



2004 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 27 November, 2004 at the Telford Exhibition Centre, Telford, commencing at 11.00am.

These minutes are not to be taken as a true record without referring to the minutes of the Executive Council meeting at which they were approved.

Present:

John Aldridge
Marc Asquith
Paul Dancey
Martin Heywood
Andrew Larkins
Dick Long
Harriet Pottinger
Damon Robinson
Angus Pinkerton
Andy Shaw
Steve Walsh

55 Voting members
of the Association

In attendance:

Jennie Burdett
Mark Dale
Joe Schofield
Dave Thompson

ITEM 1: CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS: REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Chairman, Harriet Pottinger, welcomed everyone to the thirteenth BHPA AGM and said the formal business would be conducted first, followed by Officers' Reports and an open discussion. Awards would be presented at 12.30pm.

ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 2004 be approved.

The resolution to approve the accounts was passed.

2.2 That the following members be elected to the Executive Council: M. Asquith, A. Larkins, R. Long, M. Turner, S. Walsh.

The resolution for the election of members to the Executive Council was approved.

2.3 That Clear & Lane be reappointed as auditors and the Executive Council be authorised to fix their remuneration.

The resolution was approved.

This concluded the formal business of BHPA Limited as required by the Companies Act.

ITEM 3: OFFICERS' REPORTS

Harriet informed the meeting that she is standing down from Exec after five years. She explained that her motivation has always been to keep free flight free and to encourage everyone to take responsibility for themselves. If members see anyone who is jeopardising our freedom to fly then they should do something about it.

Petra Slangen is also standing down from Exec due to the amount of time she has had to spend in hospital following her hang gliding accident. Harriet expressed her thanks to Petra for the work she has done and hoped she would soon be fully recovered.

Finally, Harriet said thank you to all the BHPA staff and officers who have supported her during her years as Chairman.

3.1 Treasurer

Dick Long reported that the Association had made a small surplus last year and he hoped that we would have the same result for the current year.

There were some issues worth noting. Firstly, we won our case against Pagefast and received all our costs back too. Secondly, our response to outstanding debts is going to be more robust than it has been in the past and we will pursue people who do not pay us. And finally, the membership level and therefore subscription income, is dropping and we are going to be looking at membership retention over the coming months.

Bill Morris, Midflight, asked Dick if he would explain the background to the Reggie Spooner Fund as there seems to be some misunderstanding in regard to this.

Dick said Reggie was one of the founder members of the BHGA. Reggie set up Airsports and money it made went into the Reggie Spooner Trust which was intended to be used to help fund a National Centre

About ten years ago we created Airsports Insurance Bureau Ltd and Reggie transferred the goodwill of Airsports to the BHPA. The Reggie Spooner Trust was then wound up.

A few years later we thought we should recognise Reggie's goodwill by showing "The Reggie Spooner Fund" in the accounts. This is money derived from our own activities and is completely separate from the Reggie Spooner Fund which he has himself and has used to help clubs to buy sites.

The money that we hold is earmarked for buying a National Centre for the BHPA. We have been looking for something suitable for a number of years but have not found anything yet.

Bill asked how actively BHPA are looking for a National Centre, i.e. is there a working party looking at it. Harriet said that Clive Robinson had been very active in looking for somewhere but when he gave up as Sites Officer nobody had taken on this job. Bill requested the search for somewhere suitable to be put higher on the BHPA agenda.

3.2 Insurance

Martin Heywood said it is customary at this point to give members the bad news but this year not much has been happening on the claims front. There have been few claims and those that we have had have been for small amounts. Our insurance is coming up for renewal next month and terms should be the same as we currently have, or possibly slightly better. The future may look a bit more rosy if we have another couple of years like this one in respect of claims.

Marc Asquith added that maybe the reduced cover and instructors being more exposed has had some effect on the reduction of accidents.

3.3 FSC

Angus Pinkerton said that FSC has also had a quiet year. We do have fewer schools and fewer instructors that prior to the insurance cap and we are quite concerned about this.

Angus was very sorry to report that Colin Morley has resigned from FSC and he will be greatly missed. Trevor McLoughlin has joined FSC but another couple of members are still required to bring the Committee up to full complement.

A new Club Pilot examination paper has been produced but we are waiting for the CAA to make up their minds about the low flying rule before we can issue it.

We now have a tensiometer calibrator and this is on the BHPA stand over the weekend. Russ Hicks is happy to take this around to clubs if required.

Derek Godfrey, Icarus Wings, had a query in regard to the First Aid Certificates required by BHPA. He said it is very difficult to get a two day course, they are generally either one day or four days.

Yvonne Jukes, Airsports, is a Red Cross instructor and said that none of their courses are for two days.

It seems that two day courses are available but not necessarily all over the country. Dave Thompson agreed to look at this again.

In regard to CEN flight tests, Angus explained that ratification had been stalled at the last minute by Germany. However, he is now confident that the CEN Paragliding Standard will be fully ratified in two months time.

3.4 Skywings

Paul Dancey said that there was nothing major report. The cost of Skywings has remained fairly static for a number of years but we are getting a better magazine, more colour etc. Since Colin Fargher took over the advertising there has been a big improvement in the look of Skywings.

The Fly With Us directory and Training Wings will be published in alternate years so that we do not hit advertisers twice in one year.

Paul Treadwell, Norfolk, asked whether the lead time for the letters page could be cut so that letters could be published sooner. Joe Schofield explained that the letters page is the last page to be put together but there is obviously going to be a time delay. If you want to get your response to a letter in Skywings in the next issue, then you have to write it straightaway.

Paul said he was not worried so much about the letters as the Club News and Joe replied that if there is something urgent then he will always try to get it in.

Harriet pointed out that clubs can always use the Club Bulletin which gets out much quicker than Skywings, although it does go to clubs rather than individual members.

WINGS OVER THE CLOUD

Marc Asquith explained that Barbara Bedding has agreed to choose the winner of the Wings Over The Cloud award as it was her late husband, David, who introduced it. Barbara was unable to be at the meeting but had written about how she came to make the final decision and Marc read this out to the meeting.

The winner was The Day I Found Religion by Adrian Leppard.

3.5 Website

Paul Dancey explained that at the last AGM he had been tasked to put out a tender for the BHPA website. This had been done, Sean Lovatt was appointed and he is doing a first class job on transforming our website. Work is being done in three phases and is progressing well.

3.6 Competitions

John Aldridge reported that the three competition panels were working well and it had been a reasonably successful season despite the weather.

John said he is the BHPA CIVL delegate, which is the hang gliding and paragliding commission of the FAI. There have been a number of fatalities in international competitions so CIVL have been seriously addressing safety issues at international level.

BHPA RAeC delegate is another of John's roles but he did not report on RAeC matters as Marc Asquith, RAeC Chairman, had produced a written report.

When John had finished speaking Tom Hardie said he wished to thank the organisers of the XC League for ensuring that our pilots do not break airspace regulations.

3.7 Sites

Steve Walsh said he gets quite a few queries from clubs and tries to provide constructive advice when possible. In Steve's opinion the major subject that needs consideration is the sites purchase issue and this is going to be discussed after the presentation of awards.

3.8 Events

Merv could not be at the meeting as he was running the exhibition but Harriet highlighted a few points from his written report. In particular, Merv will be putting some information in regard the child protection on the BHPA website.

3.9 Club Events

Damon reported that there had been some internal problems with the Southern Club Festival of Free Flight this year which unfortunately meant that it did not go ahead. Damon asked for a

show of hands of who would like a FoFF to be organised for next year and there was overwhelming support for the event. Damon said he would do his best to put this event on.

Damon also informed members that he wants to get a display team together and asked anyone interested and with the appropriate skills, to contact him.

3.10 Admin

Harriet reported that BHPA have retained the Investors In People award following reassessment earlier this year and the office is running very smoothly.

Elaine Lane, Membership Secretary, who has worked for us for many years was eligible for retirement in September but is staying with us on a part-time basis. We also have a new member of staff, Ruth Holyoak, who joined us in September.

3.11 School Liaison

Andy Shaw referred to the Schools' Workshop that he had hosted earlier in the year and said it was really good talking about training methods in hang gliding and paragliding. This was a first step in getting schools and instructors together and we have another one planned for next year. The aim is to improve communication between instructors, schools and BHPA.

Andy was enthusiastic about the shows and said the sport has a good presence with the virtual hang glider. He has negotiated theatre space so that our experts can talk about their experiences.

He then made a point of thanking all the volunteers in the sport who help keep the schools going.

Trevor Birkbeck, Dales HG & PG, asked about the decline in the number of registered schools. He said a couple of years ago we had 60 but now there are only 48. Andy replied that some of the smaller schools had closed but there had been no drastic reduction in the number of members so the remaining schools are doing a good job. Maybe this indicates that schools are getting better.

3.12 Club Liaison

Adrian Bishop said that this had been his first year as Club Liaison Officer and he had started by contacting clubs to find out what they thought about the BHPA and what problems they had with it. To his surprise there were no real problems and the general feeling was that the BHPA does the important work so that members can get on with their flying.

Sites purchase is a hot topic at the moment but otherwise most people are happy with the way BHPA is working. Adrian asked for anyone who thinks BHPA should be doing something different to let him know.

3.11 External Representation

Marc Asquith informed members that he is now Chairman of the Royal Aero Club. John Aldridge has taken over at the BHPA RAeC delegate which means that Marc has time to get involved in political lobbying.

Marc's written report was available to members and there were not questions from the floor.

ITEM 4: PRESENTATION OF TROPHIES

4.1 Harriet read out the citations for the following members who were each presented with a BHPA Award of Merit for their services to the sport.

Ian Currer, Pat Dower, Gustav Fischnaller, Derek Godfrey, Colin Morley and Robbie Stokes.

4.2 As the outgoing Chairman, Harriet was then presented with a gift as an expression of thanks for all her hard work. Historically this has always been a decanter but Dick explained that Harriet preferred jewellery so she was given a bracelet and earrings.

4.3 John Aldridge informed the meeting that four members have been put forward for FAI/RAeC awards and have been accepted. Silver medals will go to Harriet Pottinger and Andy Shaw, a bronze medal to Andy Cowley and the Saloman Trophy to Steve Elkins.

4.4 The BHPA President's Trophy for the longest flight during the year was awarded to Neville Almond.

ITEM 5: DISCUSSION - SITES PURCHASE

Steve Walsh had produced quite a detailed paper on the subject of sites purchase which was available at the meeting. Steve explained that sites are really important to us as our sport cannot exist without them and he believes that members would like to see something being done in this respect. £2 per member would produce a fund which could be used to purchase important sites.

Roger Bassil, SE Wales, said we have to act to protect sites; there is growing pressure for land for various activities and we will lose sites if we do not act to protect them.

Harriet added that it is already BHPA policy to help protect access to sites. Tom Hardie felt that sites had to be owned by the local club rather than centrally, otherwise they would not be appreciated.

Steve also mentioned that there are a large number of members who do not want to pay for sites. They have plenty of sites in their area and do not think that they are threatened.

Dick made the point that the small number of people at the meeting were not representative of the membership of the BHPA. He went on to say that if something is more expensive people will be less inclined to buy it. We may have to put up subscriptions due to falling membership figures and to add a fee for sites would lose us more members.

There were some strong views on this matter, some members present felt that a small amount should be added to membership fees immediately.

Roger Bassil felt that BHPA should provide money to enable clubs to start their own fund raising, ie. BHPA would provide seed corn funding and clubs could then apply for lottery funding or other grants.

Damon Robinson said remarked that it would be two years before a site fund had enough money in it to be useful and he asked if BHPA would loan money until the fund was available. Dick replied that BHPA already have a very generous loan arrangement.,

Dick was asked what had happened when subscriptions were increased from £60 and he replied that every time there is a hike in subscriptions the membership numbers fall slightly. He said that putting up subscriptions is the last thing we want to do; we should be cutting costs not increasing fees. Dick also added that nobody has to be a member of the BHPA, you can fly without it, whereas in other countries you have to be a member of the national body.

Martin asked those present to go back and discuss this issue with their clubs so that it can be considered fully at the next Exec meeting in January/February., Steve asked members to get as many comments back to the Exec as possible.

The meeting was then closed at 2.15pm