

MIDLAND GLIDING CLUB

Strategy 2025-2030



MGC Strategy 2025-2030

Introduction

The Midland Gliding Club with its unique geographical location on top of the Mynd, illustrious history in the gliding movement and enthusiastic members, many of whom travel long distances, passing many other gliding clubs on the way, remains a vibrant busy club, but will need to adapt and change to remain at the top of the sport.

This strategy was developed through a series of face-to-face and online consultations with members between October 2024 and April 2025. The general consensus was that it does most things very well and doesn't need radical change. But short-term incremental improvements in some areas, while exploring more substantial changes in the longer term are necessary to ensure it continues to thrive.

The strategy is in two parts. The first provides a brief history, a vision for what we want the club to look like in 5 years' time, and the most important issues we will focus on and improvements we will make in the first year. The second part provides more detail in 15 strategic areas about what we would like the club to look like, and longer-term issues and improvements we would like to make. The strategy will be reviewed and revised and priority issues for action identified annually.

History

The Midland Gliding Club is one of the oldest gliding clubs in the UK. It was established in 1934 to serve the midlands area and has been at the forefront of gliding in the UK ever since. Sited on top of the Long Mynd mid-way along a 5-mile Westerly ridge the club enjoys spectacular views and unrivalled ridge, thermal and wave flying all year round. It has always been one of the premier training clubs in the UK and as smaller clubs withdraw from training the MGC has focused on that and runs professionally led 5-day courses from May to September and provides onsite accommodation and catering. With a modern fleet and 7-day operation from April to October it remains one of the leading gliding clubs in the UK for pilots at all stages. But with public rights of way across the airfield, an increasing number of walkers, cyclists, and horse-riders on the Mynd and visitors to the club cafe, and ageing infrastructure, ensuring safety on and off the airfield is increasingly challenging.

Vision

In 2030 the Midland Gliding Club will be a thriving friendly club supporting the full range of members' ambitions including training to solo, progress towards BGA achievements, cross-country and competitions, and instructor training. Its unique geographical location with easy access to large areas of unrestricted airspace and ridge, thermal and wave lift will provide one of the best soaring sites in the country. Its training fleet of 2-seaters and single seaters, efficient 7-day operations, a full-size glider cockpit simulator and professionally led 5-day courses from April to September will make it one of the leading gliding training centres in the UK attracting trainees from all over the world. Safety will underpin all of our operations. We will have professional maintenance and repair expertise on site and will provide training and access to maintenance facilities for private owners. With homely on-site catering and accommodation, the club will frequently host visiting groups from other clubs, will organise expeditions to other gliding sites, and will have a vibrant social programme. MGC's diverse and inclusive members will all actively contribute to the flying, maintenance and management activities necessary to keep the club running.

Priority areas for action

In 2025-26 we will develop plans to address the longer-term issues while taking practical action:

- **to improve field operations:** By 2030 we are aiming to be able to fly on every flyable day and to maximise the launch rate each day. To move towards that we will aim to start flying as early as practicable each day, whilst maintaining a robust flight safety culture and taking into account the experience level of members present on the field; and increase the number of and improve the training of main and retrieve-winch drivers.
- **to improve training:** By 2030 we want the MGC to be recognised as one of the country's leading gliding training centres. To move towards that we will reinforce a systematic training culture aligned with the Sailplane Pilots Licence; and improve our training options for days it is not possible to fly including using the simulator, ground school, reading and bronze test practice.
- **to increase the number of members:** By 2030 we are aiming to have over 150 full active local, regional, and national members. To move towards that we will actively follow-up after experience flights to promote introductory membership; steer people who inquire about experience flights who seem genuinely interested in learning about gliding towards introductory courses; and do more to respond to interest in gliding shown by passing walkers and cyclists.
- **to improve the airfield:** We want to ensure that the Mynd remains one of the UK's premier hill-top gliding sites and to protect its unique geology. To move towards that we will re-route the permissive path further to the West to reduce interruptions to launching; fix the fencing around the airfield to keep out the ponies which cause frequent delays; and improve the signage around the airfield to reduce public interference with launching.
- **to improve our infrastructure:** By 2030 we are aiming to have improved the hangar and maintenance facilities, and access and parking for the clubhouse. To move towards that we will clear out the old MT shed for members to use for maintenance and small repairs; provide individual metered power supplies to north trailer hitches; and improve the parking area and patch the access road.
- **to maintain the fleet:** The 2024 fleet meets current demand, but this may need to change if demand changes. The only urgent actions are to improve utilisation of single seaters; introduce standardised training on maintenance; and make arrangements with other clubs to improve members' access to a spinnable 2-seater.
- **to maintain the accommodation:** Decent comfortable and affordable accommodation is essential to support courses and general club activities. Our current accommodation is basically sound, and all we need to do in 2025-26 is to ensure that it is comfortable and well maintained.
- **to maintain the clubhouse:** The clubhouse with its spectacular views, long tables, and historic features is a key feature attracting members and visitors to the club. It is basically OK and all we have to do in 2025-26 is to keep it smart and tidy internally and externally to improve appearances for visitors and develop a long-term plan for improvement.
- **to provide glider maintenance training:** We aim to have professional onsite maintenance and repair services for both club and private gliders, and space for members to maintain their own gliders. The priority for 2025-26 is to organise glider maintenance training for club members (and clear out the old MT shed – as mentioned above).
- **to increase involvement:** All members are expected to contribute to the wide range of activities essential to support gliding. The priority in 2025-26 is to implement the involvement strategy recognising that not all members can contribute equally and new members need time to settle in.
- **to increase income:** In 2030 MGC we are aiming for a stable income of c.£400k p.a. and pricing mechanisms which are aligned with the market and deliver good value for money for members. The priority in 2025-26 is to deliver an excellent experience and good value on experience flights and courses and to encourage people to spread the word.

The Vice Chair will be responsible for overall oversight and annual review of this strategy, with operational committee members taking responsibility for short-term actions.

Strategic areas for the longer-term

The fleet

We will have an appropriate fleet of dual and single seat gliders and a motor glider and a full-size simulator to support regular instruction and post-solo development up to silver, courses and experience flights. The 2024 fleet of 2 K21s, 2 K13s (1 in reserve), 1 K23, 1 Junior, 1 K8 and 1 Falke meets current demand, though utilisation of single seaters could be improved, and the fleet composition may need to change if demand changes.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Increase utilisation of single seat gliders.
- Improve access to a spinnable 2-seater for training.
- Introduce standardised training on how to look after the fleet.
- Upgrade the simulator to Windows 11 and Condor 3 and smarten up the simulator room.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Have a fleet replacement strategy
- Ensure insurance continues to cover like-for-like replacement. (current)
- Facilitate access to high-performance gliders for cross country and competition training / experience for members who do not have their own gliders.

Launch mechanisms/equipment

We will have 2 reliable winches and retrieve winches and 2 heavy vehicles to tow them and 3 reliable glider towing vehicles with radios.

In the very short term, we need to continue the process of replacing the Vitaras with electric buggies.

Over the next few years we need to expand our aerotow options

Improving field operations

In 2030 we will aim to fly on every flyable day throughout the year! We will have flexible flying times including morning or evening slots. We will maximise launch rate through efficient management of launches. And we will continue to ensure the safety of members and visitors and walkers and cyclists.

In the very short term, we need:

- To solve the horse problem!!!
- More well-trained people on the winch and retrieve winch.
- Better training of pilots on laying off.
- To aim to start flying as early as practicable, whilst maintaining a robust flight safety culture and taking into account the experience level of members present on the field.

Over the next few years, we need to mobilise more resources for flying more mid-week flying days in the winter, broaden the number of members able to manage this and explore options to reduce interruptions by the public.

Training

In 2030 MGC will be recognised as one of the country's leading gliding training centres offering high quality training to members up to cross-country level, and for trainees on introductory days and 5-day courses, with volunteer and professional instructors (up to SPL examiner level). Our instructors will develop a personalised structured training program including flying, simulator and ground-school for each trainee, supported by MGC's own and BGA and other clubs' printed and online resources. We will

have specialised training programmes for juniors and for cross-country flying and advanced flying levels.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Reinforce a systematic training culture aligned with the SPL across all of the instructors and students – eg to have and with their instructor to update their logbooks every time they fly.
- Ensure we have appropriate BGA manuals and other training resources in stock for sale to trainees.
- Have better-organised training options for days it is not possible to fly including simulator training, ground school sessions, and structured reading (and tests?) of the bronze and beyond book.

Over the next few years, we will:

- Revise the MGC Mynd Progress and Logbook aligned with SPL to include references to a curated selection of appropriate training resources.
- Record ground-school lessons and develop an online library of training sessions.
- Explore interest in live online training sessions.

Mentoring

All members up to bronze, and members wishing to develop their cross-country, aerobatics and competition skills will be offered a more experienced member as a mentor. Mentors will be supported to develop a mentoring plan with their mentees. Progress will be monitored by a nominated instructor to ensure it is mutually beneficial and a new mentor identified if not.

In the very short term, we need to encourage more experienced members to provide mentoring for less experienced pilots and ensure all new members are encouraged to contact them and develop a longer-term plan.

In the longer term we need to develop a mentoring system, training for mentors and a mentoring monitoring system.

Expeditions

MGC will organise expeditions to other sites allowing members to experience different flying conditions and social interaction in new settings. They will include short trips to practice specific skills eg spinning and aerotows and longer trips to experience eg wave or mountain flying.

In the very short term, we need to capitalise on existing reciprocal links with other clubs whose members are keen to fly at the Mynd and strengthen club-to-club relationships (beyond existing individual-to-individual links) so members don't feel shy about taking up the opportunities.

Over the next few years, we need to extend the range of expeditions and improve communication about them to ensure they are as inclusive as possible and are arranged at the best time of year.

The airfield

We will ensure the Mynd remains one of the UK's premier hill-top gliding sites with well-maintained runways and we will work with the National Trust to preserve its unique geology, flora and fauna.

In the short term we need to:

- Continue to experiment with rolling the runways.
- Fix the fencing around the airfield.
- Improve the signage and be more assertive with visitors.
- Re-route the permissive path further to the West to reduce interruptions to launching.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Explore the possibility of selling land that we do not use.
- Explore deeper relations with the National Trust to find other ways of generating income from the unique geology, flora and fauna on the airfield.

Infrastructure

By 2030 we will have improved infrastructure to support flying including hangar and maintenance facilities, and access and parking for the clubhouse.

In the very short term, we need to

- Clear out the old MT shed and make this into a temporary clean and safe maintenance facility that members can use for maintenance and small repairs.
- Improve the parking area and continue to patch the access road.
- Provide individual metered power supplies to north trailer hitches.
- Establish low-power overnight charging points for EVs.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Review the options and develop a costed plan to improve or replace the hangar and older buildings (linked with development of the clubhouse).
- Look for grants and /or build up a fund for major improvements to the hangar (and clubhouse) and other buildings.
- Explore the possibility of re-surfacing and possibly re-routing the road to provide more direct access to the clubhouse.

The clubhouse

Our clubhouse with its spectacular views, long tables, and historic features will continue to be a key feature attracting members and visitors to the club.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Smarten up and tidy the clubhouse internally and externally to improve appearances for visitors.
- Provide a fridge, microwave and sink for members to use when catering is unavailable.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Establish a process and funding for continual maintenance of the unique features – the long tables and the floor – and regular re-decoration.
- Develop a plan for longer term development / maintenance of the clubhouse (linked with the hanger)

Catering

We will have decent wholesome all-day catering on site 7-days a week April – October, and on flying days November – March to serve members, course participants, people doing experience flights, visiting pilots, and other visitors to the Mynd.

We have just (in April 2025) commissioned a new catering provider and in the short term need to encourage club members to make use of this facility.

Over the next few years, we need to explore the legal, cultural and security issues around increasing catering to non-members as a way of ensuring that providing catering for members is economically viable for the caterers.

Accommodation

We will maintain our decent comfortable and affordable accommodation in the clubhouse and an attractive camping field primarily for use by club members and course participants.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Ensure the accommodation is in good condition and comfortable.
- Tidy up the camping field.
- Explore short-term options to extend the accommodation and camping for use by walkers and cyclists and other Mynd users.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Develop and implement a strategic plan and provide funds for maintaining and improving the accommodation and camping field.
- Explore options and legal implications for extending the accommodation as a source of income for the club and the caterers including registration of the camping field as CAMC certified location, and glamping pods.
- Establish an online booking system for the accommodation well integrated with catering and general administration (so we don't open it for a very small number of visitors).

Glider maintenance

We will have professional onsite maintenance and repair services for both club and private gliders, and space for members to maintain their own gliders.

In the short term we need to organise glider maintenance classes and workshops for members.

In the longer term we need to improve workshop space and facilities for members to maintain their own gliders (linked with improvements to the hangar, clubhouse and other buildings).

Increasing membership

In 2030 MGC will have over 150 full active local, regional, and national members and an annual turnover of less than 15%.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Smarten up the clubhouse to create an attractive environment for visitors and people on experience flights.
- Triage enquiries about experience flights to identify people seriously interested and encourage them to switch to an introductory course.
- Follow up people on experience flights who seemed interested to encourage them to sign up for an introductory membership.
- Review the website to encourage people with a genuine interest in gliding to opt for an introductory course rather than experience flight.
- Encourage more members to post on social media.
- Do more to respond to any interest shown by passing walker and cyclists.
- Develop a dashboard for the committee to be able to visualise membership trends and assess the effectiveness of marketing.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Reach out to other organisations who promote careers in aviation including HCAP, local ATC, through members in commercial airlines, to paragliding clubs and to other audiences likely to be interested.
- Explore the value of reaching out to less obvious audiences eg through local shows, corporate events, community groups, schools and home-educating groups and universities.
- Develop reciprocal relationships with other clubs whose members might be interested in hill flying, and could offer other experiences to MGC members, eg flat-filed flying, spinning, aerotow etc.

Increasing and diversifying income

In 2030 MGC will have a stable income of c.£400k p.a. and pricing mechanisms which are aligned with the market and deliver good value for money for members.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Ensure our prices remain in line with BGA vouchers and similar clubs but offer appropriate discounts to juniors and other members with limited resources.
- Continue to offer an excellent experience and good value on 5-day and introductory courses and experience flights and encourage people to spread the word.
- Capitalise on interest among passing walkers and cyclists etc eg through QR-code links to application forms and facilitating on-the-day flights.

In the longer term we need to:

- Develop a financial strategy that will support club sustainability while improving affordability for younger and senior members eg trial memberships etc.
- Explore the possibility of diversified income streams eg through opening the clubhouse to like-minded users like paragliders, and capitalising on resources, like the camping field and the location without undermining the club's main purpose.

Youth Engagement and Support for Juniors

In 2030 the MGC will be a recognised centre supporting junior gliding with over 20 18-25 and over 10 under 18 members, providing tailored training and support.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Ensure we have the mechanisms and culture to support junior members.
- Continue to provide an excellent experience for young people on HCAP courses.

Over the next few years, we need to

- Explore other methods to attract and retain juniors eg through GoGliding, partnerships with universities and reaching out to home-educated groups.

Centre for disability gliding

In 2023 MGC will be recognised as a centre for disability gliding providing training from ab-initio up to Bronze / SPL and beyond.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Gather feedback from disabled pilots who have flown at MGC.
- Explore the possibility of acquiring a disability adapted single seat glider
- Ensure the club has good access for people with disabilities

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Pursue grants to help develop facilities for disabled people eg a grant from sport England.
- Develop courses specifically for disabled pilots.

Management

In 2030 MGC activities will be efficiently and effectively managed by an appropriate and economic mix of professional staff and committee and club members.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Improve the definition of committee roles, new committee member induction and support and improve awareness of and coordination of committee and other member work.

- Ensure we have enough of the right professional staff to deliver current activities, that they have clear deliverables and receive the necessary support and oversight.
- Review and improve our IT infrastructure and systems to ensure we meet current security and GDPR requirements and our knowledge systems (Sharepoint and website etc) to ensure continuity and train staff and committee members to use them efficiently.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Review the committee structure and operation and the balance between officers and technical members, and develop clearer role definitions, induction and support mechanisms and a succession plan.
- Identify the most economic and effective type and level of professional staff needed to deliver the club's main income-generating activities, ensure roles are clearly defined and establish effective support and oversight.
- Develop better systems for the coordination and oversight of routine tasks and special projects to improve club facilities and operations

Safety

Continuous improvement in safety standards across all our operations is our highest priority. By 2030 we will have developed our reporting, analysis and communication processes to ensure members are promptly updated on safety improvements and our training and check requirements for pilots and winch operators will enable efficient scheduling of training and adoption of improvements.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Improve our incident reporting, data collection and analysis system.
- Establish a single location for all reports and decisions and improve communication to everyone associated with our operations.
- Broaden members' involvement in 'task groups' to ensure reliable oversight of safety critical estate.

Over the next few years, we need to develop:

- A central maintenance schedule so that inspection and service requirements are notified automatically and visible to members.
- Preventative maintenance schedules of essentials such as water and drainage, emergency equipment, vehicles and electricity supply together with an automatic notification system and records that the work has been carried out.
- An investment strategy to ensure infrastructure is well maintained and safe for club members and visitors.

Involvement

By 2030 all members will be expected to contribute to the wide range of activities essential to support gliding, with an established rota for running the field and clearly defined other tasks which members can own.

In the very short term we need to review, strengthen and implement the involvement strategy recognising that not all members can contribute equally, new members need time to settle in (and learn to glide) before being burdened with other responsibilities.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Extend the successful launch director system to include two other members to help with unpacking and packing the hangar and running the field to ensure safe and efficient flying.
- Continue to develop the member skills database to identify people with the necessary skills for existing and new tasks as they emerge.
- Explore other options to strengthen involvement eg reduced fees for those who have the time to contribute a lot, and reduced expectations for those who can't.

Club Culture and Atmosphere

In 2030 the Midland Gliding Club will continue to have a friendly, collaborative and inclusive culture welcoming diverse members from all walks of life and making them feel at home.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Support the new caterers to expand the range of events and attract new people to the club.
- Encourage passers-by to come in, enjoy the catering and learn about the club's activities eg by having a sign saying visitors are welcome.
- Maintain the club's vibrant range of social events like Saturday dinners, Christmas dinners and other social gatherings, and excursions, which foster a sense of community.

Over the next few years, we need to ensure that greater use of the club facilities by non-members is possible within the club rules and legal requirements and supports and strengthens the club's primary activity which is gliding.

Communication

In 2030 MGC will continue to have effective two-way face-to-face and online communication to maintain the club culture and atmosphere and support management and operations which will attract and retain members and contribute to enjoyable flying.

In the very short term, we need to:

- Increase the number of opportunities for members to contribute to management and strategic discussions.
- Continue to improve channels for collecting feedback from course members, people on experience flights and introductory days and members eg through a QR code feedback / comments system.
- Improve contributions to and attractiveness of the existing face-to-face and digital communication tools to keep members informed and engaged.

Over the next few years, we need to:

- Review existing methods of communication with members to ensure members can access the information they want and need through their preferred channel.
- Improve systems for adding to our contact database and then make better use of it for email campaigns to specific groups.
- Improve feedback from the committee eg through strengthening the monthly newsletter.