



2003 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 7 December, 2003 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
Dick Long
Harriet Pottinger
Angus Pinkerton
Andy Shaw
Petra Slangen
Peter Studzinski

46 Voting members
of the Association

In attendance:

Jennie Burdett
Mark Dale
Joe Schofield

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

The Chairman, Harriet Pottinger, welcomed everyone to the AGM.

Apologies had been received from Martin Heywood and Clive Robinson.

ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 2003 be approved.

The resolution to approve the accounts was passed.

2.2 That four candidates be elected by ballot and appointed to the Executive Council from the following five candidates: A. Bishop, H. Pottinger, D. Robinson, A. Shaw, P. Studzinski.

Harriet explained that Clive Robinson is retiring from the Exec and three Exec Members are standing for re-election. Two other members are also standing for election.

Members' votes were counted by Dave Thompson and Joe Schofield and the following members were elected:

Adrian Bishop, Harriet Pottinger, Damon Robinson and Andy Shaw.

Harriet thanked Peter Studzinski for the time he had spent as an Exec Member and for the work he had done on the BHPA web site.

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.

Harriet explained that at this point we would normally have the President's Address but owing to the sad death of Ann Welch we do not currently have a President.

Barbara Bedding, whose late husband David had instigated the Wings Over The Cloud Award, has agreed to judge the entries for this award and choose the best article.

ITEM 3: OFFICERS' REPORTS

Harriet reported that insurance has obviously been a big issue this year. She has been very busy on the European side, together with Tom Hardie and Angus Pinkerton, and an exemption has been secured from mandatory insurance for our activities. The RAeC, Europe Airports and the EHPU have all been very active on this subject.

Regrettably Clive Robinson is standing down as Sites Officer and we are looking for someone to replace him. Clive has done an excellent job and has been very pro-active since taking over.

Harriet then said thank you to everyone who helps to run the sport; voluntary officers, coaches, staff, etc., etc. and congratulations to everyone who has achieved results either in competition or their personal flying.

3.1 Treasurer

Dick Long reported that the only thing that has changed since he wrote his Treasurer's Report printed in Skywings is that the Exec have decided not to increase subscriptions. We have managed to negotiate with our new Underwriters for a reduction in our minimum premium so there is no immediate need to increase subscriptions. We do not know how membership numbers will hold up next year and we are keeping a close eye on it.

Damon Robinson asked if it would be possible to have a monthly Direct Debit scheme. Dick explained that this is not possible as we have to pay the insurers up front and we would therefore be paying them before we had received the money from the member. It would also impose a huge admin burden on the office.

Derek Godfrey asked what the critical level is for raising subscriptions, i.e. how many members do we have to lose before subscriptions are raised. Dick replied that we currently have 7,900 members but if this figure drops below 7,000 we will have to consider the position. The other thing we have to look at is insurance premiums. We have a new Underwriter who has agreed to run our policy on the terms that we currently have and we are not exposed to the minimum premium that we had last year. We are hopeful that things will improve in regard to the insurance premium.

Dick said he believes that membership numbers are price sensitive and that is why he tries to keep the membership fees as low as possible. We will not know until early next year how many schools will continue training and if we lose many this will obviously impact on membership numbers.

Angus Pinkerton added that Dave Barber (Assistant Technical Officer) has resigned and will not be replaced in the near future as we are trying to reduce fixed costs. The highest fixed costs are the insurance premium and staff. We cannot reduce the insurance premium but the BHPA office do operate with a small staff and make use of temporary staff when necessary.

3.2 FSC

Angus Pinkerton said that FSC has now said goodbye to Dave Sollom for the second time. Having persuaded Dave to come back on to FSC he now spends most of his time in Spain and therefore feels that he cannot contribute to FSC.

This means that FSC is now looking for two new members with an interest and background either in Airworthiness or Pilot Training. Anyone interested in joining FSC should speak to Angus, Harriet or one of the Technical Staff.

Although Dave Barber has left us he will still be involved in a voluntary capacity.

Angus then went on to say that he wanted to dispel the rumour that paragliding is more dangerous than hang gliding. This is not borne out by the statistics which actually show this year that hang gliding is more dangerous. Pilots should not think they are safe whichever discipline they fly.

There has been a second meeting of the European Safety Harmonisation Committee and we will be exchanging data. This should enable us to produce meaningful statistics in future.

At the moment we do not know how many pilots are very active or how many just fly occasionally. We will be participating

in a Pan European survey to find out and this should give us an idea of which areas to concentrate on.

Angus then said thanks were due to all Examiners, Instructors and Coaches, without whom we would not have any flying.

Martin Robe suggested that it would be more accurate if the paragliding and parascending incidents were separated. Dave Thompson replied that this has not been possible up to now but the database is being updated to reflect the separate disciplines.

Angus stressed that most Incident Report forms are barely completed and he asked members to complete the forms fully and clearly.

Adrian Thomas said there are very well known statistical methods that would solve the problems we seem to have but Angus replied that our own statistics are not big enough to make any analysis worthwhile. Adrian volunteered to help with the production of statistical information if required.

3.3 Insurance

Martin Heywood was unable to be at the meeting and therefore Dick Long outlined the insurance position. What we are going through now is what all sport will have to face eventually, we just happen to have reached this situation a little earlier than other associations. We are aware of other sports that will be facing the problem in the coming year.

However we have good prospects of having a lower claims history this year which is good news.

In response to a query from Paul Seminara, Dick said that reduced cover is only for training and dual flying so if you are not in those categories then your position is unchanged.

Damon Robinson asked if there is any way that we can fight claims harder. Marc Asquith explained that instructions from insurers are to get out with the minimum hit on the policy. Therefore if fighting harder is going to cost more money, they will settle.

3.4 Skywings

Paul Dancey reported that Skywings advertising had dropped slightly but we have increased the membership and reduced costs so the end result is about the same as for last year.

Mark Woodhams has put together a Design Manual for clubs and schools wishing to use the BHPA logo.

Don Bodill said that there are several BHPA members in his household and they all receive copies of Skywings. It was explained that it is essential that all members receive Skywings as it is the only guaranteed communication of vital information such as safety notices to members. In exceptional circumstances such as Don's where multiple copies of the magazine are sent to one family, if he lets the office know that he doesn't want as many copies they can organise that. However, the membership fees cannot be reduced.

Paul expressed thanks to Colin Fargher, Joe Schofield and everyone who contributes to Skywings.

WINGS OVER THE CLOUD

Barbara Bedding was unable to attend the meeting but had judged the entries and Marc Asquith addressed the meeting on her behalf. Several articles had been shortlisted but the eventual winner was Tim Guilford for "Being There" (June 2003 Skywings).

3.5 Events

Merv Turner was too busy organising the exhibition to attend the AGM so Harriet went through his written report.

In particular Harriet mentioned that the schools who attend shows report that it is well worthwhile. It would be really good if more schools would get involved. There are four major shows planned for next year and anyone interested should contact Merv.

Damon Robinson informed members that there will be a flying event at the Southern Club in July next year.

Brett Janaway asked whether Merv is carrying on as Promotions and Events Officer and Harriet replied that he is.

3.6 Website

Peter Studzinski reported that there is a new BHPA website on the way which will be professionally designed and maintained, although it could be two years before the whole project is completed.

Damon Robinson said he has heard that the cost of the website is likely to be £25k and he asked if this is correct. Peter replied that no quotes had been received yet but tenders should be in within the next ten days. Dick added that £25k is the budget for two years, not a target to spend.

Phil Chettleburgh asked about the criteria for the tenders and Peter explained what it was. He had been tasked to appoint four companies to tender but after it had appeared in Skywings he had been inundated with enquiries.

Harriet thanked Peter for handling website matters.

3.7 Competitions

John Aldridge said everything is in his written report but he would be delighted to answer any questions.

Adrian Bishop had a query regarding competitions for DHV 1/2 paragliders and asked whether the only way to enter competitions is on high performance wings. John replied that most people do not want separate competitions.

Derek Godfrey said that 1/2 gliders are ideal for accuracy and the Accuracy Panel would be very happy to have more members competing.

Adrian said that the reality is that the majority of paragliding pilots fly 1/2, they do not fly competition gliders so the majority of BHPA pilots cannot enter competitions.

Harriet referred to the BPC and Clubs Challenge which are suitable for 1/2 gliders and suggested that Adrian take his complaint up with the Competitions Committee.

Brian Pilcher said that he had had this discussion three years ago when he had asked for an entry level competition. John referred to the BPC and Clubs Challenge as being entry level competitions. There are entry level competitions in all disciplines.

Angus added that nine times out of ten a pilot who believes that his equipment was the reason he did not win a competition is lying to himself.

3.8 Sites

Sites Officer Clive Robinson was unable to attend the meeting.

Derek Godfrey said that his site, which is military, is asking for increased insurance cover. Dick replied that it is very difficult at the moment but he is a little more optimistic with our new Underwriter. Dick suggested that Derek should contact Martin Heywood.

In response to a query from Paul Seminara regarding problems he is having re-negotiating to fly after changes to Air Traffic Control, Harriet said he should speak to Tom Hardie.

3.9 Club Liaison

Andy Shaw said we have a problem developing youth and he would like to get a group together to consider how to encourage university and scout clubs to start up again.

In the new year Andy is hoping that Exec will agree to split the role of Club Liaison Officer. He would like another Exec member to take on liaison with recreational clubs whilst he continues his role with the commercial schools.

Andy was asked how many schools have folded since the insurance cover was cut. Andy said that March is the time when most schools renew and we will have a clearer picture then but at the moment things are not as bad as we had anticipated.

3.10 Funding

Petra Slangen informed members that she is writing a Funding Guide which she hopes to complete in the middle of next year. This is designed to help clubs find funding from various sources.

3.11 External Representation

Marc Asquith informed members that he is the BHPA's representative on a number of bodies but primarily the RAeC. He said that over the years the RAeC had atrophied but now there were some new people on board and it was really working as it should. They are looking at threats from Europe such as EASA, which is the European equivalent of the CAA.

Marc went on to say that Europe Airports needs to become professional and BHPA has taken a lead by giving a voluntary contribution to help with funding. We need to have Europe Airports protecting us and therefore it must have funding.

There are various other threats such as the requirement for insurance and the RAeC are fighting all of these for us.

Marc said he has also been elected Chairman of the RAeC.

ITEM 4: PRESENTATION OF TROPHIES

Harriet introduced Ann Welch's daughter, Liz Douglas, who had very kindly agreed to present our trophies.

Firstly Awards of Merit were presented to Dave Sollom for his work on FSC over the past 10 years, and to Jim Hay and Paul Dancey of South East Wales HG & PG Club for their unstinting efforts within the club and for their work in securing the purchase of the Blorunge. This was followed by numerous presentations for hang gliding, paragliding and parascending.