



APPLICATION FOR BGA BEST PRACTICE AWARD

Club: Ulster Gliding Club

Site: Bellarena, Co. Londonderry.

Current membership numbers: 65 approx.

Name of Applicant:

Contact telephone number:

Postal address:

E- mail address (confidential):

Please describe briefly the "Good Practice" that is subject of this application.

'Improved methods for securing external capital funding to further the develop the club and the sport'.

Has this involved any changes in order to improve practices at your club? If so, what?

The required changes were under four headings:-

1. Networking.
2. Demonstrating better administration and accountability.
3. Demonstrating success.
4. Delivering a higher quality bid.

1. Networking - We recognised that to have better success at competing for funds it was desirable that the club and gliding should have a much higher



profile within the family of sports. Popular sports have the benefit of vast membership numbers plus the fact that anyone who distributes funds knows exactly what they do. It is sad that, in respect of gliding, it is usual to have to educate the fund distributors in what the sport of gliding is about.

We set about improving our contacts with branches of central government, local councils and a variety of quangos involved in sport. It is usually these bodies that have funds to distribute.

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland (SCNI) is the public sector quango responsible for overseeing and promoting sport in the province. It would perform a broadly similar function to the other home country sports councils. We ensure attendance at all SCNI meetings, seminars and courses relevant to gliding or to general club administration. We also maintain regular contact with the SCNI officer whose remit covers gliding among a long list of other sports.

The Northern Ireland Sports Forum (NISF) is the voice of voluntary sport in the province and is partially funded by SCNI. The forum makes an input to SCNI policy and provides member sports with a variety of benefits. Most important is the extra weight that this province-wide body can bring to bear in support of member sports interests. Most notable is direct access to government ministers through the Forum's Executive. This has been particularly useful in attempting to have the planning authorities here recognise the need for protection of existing airfields from unsuitable or hazardous development on adjoining land. In addition, the Forum is presently engaged in a debate with ministers on the merits of 100% rate relief for voluntary sports clubs. Individual clubs would not make any progress on such issues. We ensure that the club is represented at all meetings, courses and seminars. The Forum has an air-sports sub-group that draws together various air-sports within the province to address common concerns together. UGC currently holds the role of convenor of the air-sports group and this provides a seat on the NISF Executive Committee. Membership of the Forum has also enabled us to foster links with other member groups such as The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme who could use our services. The SCNI officer responsible for gliding also sits on the NISF Executive and this enables further regular contact.

The Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) was set up to ensure delivery of the agreed countryside recreation strategy for NI and includes representatives from SCNI, NISF, tourism bodies, the forestry service, the farmers union and the planners to mention but a few. As convenor of the air-sports group we have a seat on the Executive Council of CAAN and this has enabled us to have direct links with planning officers, the farmers union representative and all other bodies with an interest in countryside recreation. We are able to continue pressing on the issues of airfield protection and the need for inclusion of air-sports in regional planning guidelines and in area plans.

Sports Council for N.I. Lottery Fund.(SCNILF) is the branch of SCNI responsible for distributing Northern Ireland's share of the Lottery money



allocated to sport. Maintaining close links with SCNI ensures that Lottery Fund officers are well aware of gliding and of the activities of the club.

When considering bids for gliding, the Fund officers refer to the SCNI officer who handles gliding. Our regular contact with this officer ensures that we are given a favourable report.

Disability Sport NI (DSNI) is the umbrella body that promotes opportunities in sport for the disabled. UGC has worked in partnership with DSNI to advertise gliding for the disabled in the DSNI magazine. DSNI has provided valuable support for our proposals to increase accessibility for the disabled to gliding.

The Local District Council has a sports development officer and an outdoor recreation officer. We maintain contact with them and they have been helpful in supporting our bids for funding. The council now recognises the value of the club as an attraction for tourism in the area and the Mayor has been very supportive.

Maintaining the links described above ensures that we maintain a higher profile than our membership numbers would warrant. No one has to ask what is gliding about or if there is an active gliding club in the province. We are sure to be informed about any policy changes that may concern our sport and about any new funding opportunities that may arise.

2. Demonstrating better administration - It was essential to show that our administration is in good shape to be more successful at bidding for funds. It is quite clear that all of the funding bodies have had their fingers burned at some stage and they have learned to demand a higher standard of administration, organisation and accountability from applicant clubs.

We considered that, as a minimum, we should be able to demonstrate

- A proper constitution
- That funds cannot be dispersed to any individuals
- A clear mission statement
- A code of conduct statement
- Membership open to anyone (within reason)
- Audited accounts – now an accountant's report that is less expensive
- Records kept of all committee meetings and AGM's
- A policy for elections and rotation of officials
- A clear statement of officers duties
- A health & safety policy
- A child protection policy
- Clear recruitment procedures for instructors & officials
- An equality policy
- A complaints procedure and an appeals procedure
- A means of keeping all members informed
- Historical records
- Annual statistics for a number of years
- Records of development to date

Some of these policies were in place already and others were drafted afresh.



Some policies such as the equality policy follow wording approved by SCNI. Generally the funders work a 'tick box' assessment system. If you have any reasonable policy in place it will probably suffice however it would be useful to clubs if standard policies were available from our governing body the BGA.

Our most recent bid revealed the need to add an 'anti fraud' policy, a 'conflict of interest policy' and written financial procedures. This was tedious work but it was not difficult.

We decided to display almost all club policies on our website at www.ulsterglidingclub.org. We realise that this may create problems for us but at least we can say that all of our 'fine print' is there for anyone to see. Funding bodies are well aware that applicants for grants may claim to have policies in place and may submit samples whilst not actually applying such policies in practice. Displaying this material on our website gives the funding bodies a degree of assurance that we actually do what we say.

3. Highlighting success - We believe that money follows success and try to highlight the achievements of the club, the steady development over the past 12 years and the monetary value of the club to the local economy. Fund holders are much more likely to support a venture that has proved itself a success than take a chance on a lame duck.

4. Delivering a higher quality bid document - It appears that many bids for funding by other sports are very poorly presented and in some cases amount to only one page saying 'give us the money'. This may result in a deserving bid being rejected at first glance. If the fund holder thinks that such a bid is actually a worthy project then the officers performing the evaluation would have to do a vast amount of work to produce the files that they need for back-protection and to justify their decision to make an award. We should always remember that the awarding bodies have to guard against being challenged by unsuccessful bidders alleging unfair treatment.

We have prepared our recent bids on the basis that the assessing officers know nothing of the sport. The application forms are completed with as much detail as possible but, in addition, we provide a detailed introduction to the sport of gliding, the history of the club and the club's achievements to date. All of this is assembled around a fully detailed sports development plan. We also include copies of our policies, audited accounts, history and constitution.

The objective at this stage is to answer all questions or doubts that the funder may use to reject a bid at the initial sifting process. Many worthy causes are rejected at this stage through poor quality of presentation. Our approach seems to work!

The bid should in fact be a 'business case' showing that all aspects of the requirement have been researched, that there is a demand for the development and that sufficient revenue streams will assure continuity.

Our most recent successful bid concerned a new glider fitted with hand controls to provide opportunities for people with disabilities. We were



concerned that we did not have any facilities for people with disabilities but had no idea what the demand would be if facilities were made available on site. We provided a ramp for access and a wheelchair accessible WC using our own voluntary labour. We arranged to have the Walking-on-Air K21 at the site for a one-week event and advertised this in magazines specifically for those with disabilities. The event was a sell-out in advance and the user feedback forms were highly complimentary. This demonstrated a real need and that the club could deliver the service if the funds were made available. In other words, the 'business case' was proved.

We supported our recent bid documents by enclosing the BGA's promotional video and a copy of a 30 minute BBC programme made at our site. The funding body's project officers had gleaned enough information about gliding through their investigations but their recommendations are taken to a board meeting for final approval and some board members would not be familiar with gliding. Board members only receive a summary and a short briefing with recommendations from the project officers. The project officers are delighted to use good quality video in their presentation and a good video is worth a thousand words.

How did you identify the need for change, if any and what investigations were carried out?

The media occasionally report that the Lottery has awarded a large cash grant to a project that would seem to be frivolous or a gross waste of money in the eyes of most people. On discussing this with SCNI staff we found that these awards were made because the bid for that project was of a very high quality whereas the bids for other more worthy projects were inferior.

All bodies awarding grants of public sector cash must conduct a fair and transparent evaluation process. Their job is to assess bids and not to advise applicants on how best to make a bid. They are obliged to score the bids as presented. They do not have the option of saying that the bid is of poor quality but they know the project to be worthy. The quality of the bid and the extent of detail provided has a high impact on the outcome. This is particularly important for a sport that most awarding bodies have no knowledge of.

The funders also apply a score for 'risk' in their assessment. If they know of the applicant and have seen the applicant to be active in sporting circles they will be comfortable with that. If they have not heard of the applicant or do not know anything of the sport they will consider it to be a greater risk and will mark down accordingly.

How long have the ideas been in operation at your club?

The positive decision to improve our administration and to network more widely within the family of sports was taken about 8 years ago.



Costs and resources: What financial and other resources were required to implement the proposals?

Financial resources - Almost nil.

Time resources - Networking with other sports as described above is very time-consuming and much of the business has little or no relevance to gliding but, just by being there, the profile of gliding is maintained at a high level.

Evaluation: What are the results, to date?

The availability of capital funding is reducing and a large proportion of the remaining funds are being targetted at olympic sports in advance of the London games. Sports must compete with eachother for the remaining funds. Extensive networking and maintaining a high profile for gliding has ensured that gliding projects have been successful in spite of our low participation numbers compared to many other sports.

The quality of the bid is of very high significance and the type of document that we have developed has scored well enough to win substantial funds in competition with mass sports.

Having all policies and procedures in place enables quick preparation of a bid. Large sections of the bid are no more than a reprint of the club's website.

Recent awards:-

2004 - We obtained a £40,000.00 grant towards the purchase of a new DG505 and Cobra trailer. This was secured from a Tourism fund on the basis that we could further develop the facility and offer better quality 'come and try it opportunities'. The endorsment of the bid by NISF (see above) provided valuable support.

2006 - Our bid for £67,000.00 towards purchase of a new K21 fitted with hand controls to make the sport accessible to people with disabilities and wheelchair users in particular has been approved by SCNI Lottery Fund. Working in partnership with DSNI (see above) for the trial events assured good support from them when making the bid.

This is a good performance for a club with only 65 (approx.) members.

Has future club policy been affected? If so, how?

We have introduced detailed monitoring of visitors and are extending monitoring to members to record age group, gender, ethnic group and disabilities. This helps with ongoing monitoring by the fund providers with reference to the outcome of previous grants and provides valuable data to support future bids for funding.



We intend to continue networking as described above. It has proved beneficial and we are sure to learn of future funding possibilities. We learned of the opportunity to bid for tourism money in 2004 through involvement with CAAN (see above). It is almost certain that we would not have known about this fund and would not have pursued this grant otherwise.

What recommendations have you to share with other clubs that might benefit from your experience?

1. Put your administration in good shape. Be able to demonstrate a full range of agreed policies and make these visible. Templates may be had from your sports council or you could copy our policies from our website and use these as a starting point. Use BGA recommended policies when these become available.

2. Monitor your performance and keep records. Saying that you did x'000 launches is interesting but it is of more impact if translated into more human terms, the number of first solo's, how many badges gained, how many kms flown, how many women flying and how many people with disabilities flying. Take photographs of memorable events to be included as illustrations in the narrative of future bids.

3. Network widely within the family of sports. Get to know the appropriate officers in your local council. Join your local sports council. Develop links with youth groups, bodies representing people with disabilities and the like. When you make a bid for funding these organisations can provide valuable support to your business case.

4. Improve the quality of your bids for funding so that you can beat the competing bids. A good bid should have the elements of a fully sorted 'business case' rather than being a begging letter. If you don't know how to do it, seek help. You could contact the BGA's Development Officer who can provide samples of our latest successful bid to get you started.

Hard copy and CD versions of our latest successful bid have been provided to the BGA's Development Officer, Alison Randle, as a base for helping other clubs. See S&G Oct/Nov 06 Page 4.

Do you know of any other club that has adopted this idea?

I am advised that Alison Randle has already passed on details from our most recent successful bid to some other clubs to assist them in preparing their own project.

Please return this form to Roger Coote, British Gliding Association, Kimberley House, Vaughan Way, Leicester, LE1 4SE, or email it to office@gliding.co.uk