

Essex Gliding Club

Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on 9 July 2024

At the Clubhouse Ridgewell Airfield Commencing 18.00

Committee Members Present

John Whitwell (Chairman) Dave Hertzberg (CFI) Tony Brook (Treasurer)

Steve Jessup (Secretary) Callum Hitchings

Apologies

Will Burry (Working) Vince Earl (Unwell)

Minutes taken by Steve Jessup

1. Communications

JW said that at the AGM we had undertaken to issue regular news updates to the members. After some discussion it was accepted that Dave's WhatsApp communications on the EGC Bulletin were achieving this and Dave said that he would continue and would seek to enhance this initiative. **Action DH**

This led on to a discussion about communication between committee members with particular regard to e mail difficulties and how greater use of WhatsApp might help with regard to setting up meetings and making 'between meetings' decisions. It was however acknowledged that recording of decisions and minutes would need to be on the e mail record.

Decision

A WhatsApp group would be set up for the committee. Action CH

2. Treasurer's Report

TW had been unable to print off spreadsheets for the meeting because of computer difficulties but presented an overall position on the state of the finances

The current balance £130K

Anticipated large expenses in the current financial year 75K

Operating Surplus therefore 55K

It was noted that there will be revenue to come from flying fees and voucher sales which would offset, to some degree, the expenses.

With regard to membership we have about 30 full members, 12 juniors and 7 Tug members. This is much the same as last year as members leaving have been balanced by new members joining.

3. Forward Planning

Tug

Unfortunately the planned demonstration of the new Eurofox had been frustrated by the state of our field early in the year and by the time the field was usable the demonstrator aircraft had been sold. The manufacturer had offered to put us in touch with a buyer so that we could arrange a demonstration of their aircraft but this would be at our expense. The manufacturer had offered to discount half of this expense if we then purchased an aircraft.

There was a lot of discussion on possible tug replacement but it was concluded that the level of the club's finances meant that the expenditure involved was very risky and the best option was to continue with the Pawnee for the time being.

The Pawnee was discussed. Airworthiness is on a 'permission to fly' rather than a 'designated hours' basis. It seems the most critical aspect of this is the yearly oil test. There was some discussion on how the results could be better monitored to possibly give us some warning of future problems. It was noted that the engine did not seem to be deteriorating and that known pitting to the camshaft was no worse since oil checks began. The pitting probably dated to a prolonged period of disuse prior to our purchase of the aircraft. Andy Daines (Our tug pilot who leads on its maintenance) had advised that longevity was enhanced by use (insufficient use having the opposite effect) and our arrangement to overwinter at Wattisham and allow their use of the tug had assisted in this.

Decision

We will increase oil checks on the Pawnee to two per year and seek more detailed results for monitoring purposes (Action JW)

Voucher Flights

JW had received correspondence from a few of the members who felt that we should discontinue or at least reduce voucher flights as they felt that this produced too much work for members to service and was reducing the life of the tug.

With regard to the latter point it was felt this was at variance with our technical advice (see last but one paragraph).

There was a lot of discussion on voucher flights and their critical contribution to the club's finances and in particular the ability of the club to run a tug. It was however acknowledged that on a few occasions lack of sufficient members had made heavy demands on those present.

Wormingford

Members had also expressed concern regarding the news that the Essex and Suffolk Gliding Club had been given notice to quit their airfield at Wormingford and that this might lead to an influx of members and a 'takeover' of our club. We discussed this at length. We are aware that E&S are considering moving to another site but it does seem likely that some of their members might want to relocate to Ridgewell (and perhaps to Rattlesden). There were quite a few positives in having an influx of new members as our low level of membership is something that has caused concern over recent years. It was however considered that we would need to be very careful about taking on too many pre solo pilots as we have quite a few of those currently. Broadly it was felt that the situation, if it occurred, could be managed and a few mechanisms for achieving this were discussed, principally reviving the 'waiting list' scheme we had in operation a year or two ago.

It was felt that it would be beneficial to call a 'Forward Planning Meeting' of the wider membership in order to get broader feedback on the issues covered in this section.

Decision:

A Forward Planning Meeting to be arranged and all members of the club invited to take part. (Action JW/SJ)

4. Improving the Field

Ralph Hawtree had been spending a lot of time surveying the airfield and identifying a priority list of improvements, principally dips that needed infilling. He had also done the physical work necessary to complete work on several dips.

JW had accessed online a LiDAR image of the airfield which assisted in identifying uneven areas. He showed this to the Committee.

DH commented that these improvements Ralph had made had helped. There was much discussion and it was generally felt that the list was a long one and the arduous labour involved in doing it without machinery (which is how Ralph had done it) was too daunting and time consuming for most members to wish to participate in.

It was suggested, and the committee agreed in principle, that we could hire a digger and dump truck in order to have a couple of dedicated work days to get at least the top priority dips dealt with. Spoil would be taken from existing spoil heaps on site. This would have to be done 'in season' but not on flying days so e.g. Monday and Tuesday. The first step would be for JW to speak to Ralph (**Action JW**)

Decision

Agreed in principle to hire a digger and dumper for two days to enable field improvements

5. Instruments in Club Gliders

DH strongly felt that instrumentation needed to be standardised on club gliders. He was particularly concerned about the complexity of some of the electronic variometers fitted.

He felt that the PW6's should have the same type of variometer as currently fitted in the PW5 and that this would enable training on the two PW6s to be homogenous in this respect and would make for easier transition to the PW5. He suggested an 'XC Vario' which is a relatively simple vario and that we should fit these prior to next season as soon as funds would allow. It was suggested that if we could fit these ourselves prior to the annual inspections then they could be signed off by the inspectors at the time of the annual inspection.

Decision

New variometers to be purchased for both PW6's DH to make final decision on type and consult with TW on funding (Action DH/TB)

6. Neighbour Relations

JW had been in discussion with Mr Norris (who farms the adjacent land and is a prominent member of the local community). It was suggested that we could hold an open day for the immediate locality (Ridgewell OATLY) that could also feature local community groups, motorcycle displays barbeque etc. Any funds raised would be for the refurbishment of Ovington Church. On the flying side we could perhaps do a limited amount of passenger flying say 20 launches (something like a mini version of the open days we had a few years back). It would be an afternoon/evening event.

It was generally felt that this was an interesting idea (although with lots of issues to be overcome) and that we would like to explore it further before making a decision. It was agreed that this proposal was too late for this year so we were really talking something like June 2025. (**Action JW to pursue further with Mr Norris**)

The meeting Closed at 20.20

Essex Gliding Club Committee

Intermediary Decisions made following meeting of 18.3.2024

1.7.2024 Agreed to talk to local farmer about the feasibility to pursue his request for staging a community event at the airfield, including some flying, on a date to be agreed in 2025 as a means of fundraising for Ovington Church

22.5.2024 Agreed to increase the insured value of the club gliders

17.5.2024 Agreed to pay Les Clarke's invoice for £1030, being his charge for the cost of specialist X ray of the main spar and outer skin repair of KRX following the rear of its trailer colliding with the road when being towed. The Committee has decided that it would not be cost effective to involve our insurers on this occasion.

7.5.2024 Agreed to accept offer of using Zweef system a flight logging tool on the basis of free use whilst it is under development.