

# ESSEX GLIDING CLUB

## Minutes of 2024 Annual General Meeting

Held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at Ashen Village Hall Commencing 5 p.m.

### Those present

**Committee Members:** John Whitwell (Chairman), Tony Brook (Treasurer), Dave Hertzberg (CFI), Vince Earl, Callum Hitchings (Junior Representative)

**Members:** , Amelia Brook, Rob Brown, Cathy Dellar, Dennis Marcinkowski, Wayne Naylor, Gary Shepherd, Jake Smith, Harry van de Noort, Kieran van de Noort ,Dillan van de Noort , Steve Jessup, Ralph Hawtree, Nazo Haderaj, Matt Clements, Simon Ginns and Brenton Watt.

**Apologies for Absence (sent to Chairman):** Hugh Maddams, Keith Neil, Paul Street, Nick Baker, Steve Renius, Will Burry, Chris Terry, Terry Holloway, Nigel Potter and Paul Regelli

### 1. Minutes of Previous AGM held 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023

The motion to approve the minutes was seconded by Dave Hertzberg and unanimously approved by the Meeting.

### 2. Chairman's Statement

- (i) Remarked on how very unusual it was to have an AGM whilst we were still flying at Ridgewell and expressed the hope we might continue flying here well into December.
- (ii) Strongly encouraged all members who could, to obtain a SPL before the September 2025 deadline and then briefly explained the consequences of not obtaining a SPL.

### 3. Presentation of Chairman's Cup

John presented the cup to Tony Brook (to much applause). He recounted the hard work and dedication of our Treasurer who spends much of his life on the telephone on club business and the extent to which the club relies on him.

### 4. Treasurer's Statement

- (i) Tony's overview was that the club had a positive cash balance however taking a snapshot of the year, outgoing had exceeded income by approximately £5,000.
- (ii) The cash balance at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 was £136,264
- (iii) Commitments within this figure included £75K held back as a self-insurance contingency and he also drew the clubs attention to an estimated total of some £45k in expenses expected to be paid out before the end of the current financial year. Therefore we had a small 'free' financial surplus, but this could easily be swallowed up by other bills or events such as the long expected Pawnee engine refurbishment which could potentially be required next year (or maybe not for 10 years). At this point Matt Clements advised that when the engine refurbishment does become necessary it would likely cost between £60k -£70k plus VAT
- (iv) Some concern was raised that our forecast expenditure for the current year exceeded income but it was pointed out that this year's expenditures included a number of 'one offs' including two years' worth of glider insurance (the insurance broker had neglected to take payment for last year's cover which consequently was now due this year). Additionally we had improved the condition of the Orchard Farm rental property at a cost of some £6k and generally commenced a planned progress of general asset

maintenance which was addressing a maintenance backlog. This would have long term benefits but was incurring short term costs.

- (v) Tony confirmed that the document provided to the members today was a 'cash' statement and that a full set of accounts would be drawn up by the accountant at the end of the year and would be available to the membership in due course. There was considerable discussion on the difference between a 'cash' statement and a 'profit and loss' statement, the latter (for example) makes due allowance for asset depreciation and this would be provided by the accountant.
- (vi) The question of income from CASC was raised. John said that work needed to be done on this and we could claim up to 4 years in arrears. The intention was to start work on this claim in the near future, however it would be a substantial piece of work and volunteers would be needed to assist the flight logging team who would lead on this, but they would not be able to do this on their own.

#### 5. **Tariffs for the coming year**

Tony announced the following as agreed by the committee:

- (i) The Winch launch fee to be increased from £8 to £10
- (ii) The 2000 foot aerotow launch fee would be increased from £30 to £35
- (iii) Club 2 seaters would now incur a flat rate flying fee of 50 pence per minute regardless of the presence or otherwise of an instructor on board.
- (iv) The club single seater would continue to incur a charge of 35 pence per minute.
- (v) No change to other membership or Flying tariffs

#### 6. **Appointment of Committee**

Club secretary Steve Jessup had advised the committee of his wish to no longer serve on the committee. The only candidate for this post was Rob Brown whose nomination was seconded by Nick Baker (via proxy vote held by the chairman) and who was then elected unanimously to the position.

The committee members were thus elected as follows:

John Whitwell (Chairman) Tony Brook (Treasurer) Dave Hertzberg (CFI) Rob Brown (Secretary) Vince Earl, Will Burry (Winchmaster) Callum Hitchings (Junior Representative)

The motion to nominate the committee as described above was put by Ralph Hawtree and seconded by Steve Jessup.

#### 7. **Any resolutions Proposed by the Committee or Members**

There were none.

#### 8. **CFIs Statement**

Dave Hertzberg alluded to a number of individual successes this season:

- (i) Grae Mileham 1<sup>st</sup> Solo, Hermanth Ramkumar 1<sup>st</sup> Solo
- (ii) Rob Brown, 1<sup>st</sup> Aerotow solo, Kieran Van de Noort, 1<sup>st</sup> aerotow solo
- (iii) Gary Shepherd Silver Distance and Cross Country endorsement

Dave also extended his thanks to his fellow instructors, Kevin, Vince, Hugh and Harry for all their work. He also thanked the winch drivers.

He then went on to thank Tony, Callum, Gary, Steve and Simon for their sterling work in getting through the many voucher flights (VFs) this year.

He then made the following points;

- a) That the extensive use of the club PW5 which was good to see. He encouraged all eligible members to continue to use this asset .He pointed out that Gary had used it to obtain his 5 hour endorsement, so it was clearly capable of cross country as well as local use.
- b) That the club gliding app was now indispensable to the running of the club and thanked Harry for all his work in managing our use of this asset. He then pointed out that it was possible to record all achievements on the app and that instructors could put progress notes on it. Documentation such as insurance certificates could also be logged there as well as volunteers for the required posts such as instructor, tug pilot etc. He also noted that our use of the app would only increase with the advent of the SPL regime which commences 30/09/2025.
- c) He outlined the effects of the forthcoming SPL regime. From 30/09/2025 all pilots who are in a position to do so must have obtained a SPL. This means having at least a BGA bronze and a cross country endorsement as well as a medical declaration or certificate and then applying for conversion. Dave forecast there would be a 'last minute rush' to convert next year ahead of the deadline and therefore echoed John's advice which was that anyone who could to convert should do so as soon as possible. Anyone who did not convert by this date would revert in status to a 'student pilot' regardless of actual flying experience or present qualifications held.
- d) He reminded everyone that Bronze pilots must obtain a briefing from the Duty Instructor prior to flying and they cannot fly on that day without this.
- e) Advised that he would shortly be circulating advice on the safe towing of gliders to all club members.

#### 9. **Award of CFI Trophy**

Dave awarded the trophy to Wayne Naylor who had initially had had the greatest of difficulties in executing a successful and safe landing. However he persevered and in due course suddenly 'it all clicked' and Dave felt Wayne had then achieved a remarkable improvement in flying skills and confidence over the last year. The meeting's reaction showed that this was a very popular decision.

#### 10. **Fleet and club Maintenance**

Callum thanked all those who had helped with maintenance during the year and drew the clubs attention to the excellent state of the fleet due to the sterling work done by his predecessor, Vince.

He reminded the membership that the club currently owned 2 PW6s, 2 K13s and a PW5, the latter having been purchased as a final replacement for our sadly departed Astir.

He then made the following points;

- a) That the clubs sole PW6 trailer had been in a very poor state of repair, actually being unroadworthy. It had therefore gone for an extensive rebuild at the workshops of Derek Tansley and was now back at Ridgewell in an excellent state. He asked for the club to record our thanks to Derek for arranging this work to be done and getting it done so speedily. This had been vital as we had been without the means to recover a 'landed out' PW6 whilst the trailer had been 'of the road'.

- b) That an ARC and annual maintenance schedule had now been arranged so that in future all club gliders would have this work done during the winter, so allowing for maximum utilisation of the fleet in years to come as we will avoid having some of them being 'down for maintenance' during the flying season, as is presently the case.
- c) That the PW5 trailer was next in line for attention and would be worked on extensively during the winter to deal with a number of issues with this asset.
- d) That Nigel Potter had undertaken to wash all the club covers over the winter and thanked him on behalf of the club for volunteering for this unglamorous but necessary task.
- e) He then made a plea for all members to remember not to tow PW6s 'round a corner' as this put pressure on the nose fairing. All that was required was to lift the nose wheel of the ground when wishing to change the direction of travel. He advised that we have now spent a considerable sum of money in repairing damage to the PW6 fleet due to members failing to follow this direction. This was despite it having been brought to member's attention regularly for at least the last two years, but it was still happening and he was therefore obliged to raise this matter once more.
- f) That the winch would be going for an extensive overhaul next year at a cost of some £5,000. The need for this had been clearly illustrated by the problems with the differential which had put the winch out of action for more than 3 weeks in the summer (and it would have been very much longer out of action but for Derek Tansley's generous and timely assistance). Callum asked the club to record its appreciation for all Derek's assistance in this matter.
- g) The formation of a site maintenance team had been a great success with a large number of long outstanding tasks and issues addressed. Maintenance was now much more a shared responsibility and planned rather than just re-active, however there was still much to do.
- h) He then reminded members that the gliding app had an excellent facility for recording faults to club assets including gliders. However he cautioned members to be careful when recording issues on a gliders as 'faults' as this would then require the input of an inspector to remove. For this reason before recording a fault to a glider on the app, input should be sought from an Instructor. He then reminded members that there is also the alternative option of recording any issue with a glider as a 'complaint'.
- i) Advised that a small digger and dumper truck was to be hired during the winter to complete some tasks including digging a trench from the clubhouse to the toilet block to allow the re-establishment of hot water provision in the block. The digger would also be used to remove the earth bank at the south west corner of the airfield.

A number of questions were then put to Callum by club members.

Harry Van De Noort asked if installation of a FLARM set in glider HVW was under consideration. Callum replied that at the present time this was not a priority, primarily due to budgetary pressures.

Jake Smith asked if in the light of problems the club had in retrieving a 'landed out' K13 earlier in the season whether consideration could be given to purchasing a closed K13 trailer. Callum replied that the club already had an open K13 trailer which was actually quite useful. John added that a purchase of this nature was not under consideration as the club also had use of (by way of an existing agreement) a closed K13 trailer owned by Tony Brook. He also added that enquiries had also been made in the past as to the availability on the market of any such trailer. These enquiries showed no such trailer was available for sale, apart from one which was utterly unsuitable, resembling as what could only be described as a 'barn on wheels'.

## 11. Interval

At this point the meeting stopped for refreshments. Following the reconvening of the meeting John expressed our thanks to Mrs. Hitchings for preparing the extensive buffet which we had all enjoyed.

## 12. Open Forum

John said that the topics under this item on the agenda were ones which one or more members had raised with him. However any other topics could also be raised, this was the members opportunity.

### (i) Voucher Flights

There had been some considerable concern about VF's impinging on member flights. There was much discussion on this but it was then generally agreed that these flights seemed to impact less on members this year than the year before. There then followed a discussion on why this should be. It was noted that we had had slightly fewer VFs (195 this year versus 210 in 2023 and that we have had more flying days this year (71 days in the 2024 season to date, versus 63 days in 2023). It was generally agreed the resulting reduction in the average number of VFs per flying day may have contributed to this feeling. Tony advised the meeting that the committee were fully aware of the feeling by some members at least that the VFs were impacting on members enjoyment of their sport and as a result the committee had trialled an additional flying day on a Friday which was designed primarily ( but not exclusively) for the completion of VFs. This had been a success and it was intended to have a programme of these Friday flying days next season with the objective of completing the majority of VFs on these days which should markedly reduce the impact of these flights on club members. Rob asked if consideration had been given to increasing the price of VFs. He commented that if prices were increased, revenue would increase without a commensurate increase in workload. If the price was then too high and demand collapsed it would be easy to offer discounts and seasonal cut price offers and stimulate demand once more. Tony replied that this was kept under consideration but a substantial price had been pushed thorough in the past which had led to a collapse in demand so it required careful management.

### (ii) Winch Driving

Rob asked to discuss this topic and the effectiveness of the winch rota. He explained that whilst there were now some 15 trained winch drivers in the club in practice the majority of this task was completed by about 7 members, with the reminder volunteering infrequently or in some cases not at all. It had become increasingly difficult to fill the rota with the same people stepping in again and again. There had been no rostered winch driver on 15 planned flying days during the season. He did however point out that some of these days were filled by people turning up and volunteering on an 'ad hoc' basis however the club had previously agreed this was not a satisfactory method of staffing the winch. Rob also noted that as the winch made a profit on every launch (unlike the tug which lost money on member launches) so in a time of financial pressure it made no sense to underutilise this asset. This situation has led to a degree of ill feeling amongst the winch drivers with one or more having declared they would not undertake this duty much, if at all next season. As a result Rob was faced with having to advise the club he could not guarantee to provide a viable rota next season. He therefore proposed the following motion.

#### MOTION

*From the beginning of the 2025 season the winch rota dates will be set by the winch master or a person nominated by him. Dates for the period March –June will be set in January and set again in April for the period July to October. All adult members currently trained and authorised by the Winchmaster to be winch driver will be subject to this rota. Dates will be published on the EGS gliding app. Dates may be changed or swapped by mutual agreement with any other trained winch driver. Any adult member who is in future newly authorised to fly solo by the CFI will then move to a training program managed by the Winchmaster. Existing adult*

*members who are not currently trained to drive the winch will be expected to make themselves available for winch driver training.*

There then followed a lively debate on the motion. When asked Rob clarified that the instructors were not included in this proposal as they already had a full work load, nor were the tug pilots for the same reason. This then generated a discussion on whether BIs and IFPs should also be exempt. Tony then advised that it was planned for BIs and IFP to be subject of rota from next season to complete the seasons VF program. It was then generally agreed that given this new information it was unjust for any person to be on two rotas and therefore the BIs and IFPs should also be exempt from this motion. The motion was then amended to remove instructors, BIs and IFPs from its provisions and with this amendment it passed unanimously.

As an aside John pointed out that the IFP Endorsement is seen by the BGA as open to all experienced pilots ratified by the CFI. That clubs should not then need to rota IFP's. EGC should seek to aspire to this.

(iii) Proposed Field Improvements

Ralph explained that he had utilised GPS tracking to accurately map all the dips and hollows on the field and had made a start in filling these in manually, with the aid of several members he had made some improvements but more needed to be done. The digger to be hired (see above) could also be used for this task and the earth from the S.W corner would provide some material for this although he had made some enquiries and top soil was remarkably cheap, should we require additional material to fill in the hollows. It was agreed this was a very worthwhile and necessary project which would be taken forward.

(iv) The future

John advised members that the Essex and Suffolk gliding club at Wormingford will definitely close in 2 years. This is currently the only other club in the county of Essex and has some 150 members, so its closure must and will affect us. One effect will be that we will very likely no longer have the option of going to other clubs who are relatively nearby for winter continuity flying as these club will almost inevitability fill up with ex wormingford members and consequently they will have no spare capacity to offer us in wintertime.

Steve Jessup opined that this was an opportunity to attract new members. This generated a debate on the nature and number of new members the club would absorb. A maximum of between 10 and 15 additional members was mentioned as a realistic maximum by several speakers, however it was strongly agreed that any such new members must bring with them a range of skills to assist with the development of EGC. These must include (as examples) a proportion of instructors and winch drivers. It was agreed by all speakers that we did not have the capacity to take on (as a further example) 15 juniors or a similar number of student pilots.

Concerns were raised as to the practicality of any such transfer, i.e. how would we manage the transfer to ensure we got the members we want and need and would such persons come with a share of the assets of their old club. Rob suggested that if they did come with a share of these financial assets then the resulting capital could potentially be considered for developing Ridgewell to expand flying capacity. One option would be to use this money to finance a move of our buildings to the compound area, freeing up field 'width' and so potentially allowing simultaneous safe landings and take offs . Gary asked what the attitude of the Parish Council would be to any such relocation or expansion. John advised that this unclear at the moment, he had attempt to gauge their opinion on any such scheme, but he was unable to get a clear steer at this time from them. He did advise that the most sensitive issue was and would continue to be the tug i.e. number of flights allowed, as any expansion of club would need a commensurate expansion in tug flying. Finally John advised there would also be concerns that any expansion would generate additional traffic through Ashen village and the local inhabitants were very sensitive about this issue. However a number of members opined that an

expansion of some 15 members would only take the club back to the membership levels of only a few years ago.

John explained that one difficulty was determining what the Wormingford membership would wish to do, had they the choice. It is unclear how many would even want to come to Ridgewell, as we are a comparatively short grass strip which is highly sensitive to the weather.

Dave opined that in theory any Wormingford member would be welcome, subject to the limitations discussed, however there was one Wormingford member who was not a suitable candidate for membership of our club. He has previously been an EGC member but had moved to Wormingford after a number of concerning incidents which called into question his willingness or ability to comply with basic safety protocols. John agreed with this assessment of his character and advised he had therefore drafted a letter advising this person of the club's attitude should he be considering applying for membership at EGC once more .

Gary opined that it was difficult to take the 'Wormingford debate' forward until we knew what Wormingford member's plans actually were. Several members asked about options to determine this. John advised he was in regular contact with the Wormingford Chairman and these meetings would continue and he could only hope their plans would become clearer as 2026 came closer. Finally he mentioned that they are still actively looking for a replacement airfield and whilst this may be a difficult task with a very low probability of success it is not utterly impossible and therefore we may not get any additional members at all.

John then advised that he and the committee would value a steer from the membership as to which way they wanted their committee to approach this issue. As he saw it, there were two basic options

- a) Continue as we are, do not take in any new members from Wormingford (should they approach us). This might be called the '*Essex Gliding club*' option.
- b) Welcome a suitable number of usefully qualified members from Wormingford to allow for a limited expansion of our club and to ensure its future survival through a managed and enlarged membership. This might be called the '*Gliding at Ridgewell*' option.

There followed a spirited debate on these options. A concern was raised that if we did welcome a cohort of new members 'en masse' from Wormingford there was then a danger of old and new members of our club not melding together and sticking to people they know, forming what essentially would be two cliques . This was acknowledged as a concern but one that could only be addressed when and if it happened. There was general agreement that the club should consider this an opportunity and take advantage of it.

A vote was taken and Option 'b)', the *Gliding at Ridgewell* option was passed unanimously.

### 13. **AOB**

John reminded the membership that there was an option for any interested member to join the committee at any time. There was no requirement to wait for a post to become vacant before a member could express interest and a member could be on the committee without a specific role, responsibility or post.

Simon Ginns asked '*Can someone apply who is already a member of another club*'.

John replied '*Yes they can, providing that they are not on the Committee of the other club as this could result in a conflict of interest.*'

There were no immediate volunteers.

No other concerns or issues were raised

**The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.**

Minutes taken by Rob Brown