thanks to continuing developments in aerodynamics, makes very efficient use of atmospheric energy. From the short hops of the early pioneers, glider pilots are now capable of making single flights of over 2,400 kilometres and have soared to 50,000 feet above the earth's surface, to the very edge of space.

The performance progress has been hyperbolic over the last 25 years and we can but guess at what lies ahead of us as we progress through the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Gliders can already achieve a glide angle of 60:1. In another 25 years 100:1 or better may be commonplace when from 5000' gliders will soar for 100 miles in still air.



Sadly gliding has seen a worldwide decline in numbers over the last 10 years but there is now evidence that this decline is halting and that club membership numbers are once again slowly increasing.

# Where are we now?

## Membership

MGC currently has ??? members divided amongst several categories:

- ??? are Full Flying Members
- ??? are Associate Members
- ??? are Junior Members
- ??? are Social Members
- ??? are Country Members (residing more than 100 miles radius from the club)
- ??? are Overseas Members (living outside the UK for more than 9 months a year)
- ??? Temporary Members (3 months trial)
- ??? are adults males
- ??? are adult females
- ??? are boys under the age of 21
- ??? are girls under the age of 21

The average age of the membership is ???

At the last survey in 2012 59% of the membership lived within 20 miles of the club. The remainder travel from the four corners of the UK including Scotland, Leeds, Aberystwyth, Bristol, Cambridge, London and the south coast.

Members' abilities cover the entire range from novice to instructors. At the last count:

- ??? are abinitios (pre-solo)
- ??? are solo pilots but not Cross Country endorsed
- ??? are Cross Country Silver Badge pilots
- ??? are Gold Badge pilots
- ??? are Diamond Badge pilots
- ??? are BGA certified instructors
- ??? hold roles within the BGA regulatory structure (regional examiners, inspectors etc.)
- ??? no longer fly
- ??? have never flown

Current subscriptions which contribute to the upkeep of the fabric of the club and its staff and facilities are:

- £438 per annum - Full Flying Members
- £240 per annum - Country Members



- £180 per annum Overseas Members
- £200 per annum Junior Members under 21 yrs
- £110 per annum Junior Members 18 – 20 yrs
- £85 per annum Junior Members 16 -17 yrs
- £65 per annum Junior Members 14 – 15 yrs
- £65/qtr Winter Country Members (for Full Members of other BGA clubs)
- £115 per annum Associate Members (former MGC Full Flying members)
- £40 per annum Social Members

Flying members pay an additional annual Flying Fee which pays for the upkeep and running costs of the club fleet used for training and recreational flying. Paying the flying fee entitles the member to unlimited flying time in club aircraft.

Current Flying Fees are:

- £306 per annum for members who do not privately own a glider
- £306 per annum for country members
- £288 per annum for members of other BGA/overseas clubs
- £153 per annum for instructors on the club rota
- £153 per annum for private owners
- £153 per annum for Juniors under 25
- £26 per month for up to three consecutive months for temporary members
- £24 per day for visitors and associate members

Additionally all launches are charged at £9 per launch.

All weekend instruction is free of charge.

Total membership numbers for the last five years were:

- 2012 - ???
- 2011 - ???
- 2010 - ???
- 2009 - ???
- 2008 - ???

We attract new members by advertising in local newspapers and magazines, by supporting and displaying at local events, by running competitions, by partnering with the Wenlock Olympian Society to host the Wenlock Olympian Gliding Games and by maintaining an informative website, a blog site and a competition website.

We offer trial lessons with three months temporary membership and encourage temporary members to fly at club rates during the three months to experience the benefits of full membership.

We run residential holiday courses with similar temporary membership benefits.



We have an innovative charging scheme for members that is more cost effective than most other clubs.

## Activities

MGC offers to its members:

- A share in the club, owned and managed by members
- 150 hectare of privately owned airfield in one of the most beautiful parts of the country
- Access to a club house and bar with professional catering
- Residential accommodation at affordable prices
- A caravan park adjacent to the clubhouse
- Modern toilet and shower facilities
- A fleet of club single seat and two seat training aircraft
- A motor glider for training to cross country endorsement level
- One of the best launch systems in the country
- Basic training to solo level
- Advanced training to cross country level
- Continued coaching to competition standards
- Residential training courses during the summer months
- Expeditions to other sites in the UK and Spain
- Weather, NOTAM and task briefings on all flyable days
- 24/7 access to club facilities
- Open every day of the year
- Parking and storage facilities for privately owned gliders
- Professional instructors available every day during the week
- Professional engineering and launching staff
- Volunteer instructors and ground crews every weekend
- Professional office management

The main purpose of the club is to:

- To foster and promote gliding and associated aerial sports and activities
- To carry on any other activity which is reasonably necessary for pursuing and attaining the objects defined above.

We organise training through:

- 5 day residential courses for at least 8 weeks during the summer normally with 8 students on each course (representing 320 training sessions annually)
- Weekend instruction for members with two instructors taking up to 4 pupils each a day (representing 800 training sessions annually)
- Up to 3 trial lessons each weekend day and occasional ones during the week (representing 300 sessions annually)



- One three week expedition to the Spanish Pyrenees with a club glider and privately owned two seat gliders and instructors (representing 42 sessions)
- Two 10 day expeditions to UK clubs for competitions with a two seat glider and instructors (representing 20 sessions)
- One 10 day local competition with 2 club 2 seat gliders and instructors (representing 20 sessions)
- The local inter-club league series with one two seat glider and instructor for up to 6 weekends (representing 12 sessions)
- Total 1514 training sessions annually (depending on weather) averaging 29 per week over the year

The club has a very strong social life with a well-stocked bar for members open every evening, a three course meal every Saturday evening, evening meals on all other days for course members and breakfast, lunch and dinner for all on every day that the club is open. Club members often have parties (birthdays in particular) in the club house and we organise several social events during the year, such as BBQs, Bonfire and Halloween parties, as well as an annual Dinner and Trophy presentation at the end of the summer season.

The club receives a party of school boys from Shrewsbury School every Thursday afternoon during the terms, regular visits from Air Cadet Squadrons (often camping and staying for at least a long weekend) and is seeking to offer the same training facilities to other schools in the area. We have links with students at Aberystwyth University through the university gliding club. We welcome at least 4 visiting groups of pilots for a week at a time from other UK clubs and individual visitors from other clubs on an ad hoc basis. For the last 16 years we have hosted a group of Dutch glider pilots for a week in the spring. MGC is an accredited Junior Gliding Centre with a member responsible for organising Junior activities. MGC is part of a group of six Welsh and Borders gliding clubs for the purpose of mutual support and marketing. We have close links with our other local gliding clubs at Shobdon, Cosford and Sleaf, offering joint training and launch facilities and use of each other's airfields in the event of one being inoperable for any reason.

MGC has close links with the Long Mynd Soaring Club (hang and paragliders) who own a field adjacent to our airfield and with whom we share our immediate airspace. We have a joint liaison meeting at least once a year and their current and past chairmen are active members of our club. We each invite members to the other's social events. Some of their members are also members of our club, both social and flying.

We have similar though less frequent links with the Long Mynd Soaring Society (model radio controlled gliders) which operates with the permission of the National Trust from a number of sites on the hill.

The MGC airfield has a number of bridleways and footpaths that cross its land. To make it easier for walkers, horse riders and bikers to cross our land we have established a number of permissive ways which enable them to follow the edge of the ridge away from the airfield operations, with consequentially better views, undisturbed by gliders launching and landing.



## Club instructors and officials

MGC currently has ??? volunteer instructors drawn from the members and two professional instructors operating on a job share basis so that one of them is on duty every weekday during the year. They are all fully qualified through the British Gliding Association training and accreditation scheme. They are all CRB checked and approved.

The club has two child protection officers, one a recently retired serving police officer.

The club has a Junior Gliding officer to run the BGA accredited Junior Gliding Centre.

The club has a management committee of four officers (Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary) and up to 6 others all drawn from the members.

## Building and Equipment

MGC owns all the land that comprises the airfield and all the buildings and equipment on it. It has no loans or mortgages.

The airfield and club buildings are all accessible to all though the particular requirements of aviation restrict access to the aircraft to certain forms of disability.

MGC owns the following equipment:

- 3 two seat training gliders
- 4 single seat gliders
- A share in a syndicate owned motor glider kept on site and available for training
- 1 Skylaunch main winch
- 1 Knox main winch
- 2 retrieve winches
- 1 Range Rover winch towing vehicle
- 3 Land Rover general airfield towing vehicles
- 1 launch point vehicle
- Fully equipped maintenance workshop with lifting, metal working, welding, paint and engineering tools and equipment
- Fully equipped commercial kitchen
- Bar equipment
- Furniture and fittings for seven residential rooms and bunk house
- Office equipment including computers, photocopier, printer, telephones

The aircraft and winches are all in first class condition and are maintained regularly to provide safe and reliable facilities.

The motorised vehicles are all old and have all seen better days but they are regularly maintained on site in a safe condition.



Though the workshop equipment is all in good condition the buildings in which they are used are not: hardly insulated, leaking roofs, poor drainage.

MGC does not currently have an assets register though it noted as part of the next 5 year strategic plan starting 2013 that one should be provided.

Lack of sufficient available revenue has precluded the setting aside of a sinking fund for maintenance and replacement of equipment over the last ten years. But recent changes to operating procedures and staffing levels, rationalisation of the fleet and the sale of some asset, alongside the introduction of an innovative charging policy, has put the club back into the a position of ending the financial year with a small surplus. It is the management committee's declared intention to budget for an end of year surplus of £20,000 in order to build a sinking fund for maintenance and improvement.

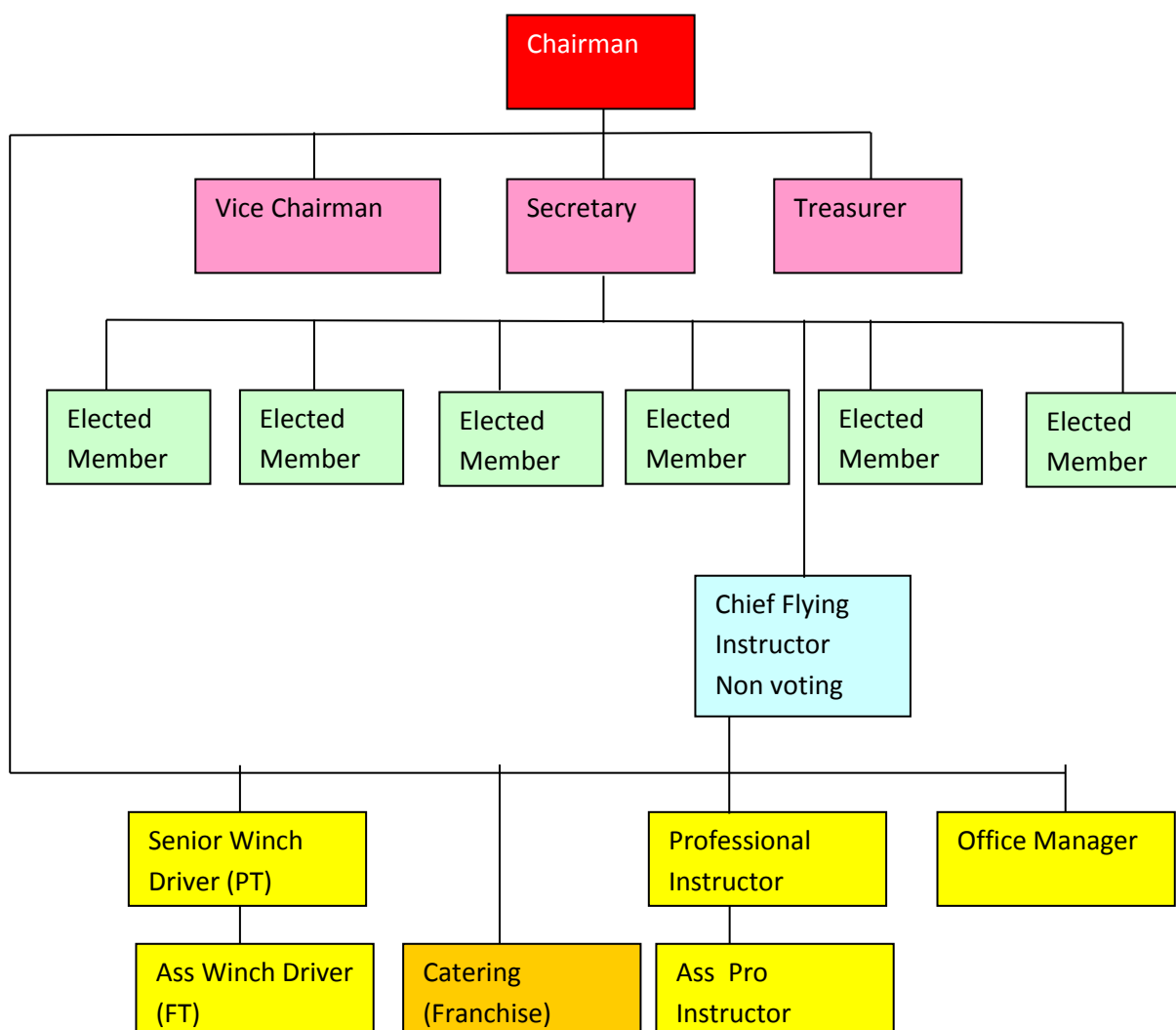
## Management Committee

The MGC is managed by a committee (or Board of Directors) of up to ten elected members including a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. There is provision to co-opt others as required. It meets on the second Friday of every month and conducts business by email in between. The roles of the committee are as follows:

- Chairman - The main responsibility for the chair of the club is to run the board meetings and lead the organisation in terms of strategy, vision and mission, to chair committee meetings, Annual and Special General Meetings. The current Chairman also takes responsibility for staff issues, for running the website, designing and producing all marketing and PR materials and representing the club at official events.
- Vice Chairman – The Vice Chairman is acknowledged as the next Chairman designate and deputises for the Chairman in all his principal roles. The current Vice Chairman also takes responsibility for membership issues and office systems development.
- Treasurer – The treasurer is the main person responsible for managing the finances of the club. He is responsible to the club for:
  - Looking after its finances
  - Collecting subscriptions and all money due to the club
  - Paying the bills and recording the information
  - Keeping up-to-date records of all the financial transactions
  - Ensuring that all funds are spent properly
  - Issuing receipts for all money received and recording this information
  - Reporting regularly to the committee on the club's financial status
  - Preparing year-end statements of accounts
  - Arranging for the statement of accounts to be audited/independently examined
  - Presenting an end-of-year financial report to the AGM
  - Financial planning, including producing an annual budget and monitoring it throughout the year
  - Helping to prepare and submit any statutory documents that are required e.g. VAT returns, tax returns and grant-aid reports.



- Secretary – The Secretary ensures the club’s communications function efficiently and attends and takes minutes at all committee meetings and the AGM
- Chief Flying Instructor – responsible for all matters relating to flying, instructing, safety and training (non voting)
- Accounting Officer – this committee member provides bookkeeping oversight in the office and prepares management accounts monthly for the committee, prepares an annual budget and advises on financial policy, working closely with the Treasurer. Also responsible for fleet and club insurance.
- Airfield Officer – responsible for the care and maintenance of the airfield and its boundary fencing
- Fleet Officer – responsible for the care and maintenance of the club fleet of aircraft
- Engineering Officer – responsible for the management of paid engineering staff and the care and maintenance of the motorised equipment, winches and other launch equipment. He is also responsible for the management of the volunteer and professional winch drivers.
- Fundraising Officer – responsible for advising the committee on grant opportunities and preparing and grant applications for submission. (Currently co-opted).
- Buildings Officer – vacant





MGC recently reviewed and rewrote its rules and constitution which was approved by the FSA and subsequently agreed the members at the 2012 AGM. The club awaits approval from HMRC to change its status to that of a Community Amateur Sports Club.

The club's constitution clearly sets out its aims and objectives and is available on request or from the club website.

The committee does from time to time appoint sub-groups to look at specific issues and make recommendations to the committee. Over recent years sub-groups have considered issues such as the future of the tug aircraft, improvements to the club buildings, renewal or removal of the tarmac road across the airfield and the organisation of competitions.

## Core Values

Midland Gliding Club has established over the years a set of core values:

- Adventure and a freedom to achieve that encourages personal challenges and development.
- Allowing individuals to take opportunities to gain experience even if it requires taking a degree of personal risk provided that others are not endangered by those actions.
- Safety is paramount from the outset in instruction and coaching and remains the primary consideration in every circumstance.
- MGC seeks continual improvement in standards in everything that the club and its members do.
- The club is its members and exists primarily to enable them to become competent glider pilots and safely to achieve their flying ambitions and aspirations, whether they are to simply fly a solo circuit or to achieve high performance cross country flying, high altitude wave flying, and competitive success at local, national or international levels or in aerobic performance.
- Equality of opportunity, to the extent that the sport permits, for everyone, male, female, young, old, those from ethnic groups and those with disabilities and disadvantages.

Teamwork in all that we do underpins the achievement of individuals, from non-flying activities such as maintenance of aircraft, equipment and machinery to training and continuing performance coaching. Apart from a few professionals almost all of what we do depends on the willing and unpaid input from hundreds of volunteers. The camaraderie that accrues from such team work is a fundamental facet of club life and one of the things that many members believe makes the Midland Gliding Club different.



# SWOT analysis

## Strengths

- One of the oldest clubs in the UK with a long and enviable history and reputation
- Beautiful countryside and good opportunities for partners and families to enjoy other pastimes and activities
- The highest club in the UK with a 5m long west facing ridge provides for all year round flying
- Club owns 150 hectares in the middle of AONB with guaranteed tenure
- Very low risk of development pressure or handicaps
- Largely unrestricted airspace and access to areas of permitted high altitude flying in Wales
- Large unrestricted landing areas
- Professional instructors
- One of the best launch systems in the country providing cheap winch launches to 3000'asl
- A cost-effective fleet of aircraft well-structured for training progression
- One of the few UK clubs still offering residential training courses
- Able to fly all year round
- Residential accommodation on site
- Professional catering 7 days a week
- Professional office manager
- Comprehensive web presence
- Trial lessons still a good source of income
- Cosy bar sponsored by a local brewery
- Membership still beyond critical mass in spite of recent reductions
- Positioned to come out of recession in a strong state with almost everything required and better financials than seen for some time
- Innovative pricing structure
- Junior Gliding Centre
- Wenlock Olympian Gliding Games host and partner

## Weaknesses

- Big club facilities with medium club membership
- Buildings rapidly reaching end of useful life
- Restricted development potential
- Road can be impassable in winter
- Restricted caravan park license – no opportunity to increase numbers
- Access roads can be daunting to timid drivers
- Public rights of way across airfield
- Road bisects north end of airfield
- Often stop for lunch at best time of the day



- Inflating insurance costs
- Steeply Increasing energy bills
- Few disabled facilities in buildings or fleet
- Lack of adequate briefing/lecture room facilities
- Not enough to do on site if not gliding
- Inadequate water supply during excessively dry summer months

## Opportunities

- Bring hang and paragliders into club membership
- Merge with Long Mynd Soaring Club
- Merge with one or more other local clubs
- Develop other “public” facilities in partnership with other agencies
- Significantly improve catering and accommodation for non-member use
- Become an accredited training site under new EASA regulations
- Attract grant support for developments especially improvements to buildings
- Bring “access” facilities up to date
- Explore broadening the offer so not reliant solely on gliding revenue e.g. more accommodation, cycle hire, walking centre, interpretation centre etc
- Encourage other light power aviation uses

## Threats

- Buildings become unfit for purpose
- Workshops do not meet EASA Part M standards and lose maintenance facility leading to heavily increased costs
- Being overwhelmed by bringing hang and paragliders into club membership
- Increased numbers of hang and paragliders on the ridge could make flying sailplanes difficult
- Continued decrease in membership
- Fail to become accredited training site in future if the current situation changes and lose ab initio members
- Major fire in buildings (emergency service too far away to respond in time)
- Repeat of Foot and Mouth or similar catastrophic event while uninsured
- A major accident could render club fleet insurance premium too high to afford
- EASA regulations make gliding more expensive, less attractive and reduces membership
- Increasing fixed costs require increasing subscriptions



# Where would we like to be?

In four years' time MGC would like to (in priority order):

- Replace the workshops with new energy efficient buildings
- Reroof the accommodation block to solve water ingress issues
- Install and commission a wind turbine to reduce energy costs
- Provide low cost subsidised bursaries to three junior members each year
- Increase junior membership by 20%
- Increase overall membership by a steady 5% per year
- Reduce the membership churn rate to less than 15% each year
- Have regular training agreements with three local schools or colleges

## How are we going to get there?

### 1. Replace the workshops with new energy efficient buildings

This has to be our number one priority. If we do not replace the existing workshop buildings the BGA will not license them for Part M standard repair facilities and the club will be faced with significantly increased costs and increased downtime resulting in loss of revenue that will threaten the continuing viability of the club.

Estimated cost £75,000

Outsource to contractors

Financed by £50,000 grant support and £25,000 from club resources

Project champion David Wedlock

Completion deadline autumn 2013

### 2. Reroof the accommodation block to solve water ingress issues

This a major priority as two of the seven rooms are no longer usable due to the leaking roof, reducing income from charges and our ability to fill summer residential holiday courses.

Estimated cost £5000

Use member labour supervised by David Crowson

Project champion David Crowson

Financed from club resources

Completion deadline winter 2013



### **3. Install and commission a wind turbine to reduce energy costs**

Not a major priority but an opportunity exists to partner with a local company wishing to site a prototype turbine on an exposed site subject to high winds to test efficacy and reliability. Benefits to club include revenues from feed-in tariff and reduced energy costs for duration of 12 months trial and, if proved successful, subsequent purchase of hardware at significantly reduced cost and continued reduced energy costs.

Estimated cost initially zero then purchase cost of hardware at end of trial in Q4 2014 £5000

Supply and construction by local company

Project champion John Parry

Financed from club resources

Completion deadline spring 2014

### **4. Provide low cost subsidised bursaries to three junior members each year**

This is a medium priority but part of the plan to increase junior membership. MGC has an aging member profile and will, if not addressed soon, see many of our long standing members becoming too infirm to fly or unable to afford to fly once living on limited retirement resources. It is incumbent upon the club to encourage new younger members to replace the ones about to drop out. Flying may seem an expensive hobby to the uninitiated, even though gliding is in fact much less costly than power flying and closer to golf or horse riding. Providing low or no cost bursaries to selected student pilots will encourage longer term involvement in the sport and encourage local schools and youth organisations to take part.

Estimated cost for three bursaries £3300 per year

Financed by mix of sponsorship and club resources

Project champion Paul Fowler

Introduction deadline April 2014

### **5. Increase junior membership to 20% of total**

One additional school signing up 10 pupils on a scheme similar to Shrewsbury School will achieve this target. Requires some communication with local schools, meetings with head teachers and staff and some marketing materials.

Estimated cost £500

Financed from club resources

Project champion Mike Greenwood

Completion deadline April 2017



## **6. Increase overall membership by 5% per year**

Convert trial lessons to full membership after trial membership period expires. Requires training instructors to up-sell the experience and benefits of the low cost temporary membership. Requires office manager to stress opportunity. New marketing material required and update to website information. Make full use of capability of new Aerolog back office system to send email offers and newsletters to all temporary members for at least 12 months.

Estimated cost zero

Project champion Dominic Haughton

Completion deadline April 2017

## **7. Reduce the membership churn rate to less than 15% each year**

Traditionally the club churn rate, the numbers not renewing membership each year, has been around 20% to 25%. This is not surprising with a sport of this kind which requires consistent application and much time with often long periods of waiting around while the weather improves. It is consistent with the national average. However it is much cheaper to keep an existing member than to recruit a new one so we must address this issue. This is a high priority.

Since we introduced our innovative new charging policy that replaces charging by the hour for flying costs with a set 'fly as much as you want' annual fee we have seen the churn rate reduce somewhat. Private owners have used the club fleet more often and novices have willingly taken more launches than previously as the amount of flying they do is governed less by the depth of their pockets. Consequently new members are retaining membership longer.

However if we are successful in attracting more junior members we can expect the churn rate to suffer at a point some 5 years hence when these young people go away to university, get jobs and start families.

MGC has been highly successful in creating a 'family' atmosphere around the club which encourages social interaction and loyalty. This must continue.

We must give the members an effective fleet with enough gliders and instructors to provide adequate levels of training without undue periods of waiting around. This requires us to reduce fleet downtime to a minimum and plan regular maintenance meticulously.

We will introduce regular member surveys to understand the successes and failures of the club using the new Aerolog back office system introduced during 2012-13.

Estimated cost zero

Project champion Dominic Haughton

Completion deadline April 2017



### **8. Have regular training agreements with three local schools or colleges**

For several years we have enjoyed a fruitful relationship with the Shrewsbury School where gliding was introduced as an optional sport and MGC provided the facilities and training. This was largely due to the enthusiasm of one of the teachers who was himself a club member.

For the last three years we have welcomed a squadron of Air Cadets from Cumbria on camps where the young people can extend their training.

We have the capacity during the summer months to do more of this and will actively approach other local schools and organisations to enter into similar training agreements.

Estimated cost zero

Project champion Mike Rogers, Junior Gliding Officer

Project deadline Spring 2015