

2024-25 Chair's Annual Report



MGC Chair's Report FY2024 -25

In this report, I will start with the club's objectives, move on to the committee and staff, Eddie Humphries Legacy and then discuss the operational areas, what we are trying to achieve, and our challenges. I will conclude with a personal statement.

Returning to our club's fundamental objective is always good: "To foster and promote gliding and associated aerial sports and activities." This objective defines what we do.

Your committee is dedicated to achieving this objective and ensuring the Club's success. This involves commitment and hard work, which often goes unseen.

We should also appreciate the hard work and commitment of the club's staff, without whom we could not achieve our objectives.

I am sure I reflect the members' heartfelt appreciation and thanks for the committee's and staff's hard work.

I would also like to recognise the fallen eagles who made significant contributions to the club over the decades: Howard Bradley, Eddie Humphries, Jon Lewis, Bob Neill and Derek Platt.

Eddie Humphries Legacy

Talking of fallen eagles, Eddie Humphries died in March 2025. He left a very substantial legacy of £ 223,341 to the club, specifically for infrastructure renewal. I would just like to include part of an email to Linda, Eddie's long-term partner.

"I am taken aback at Eddie's generosity to the club. He loved the club and the club loved him. His generosity will allow us to improve the club's much-neglected infrastructure. He called me the morning after he re-wrote his Will, explaining what he had done and how he wanted the money to be spent. I then wrote to the club's executive committee explaining what Eddie said. We will ensure that the money is spent as he intended and that the family are involved.

We have started the process of wisely using Eddie's legacy by consulting the membership, commissioning reports to understand what is required, and changing the club's financial scheme of delegation to ensure rigorous scrutiny of how the legacy is used.

Operational areas

Now, let's move on to a review of the operational areas. There are more areas than committee members. If flying is the top of the pyramid, this illustrates the vast range of things that need to happen before you can attach the cable and take a flight.

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The Estate

The club owns 136 hectares of land on the Long Mynd - the typical gliding club uses no more than 30 hectares for gliding operations.

David Rance has been looking after the Estate – Airfield, Grounds, Roads, Paths and Fences. Fence posts and gates have been replaced, the access road has been patched, and heather has been cut back so it does not impinge on the airfield. David is currently considering resurfacing the road this year. He thinks the fence will last another five years.

Airfield Vehicles & Winches

Without Winches, we cannot launch gliders, and without airfield vehicles, we cannot move the gliders around the airfield. The reliability, availability, and serviceability of this equipment is vital.

Following a trial, we bought two electric “Nippers” to replace two Vitaras. They have proved successful on the field and in the workshop, as they require much less maintenance to keep them going.

Simon Adlard stepped into the role of winch master and has done a great job with his team.

Communications & Marketing

Witnessing the increasing number of members, our marketing team have done a fantastic job.

Marketing our services is vital, and Sarah Platt is taking the lead on this in her professional capacity. This work dovetails nicely with Sarah's work for the BGA to grow awareness and, hopefully, participation in gliding.

We have five social media accounts: Facebook, Instagram, X(Twitter), Threads, and YouTube. All accounts have increased their reach in the past year (Facebook and Instagram significantly), helping us market our experienced flights and courses and reach our members and other interested parties.

After four years, Rob Kronenburg is stepping down from the committee. Hopefully, he will continue to drive the club's monthly newsletter and the club's stand out magazine, Glide Angle.

Fleet

Over the past few years, we have significantly improved our fleet. This year, continued with the refinish of the K23 G-CLUV, extending its life considerably.

Unfortunately, the motor glider (G-KGAO) was lost after a significant overhaul. A replacement is now being sought.

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Rhys Williams has cut his teeth looking after the fleet this year; next year, he is planning to move on to IT.

Flying

The table below illustrates our flying compared to the post-pandemic peak (2022-23). It is no surprise that the weather and aircraft availability affected us.

Description	Flights	Flights (Post-Pandemic Peak)	Hours	Hours (Post-Pandemic Peak)
Club Two Seaters	3,252	3,531	800	768
Club Single Seaters	787	1,205	258	429
Club Motor Glider	12	111	5	87
Private Owner	770	1,363	948	1,755
Total	4,821	6,210	2,011	3,039

Consider the impact on income of 1,389 (22.4%) fewer flights and 221 (17.2%) fewer club fleet hours.

This was Andy Rands' first year as CFI. He and his team have done a fabulous job. We thank our instructors, ground crew, launch directors and winch drivers for making flying possible.

Hospitality

Across the movement, we are known for our accommodation, bar, and food.

Catering is fundamental to the club's viability. Without viable professional catering, it is difficult to see how the club could continue in anything like its current form. It is important we look after our caterers and treat them with the respect they deserve.

After David and Helen Crowson retired, we were fortunate to recruit Jessica Harding and her team. Jessica has become part of the Mynd family.

Keeping the accommodation and clubhouse welcoming and in good order is vital. Kiri Collins, Sue Sharpe and Debbie Williams have done a fantastic job over the last year.

Infrastructure

This year, Richard Bennett has continued to take control of our vast, underinvested infrastructure. In comparison, the fourth road bridge is a minor understatement. The list is endless; he needs as much help as possible.

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Eddie Humphries' legacy will help fund the considerable work that is needed. As an example, professional advice recommends that the hanger cladding be replaced within the next three years. There are also electrical upgrades required.

IT

Over the last five years, we have increased our investment in IT, enabling us to improve the efficiency of our operations. There are considerable opportunities for improvement, but this depends on people supporting the applications and physical infrastructure.

Operations

Many aspects of the club's operations need to be scheduled. Mark Sanders works tirelessly to ensure our operations run smoothly. While the most visible part is booking accommodation or a training session, his work extends to courses, scheduling instructors, and winch drivers. Most of this uses software Mark either helped develop or has written.

Club Strategy

John Young developed the strategy through a series of face-to-face and online consultations with members between October 2024 and April 2025. This document, reviewed annually, becomes the foundation of what we do. The strategy will inform the infrastructure renewal project.

The 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 available from the members' section of the website.

What are we trying to achieve?

While this is expressed differently in the Strategy, the result is the same.

Leave with a Smile

Fundamentally, we want everyone to leave with a smile and planning their return to the Mynd before they go through the gate.

Like anything worthwhile, gliding can be frustrating. We must make our members' experiences as good as possible.

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Preferred club and destination

Our assets base and location mean the club cannot survive as a local or soaring club. That market is not big enough to pay the bills. We must be much more.

We want to be recognised as one of the country's leading gliding training centres. We are fortunate to be able to build on our unique heritage and reputation. For example, our summer courses fill a growing gap created as other clubs shrink and gliding consolidates into fewer clubs. Today, there are 20% fewer gliding clubs than twenty-five years ago.

We also must expand what we do, such as disabled gliding and junior gliding.

We must outcompete our competitors and continually improve what we do so that pilots choose the Mynd over clubs closer to home.

Keep gliding affordable

Over the last five years, real GDP per capita has fallen by 1.9%, squeezing the discretionary spending we depend on. We must be careful when increasing our prices, as cost increases could be counterproductive in this environment.

We benchmark our prices against similar clubs, so price should not be the reason to choose another.

To make the finances work, we must evolve our operation. We are a mutual, where every full member has an equal share and a vote. So, rather than substantially increasing prices, it makes sense for members to become more involved in the vast range of factors that go into taking a flight. This is simply the best way of keeping our prices down. It is also great fun, and you get to learn new things.

Operate Safely

Gliding is an assumed-risk sport. Accidents have a terrible impact on everyone involved, so we must do everything possible to operate safely.

We have a no-blame safety culture, and we encourage reporting incidents (airside and landside) to improve the safety of our operations.

The incident reporting system we introduced using Microsoft Forms is paying dividends. The more incidents reported, the greater our understanding and the safer our operation will become.

Martin Sloan, supported by Mike Greenwood, continued improving our operations' safety, analysing incident reports to find the root causes and finding solutions to minimise risk.

Our challenges

Now, let's look at two of our key challenges:

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Succession of knowledge, skills and people

We depend on knowledge and skills passed on from year to year and from generation to generation. Vital knowledge is not written down, and even when it is written down, it must be accessible when needed. We need to improve the way knowledge and skills are passed down.

Make the Club manageable

It is easy to think we are “just a club”. But what is involved? Consider, for example: -

- We own and are responsible for 136 hectares of land, surrounded by a 7.5km perimeter fence. The land is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We have an agreement with a local farmer who has grazing rights. Additionally, public rights of way cross our land. We are responsible for safeguarding the land's heritage assets, including Bronze Age hut circles and World War Two glider traps.
- Maintain regulatory compliance with BGA, CAA, FSA, HSE.....
- Employ and manage staff
- Administer our operations
- Maintain buildings
- Maintain vehicles and winches
- Maintain and hire aircraft
- Market our services
- Launch gliders
- Offer Flying Instruction

How do we manage everything that needs to be managed so that they do not burden any individual or group? The club has an annual rhythm. Every year, we can improve what we do. What can you contribute to?

The answer is Volunteering, or as I would prefer to express it, Involvement. Being involved is a great way to apply the expertise you already have or learning new skills. In either case, it is a brilliant way to have a great time and contribute to society.

On a personal note

Having completed one year on the committee as membership and marketing, five years as secretary, five years as treasurer, and three years as chair, this is my last annual report. I would like to thank all the great people I have had the pleasure of working with over those fourteen years. I hope you will agree with me that it is time for fresh energy to drive the club in its ninth decade.

James Moore

Chair

12th March 2026