

**ESSEX GLIDING CLUB**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2022

1700 hours, Ashen Village Hall, Ashen, CO10 8JS, Essex

Twenty four Members of the club were in attendance of which the following Committee were present: John Whitwell, Tony Brook, Dave Hertzberg, Vince Earl, and Callum Hitchings

Apologies received from: Will Burry, Steve Jessup, Mike Harris, Kevin King, Geoff Looser, Paul Smith

Meeting commenced 1700 hours

**1. Welcoming remarks:**

Chair opened the meeting. Stressed that it was a meeting for all members and everyone's opinion mattered and this was an opportunity for them to be heard. Everyone is very welcome, however a special welcome to Paul, great to see you.

**2. Chairman's Statement:**

Firstly I have great pleasure in presenting this year's Chairman's Cup. It goes to someone who does a lot for the club, consistently shows good judgement and has a great enthusiasm for the sport and for this club, presented to Callum Hittchings.

Wished to thank on behalf of the club Andy and Mike for their tireless work in bringing the tug back to flying condition. Also wished to thank our tireless Chief Flying Instructor (CFI) Dave for the many hours he has dedicated to the club. Also offered thanks to the tug pilots and the winch drivers

Remarked we describe ourselves as a small, friendly club. We are certainly friendly but we don't perhaps need to be small to be friendly. So should we lose the 'small' description? And should we not grow in order to 'future proof' ourselves? Whilst this was a theme we would doubtless discuss again later in the meeting he wished now to bring to clubs attention a recent move by the committee which was to increase the top end of the junior member's age band to 25. It was hoped the savings this offered to our junior members would aid both recruitment and retention.

Reminded members there are currently not one but two BGA consultation exercises underway. Strongly advised members to read the material circulated regarding both exercises and to reply to both. As you will know one is with regard to licencing and the other concerns medical requirements. Please reply to both, however if you are pressed for time and can only reply to one then I recommend you reply to the medical requirement exercise.

**3. Treasurers Statement**

The Treasurer reported that the financial situation was generally satisfactory. Our forecast expenditure of £75963 over the year compares favourably with our projected income of £74925. Wished to draw member's attention to a positive cash balance of some £126,800. Whilst this was satisfactory it should not all be considered as all being available for immediate spending. For example, within this sum some £70,000 was earmarked for a 'self-insurance' fund as there were a

number of high value items belonging to the club for which insurance could not be obtained, one example being the fuel bowser and all the 'buildings' etc. and this sum was required in the event of any or all of these items requiring replacement.

Also drew the clubs attention to the large sum spent this year on tug refurbishment and maintenance this financial year i.e. some £16,000. This was a very large amount but it was hoped this was a 'one off' and no further significant expenditure would be required on the Pawnee for some time to come.

#### **4.Tariff for the year**

In line with the view that the financial situation was generally satisfactory no increase in the member's fee was proposed for the year 2023/2024 i.e. it would stay at £350 per annum.

Changes to any other charges, including Aerotows, would be determined by the committee nearer the commencement of the new season due to the current fluctuation in commodity prices. However trailer storage fees would remain the same as for this year.

#### **5.Appointments to the Committee**

Following members presented for re-election and were elected by the members by open poll.

John Whitwell (Chairman), Vince Earle, Will Burry.

Additionally Tony Brook and Steve Jessup, who currently undertake the role of Treasurer and Secretary respectively following the resignation of previous post holders presented for re-election in their new roles and were duly appointed.

Chair - advised that the committee if re-elected had determined to co-opt Callum Hitchings as lead Junior Flying member, to serve on the committee until the next AGM. Accordingly Calum was now the lead junior member.

#### **6.Resolutions proposed by the committee**

Nil.

#### **7.Resolutions proposed by any member**

Nil.

#### **8. Minutes of 2021-2022 AGM.**

Presented and accepted as a true and fair record of this meeting. Proposed by Gary, seconded by Rob.

#### **9. Chief Flying Instructors (CFIs) Statement**

CFI -We have had a great season. This was despite the fact that for much of the year we were missing the tug however we still managed to fly the vast majority of the trial lessons booked. This was due to a great effort by many members but special thanks must go Tony and Cathy for successfully managing this. Also my thanks to Allen Cherry for the loan of his Marianne and Tony for the loan of his K13.

We didn't quite manage to get five new members flying solo as we did last year but we did manage three which is still a very satisfactory number. My congratulations therefore to our new solo pilots Amy, Kieran and Josh. Also congratulations to Steve Jessup who is now a qualified IFP. To Gary for

Silver Height and distance UK XC Diploma part 1. Also to Nigel for his 5 hours silver height and Bronze Cc and Nick for the Bronze C.

For me one really pleasing aspect is the average age of the solos which I think is around the 21 mark.

I am also very happy to be able to give a warm welcome to the latest member of our instructor team i.e. Harry, so congratulations to Harry and also my thanks to him for putting together and delivering a very useful and well received series of Zoom lectures over the winter covering the syllabus for the Bronze qualification. Finally my thanks to all the instructor team who as ever give up their time and opportunities to fly solo themselves to enable others to fly.

I must now remind members about the absolute importance of obeying Airspace regulations. As you will know we had an airspace violation this year. Whilst this is serious in itself, potentially further serious consequences for both the member concerned and the club were avoided by it being reported immediately to the duty instructor who in turn brought it to the attention of the BGA and CAA as soon as practicable. I must strongly advise you all to have a good working knowledge of the local airspace and the relevant area if you go cross country. But if you do breach airspace regulations you absolutely must let the duty instructor know straight away.

Advised anyone who is at least is a Bronze and has a cross country qualification should apply for a BGA licence without delay.

We have had a lengthy flying season at Ridgewell this year but that is inevitably drawing to the close. I encourage everyone but especially our less experienced pilots to keep current and visit either Rattlesden or Wattisham as often as they can to keep their skill levels up.

Dave then asked Callum to provide some details of some flying tasks he had been developing for the benefit of the club

Callum – I have developed 4 ‘mini-tasks’ consisting of 4 routes to be flown cross country to help members develop their cross-country flying skills.

These are: a 22 kilometre distance task, a 30 kilometre task, a 50 kilometre task and a 75 kilometre task. I have posted the details of these and if you want details or have any questions about these please do get in touch with me.

CFI – thanked Callum for this work and then reminded members of the BGA medical requirement consultation exercise currently underway. Details had been sent to all members and this was important to anyone interested in the sport of gliding. Please do read this and reply to the BGA as soon as possible.

Finally it is my pleasure to award the CFI cup. This goes to someone who was still pre solo last season. However he persevered, particularly with his landings and went on to fly solo and buy a share in DWC. He has gone on to fly over 30 hours solo and has gained his Silver height and Bronze C qualifications. An active club member and winch driver, the CFI cup goes to Nigel Potter.

## **10. Fleet maintenance and readiness statement.**

Vince Earl: Thanks once again to all members that have provided help and support in any way to keep the club gliders and trailers airworthy and roadworthy throughout year. Without that support and generosity with your time and skills, the club would not be able to operate with the availability we have achieved.

For those who are concerned about offering to help, you will be supervised if you have appropriate skills but have never worked on aircraft before. Please give your time and effort according to your skills, interest and availability. Do speak to me if you want to get involved.

Advised that G-CKRU was currently with Les Clark for repair and should be ready for collection on or around 22/11/2022. G-CKRU will be collected and placed in a hangar. G-CKRX can then later be trailered for its ARC when it will also have its cables replaced.

The club K13 is due to be re-weighed, inspected and calibrated.

The ASTIR vario problem is currently being worked on by Allen.

I must ask all members to be cautious when engaged in ground handling the PW6. The nose wheel is in my opinion a weak element of the design and in consequence is easily overstressed and damaged. Therefore please do not turn sharp corners when using the nose wheel attachment to tow it around the field. If it's pointing in the wrong direction at or near the flight line then please remove the nose wheel attachment and manoeuvre it manually, there are usually more than sufficient people to help with this.

Please remember to record work performed on any of the club gliders must be recorded in the gliders documentation

Finally it is three years since the last BGA technical audit so we can expect another one in the next 24 months

Luis – a question; do we need to do anything special to prepare for the audit

Vince – no, we should and always do work to the standards laid out by the BGA, therefore we don't need to prepare our fleet. All I do is make sure the documentation is properly arranged to make it easy for the inspector to find what papers he wants.

**There then followed a break for refreshments,**

After the break

**11. Open Forum** Opened to all members by the chair. The following topics were discussed;

### **Winch driving**

Chair- The first topic to be usefully discussed would be the contention that the winch drivers are revolting. Explained that he was aware there was some considerable feeling about how operators for the winch were organised/arranged.

Chair- Broadly speaking the issue was – do we need a rota or not?

Chair -There are a number of options

- a) We could implement a system similar to that used by Wattisham which is that every member is suitably trained and drives the winch as required. The schedule on the day is organised by the duty instructor
- b) We could train more people and keep the present arrangement
- c) We could draw up a 'proper' rota with an expectation that if you are rostered to be on the winch, you had to turn up.

Vince – if we are short of winch drivers I will re-train and explained after discussion that he envisioned this being useful on the occasions when he was instructing and there was only one winch driver at the field, then he could take over and allow the driver at least one flight before they reversed roles again and he returned to his usual instructor role.

CFI– was of the opinion that tug pilots and instructors had a rota, so why don't winch drivers? He didn't feel he could re-train as a winch driver as well as being CFI.

Luis – asked at what point members could train as winch drivers, did one have to be Solo pilot as a minimum.

Chair – replied there was no BGA or club rule requiring drivers to be solo pilots, effectively any club member was eligible to be trained.

Nigel – suggested winch driving could perhaps be incorporated into the Solo training syllabus. He commented that at present winch driving was rarely mentioned during training, at the very least novice pilots should be acquainted with and spend time at the winch.

Nick – we need to be a little more organised on who trains prospective winch drivers. He had had members sit with him at the winch and observe. However he didn't feel he was qualified to 'let them have a go', but he wasn't clear who was qualified or authorised to do this (apart from Will).

Chair – replied there was a short list of winch drivers with sufficient experience authorised to undertake this role, it would be circulated.

Ralph - volunteered to be re-trained for winch driving, however he raised the issue of what would occur on the admittedly rare days where conditions were ideal for an extended i.e. a 300 kilometre plus cross country flight (which was his personal goal) and he was winch driver on a rota. He would be annoyed if he missed these rare opportunities. This was one reason he did not undertake this role anymore.

Nigel- confirmed that if the situation outlined by Ralph ever occurred he would glad step in to take Ralphs winch shift. A considerable number of other members agreed they would do the same for Ralph.

Rob – One difficulty with a 'cast in stone' formal rota set in advance is that members who travel a considerable distance who are rostered 'on' the winch that day might resent having to travel on a marginal weather day only to find flying is cancelled. Of course that happens at the moment to all of us but this would remove any flexibility to decide on the day. Also members who have busy lives or extensive other commitments may find it difficult or impossible to reconcile these with their winch days within a formal rota. However if every member was obliged to be trained, there would be plenty of drivers and the duty instructor could simply nominate two or three members from those actually at the field at the start of the day, this would take mere seconds and he (or she) could then leave it to the two or three nominated to split the day up as it suited them.

There then followed a general discussion on the subject and the merits and otherwise of the proposals. No clear consensus emerged from this and therefore the Chair declared that clearly a solution acceptable to at least a majority of members was not going to found tonight. Therefore he would form a sub committee to examine the issue and bring forward a proposal as to the best solution. This would be formed and charged with reporting back before the start of next season. Volunteers for the subcommittee would be requested in the very near future.

## **12. Workshop usage charges**

Then followed a discussion re the potential for levying charges on members who wish to use the newly refurbished club workshop for maintenance or the repair of privately owned gliders. A proposal was put to the members that this should be implemented, no dissent was voiced. However Tony was of the opinion that the matter first required discussion in committee which had not yet occurred. Therefore no final decision was reached and it was put over for discussion at the next committee meeting.

## **13. Alan Cherry's task list.**

Chair – Alan decided to withdraw from the committee. Resulting from this at my request he drew up a list of tasks he performs for the benefit of the club and its members. This amounted to no less than 38 separate tasks. (At this point Chair thanked Allen for the massive amount of work Allen had been undertaking for EGC. This drew an ovation for Allen from all present). Chair continued we must take on some or all of these tasks as Allen wishes to spend some time on his other pursuits. Additionally this situation is not acceptable as we are not 'future proofed'. We must, and Allen agrees with me on this, get to a situation where not only is the burden of running the club more equally shared but every task or role must have a deputy who is knowledgeable enough to step in should the primary task holder suddenly be unavailable for any reason.

Allen – confirmed he had not yet determined which tasks he would be content to keep.

Some members then volunteered to take on some of these tasks. Chair replied thanking them but saying the list would be circulated to every member who could then reply saying what they could take on either as primary or deputy. This would be recorded and then 'we would know where we are'

Rob- Should we not do that for every task or role i.e. those done at present by people other than Allen, so we have a complete list of tasks or roles and who does them. If these are significant tasks then would it not be equally worthwhile for these to have a deputy also?

Chair - agreed this should be done and a request for people to offer details of what tasks or roles they undertook would be sent out and a central list of tasks and roles collated. Also noted that the role of Simulator manager needed to be added to the task list.

## **14. EGC Simulator**

Chair – it is clearly underused, why is this?

Calum- it is a great tool, but not used as much as we thought

Wayne – I find there is a delay in the controls, which isn't helpful when one is learning, that is one reason I don't use it as much as I might.

Allen – there is a 'patch' for this but it's a lot of work and I'm not sure it is a priority given the other tasks I have.

CFI – It is great for instructor training, great for circuit training, not great for landings. What is needed are personnel to drive forward the use of it. One solution would be simulator instructors, these don't need to be formally trained or to be a qualified instructor, just people who understand

the principles of flight, the controls of a glider and are also capable of communicating these to a novice pilot. Anyone interested in undertaking this new role please get in touch with me.

Luis- enquired about the possible use of VR headsets to improve the experience.

Allen – VR headsets would not work as the instructor needs to see what the student sees.

CFI- the physical structure of the Sim caravan and the area immediately inside the entrance was not ideal and not attractive to the eye, the structure was a little rickety and the entrance area was untidy with a K13 fuselage sitting to one side, which didn't help.

Chair – replied that the structure was basically sound, it had been blown sideways during the high winds earlier in the year but that damage had now been repaired and it was now entirely secure. However perhaps additional supports could be added to make it look better, that would be considered. However replacing the entire caravan would be a major undertaking which he was not sure could be justified at this time. Nevertheless the entrance area could certainly be tidied up.

Allen- advised that the K13 fuselage referred to was intended for the simulator, however replacing the existing simulator fuselage with the K13 was frankly lot of work which given the usage of the facility could not be justified. If the members used the simulator more he would gladly fit the K13 fuselage into the simulator so it would no longer be 'lying about' in the entrance area.

### **15. Pawnee tug**

Gary- can we afford this? Should we consider other options for the tug role, actually can we afford a tug at all? He explained that based on current fuel costs the rates charged to members did not even cover the fuel costs for the tug, never mind other variable and fixed costs. Should the club be subsidising it to this degree? The fuel costs alone for a 2000 feet tow are at least £25. At the very least an aero tow should cover total variable costs, which it doesn't.

Andy – We have spent £16,000 this year on the Pawnee, it is now almost like new and also we know it and we know its issues and problems. If we buy something else we will inevitably be buying second hand and we won't have that knowledge base.

Gary – we are very reliant on trial lessons to subsidise the tug, without them the cost to members for an aero tow would probably have to double. If we continue as we are we at least need to acknowledge that and everyone needs to work to keep the clients happy. Also what about an electric tug?

CGI- Ridgewell is a short field, we need a powerful tug to get the glider away safely. At present an electric tug would not have the power.

Terry- confirmed this was the case, we absolutely need a powerful tug to fly safely at Ridgewell.

Andy- also any replacement tug, electric or not would inevitably be a much more complex machine. The Pawnee is powerful and simple to work on with a relatively wide base of component suppliers, which to some extent keeps prices down. A modern replacement would be significantly more expensive to maintain and repair, so at least to some extent any savings on fuel would be swallowed up by increased maintenance costs. I'm far from sure it would be any cheaper overall.

Terry – Has the option of having client only flying days being considered? This would allow us to offer the best possible visitor experience, we could concentrate on them, minimise delays and potentially fit more trial lessons in and maximise revenue?

Chair- it has been tried before, didn't work terribly well, but worth keeping under consideration, Tony will continue to offer an alternative week day – say Friday - to see if we can get some take up.

## **16. Generating new members /retaining them**

Luis- two questions; how many new members can we cope with and how do we get them??

Chair – Well we have already lowered prices for juniors and extended the max age limit for junior members to 25.

Luis – the trial lessons should be attracting new members. But have we the correct social media profile?

Chair -we are on Instagram and Facebook

Luis – not sure Facebook is the correct platform and also we need to be clear on our messaging, social media won't be effective without this.

Callum- I think we actually do enough, we need to make sure we are viable, which we do and wait for people to come, which they do.

Nigel – have we considered a link with the Air Scouts?

Gary- why do we want kids? I'm not being facetious but what we need are people who have a little spare time and a little spare income. Generally that's not kids. We do recruit people but we don't keep them, we need to set a retention goal.

Callum- don't worry, kids won't want to spend their days with a bunch of pensioners on an airfield in the middle of nowhere.

CFI- we do concentrate too much on recruitment

Gary - Everything we do should be looked in the light of the questions 'will this aid retention? Or will it aid recruitment?'

Chair – thank you for the points raised, interesting questions put and some good potential solutions provided, your committee will consider the points raised and the questions asked and endeavour to provide solutions were possible

Chair – thank you all for attending and finally our thanks to Callum's mum for organising the excellent catering tonight

Meeting closed 20.00hrs

Rob Brown