

INSURANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE AGM - NOVEMBER 2007

It has again been a quiet year on the insurance front. There have been no large claims, and the only thing which might characterise this year is a higher than average number of pilots landing in car parks and using a conveniently placed car or van to slow the rate of descent. This has not resulted in serious injury nor any high value losses.

We have also detected some degree of softening in the insurance market towards our industry, and this is largely due to the vastly improved claims history since 2001 and the pilot training syllabus which has standardised the training process. It is too early to say whether we will ever have high levels of cover that we used to across the board, but early signs are suggesting that higher levels may be available for instructors and schools, but we cannot yet judge cost of premiums connected with it. There are also interesting new developments in the recreational aviation sector generally and we are watching these closely.

There is a new sense that things are slowly turning back around once again. Before, it used to be a question of whether there was any insurance at all; now we know that there is perhaps a little more cover out there and we now have the comparative luxury of wondering about affordability.

Regards to all.

Martin Heywood
Insurance Officer

BHPA Flying and Safety Committee.

Report to the 2007 AGM.

There has only been one change to the FSC membership this year. We have said goodbye to Andy Cowley who was our Chief Examiner and head of the Examination & Inspection panel. He has found that the pressure of spending much of his time for the past several years working in the USA has finally got too much. Andy has given many years of sterling service to the BHPA (and the BAPC before that), bringing his remarkable professional expertise as a parachute designer as well as his extensive parascending and paragliding experience and sharing all this willingly with our members. Andy was largely responsible for developing our much admired Emergency Parachute Packers courses to fruition, and has promised to continue to be involved in running them. I am delighted that Ken Raines has agreed to take over as our Chief Examiner.

The current FSC membership is:

Angus Pinkerton (FSC Chairman)
John Lovell (Accident Prevention, Investigation and Medical Panel)
Trevor McLaughlin (Instructor and Coach Training Panel)
Chris Dawes (Development Panel)
Mark Turner (Airspace Panel)
Paul Mahoney (SPHG Panel)
Michel Carnet (Pilot Training Panel)
Ken Raines (Chief Examiner and Examination & Inspections Panel)
Joe Schofield (Publications Panel)
Russ Hicks (Towing Panel)
Mark Dale (BHPA Technical Manager)
Dave Thompson (BHPA Technical Officer)

All of our schools have now completed their own individual Operations Manuals, based on the 'School's Operations Manual' pro-forma template that we provided. These documents will go a long way to ensuring that schools keep the right side of current HSE 'Risk Assessment' requirements, etc.

2007 was a somewhat better year for training, with 467 new PG CPs issued up to October, along with 46 new HG CPs and 5 for PA. This compares to about 400 PG and 40 HG in 2006.

During 2007 there have been 3 flying fatalities involving BHPA members – all paragliding, one being in Spain. In addition there were two Paramotor fatal accidents, neither of whose pilots were BHPA members. A full summary of the Accident and Incident reports received in 2006 will be published in Skywings in the New Year. The AAIB who took over responsibility in 2006 for investigating all fatal accidents published their first report into the September 2006 fatal accident in Northern Ireland in November 2007. We have recently had a meeting with the Deputy Director of the AAIB in an effort to improve the working relationship and speed up the flow of information. We have now established a Memorandum of Understanding between the AAIB and BHPA, and we are hopeful that the results of future investigations will be available more quickly, particularly if there are important safety lessons to be learned. For non fatal and less serious incidents the BHPA system remains unchanged, and in all cases we ask all our members to continue to complete Incident Report forms. To illustrate the importance of this, one of the fatal paramotor accidents involved the failure of a support arm, and during the investigation it became clear that bending of these arms was an issue that had happened to a number of PPG pilots; but none had submitted a report, so there was no way to spot that a trend existed and allow us to take early action.

The revised EN PG standards have now been in place for over a year, and are being used by a growing number of manufacturers. Indeed in Germany there is now an alternative testing body to the DHV, who are using the EN standard to issue the certification required by German law for local pilots to buy and fly equipment.

We have decided to re-title the SPHG "Restricted" and "Full" ratings as "Club Pilot" and "Pilot" respectively, to bring them into line with our other pilot qualifications.

"Speed Riding" continues to be a cause for concern. These small paraglider wings, initially used in the Alps for high-speed terrain hugging descents, are being used in the UK (and elsewhere) to allow soaring in strong winds. The only models that have undergone any airworthiness testing would seem to be small gliders deliberately designed for acro flying, and these have very dynamic behaviour. This is not a good combination with the aerodynamic forces that can be created by turbulent airflow over and around obstructions. Pilots are reminded that aerodynamic forces are proportional to the *square* of the airspeed.

Angus Pinkerton,
Chairman, BHPA Flying and Safety Committee.
November 2007

COMPETITIONS DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE AGM – NOVEMBER 2007

Competitions continue to be popular in our association, partly as social gatherings of pilots but also as a way to improve and measure achievement, the popularity of the two cross country leagues are further evidence of the competitive nature of a significant portion of our membership. All disciplines continued to attract a solid following with an encouraging number of newcomers at all levels.

This has been a particularly successful year at the very highest levels with Bruce Goldsmith showing the way at the World Paragliding Championships in Manilla, NSW, where his consistent performance earned him the gold medal and the World Champion title. At the other end of the scale (in terms of temperature) Andy Webster won individual silver at the World Paragliding Accuracy Championship which was held on a frozen lake in Lithuania; our team won bronze. At the Hang Gliding Worlds in Big Spring, Texas, the UK team led from Task 2 onward and finished as World Team Champions with a gold medal each. In the World Paramotor Championship it was silver medals for team UK with Michel Carnet getting individual bronze and father and son John and Tom Kemp getting bronze in the tandem class.

All disciplines had successful national level competitions and the BHPA congratulates our champions: Gordon Rigg (for an incredible 8th time) in hang gliding, Russell Ogden in paragliding, Andy Webster Classic Accuracy Champion for the 5th time while Michel Carnet remains the UK Paramotoring champion. Sadly our Paragliding Accuracy Nationals were washed out completely.

Our UK hang gliding competitions suffered from bad weather during all the planned meets this season but an extremely successful back-up meet run by Kathleen Rigg saved the series, which was won by Kernow's Graham Phipps. Class 5 pilots remain generally uninterested in national competition and only a couple competed regularly in the Open Series. However for the first time for some years we did manage to run a national championship and ex-UK flexwing champion Mike Stephens added a nationals title in this class to his CV.

National XC Leagues continues to be strongly contested in both hang gliding and paragliding with Gordon Rigg of DSC becoming the hang gliding XC League Champion, also getting the President's Trophy for the longest flight of the year. In paragliding Martin Sandwith from Cumbria took the title.

In contrast to hang gliding, both the UK paragliding series and the Nationals had particularly good conditions for task setting and both were very successful. Steve Nash took the British Paragliding Cup title and Russell Ogden the Nationals.

UK Paramotoring competitions have also had a successful year with the BHPA supporting their most contested UK Paramotoring Nationals to date as well as the UK team which competed in the Worlds in China.

November 2006

John Aldridge
Competition Director



During 2006/7 Skywings publication costs came in under budget, and so far appear on track to do the same in 2007/8.

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7
Expenditure	£172,938	£169,757	£163,379
Revenue	£88,071	£90,198	£84,398
Net cost	£84,866	£79,559	£78,981
Average net cost per magazine	£0.95	£0.93	£0.94
Copies ordered	89,260	85,681	84,388
Pages printed	684	688	664

As the above figures show, in 2006/7 we printed a total of 664 pages across 12 issues, down slightly on the previous year. Advertising revenue for 2006/7 also fell by £5,800 despite the hard work and dedication of our advertising agent, Colin Fargher.

We ordered 84,388 copies from the printer in 2006/7, around 1,300 down on 2005/6. This is a direct result of current BHPA membership trends, but represents a much lesser fall in numbers than the 3,500 recorded between 2004/5 and 2005/6.

Despite the difficult environment, careful management and maximum effort on the advertising front during 2006/7 enabled us to keep the unit cost of the magazine at around 94p per copy, only a penny more than in 2004/and 2p below the 2004/5 figure. We hope to keep the unit cost close to this figure again this year.

However the number of copies ordered over the year is likely to be down on 2006/7 as an improvement in membership is unlikely over the next six months. Advertising revenue also continues to fall and is likely to be well down on last year. To keep unit costs in check we have started to pull back on the size of recent issues, as readers may have noticed, and we will be monitoring this carefully over the winter months. We cannot predict whether advertising revenue will bounce back next year – many traders have cited the poor weather this year as a reason for their reduced investment in advertising.

It should be obvious from the foregoing that the health of Skywings is closely linked to that of the trade. When the trade is in recession, Skywings advertising income suffers as traders cut their overheads. We will continue to try to keep costs under control and redouble our efforts to maximise our advertising income, but we continue to face difficult and uncertain times.

However we remain committed to delivering a high quality full colour monthly magazine that educates, informs and entertains its readers, on time and within budget. That is made possible because of the dedicated team behind the magazine, not least our talented and hard-working designer (and advertising agent) Colin Fargher. And of course Skywings wouldn't be possible at all without those who regularly – or occasionally - contribute the articles and photographs that make it such a great read. My sincere thanks to all of you for your support and your contributions over the past year. It is a privilege to be the Editor of such a well supported, and well respected magazine.

SITES DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE AGM – NOVEMBER 2007

Site Purchase Fund

The voluntary contributions to this fund are only trickling in and it currently stands at £3700 (maybe enough for one acre of grazing land!). Two pieces in Skywings this year have tried to confirm the principles and operating procedures of the fund following requests from members. It is now due for a review and members will be canvassed for opinions in the New Year. Comments received during this year have focused on maintaining a ring-fenced fund that is used exclusively for site purchase and the need for any purchased sites to be made open to the general membership. Each member receives details of the fund and an invitation to donate upon renewal. Please make any comments on the fund to myself or the BHPA office at renewal time or you can request a copy of the operating procedures and a donation form at any time.

In the last 12 months no club has formally approached the BHPA for assistance with site purchase. Although the possibility of buying one or even two sites is on the horizon.

Site losses

Nationally there have been no cases of lost sites brought to the attention of the BHPA this year (although I am sure there will be some examples we don't know about). Although there seem to be two ongoing campaigns/wrangles trying to reclaim important sites lost in previous years and one tow site may be lost to planning development next year. And just as I am writing this news of three important Welsh sites being under threat from a landowner wishing to close them has just been sent to me. Sites are our lifeblood and although there are nearly 1000 registered around the country our sport makes extensive use of only a small proportion of them; we all need to do what we can to keep them.

Wind Farms

Proposals continue to be sent to the BHPA for comment. Surprisingly few seem to conflict with existing flying sites. Unfortunately one tow site could be lost and even with local and national objections to the planning committee may be lost. Not all proposals come to the BHPA for comment so local clubs need to be vigilant in their areas and raise objections or place comments on record as soon as proposals are put forward.

Flying Site Data Base.

As of October 2007 I have started the job of creating a new national sites database. The information will remain confidential and only a club's own site listing can be made available. New site registrations will be added to the database as they are received. Contact myself or the BHPA office for forms. Some clubs will have received site listings to check the correctness of the existing information the rest will be contacted in the next few months.

Steve Walsh
BHPA Sites Officer
November 2007

PARAMOTOR LIAISON REPORT TO THE AGM – NOVEMBER 2007

One year into the Paramotor Liaison committee post and the BHPA message is definitely getting across to the paramotor community. I'd like to thank everyone out there that has provided valuable input and encouragement.

We're still a fairly young community and the club structure is slowly growing and maturing. We need to work to bring the paramotor clubs within the BHPA culture and to develop formal coaching skills within the clubs to provide support for the newcomers. Coaching and support will be a major aid to safe operation and to encouraging new pilots into the sport.

The competition scene is healthier than ever with a very successful Nationals held in Gloucestershire in June this year with more competitors than ever before, and a superb performance from the UK team who won team silver at the World Championships in China. The BHPA's generous support of the paramotor competitions has been pivotal in widening the appeal of these events. I'll do better next time hopefully!

As always, your input required.

Edward Cunliffe
Paramotor Liaison

SCHOOL LIAISON DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE AGM – NOVEMBER 2007

This last year has been difficult for schools with generally a very poor summer as a result of this there are a number of schools that have closed; this is a shame and will damage the association.

The schools workshop was successful (if somewhat under attended) but a number of interesting ideas came out of it and been acted on.

I have contacted one of the most experienced SIV instructors in the world with a view to running an SIV instructor masterclass and this looks like it will be going ahead. I am still awaiting final details. This will help British instructors who run SIV courses to improve and develop their skills.

I have petitioned the FSC to consider making instructor CPD a requirement. I have also submitted a couple of improvements to the training program. These suggestions were put forward at the BHPA Schools Workshop.

The date for next years BHPA Schools Workshop is 25 / 26 March with the location tbc.

John Welch
Schools Liaison Officer