



2009 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 4th December at the National Water Sports Centre, Holme Pierrpont, Nottingham, 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
Jennie Burdett
Ed Cunliffe
Mark Dale
Paul Dancey
Martin Heywood
Angus Langford
Angus Pinkerton

Joe Schofield
Dave Thompson
Steve Walsh
John Welch

In attendance:
12 Voting members
of the Association

ITEM 1: CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman opened the meeting. Apologies had been received from BHPA President, Lembit Opik, who was unfortunately unavailable due to pressing parliamentary business.

Attendance at the meeting was very low and Martin gave a special welcome to those members who had made it. He went on to say that the main reason for not having the usual show and AGM at the NEC was financial; we are trying to keep costs down during these difficult times. We are currently in negotiations with a new insurer and all being well this will save us some money.

Martin explained the order of the meeting: formal business, presentation of awards, then members' questions. He noted that for the first time in a number of years there was a contested election for Exec members.

ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 2009 be approved.

The resolution to approve the accounts was passed.

2.2 That five members be elected to the Executive Council from the following six candidates: M Asquith, R Davar, M Heywood, J Lawson, J Nash, J Welch.

The five candidates elected were: M Asquith, M Heywood, J Lawson, J Nash and J Welch.

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

The resolution was approved and this concluded the formal business of BHPA Limited.

ITEM 3: PRESENTATION OF TROPHIES

Royal Aero Club Certificates were awarded to Louise (Squash) Falconer for the first UK ascent and paraglider descent of Mont Blanc and to Brett Janaway for his UK 200km out and return record.

Michel Carnet was presented with the FAI gold medal for becoming World Paramotoring Champion.

ITEM 4: OFFICERS' REPORTS

4.1 Treasurer

Angus Langford reported that the Exec had felt it necessary to increase membership subscriptions due to the loss of the rebate from our insurers, the loss of Sports Council grant and the drop in Skywings advertising income. We are not really expecting the Skywings income to pick up in the coming year but we are changing insurers so will be getting a better deal.

Our reserves have stood us in good stead during the economic downturn and we have had to dip into them. However, we expect to start building them up again in 2010.

4.2 Insurance

Martin Heywood reported that he is negotiating with new insurers and hopes to get the same cover at a lower premium. The new insurers are Hiscox who are highly rated in the UK. The final figure has yet to be agreed but should lead to a substantial saving.

In response to a question from Michel Carnet, Martin said that we have one potential big claim at the moment but the majority of accidents over the last three or four years have been for damage to cars due to pilots landing on them. Claims have been very low but there are three years in which people can decide to make a claim so we remain vulnerable. This would be the same regardless of whether we stayed with our current insurers or moved, but obviously if we have a big claim now it will wipe out any saving we were hoping to make with Hiscox as the premium will go up.

4.3 Skywings

Paul Dancey reported that Skywings is still within budget but the number of pages has had to be reduced. Paul said he had renegotiated the print contract which hopefully will save us around nine or ten thousand pounds per year.

Bill Morris informed the meeting that Skywings Editor, Joe Schofield, had now produced two hundred issues and Bill congratulated him on behalf of the membership.

4.4 Website

Paul said there is an increasing amount of safety information available on the BHPA website, including Incident Reports and Boards of Inquiry.

Michel Carnet felt that the terminology was a bit confusing in respect of safety information but Paul replied that it should be clear as it was all in the same place.

Paul was asked whether it would be possible to have weather information on the website and he said it was something he could look at when finances improve.

4.5 Competitions

John Aldridge presented his written report and asked if there were any questions. Michel Carnet asked if CIVL have been worried about the level of accidents in competitions and whether anything can be done to address this at national level. John replied that this is not perceived to be a problem at national level; in fact paragliding competitions run by the competitions committee have been accident free this year. He added that there is no point in putting rules in place if you cannot police them as this could put us in an uncertain position with the insurers.

John assured the meeting that, at national level, hang gliding has been more or less accident free for many years and paragliding is now showing a big improvement too.

Finally, John expressed the gratitude of the various competitions panels for the funding support that they receive

from the BHPA.

4.6 External Representation

4.6.1 John Aldridge reported that the RAeC had formally adopted the FAI rules on anti-doping although we had voted against it. We are not in favour of drug testing as there are no performance enhancing drugs for air sports, but virtually all countries have signed up to this so we will have to go along with it and acknowledge it in some way.

Michel disagreed and said that pilots can be stoned whilst flying but John explained that this is not performance enhancing and in any case these recreational drugs are illegal.

Martin said that this is probably due to the placebo effect. If pilots believe that beta-blockers will help them win, they will do better, but actually these drugs do not enhance physical performance.

UK Sport has said that there will be no money available for testing of non-Olympic sports before 2012.

4.6.2 Several top pilots have been killed in international competitions recently and there has been a lot of work at CIVL to try to make international competitions safer. Part of the problem is the competition mentality. When pilots are flying in a competition they see things differently to when they are doing normal recreational flying. It is not just about making the equipment safer.

At the moment a ban on manufacturers' proto types is being considered at top level competitions but John said he could not forecast how CIVL would vote on all of the issues concerned.

4.7 Sites

4.7.1 Steve Walsh reported that the Sites Fund now stands at £7200 which is a significant increase on last year. The BHPA did commit to support a club in the purchase of a site this year but unfortunately one bidder was prepared to pay well in excess of the market value.

4.7.2 A large part of west Wales may be lost to us due to the use of unmanned aircraft systems. There have been consultations and we are now waiting the final decision on the format of the new airspace.

4.7.3 The National Trust are still in the process of rewriting their policy on hang gliding/paragliding. However, as our new insurers can increase cover to £5m on designated sites there should no longer be a problem with NT regional offices.

4.8 Paramotor Liaison

Ed Cunliffe said that we now have two dedicated paramotor clubs, three clubs listing paramotoring in their operations and ten schools flying paramotors. It is definitely on the way up. There is a problem that some paramotor pilots do not feel that they need to be within the system, but we are making progress.

The British Team took silver at the World Paramotor Championships in August and Michel Carnet took the individual gold and is now World Champion.

Ed informed members that following BHPA and BMAA negotiations with the CAA, the 10 litre fuel capacity rule will be taken out of the ANO in February next year.

4.9 FSC

4.9.1 Angus Pinkerton reported that 1999 was the only year when we did not have a fatal accident. This year, ten years on, we have had seven of our members killed (3 in the UK and 4 abroad) and unfortunately fatalities abroad is an increasing trend. We do not know quite what to do about this apart from continuing to try to educate people.

Angus then gave brief details of the fatal accidents.

4.9.2 It had been a good year for flying and we have registered 555 new PG Club Pilots, which is a significant increase, and there have also been 54 new HG Club Pilots. These figures do include a small number of power ratings.

4.9.3 The Technical Manual is now available as a PDF on the BHPA website and is easily searchable.

4.9.4 Angus then said thanks are due to everyone who serves on the FSC. They are passionate about flying but give their time to sit on the committee to make it possible for all of us to fly more safely.

Brett Janaway asked about the fatalities abroad and Angus

said two of them were in Morocco, one in Spain and one in Bulgaria, however, three of the incidents involved training, which was a concern.

At the FSC meeting on the previous day, the committee had considered whether people going on these trips were actually aware that they might be some distance away from medical care. For instance, there is no air ambulance in Morocco and local medical care, even in rural Spain, may be a considerable distance away.

4.10 School Liaison

John Welch reported that this year had been a little better for schools, the number has started to increase again and most school proprietors are hopeful for next year. Being able to train abroad has helped the situation.

Dave Thompson added that the weather had also been better than it had been the previous year.

ITEM 5: MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Martin welcomed the two new members of the Exec, John Lawson and John Nash, and asked members if there were any questions.

5.1 Bill Morris asked about the proposed new office and Marc Asquith explained that we have been trying to get the BGA to join us and share office space. However, the BGA were not moving very quickly.

Bill then asked if new employees will have some form of pension and Marc replied that Exec did not want to introduce something that we could not afford and then find that we have to make someone redundant.

There was some discussion regarding purchasing rather than renting an office and it was noted that our Treasurers have always said that we are not in the property investment business. Martin said that there are complications that can arise in purchasing an office but Exec will discuss the possibility.

Bill wished to put on record thanks to Tony Mitchell who was made redundant earlier this year, and in particular to Elaine Lane, who recently retired after 24 years working at the BHPA office.

5.2 Michel referred to the format of the AGM and awarding of trophies. Martin replied that a decision was taken sometime ago not to present all the trophies at the AGM. Over the years it had got into a mess with recipients not turning up and trophies getting lost. We need to know who is coming and what they are getting; we cannot have a row of awards and no indication of who is coming on the day.

Michel said that this is just one aspect of it. Years ago we had good AGMs with workshops and seminars and members actually wanted to attend. It was over two days and even had a dinner. Now that we are not running the show at the NEC, maybe we should look back and do something more interesting.

Angus Pinkerton said that whatever we do it is only popular for a few years and then people get bored with it. Michel replied that the experiment with the BMAA was very good for several years but then unfortunately went down hill.

There was some discussion about incentives to get members to attend the AGM, such as a raffle for a year's free membership or lectures and seminars that would be of interest to members.

Brett Janaway pointed out that there were no real details about the AGM on our website.

As there were no further questions the Chairman thanked those who had attended and closed the meeting