



Strategic Plan 2007-2012

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**Midland Gliding Club Ltd
Long Mynd
Church Stretton
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Gliding is something that almost everyone can do no matter what their age, gender or previous experience.





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1 Introduction

Gliding is an exciting sport that acts as an exemplar for what can be achieved as an environmentally friendly form of aviation that, once launched, uses only the energy provided by the sun and the wind. It is a uniquely challenging yet graceful sport. It demands care and attention, fosters team work, develops manual and mental skills and often engenders a lifetime commitment.

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 enter the 21st century. Gliders can already achieve a glide angle of 60:1. In another 25 years 100:1 or better may be commonplace.

Despite being one of the leading gliding nations in the world, gliding in the UK, in common with other gliding countries, faces several challenges as we head off into this new millennium. Membership of gliding clubs has been reducing worldwide. People are now cash rich and time poor and there are many more available ways to spend leisure time than 20 years ago. For the first time in gliding's history the sport is faced with having to market itself to gain new members.

Over the last ten years gliding clubs have year on year witnessed falling membership numbers, exacerbated by the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001 but following a national trend. MGC however has been, from a low point in 2003 attracting new members, but still has a long way to go to get back to the levels of 1999 when we had 55 more members than we do now. The club is trying to maintain a level of facility and service geared to these higher numbers but is finding it increasingly difficult to generate enough revenue from the current membership.

Better marketing and increased membership levels are fundamental to the future of Midland Gliding Club (MGC). We must adapt to a changing environment in terms of the attitudes of our members, their flying expectations and regard them as customers as well as members. Furthermore we must provide value for money, which is not necessarily the same as being the cheapest.

Lack of visibility and public awareness remains a problem when trying to promote the sport. It still manages to maintain the perception of an elitist sport for the rich and



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privileged. This perception colours the views of government, local authorities and those agencies that distribute external funding.

The day to day operation of the club depends overwhelmingly on its members providing services on a voluntary basis. Even our few professional staff do their jobs by and large for the passion they feel for gliding and not because it will make them rich. The way we marshal our resources is greatly influenced by this dependence on good will.

Over the past 20 years or so technical advances in glider design and performance, combined with huge developments in on-board cockpit equipment, GPS systems and moving maps have led to huge advances in soaring performance. This has trickled down from the top competition levels to the club level and now both new and experienced solo pilots aspire to much greater sophistication in their equipment. This may help to explain why in spite of these advances gliding in the UK has remained numerically broadly static (number of members, launches, badge achievements) except for involvement in competitions and the privately owned as distinct from the club owned fleets. The UK picture is very different from many other European nations where, because of government subsidy, there are fewer private owners and much bigger and better, club fleets.

Environmentally we are clearly well positioned in most respects. We fly for hours from a gas powered launch without using any fuel at all, except for the few self launching and self sustaining gliders. Our use of the tug remains relatively small and we make extensive efforts to reduce the noise nuisance to our close neighbours. Our airfield is recognised as being on a site of outstanding natural beauty and we work closely with English Nature, DEFRA and the Forestry Commission to maintain it as a haven for wildlife and plants.

Our club buildings are deteriorating rapidly and will not survive another 50 years as they have the last. We are hamstrung with planning issues and our impact on the natural environment but we must find ways to overcome them and modernise and improve our facilities. A programme of improvement has begun but until we can address the shortcomings of the buildings whatever we do will inevitable be largely cosmetic.



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The challenges that lie ahead at the beginning of this second century of flight are:

- To preserve the MGC's presence on the Long Mynd
- To extend the gliding experience to a wider membership
- To manage better existing and new members
- To manage the use and replacement of the fleet
- To maximise revenue earning from a dwindling market
- To address the need for change
- To find funding to embark on a phased programme of building improvements.

Many famous aviators have flown at the MGC, including Amy Johnson





2 History and Background

Gliding began in the very late 18th and early 19th centuries with Pilcher, Lilienthal, Cayley and others attempting to master flight. Eric Gordon England piloted the first soaring glider in 1907 from a launch at Amberley Mount in West Sussex. German sailplanes soared the Wasserkuppe and in 1922 Alexis Maneyrol broke the world record with a flight of 3 hours and 21 minutes. In 1929 Robert Kronfeld demonstrated the possibilities of cross country flying by soaring 50 miles from Firle Beacon in East Sussex to Portsdown Hill in Hampshire. From that day interest in gliding burgeoned and gliding clubs sprang up all over the country.

The Midland Gliding Club was one of the first, established by Espin Hardwick in Birmingham in the early 1930's and creating the foundation of the present club on the Long Mynd in Shropshire in 1934. The site was chosen because of its long ridge and favourable westerly winds and attracted a number of famous aviators including Amy Johnson.

The present set of buildings was first started in 1936 with the construction of the hangar and has since been added to. The clubhouse was built in 1954 and the bunkhouse added in 1963. The large club house and communal dining area with panoramic windows looking west over the Welsh Marches became part of gliding legend.

The club committees had the foresight over the years to purchase land as it became available and now owns about 140 hectares on the south end of the Long Mynd, some 5 miles from Church Stretton, the nearest sizeable town, mid way between Shrewsbury and Ludlow on the A49. The Long Mynd itself is one of the oldest pieces of rock in the UK at some 500m years, and is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, renowned for its buzzards, for walking, horse riding and mountain biking and as the most southerly grouse moor in Britain. The airfield, at 1450 feet above sea level, is one of the highest gliding clubs in the UK.

Over the last 20 years the gliding club has had to share its airspace with hang and paragliders who bought the field next to the airfield on the northern side of the Portway and operate from there whenever the wind is westerly. This places some restrictions on our operating procedures but generally the relationships between the clubs are good and friendly though some of the members of the MGC do resent what they perceive as an incursion into 'our' airspace.

We are not largely hampered by controlled airspace with a ceiling of 14500' directly above the airfield with access to uncontrolled space to 19500' not far to the west.



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Under new agreements with NATS we can open a 'wave window' on request to allow us to fly up to 24000' in suitable conditions.

MGC operates seven days a week from mid March to the end of October with professional winch drivers and two professional instructors who run residential training courses Monday to Friday every week. From November to mid March the club operates from Thursday to Sunday every week for members and visitors from other clubs.

Launching is by powerful winches that make use of retrieve winches to quickly recover the launch wire (a system pioneered and developed by the MGC), by aerotow and by bungee from the west ridge. All our winches and airfield vehicles are powered by LPG.

The club fleet consists of:

- One DG505 two seat high performance training glider
- Two ASK21 two seat mid performance training gliders
- One ASK13 two seat low performance spin training glider
- One Discus single seat high performance glider
- One ASK23 single seat mid performance glider
- One ASK8 single seat low performance glider
- One Falke 2000 motorglider, syndicate owned
- One Pawnee aerotow tug (bought with the assistance of loans from some members)

3 Mission

The Midland Gliding Club's mission is to ensure the best possible training, flying, airfield and support facilities for its members and to enable them to enjoy the sport of soaring and the continuity of gliding from the Long Mynd for the foreseeable future.



4 Vision

That the Midland Gliding Club will maintain its position as one of the UK's premier gliding clubs and the best hill site in England. MGC will provide an environment where excellent glider pilots are trained to the highest standards and where they can realise their potential and ambitions as cross country and competition pilots. MGC will become a centre of excellence for air sports in the Midlands and mid Wales.

5 Philosophy and 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 to achieve safely 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, competitive success at local, national or international levels or in aerobatic 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 GC different.



Wave flying above the Mynd



6 Recent Developments

In 2001 the club was closed for most of the course flying season due to the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease. The Club Committee was forced to close the Club following the National Trust's closure of the access roads onto the Long Mynd and by MAFF, acting as the Statutory Authority, denying our right to continue with our operation. Even though this meant that the Club faced losing £5000 per week, closure was considered to be the correct course of action by all concerned to mitigate the possible contagious effect on both our land and that of our neighbours of members arriving on the Mynd from infected parts of the country. Although we did manage to continue with a limited operation from neighbouring clubs at Sleaf and Shobdon the effect was disastrous for the business and resulted in a significant down turn of membership in subsequent years. We have not yet fully recovered the previous levels of membership though the trend is increasing slowly. Fortunately the club had maintained insurance against business disruption since the previous outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in 1967.

Historically the club always depended on an overdraft facility from the bank during the winter months but successive committees since 2001 have husbanded the finances and MGC now has a reserve fund of around £100,000. The end of year accounts for the year 2005-6 show an operating surplus of almost £10,000 but after allowances for depreciation this translates as a deficit of nearly £24,000. The current committee is clear that subscription revenue needs to at least cover fixed costs and for 2007-8 increased subscriptions by more than inflation and plan to do the same for the next few years until they do.

The club fleet has been reshaped to provide matched pairs of two seat and single seat gliders that will adequately take members from ab initio status through to competent cross country pilots. This involved selling one of the K23 single seaters and a K21 two seater, replacing them with a high performance DG505 two seat trainer.

MGC retains a Pawnee tug for aerotows maintaining that it is currently just about the only suitable aircraft for this use on our site. We would prefer a two or four seat aircraft that could be hired out when not towing to increase its revenue earning capacity. The Pawnee, originally built as a crop sprayer, is no longer manufactured and though spare parts are currently available from Argentina, they may not remain available for ever. The engine will inevitably require a rebuild or replacement after another 1500 hours or so (5-6 years at current usage).

We have the use of a Falke 2000 motorglider, privately owned but made available to the club at a favourable rate in return for free hangarage.



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The club has two main winches and two retrieve winches, the first pair built by Skylaunch but the second designed and built at the club by its own engineers with the help of club members. This system provides high quality and relatively inexpensive launching. They and the four Land Rover vehicles used to move equipment and gliders are all run on Liquid Petroleum Gas.

Damage to three of the two seat gliders over the space of two years has increased the insurance premiums by more than £13,000 per year and the excesses (at 10% of hull value) now range from £1100 to £5000 which has had a significant effect on the club finances. Further serious accidents in the near future could render the club fleet very difficult to insure at an acceptable level.

In 2002 the toilet and shower block were refurbished followed in 2004 by the reshaping and upgrading of the accommodation block to make a single bunk room and seven double rooms two of which have four single bunks. One of the two double rooms has a full en-suite and the other a half en-suite.

Over the winter of the 2005-6 club members refurbished the bar area and created a new access to behind the bar from the lounge area. At the same time the old briefing room was refurbished and the access door moved from the corridor between the club house and the hangar to the dining area.

In 2004 the club invested £50,000 in a DG505 bought from the Faulkes Foundation to promote the training and coaching of cross country flying. For the first two years, because of damage to it and other gliders in the fleet, it was not able to be used for this purpose as much as we hoped as it was substituting for other two seaters. The 2007 season was the first when it was used properly. It has been entered into a number of competitions and was used extensively during the Rockpolishers Inter Club League.

In 2005 an area of ground south of the caravan park, formerly know as the croquet lawn was levelled, fenced and had trees planted around the edges to form a camping area safe from curious sheep. This has proved to be very successful.



7 Aims and Objectives

In broad terms the key aims and objectives for each of the key areas of the club operation and the rationale behind them are:

Constitution

The MGC is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act and as such the constitution and memorandum are broadly similar to when the club was formed back in the 1930s. The club and the members needs have changed in that time and the constitution needs to be modernised. Indeed the time may be right for the club to reconsider its core legal structure and other business models may now be more appropriate if we are to succeed in attracting financial support from other sources. We might benefit from becoming an educational charity with a trading company that owns and operates the fleet and equipment and effectively leases them to the charity. Such a model can give benefits in terms of VAT and tax status. The review of the legal status should be a priority.

Aims and Objectives

- To review the current legal status of the club
- To investigate suitable alternatives
- To recommend to the membership any changes as may be required and with their agreement steer through the required legal changes.

Membership

The members are the club. It exists in order to enable the members to fly gliders and other aircraft and to enjoy the social aspects of the club and its facilities. The club has always operated a non-exclusive membership policy and welcomes members from all walks of life and social background, male and female, young and old. At its peak in 1999 the club had 234 of which 195 were full flying members. After 2001, the year of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, the numbers fell to 177 and 157 full flying members by the end of the 2003/4 season. This reduction in membership was reflected throughout the movement across the UK. Since then, due to a determined effort by each subsequent management committee numbers have increased again to 186 and 173 at the end of the 2006/7 subscription year. The significant decline has been in the number of Social members.

Social members do not bring in much revenue but, as they are often the family of full flying members, they do make it easier for them to spend time at the club. However the Registrar of Friendly Societies imposed limits on the number of social members because not having shares they have no say in the running of the club. This is a



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compelling reason to review the legal status of the club and change it if it would prove beneficial.

Our current churn rate, the proportion of members that do not renew at the year end over the last 8 years has varied from a high of 36% to a low of 5% with an average of 22%. Although this probably compares favourably with most member sports clubs reducing this number by half would give the club an annual increase in membership of more than 15.

The membership distribution is untypical of most other gliding clubs that tend to have a fairly narrow catchment area. Because of the unique nature of the Long Mynd site and its year round operation it draws members from a very wide area. It currently has members that live in London, the south coast, Bristol, Newcastle, Scotland and Portugal as well as the relatively nearby Merseyside, Cheshire and the West Midlands. This tends to encourage people to visit the club for several days at a time, especially over weekends. It also means that many of the members are not able to offer as much time to club management and organisation as they might wish because of their geographical location.

Aims and objectives

- To increase flying membership by at least 25 within five years to return to similar numbers enjoyed at the end of the last decade. 25 full members represent approximately £18k of additional revenue at today's prices¹
- To attract more social members especially family of flying members
- To reduce the churn rate to below 15%

¹ At today's prices, 25 x £365 subscriptions, 25 x 15 £7.50 winch launches, 25 x 10 hours glider (approx. £25/hr) = £18,187.50



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Trial Lessons

Trial Lessons (TLs) provide an important part of the club's income, more than £30k in 2006. Recent experience suggests that they are not price sensitive as we have substantially increased the cost over the last few years without any decrease in sales. We currently offer three types of TL at £95, £135 and £195. Around 40% of TLs sold are never taken up. In the past some members have complained that too many resources are given over to TLs at weekends. This has largely been overcome but the club must continue to be mindful of it. One way would be to do more of the TLs on weekdays and in the evenings.

Aims and objectives

- To increase the number of TLs sold each year until we reach capacity
- To continue to increase the prices until the take up reduces
- To find ways of improving the perceived value for money that the public receives, such as providing quality video footage of the flight from inside the cockpit
- To fly more of them during the week and in the evenings during the summer months
- To standardise the briefing procedure across all Basic Instructors (BIs) to reduce the time taken.
- To minimise the impact on club members and their perception that TLs detrimentally take club resources at weekends

Fleet

The club fleet is owned by the members and serves four major functions, to enable club members to learn to fly gliders safely, to 'hire' club gliders to members (and visitors) to fly solo if they do not own a glider privately, to enable the club to run training courses for member pilots and visitors during the summer months and to fly Trial Lessons. The choice of gliders in the fleet is governed by their uses.

Over many years we have used ASK21 two seat trainers for most of the club training from ab initio to pundit. These gliders are exceptionally well built, strong and have no characteristics that make them difficult to fly. Our professional instructors are of the view that nothing else would serve as well on our airfield for similar cost. We currently operate 2 ASK21s.

We also keep an ASK13, an older metal tube and fabric construction two seat trainer, primarily for spin training as the ASK21s do not spin easily.



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We recently purchased a low hours DG505 Elan high performance two seat glider to promote cross country training and coaching through the club.

In addition we operate an old ASK8 low performance single seat glider that is the natural progression from the ASK13, an ASK23 single seat version of the ASK21 and a Discus B high performance single seat glider.

The current like for like replacement value of these gliders is in the region of £174k.

The club is home to a privately owned Falke 2000 motor glider that is used for cross country endorsement preparation, navigation and field selection exercises, essential under the current BGA training regime.

The club also owns and operates a single seat Pawnee crop spraying aircraft used for aero towing operations which has just successfully completed its 50 hour check. While the aircraft is in good condition they are no longer made and spares, currently only available from Argentina, will become more difficult to source in the future. Because it is single seat it has limited opportunities for extra revenue earning by hiring out to club members, unlike a multi seat aircraft like a Robin, Raleigh or Super Dimona or Grob 109 Turbo, except for towing at competitions which takes it away from the club.

Aims and Objectives

- To retain a serviceable fleet of gliders and tug aircraft that are at least as good as at present
- To have a motor glider always available at short notice for cross country and field selection exercises
- To replace the Pawnee with a multi-seat, multi-use aircraft when one becomes available that we are confident will survive on our airfield
- To give the high performance two and single seat gliders priority for cross country training unless unserviceability of other aircraft makes it necessary for them to be substituted
- To brand the club aircraft and trailers with highly visible club logos and web site addresses

Training

The training regime is determined by the BGA and executed by our own instructors under the guidance and leadership of the Chief Flying Instructor (CFI). The CFI is a committee appointed position within the club, usually selected and groomed by the outgoing CFI and ratified by the BGA.



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The club offers two distinct paths for pilot training which operate alongside each other and cross over at times. The first is by residential courses held at the club between March and October run by two professional instructors. These courses can take up to 8 people per week, more with the assistance of another non professional instructor drawn from the club instructor pool. The typical cost of a five day course at mid season is £640 including all flying costs, accommodation and meals. These courses have the advantage of more rapid progression through the syllabus typically taking a pilot from ab initio to first solo inside two weeks. The club offers a guarantee on these courses against bad weather so that if a minimum number of hours flying time is not achieved the student can return to make up the time on another course later in the year. Courses were introduced more than fifty years ago to keep the airfield open and operating seven days a week throughout the summer for the benefit of the members. The MGC has a well deserved reputation for the quality of its courses and training and continues to sell course places in an environment where other clubs are no longer offering courses because they are uneconomic.

The other path is weekend training by non professional but equally qualified club instructors. These are members who have obtained instructor status, often over many years and generally are highly experienced pilots. Weekend training is free apart from the cost of glider hire and launching but is largely unstructured and can take a year for a pilot to achieve solo status at a cost often exceeding £1000. The club is currently experimenting with bookable weekend long training courses where a limited number of trainee pilots have the same instructor for two days. There is on each weekend day provision for a short course where the first four pilots to sign up in the morning are allocated an instructor and a glider for the whole day.

It is clear that members are unwilling any longer, as was prevalent twenty years ago, to spend a whole day on the airfield for as little as ten minutes flying.

Aims and objectives

- To continue to offer first class pilot training
- In the short term to improve the value for money aspect of the weekday courses
- In the long term to review the rationale and operation of the weekday courses to confirm their economic viability
- To review the operation of weekend training in order to meet the changing needs of members
- To consider greater emphasis on training within courses rather than at weekend to speed progress and increase member satisfaction



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Operations

The club is open seven days a week from March to end of October and then Thursday to Sunday and other suitable flying days through the winter months. It is run by a management committee elected by the membership yearly. It employs an office manager, two professional instructors, a part time housekeeper, one full time and two part time winch drivers. Catering is franchised. All other functions of the club and its business are fulfilled by the committee and the members on a voluntary basis.

At present the club is solely orientated towards sailplanes though there is a hang gliding club and a paragliding club operating from an adjacent field. The hang and paraglider pilots are often unable to fly because conditions, while suitable for sailplanes, are not suitable for their aircraft that have much narrower windows of operation. They represent a pool of potential members on our doorstep if the club is prepared to amend its objectives to accommodate them. Many sailplane pilots started out flying hang and paragliders as demonstrated by our current CFI. An influx of new members, if properly controlled, could, through additional revenues and economies of scale, secure the future of MGC.

We have in the past frowned on powered aircraft operating from the club, largely because of perceived objections from neighbours. However a recent new member, whilst interested in learning to glide, also owns an MT-03 Gyroplane that we allow to operate from the airfield.

Aims and objectives

- To operate the club in such a way that members can, within reason and with notice, fly on any day of the week throughout the year
- To maintain seven day operations between March and end of October
- To consider if there are opportunities to merge operations with the neighbouring hang and paragliding clubs without any detriment to the current membership
- To consider if there are other merger opportunities with local gliding clubs to give economy of scale
- To evaluate any benefits that may accrue from affording more opportunity for members to fly their power aircraft from the site

Catering

Catering at the Mynd is an essential part of what makes it the Mynd. There is a long tradition of good quality food available throughout the day when ever flying is happening and of evening meals for courses and others during the week. At weekends Saturday night supper at the Mynd is a legend with as many as 50 people



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attending for a three course meal. Even so it is hard for the professional caterers to make a living from the limited customer base especially as there is no real 'passing' trade. Successive caterers have provided a more professional offering but have also raised prices to try and make a living. Increased prices and fewer customers have led to a decrease in takings such that the club has to subsidise the catering in the winter to ensure its continued presence.

Several years ago the club separated the cost of catering from the course fees to make the courses look less expensive. This succeeded in filling the courses but removed the guaranteed income to the caterers. It may now be time to rethink this decision.

It is important to the club that the catering is there and available at all times that members want it. For many cross country pilots this means being open and supplying packed lunches and water before the normal lunch time so that they can take it with them. Equally, late returns after land outs often mean hungry pilots and crews. The course members should be able to expect to buy sandwiches, snacks and hot drinks at any time of the day. Evening parties should be able to get a meal when they finish.

The economics of making sufficient profit for a commercial operation has meant a slide into limited opening times, increased costs and not opening at all when there are only a few people requiring meals.

The club needs to make some serious decisions regarding how the catering is run. It is such an important function of the club and its ethos that it may now be time to consider taking the catering back in house and paying staff to run it. The initial objective should be to provide an acceptable service to the members at prices they are willing to pay even if as a cost centre it only breaks even. The club should be prepared to operate the catering at no profit if necessary for two years while building back the customer base that it has lost. More people staying for dinner will encourage more people to fly at weekends increasing revenue from our core business as well as the spin offs. When we get back to regularly feeding 30 or 40 people on Saturday night we can consider once more making a reasonable profit from the catering.

At the same time we should evaluate the catering staff being responsible for running, stocking and staffing the bar. The club should consider paying for part time bar staff at least on Friday and Saturday nights if and when the numbers using the bar justify it.



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Aims and objectives

- To review thoroughly the operation of the catering franchise
- Actively to promote corporate events, evening parties, members celebrations that bring additional customers to the catering and generate more revenue
- To consider the viability of encouraging members of the public to use the catering facility
- To reconsider including catering costs in the course fee
- To evaluate taking the catering provision in house
- To consider taking the operation of the bar into the catering
- To ensure that the catering is available most of every day from at least 0800 to 2100
- To take steps to secure the future provision of quality affordable catering at the club

Motor Transport

Motor Transport (MT) is the part of the club that operates and maintains the launch winches, retrieve winches and the ground vehicles, all of which are powered by LPG. The club owns two main winches, two retrieve winches, three Land Rovers and a Range Rover. The latest main winch and one of the retrieve winches were both designed and built by the senior winch driver/engineer with the help of some of the members. The MT section is staffed by three winch drivers/engineers. Traditionally we have only allowed the professional winch drivers to operate the main winches but the retrieve winches are always operated by members who have been properly trained on them. This can give rise to operational problems when the drivers are sick, on holiday or need to take a break for lunch. Again, traditionally, the Mynd stops launching at the best part of the day for lunch which can give rise to dissatisfaction amongst the cross country pilots who want to get away at exactly the same time.

Recently this has been ameliorated by using the aerotow tug for launching at lunch time and the club is trialling training selected members as auxiliary winch drivers at this time.

It is undoubtedly true that due to the exceptional skills and dedication of the paid MT staff the club is blessed with one of the best launch systems available anywhere in the country but as the senior MT staff approach retirement the club must make sure that there is an equally skilled and experienced replacement online.



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Aims and objectives

- To maintain a launch system that is at least equal to that currently in place
- To establish a succession plan for the senior winch driver/engineer
- To consider if a combination of professional and member winch drivers is a viable alternative
- To make possible the continuation of winch launching throughout the day

Buildings

Most of the building on the airfield are over 50 years old and are showing signs of their age. The hangar is of an old design and while waterproof and still serviceable it is no longer big enough to house the club fleet without considerable skill in packing. The tightness of the pack increases the likelihood of damage and makes getting any single glider out of the hangar impossible without removing most of the others.

The club house and the rest of the buildings do not come close to meeting current environmental standards. The lack of adequate insulation makes the quiet room and bar very cold in certain wind directions.

The office and associated storage is now far too small to meet the operational demands.

The accommodation block, toilets and showers have been improved over recent years but we could fill more rooms and increase revenue if more were available.

The workshops are in poor condition and leak and flood heavily in bad weather.

We need a proper briefing room big enough to sit up to 60 people equipped with modern digital projection equipment.

Replacement of some or all of the buildings must be a major strategic priority over the next ten years.

Aims and objectives

- To develop a phased and fully costed plan for the improvement/replacement of all the buildings within the next twenty years
- To enter into dialogue with the local authority and other planning agencies about the likelihood of success of a planning application and to see if there are opportunities to offer something in return in the way of improved public access to the buildings or catering or a small exhibition centre interpreting the history, geology and natural history of the Longmynd for the public
- To involve the planning agencies in the development process



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- To create and fill a committee position with the sole responsibility of fundraising, a key part of the job to be identifying and applying for grants
- To draw up a design brief and performance specification for the new buildings
- To establish a phased programme of building refurbishment and/or replacement
- In the short term to make the workshop buildings waterproof

Airfield

For as long as many of us can remember the airfield and grounds have been maintained by the members and particularly by one long standing committee member who has had overall responsibility. The club is fortunate in having some members who are farmers who have been able to help with machinery and supplies but we still often have to pay for professional work in laying drains, levelling, rolling and reseeding. It never has to mow the grass as a local farmer has the right to graze a limited number of sheep but it does occasionally have to cut the heather next to the landing areas.

The active parts of the airfield are crossed in places by public footpaths and bridleways. Under the CROW legislation it is not marked as unrestricted free public access, walkers and riders must stick to the acknowledged rights of way.

The airfield is crossed by a road that gives access to the club buildings and car parks. This creates additional safety issues when launching to the west or landing to the east and restricts the ability to maintain separation between the winch launch area and the aerotow run when launching to the south.

Aims and objectives

- To operate the launch equipment in such a way at all times to minimise impact on and damage to the airfield
- In the interests of public safety to consider in detail alternative routes for the roads and rights of way that cross the airfield
- To open dialogue with the authorities to discuss any such relocation



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Services

The club house is served with a single phase electrical supply and BT telephone lines, though both are liable to failure during bad weather and in the winter. The wiring in the club, while having been checked recently and approved for insurance purposes, is still in places less than perfect and needs a complete overhaul.

There is no mains drainage and most of our water is collected from a spring on the west face. Some water is pumped from a spring source on the east face of the hill. This pump is diesel driven and prone to regular failure and every summer the club is required to be careful with its water consumption. There is no mains gas supply the club being reliant on LPG.

The club office, clubhouse, accommodation block and caravan park are served with wireless internet connection via the BT lines. By modern standards this is a relatively slow connection but due to the distance from the exchange is unlikely to improve significantly until BT lays new copper wire to the club.

Aims and objectives

- To replace the water pump with an electrically driven system to ensure a regular water supply
- In any new building proposals to investigate becoming self sufficient in power generation by utilising geothermal, wind, solar generation or a combination of the three.

Finance

The members of the club are effectively share holders of a small business turning over around £250k a year. It is incumbent upon the management committee to run the business in such a way that it makes surpluses that can be husbanded to provide for the future. With some big projects on the horizon the club's current financial position, though healthy, will not sustain even modest improvements on the scale envisaged. Future committees will have to make hard choices between financing the type of club we all currently enjoy or changing the way the club operates to meet its ability to pay for it.

Like any small business, accurate and timely management accounts are the key to forecasting and planning. The present committee is seeking to put such accounting practices in place but it is taking too long and at the time of writing are not yet functional.

Because the club's finances are so weather dependant members in the future may have to face up to paying increased subscriptions to cover the fixed cost of the



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operation thereby reducing the club's exposure to operating at a loss when the revenue earning parts of the business are adversely affected.

Alongside this need to harvest greater income from subscriptions there is of course the continuing need to be mindful of increasing overheads and, where possible, reducing them.

Other clubs have successfully applied for grants from public funding to help in their development programmes. MGC has not to date had much success in securing significant grant aid largely due to the time it takes to put an application together and having someone with sufficient grasp of the application process to steer it through the politics. The committee should seek to appoint, co-opt or elect a member with expertise to steer the process as soon as possible.

Aims and objectives

- As a matter of urgency to put in place accurate and effective accounting procedures that will give the committee management accounts on a monthly basis
- To improve the extent to which fixed costs are covered by fixed income and thus reduce the impact of direct income lost due to adverse weather
- To explore all other revenue earning possibilities and to implement any which seem viable

Weekend Operations

In common with most other gliding clubs in the UK MGC has seen a marked decline in attendance at weekends. At the same time it is becoming more difficult to get instructors and ground crew to attend for their duty days allocated on the published rota. This is due to a number of factors including the poorer weather, better weather forecasting, increased cost of travel and the fact that we are all more cash rich and time poor. The two are inextricably linked; if we cannot present a full operational crew at the weekend then the members will not come because they expect not to be able to fly. If there are fewer members at the weekends the crew are less inclined to turn up. Fewer people mean fewer launches which means less revenue.

We have relied for many years on training our members at weekends while providing courses that are predominantly filled with members of other clubs or beginners. Perhaps this is not the most efficient, satisfying or cost effective method and the club should review and consider other options such as not doing any training at weekends (except for site, currency and annual checks) and moving all training to the courses with the professional instructors



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Aims and objectives

- To encourage members to attend at weekends
- To consider ways of improving crew attendance
- To evaluate the concept of rewarding the duty crews, financially or otherwise
- To consider radical changes to the weekend operations

Merchandising

The club has a captive audience for merchandising with the potential for up to 260 course places and around 300 trial lessons each year, plus some 200 or so members and visiting pilots. It has always had some T shirts, polo shirts and sweatshirts for sale but these have never been properly displayed or marketed. It is a few years since the last designs were produced.

Members like to wear something that identifies them with gliding in general and MGC in particular. When worn away from the club it is good publicity. Sale of merchandising is a modest income earner. Course and trial lesson participants should be encouraged to leave with an item.

Aims and objectives

- To design a new range of merchandising to be available before the start of the 2008 course season to include fun T shirts, polo shirts, sweatshirts and beanie hats
- To clear existing stock
- Produce the means to display securely the range of merchandise within the club house near the office
- Review and if necessary renew designs every two years

Advertising and Promotion

The club spends around £6k a year on advertising (including some costs related to one off promotions) which together is less than 2.5% of turnover. The quality of the advertising is high due to unpaid support from club members who have professional skills in design and print buying but if these skills were no longer available in the future the club would have to budget for paying outsiders to substitute at a cost in excess of £5k per year. Most of the bought advertising is in both the BGA magazine *Sailplane and Gliding* (6 insertions a year mostly promoting courses and winter flying at the Mynd) and in the local press leading up to Christmas (membership and trial lesson vouchers as Christmas presents) and leading up to open days usually in April.



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The quality of leaflets, flyers, brochures, newsletters and other promotional material is also high and maintains a solid corporate image due to the same unpaid volunteer input from members with design and production skills.

The club website is comprehensive, looks professional and is updated regularly. It is maintained by one member who regularly updates it. About half of all the trial lesson vouchers sold each year are bought via the web site. There are opportunities to develop the website further for online booking of trial lessons and gliders/instructors at weekends, course places, payment of subscriptions and renewals, an online shop to sell merchandising, secure member only areas with online log books, forums for instructors, competitions, winter wave flying, cross country coaching, etc. but these opportunities also bring potential dangers if the only person that understands the mechanics of the website is no longer available. Such development is beyond the expertise of the current webmaster.

At present the club fleet is not 'branded'.

Aims and objectives

- To maintain spending on advertising and promotion at least at current levels uplifted each year for inflation
- To establish a succession plan and introduce new members to 'understudy' the key roles of marketing, design and production
- To plan the succession of a new webmaster within the life of this strategy
- To brand the club fleet by application of club logos and website address to all gliders and trailers
- To make sure that all involved understand the importance of corporate image and encourage its application throughout the organisation
- To create a design manual for the business that clearly details the corporate image, typefaces and their uses in print, advertising and promotion such that the corporate design strategy can be continued well into the future

Succession Planning

So much good work is done by each successive committee it is vitally important that what has been learned is passed on to future committees. As such the club keeps good records and these are available when required. Equally important though is that the knowledge and understanding of individuals is passed down to those that succeed them in whatever role in the club. It is vital that every member of the committee identifies and encourages someone from the wider membership to stand for election and to take over their role when they retire from the committee.



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It is likely to become harder and harder to recruit committee members over the coming years as people become less inclined to volunteer, either because of lack of time or because of the fear of litigation, however misplaced that fear may be. However the club must overcome this difficulty without relying on the same few people to do all the jobs. It is not hard to imagine how the sudden loss or incapacity of a key person could create severe operational difficulties for the club.

Succession planning applies equally to all the committee posts and responsibilities and also to the staff posts and support services.

Aims and objectives

- To ensure that all the committee posts are 'understudied' by another member who would be willing to stand for election to committee at some stage to seamlessly continue the work of that committee post when the present incumbent retires



Andy Holmes first flew gliders at the Mynd before he was 16 years old and is now a commercial pilot.



8 Key Strategies

Having considered the current situation, carried out a SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) analysis (see Appendix A), held a series of strategy meetings at committee level and having considered the aims and objectives to fulfil the club's role for the future, the following issues have been identified as requiring key strategic attention for the next five years.

Membership

The club will continue to advertise, promote and market its services and facilities locally and throughout the gliding movement to increase the number of members. It will seek the views of the membership to ensure that it is adequately providing the services and facilities that they want. It will continue to maintain a close dialogue with new members to monitor their progress and highlight any perceived failings in the system. It will contact members that fail to renew at the year end to find out why. It will explore expanding the membership through creating new categories of membership. It will act on all these findings.

Training

The club will review the training process and methods currently in place and explore new methods of training from ab initio to competitions. It will look at the instructor corps and see what can be put in place to encourage new instructors and retain experienced ones. It will particularly look at the weekend instructor and ground crew operation and consider if there are other ways of doing things that more closely meet the aspirations of instructors, ground crew and the members.

Financial Oversight

The club will put in place a robust financial reporting system that provides the executive committee with understandable management accounts on a regular basis. On the basis of these management accounts the committee will set financial targets and set spending budgets ahead of the start of the next financial year.

Airfield Operations

The club will seek to address issues of the positioning of roads and public rights of way across the airfield to improve public safety. It will consider if there is any advantage in moving the car park further south to enable potential expansion of the buildings on the current car park site enabling the provision of catering services for the general public separate from the club facilities.



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Buildings Renewal

The club will establish a robust plan for a phased renewal or renovation of the buildings within a reasonable timescale. It will produce a design brief and performance specification for such renewal or replacement that includes improving access and use of the club facilities within the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 2005). It will open a dialogue with the relevant planning authorities and other agencies to see what is possible and include those authorities and agencies in the development process. It will start the process of understanding the cost of renewal and how the development plan will be funded. It will seek to establish an incremental phased development programme.

Fundraising

To date the MGC has taken little advantage of the public funds that have been on offer through the Lottery Fund, Sports England and other agencies to subsidise the cost of developments, though it has been in receipt of grants in the past. Such funds have been used by other clubs to pay for purchase of gliders, equipment and buildings. However it requires someone to champion the process who understands the often demanding requirements of the application process and the politics of the funding agencies. The committee should seek to appoint, co-opt or elect a member with expertise to steer the process as soon as possible. It also has to find from reserves the matching funding that will be required.



The Mynd is a beautiful place at all times of the year



9 Priorities

The priority for achieving these stated key strategies is as follows:

1 Establish proper reporting procedures for management accounts

The strategic decisions made by future management committees depend on them having available accurate reports of the current financial situation and reliable forecasts of imminent expenditure. Getting these reports in place and functioning is the pre-eminent priority.

Target date: December 2007

2 Appoint a fundraiser reporting to committee

The committee should, as soon as possible, seek to appoint, co-opt or elect a member with expertise to identify funding opportunities, identify suitable funders, write the applications and steer the grant applications.

Target date: January 2008

3 Review training and weekend operating procedures

Part of the job of recruiting and retaining members is to make the training as effective as possible, in terms of cost and time, and to identify and eliminate areas of stagnancy in the pilot development process.

Target date: Dec 2008

4 Increase membership

More members means more revenue, more people to do things, more volunteers for future committees, more instructors and more ground crew. Seeking and implementing the means to increase significantly the total membership, by recruitment and by reducing the churn rate, is key to making the club thrive. Within the current club structure a total membership of 220 is sustainable.

Target date: April 2010

5 Address the issues of public rights of way across the airfield

In the interests of public safety we must try to separate the unwary public from the active airfield.

Target date to implement: summer 2011



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6 Lay the ground for the renewal of the buildings

Raising the money and support from the varied involved agencies and stakeholders will be a long and difficult job and needs to be started as soon as possible with a view to a redevelopment project starting by 2017.

Target date: to open dialogue April 2009
to begin redevelopment by April 2017



10 Appendices

APPENDIX A SWOT analysis

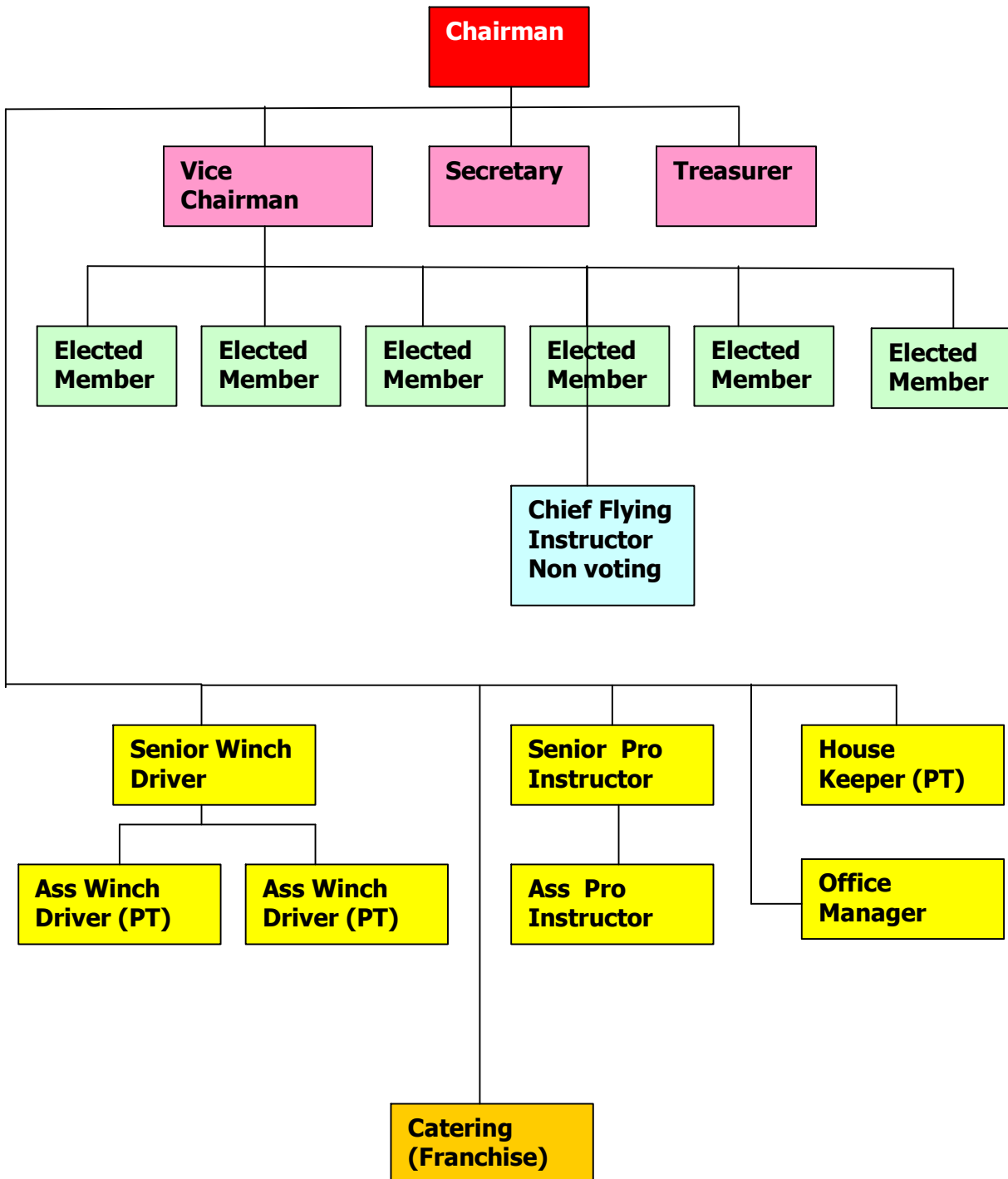
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Long established history Good picturesque location Largely unrestricted airspace 1450' west facing 5m long ridge Thermal, ridge and wave Own 140 hectares with guaranteed tenure Large unrestricted landing area Established club house with accommodation Long history of running training courses Well structured fleet for training progression Cash in bank – no overdraft in winter months Winter operations, often useable when others are waterlogged 7 day a week catering (summer) Professional launch, MT and instructing staff Professional office manager Quality web presence Quality marketing, advertising and PR Good corporate image Trial lessons highly popular Wide range of professional skills among membership Significant proportion of membership are female</p>	<p>Big club facilities with medium club membership Buildings rapidly reaching end of useful life Restricted development potential Unpredictable local weather system Road can be impassable in winter Restricted hangarage Restricted caravan park license Poor quality and unreliable telephone/internet service Access roads can be daunting Public rights of way across airfield Road bisects north end of airfield Courses not always offering value for money Reliant on professional winch staff for launching Often stop for lunch at best time of the day Recent accident history inflating insurance costs No disabled facilities in buildings or fleet Lack of adequate briefing/lecture room facilities Some close neighbours object to noise from tug and motorglider Not enough to do on site if not gliding Inadequate water supply during summer months</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS



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<p>Bring hang and paragliders into club membership</p> <p>Develop other "public" facilities in partnership with other agencies</p> <p>Become an accredited training site under new EASA regulations</p> <p>Attract grant support for developments especially improvements to buildings</p> <p>Bring "access" facilities up to date</p> <p>Explore broadening the offer so not reliant solely on gliding revenue e.g. more accommodation, cycle hire, walking centre, interpretation centre etc</p> <p>Encourage other light power aviation uses</p>	<p>Bring hang and paragliders into club membership (for some members)</p> <p>Increased numbers of hang and paragliders could make flying gliders difficult</p> <p>Decreasing membership</p> <p>Fail to become accredited training site in future if the current situation changes and lose ab initio members</p> <p>Major fire in buildings</p> <p>Repeat of Foot and Mouth or similar while uninsured</p> <p>Another major accident could render club fleet insurance premium too high to afford</p> <p>EASA regulations make gliding more expensive, less attractive and reduces membership</p> <p>Increasing fixed costs require increasing subscriptions</p>
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APPENDIX B
Organisation and management





APPENDIX C
Executive Committee Responsibilities

The club is a company registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1893. It consists of flying members, social members, associate members and non flying members. Social members and associate members do not have a vote.

The committee consists of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, the Treasurer and the Secretary who are the Officers of the club. There are also six committee members. All are elected annually by the vote of the members at the AGM.

The committee has the power to co-opt members for a fixed term.

The CFI is invited to attend the committee meetings to report on flying matters and to contribute to debate but does not have a vote unless independently elected by the membership to the committee.

The current committee members have adopted responsibilities which include:

Charles Carter	Chairman , staff, catering
Jon Hall	Vice Chairman , Membership, PR, Webmaster, Design and Publications
Keith Mansell	Treasurer
Andrew Sherrington	Secretary
Chris Ellis	Marketing, Advertising and Merchandising
Howard Bradley	Airfield and Grounds
Clive Jones	MT
Mike Witton	
Allan Reynolds	(co-opted), Buildings



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Notes: