

British Gliding Association Annual Report 2022



The BGA is the governing body of sport gliding in the UK and a member organisation that exists to support the clubs and their members and glider owners. This 2022 annual report provides a snapshot of a very different year for everyone and provides some insight into the excellent work carried out by the sub-committees and others on behalf of us all.

Chairmans Report

The summer of 2022 will be remembered as a superb gliding summer. As well as an exceptional amount of gliding days, there were memorable achievements across all aspects of our sport. Cross country wise we saw 1.6 million kms registered on the ladder. This was accompanied by a fantastic competition year which included the exceptional Women's World Gliding Championships 2022 with a Silver medal for Claudia Hill and a Gold medal at the Junior World Gliding Championships for Finn Sleight. From the Vintage Glider rally to the Nationals, Regionals and Competition Enterprise, a huge thank you to all of the volunteers who dedicated their time to ensuring safe and fun contests and events were possible across the UK.

The Fit for Future initiative is reaping reward with some great collaborations occurring across the UK. Several clubs are reporting grant funding and closer working with local businesses and their community. In addition, the Department for Transport have supported an application to their 'Reach for the Skies' challenge fund which will help us with 'Go Gliding' – inspiring and engaging young people through the sport of gliding. This is a great opportunity for us as a sport to help engage communities in partnership with clubs around the UK. I am hopeful that this initiative as well as the legacy that is evolving from the Women's World Gliding Championships 2022 will see gliding encourage a diverse and energised new cohort of glider pilots joining our sport.

The past couple of years have been tough and I am under no illusion that with the cost of living crisis, 2023 will offer other challenges to many. What I continue to be encouraged by, is the supportive and welcoming attitude of glider pilots across the country. I am therefore hopeful that together we will overcome these challenges and look ahead to a great year of gliding.

Thank you to club chairmen and other club officials, BGA directors and our dedicated team of staff for their continued support. My thanks to Peter Hibbard who stepped down as an elected Executive member during the year.

Andy Perkins
Chair

CEOs Report

We started 2022 on an optimistic note, the weather progressively improved, the sun shone for seemingly days on end and club pilots flew further and faster, and in some cases higher, than they had done so in many years. A 10,000' cloud base over England and Wales as experienced in mid-August is a very rare treat. Also in August, the WWGC and the associated public access activities at The Gliding Centre were a great success. The event has helped to open the door to funded activity that in supporting a government initiative will raise the profile of gliding and benefit clubs. A joint TGC/BGA team are keen to share the lessons learned from local engagement and other club marketing opportunities. If that interests your club, please do get in touch. Behind the scenes, the BGA has been working hard to protect and support the memberships interests and to directly support club committees during what continue to be interesting times.

We reported last year that the rapid and widespread emergence of online platforms to facilitate meetings, socials, talks, briefings, and training has been extremely helpful and has probably resulted in a permanent shift in the way we do business. No surprises that during 2022 the online approach has continued to be successful and, in addition, is making significant saving on travelling costs and emissions. Our necessarily face to face conferences have returned and BGA volunteers, contractors and staff of course continue to be involved in-person at club sites.

During 2022, the UK Government has been talking about post-EU exit opportunities and the CAA has carried out a consultation on the future of GA pilot licensing. At the time of writing, we are unaware of the detailed outcome of the CAA consultation but expect to be continuing to prepare for UK-SFCL for another year. We are aware that the UK Government expects no change for most aviation retained EU legislation, especially where it is based on international standards, but the opportunity to make changes that simplify and reduce unneeded regulation or duplication will exist after 2023. As you would expect, the BGA is making sure the Government and CAA are aware of the needs of all elements within gliding. Ongoing mutual understanding, positive engagement, and effective communication with the CAA and the DfT remain essential.

'Fit for the Future' development continued through 2022. For example, our instructor training continues to evolve and produce high quality results under the flexible model that clubs asked for, agreement has been made and work started to refresh the BGA websites and in particular making information for members much more accessible, to date around a third of BGA clubs have worked through an operational risk management review, and we've adjusted our approach to advocacy to better match changes at the CAA. As ever, there is always more to do. We are currently considering in detail how to improve our direct to individual club member communications. We continue to encourage CAA to progress sustainably costed delegation of regulated gliding activity.

You can read more about the BGA's financial performance in the Treasurers report below. Good financial control is vitally important, and I am grateful to our Hon. Treasurer, our accounts manager, and our office team for their diligence. I would like to express my thanks for the outstanding support of all our working group and committee members, our staff, the Executive Committee, and the Vice-Presidents. We are very fortunate to have such high calibre, expert and motivated people supporting the continued success of gliding, the clubs and individual participants.

Pete Stratten
CEO

Treasurers Report

The financial results for the year ending 30 September 2022 show a small post tax deficit of £1.5k (2021 deficit £34.2k) on a turnover of £691k (2021 588k). The increase in turnover this year compared to 2021 is largely as a result in the 25% discount given to clubs in the 2021 financial year to provide support with the financial implications of the pandemic.

As with previous years, our financial objective is to achieve a break-even position, whilst maintaining a healthy balance sheet. The deficit in the year means that our balance sheet position has reduced by the same amount. Our reserves figure remains robust. It is important to note; reserves represent the excess of assets over liabilities rather than cash in the bank.

The corporation tax liability is not material, although it does look slightly unusual. The corporation tax charge largely relates to the sale of trial lesson vouchers, which is offset by the expenses incurred in the sale of the vouchers – there is always a difference in timing between those two events. Most of our activity is exempt from corporation tax.

There is an ever-present risk of financial fraud, with fraudsters becoming increasingly more sophisticated. We have reviewed and discussed at length our policies and procedures to recognise these risks. Whilst we must be ever vigilant, I am satisfied that there is a good awareness of these risks and how they should be mitigated, including direct access to senior BGA management at any time should any staff member have concerns.

The current economic climate, whilst still uncertain, does seem to be settling a little. With this environment in mind, we will seek to keep any increases in fees to a minimum, but it is important that we maintain a healthy reserve position on the balance sheet. This will ensure that we are in a strong position to face future challenges.

As always, I'd like to express my thanks to Peter Bishop, Liz Pike, and the rest of the team for the hard work that goes into the accounting function in the BGA, and the completion of the accounts.

Tony Smith
Treasurer

Airspace Committee Report

During 2022, the flow of new and continuing airspace change proposal (ACP) response work has progressively increased. Even though the industry has not returned to pre-Covid levels, most airports are seeing an upswing in activity and supported by Government funding are starting new or restarting dormant ACPs. In addition, with hockey stick projections of drone activity and associated funding opportunities, 2022 has seen a significant increase in 'drone testing' Temporary Danger Area (TDA) ACP's that need review and input. The military are also embracing drones and in addition to TDA's, two large and permanent danger areas will be established; one overhead Waddington and another overhead Fairford, both of which join up with airways. The Waddington danger area is linked to changes to the Red Arrows operation. As Waddington is unsafe for all Red Arrows training and the airspace overhead now disused Scampton may not be available, a TDA is being established overhead Syerston airfield in Nottinghamshire. There are promised danger area crossing services and the Fairford danger area intends to operate only at night. Previous experience of military TDA and DA promised crossing services has demonstrated why we view these changes with concern. On a more positive note, the CAA's ongoing airspace classification review by region has identified volumes of unutilised controlled airspace that should be reclassified. Even the military is being encouraged to reflect on its rarely or no longer used legacy airspace collection to identify where reclassification could occur. Engaging with and responding to all this activity takes up a lot of time and energy.

Why so many airport-related ACP's? The UK's airspace is being modernised. NATS en-route airspace (the airspace up above 7000') is being redesigned and there are several complex ACPs underway, e.g. around Manchester, London and Glasgow/Edinburgh. Below 7000', some 21 airports are redeveloping 'their' airspace to accommodate new procedures that are designed to provide more efficient operations. Those airports that are close to each other are expected to work in co-ordinated clusters to ensure their redesigned airspace is aligned with each other and the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, which includes a need to minimise the amount of controlled airspace. For example, Farnborough working in co-ordination with Heathrow should mean that Farnborough aircraft can climb and descend steeply instead of driving around southern England underneath other airports airspace in their own large volumes of inefficient low-level airspace. As ever, making it happen will be the difficult bit. ACP proposers claim minimal controlled airspace as a design principle, but their focus lies elsewhere. Unhelpfully, the ACP evaluation process does not require sponsors to consider or include in their ACP proposal steeper climb and descent profiles among other important modernisation and environmental attributes, which appears to stem from a policy gap. It is far from certain that, despite our determined efforts, the myriad of changes will result in what should be possible - a significantly better outcome for soaring.

As the airspace work has evolved through 2022, so has the BGA's response. We work very closely with GA Alliance colleagues and with groups of clubs and individuals who are willing to take the initiative, for example, the Regional Soaring Airspace Group in the north of England, small teams of experts in Scotland and Wales, several other club airspace representatives, and of course airspace committee colleagues. Others have worked tirelessly within the CAA's Electronic Conspicuity Working Group, are gliding experts on the UK airprox board, and have continued to help many glider pilots qualify for radio licences. Thanks all.

During 2022, it was decided that as the A4A Trust future funding could not be assured, the GA Alliance would restart its member association funded work under a programme manager. As an early result, an ACP database and notification process has been evolved that will help us triage, monitor and respond to ACP priorities.

Electronic conspicuity is viewed as a significant enabler for modernised airspace and particularly in support of drone operations. The Government, advised by the CAA, has specified 1090 MHz and 978 MHz as the only frequencies that can be used for regulated EC interoperability. That EC specification decision does not prevent our highly effective continued use of FLARM, etc, but will impact future uptake of FLARM and PilotAware equipage and exclude thousands of aircraft from benefitting from future safe interoperability outside controlled airspace between GA and drones without additional costly equipage. EASA has taken an alternatively informed approach to GA/drone interoperability in what it calls U-Space by embracing an ADS-L EC specification, which includes frequencies used by FLARM and PilotAware, etc. The reality of drone activity will undoubtedly emerge over the coming years and meanwhile we will continue to encourage a well-informed, proportionate, and objective approach to EC that meets the needs of all airspace users.

The aim of all our work is of course to help maintain safe UK airspace and to ensure we and the next generation of glider pilots can enjoy our fantastic sport. We all have a part to play. Please prepare carefully before flight, be vigilant when flying, be considerate of other airspace users, and, where requested, please give your support to protect our freedoms to fly.

Pete Stratten
Acting Chair

Competitions and Awards Committee Report

Having lost some competition venues in recent years, it was good to see the emergence of a new Nationals venue at Saltby, where Buckminster Gliding Club hosted the 2022 Club Class Nationals. Buckminster's team was new to this kind of competition but are to be congratulated on delivering a very successful event. We look forward to more comps at Saltby in the future.

There was more good news with the return of Sherington Regionals in 2022 and entries for 2023 Regionals have been very healthy with most competitions filling up quickly.

A new initiative was introduced in 2022 to help competition directors with those tricky decisions around interpreting the rules. A member of the Rules Sub-Committee was nominated to act as a referee at each rated competition. The referee's role was to provide advice when queries arose. The experiment proved to be very successful and will become a standard feature from now on.

The Simplified Rules which were developed in 2021 were rolled-out in 2022. These were developed in response to frequent complaints that "The Rules are Too Complicated". These rules will remain available for organisers where preferred.

The Interclub League final was held at Dunstable over the weekend of 3/4th September. Nympsfield won, followed by Dunstable, then Essex and Suffolk. Plans are in hand to get more clubs involved in the ICL, including an article in S&G promoting the advantages of ICL as a platform to encourage new XC pilots. It will include pilots' experiences of ICL and will also look at what clubs need to participate. Many of our top X/C pilots started at ICL events.

2022 was another successful season for the British Gliding Team. The 21st European Gliding Championships were held in Pociunai Lithuania in July. It was a tough competition with challenging weather, with 10 days of competition flying in all classes. Reigning Club class champion Tom Arscott came away with bronze, another FAI medal for his growing collection.

The 37th World Championships took place in July in Szeged Hungary with a strong team competing in each class. The weather was excellent with very high speeds achieved. Steve Jones and Garry Coppin in their Arcus T won day 10 with 151.77kph, taking Bronze for the competition.

The 12th Junior World Championships took place at Tabor, Czech Republic in July. Current Club Class Junior European Champion, Finn Sleight, took Gold, with his teammate Toby Freeland taking Silver. The weather was again excellent with 12 days flying in each class.

Finn then later in the summer went on to win his last Junior Nationals, the first and only British pilot of any age to be National Champion, European Champion, and World Champion at the same time. Finn, along with other former Junior pilots is now actively involved in coaching and junior team selection.

In August the Womens' World Championships was held on home soil at Husbands Bosworth. The weather was a little unkind after the excellent weather of the previous weeks, but six days were achieved in the Club Class with eight in the other two classes. The British Team fielded three pilots in the Standard Class, three in the Club Class and one in the 18m class. In the Club Class, Claudia Hill came away with her best result to date, a Silver medal; her first FAI medal and hopefully the first of many.

I was very pleased to welcome Fran Roberts to the committee early in 2022. Fran is an experienced competition pilot and member of the growing Women Gliding group. Maybe we can recruit another woman this year?

I would like to say a huge "Thank You" to Graham Garnett, who has stepped down as British Gliding Team Manager after 10 years in charge. It is a very busy volunteer role in which the work goes on throughout the year to ensure that teams are selected and organised in good time and for all the administrative arrangements to be made. A measure of Graham's success is that, under his stewardship, the team has amassed around 40 medals at World and European championships.

Many of you will know Werner Stroud, who has taken over from Graham. Werner has a wealth of experience in running gliding operations and has served both as Team Captain and Media Manager at several overseas competitions. We are very pleased to welcome Werner to the role and wish him every success.

Finally, thanks again to all the members of the Committee for their hard work during 2022.

Alan Langlands
Chair

Development Committee Report

The Development Committee continued to provide support to clubs on most aspects of club management. We welcomed two new members to the Committee. Emma Burns will pick up University Liaison work, taking over from Dick Poole who has worked diligently in the area since his appointment in 2007. I would like to record a formal note of thanks to Dick for his great contribution. Yvonne Elliot also joined the Committee bringing along her duties overseeing Junior Gliding Centres as well as her role of BGA Women's Advocate. Yvonne visited nine clubs to help promote and support their work with Juniors. Yvonne will be rolling out new initiatives that should help support female participation in the first half of 2023.

The rates team were rather quieter in the period with many clubs still benefiting from COVID19 related business rates support. Preparations are now in place for the April 2023 rates revaluation. The preliminary analysis has identified a number of clubs who will need support to help re-negotiate their rates to a more acceptable level.

We were also delighted to organise the first face to face Club Development Conference in November 2022. The event was a great success with 120 delegates representing 46 clubs. The event was very positive with lots of opportunities to share good practices. The Development Committee will be rolling out an improved process to help share good practices in 2023. The Monday evening sessions, led by BGA Development Officer Alison Randle, have also proved to be a great opportunity for club volunteers to discuss issues and share solutions. We would encourage clubs to make the most of these free support sessions.

As ever in the background we provide clubs with support and advice on topics such as club governance, planning appeals, child protection, the working of community amateur sports clubs (CASCs), diversity, site security. Much of this work is done quietly in the background by Committee members with amazing skills and dedication.

We also continue to liaise with the General Aviation Awareness Council whose main focus is to support GA airfields and useful approaches to planning issues can usefully be shared.

I would like to close as ever with my sincere thanks to everyone on the Committee who are helping make our sport to take place so effectively.

Dave Latimer
Chair

Instructing and Examining Committee Report

The Instructing and Examining Committee is saddened by the passing of its friend, chair and colleague Colin Sword during 2022. Colin was an inspiration to many and will be missed. Our continued thoughts are with Helen and family.

2022 was another year of evolving the instructor course delivery, with several clubs delivering Part 1 and/or Part 2 instructor training via their Flight Instructor Coaches, as well as the BGA delivered Part 1 and Part 2 fixed date instructor courses. In addition, BGA contracted coaches ran a programme of Teaching and Learning seminars, which is the foundation for new instructor training, as well as a variety of refresher seminars. Our thanks to all the dedicated Flight Instructor Coaches who continue to provide such excellent and important support.

During the year, our employed Training Standards Manager, Mike Fox, moved on to a new career at the CAA. He was replaced by Stu Naylor, a highly experienced glider pilot and instructor based in Scotland. Stu's priorities are of course focused on club instructor training and development, and he has been working with club CFIs to better understand their instructor training needs over the coming 12 months.

As the BGA supports SFCL licence conversion and subsequently supports SPL holders with their needs, the BGA holds Declared Training Organisation (DTO) approval. That approval requires us to have a nominated Head of Training, and we were delighted during 2022 that Derek Smith, Senior Regional Examiner in the North-East, has taken on that role. Andy Miller continues to be the SFCL examining lead, and we are grateful for his continuing expert development of examiners in preparation for the future.

The Instructing and Examining Committee is primarily formed of the Senior Regional Examiners, who are all highly experienced instructors and examiners whose primary role is to support the regional examiner teams and advise CFIs. We are grateful for their continued support, which often results in them voluntarily giving up weekend and evening time. Of course, the committee does not work in isolation, and we are grateful for the continued engagement and challenge so ably supplied by the BGA Safety Committee. That collaboration remains important as the BGA safety system continues to inform training developments and information. CFI's have a key role in passing on safety and training messages to pilots and instructors, and once again we thank them for their dedication and the vital support that they provide to their clubs.

Going forward, the Instructing and Examining Committee is considering how it can better meet its terms of reference by developing how it uses information gathered during examining and assessing to further improve the support provided for instructors and clubs. At the same time, preparations for SFCL implementation continue at an appropriate pace.

BGA I&E Committee

Junior Gliding Report

What a fantastic season we've had for gliding! And with it came many spectacular flights from the junior generation of glider pilots. Many achieved their first 300km and 500km flights and we saw a few 750km flights as well. And records were broken too! Congrats to all!

This year, the British Junior Gliding Team went to Tabór in the Czech Republic to compete in the 12th FAI Junior World Gliding Championships with great success! Finn Sleight and Toby Freeland flew an amazingly solid competition showing their competitors that there was no doubt they deserved to be the winners in the Club Class, Finn taking 1st place closely followed by Toby in 2nd place. Congratulations also to Henry Inigo-Jones and Thomas Pavis in the Standard Class who flew in an incredibly tough field of junior pilots. We are all very proud of the entire team and coaches!

Next year's Junior Europeans will take place in Denmark and the next team consisting of Toby Freeland and George White in the Club Class, Ben Edkins and Freddie Turner in the Standard Class, and Ben Payne as a reserve, will soon be knee-deep in preparations. We wish them all the best for the competition! Additionally, the Junior Development Squad for the next season has been announced, consisting of pilots who have great potential to join the British Junior Gliding Team in the future. Alongside the current Junior Gliding Team members, Henry Inigo-Jones, Peter Freeland, Luke Pike, Oliver Ramsay, Dan Hayday, George Downing, Ollie Sleight, and Tom Chapman have been selected for the squad.

The Junior Nationals has a continued high number of entries and this year, we had 6 great and challenging competition days. At first Keevil seemed unusual, but it turned out to be a great site for the competition with good cross-country weather and options to route both to the North while also opening routing options to Devon. This year's winner was Finn, followed by Toby in 2nd, and Alistair Emson in 3rd place. The highest-scoring newcomer was the then-only 16-year-old Oliver Ramsay.

As we are now in the middle of the Winter Series events, we want to mention the ever-increasing interest in the Winter Series. Last winter's 4th round was held in April at Edgehill with the hope of some favourable cross-country conditions which we were blessed with on the last day. Many Juniors were able to make use of the opportunity and got introduced to cross-country flying by the amazing coaches. This winter, the interest in the Winter Series events is so high that we were forced to start capping the numbers as we are reliably getting over 100 sign-ups per event. We are very happy about the enthusiasm the Juniors are showing in attending these events.

The UKJG Promo Team did a fantastic job alongside the BGA team again reaching out at air show events at Shuttleworth, Farnborough, and RIAT. We would like to thank them for their continued efforts in bringing gliding closer to the public eye and showing them our sport and the opportunities within.

At this point, we would also like to thank all the instructors, cross-country coaches, and volunteers for their help at all our UK Junior Gliding events from Junior Nationals to the Winter Series. And a big thank you also to the clubs and private owners providing their gliders for these events. We wouldn't be able to inspire and create the next generation of glider pilots without you.

Lucy Wootton
Junior Gliding Development Team

Safety Committee Report

The Safety Committee continues to analyse accidents, produce, and disseminate safety advice and training material, and support the Instructing and Examining Committee's development of the training syllabus.

Analysis. Our extensive accident database and report archive continues to provide a rich evidence base for safety analysis and development, supported by a positive, no-blame reporting culture that is actively promoted by our network of dedicated Club Safety Officers. Face to face Club Safety Officer seminars have recommenced. We continue to provide support to AAIB accident investigations.

Communication. While CFIs and instructors remain a key line of communication as well as an invaluable source of practical advice and considered wisdom, the BGA is looking to additionally provide direct communications to pilots. We continue to work closely with other Sub-Committees to engage, learn and inform about safety aspects and key messages, and develop the advice collected in Managing Flying Risk – a live document that has further evolved during 2022.

The topical 'Straighten Up & Fly Right' articles for S&G seem to be well received and continue. Guidance on rigging has again been updated, is available from the BGA website and we urge all pilots to make use of the information.

Accidents. Accidents by category were disappointingly similar to past years; a number of accidents and incidents could easily have proved more serious, and there remains much room for improvement. Details will be published in the 2022 Accident Review.

Thanks. I would again like to thank CSOs and regional teams for relentlessly promoting safety at club level; and numerous individual pilots and instructors for personally adopting and promoting a positive safety culture, diligent reporting, and safety-related suggestions. Nick Bowers provides splendid support having taken on our occurrence data analysis from Hugh Browning, as does the Safety Committee, and the BGA accident investigators.

Safe flying in 2023!

Tim Freegarde
Chair

Technical Committee Report

Summary

The re-establishment of national airworthiness processes as applied to our sport remain 'work in progress' for our national authority, the CAA. In overview, gliding has a major strength: through the concerted preservation of national processes over the past ten year of EASA legislation: and a major weakness in that our airframe supply base largely comes from the European sector which remain under EASA overview. We are now clear that the basic airframe certification processes (Type Certificates etc) are stable, but day-to-day operating details, particularly in respect of maintenance, will continue to need rework for some time to come, and will remain heavily dependent to the prioritisation given to sport aviation by national legislators.

UK national procedures post-Brexit

In the widest context, the processes for continuing airworthiness and maintenance are now dependent on the outcome of the post Brexit EU Revocation and Reform Bill which is currently deliberating on which EU laws should be revoked by end 2023. It can be immediately appreciated that within this highly political legislation, the issues facing sport aviation including gliding are unlikely to attract any significant priority.

In this reporting period, we have resolved, for the time being, various practical maintenance issues including the provenance of spare parts and services, and the status of such organisations, particularly on the continent, empowering them to enact maintenance and/or modification actions on UK based airframes.

Note also that the extant BGA inspector national accreditation will remain extant to support nationally registered (non-Part 21) types, now mostly vintage and homebuilt airframes.

Personal licensing of BGA Inspectors

The current major issue is that there is no agreed workable process by which UK is able to qualify sailplane maintenance personnel, given the uncertain status of EASA Part 66L. To date, and in spite of major inputs by the BGA, both CAA and Government departments have failed to provide any workable route whereby the gliding community can sustain qualified engineers. For the present we continue to operate with a static population of maintenance/airworthiness engineers with no means of replenishment or promoting newer or younger candidates. The issue will come to a further head when BGA inspectors seek Part-66L requalification for the first time.

The BGA position remains that we stand ready, and we believe able, to expand our role in many such areas, and we are active to establish what new opportunities the BGA might be negotiated on a national basis. That said we remain at the mercy of ongoing high level political decisions.

Wooden airframe airworthiness

During 2022 EASA released several publications regarding the airworthiness of legacy airframes, still in heavy use in BGA clubs. We are heartened to find that these publications have recommended practices which, have mirrored the activities undertaken under our own management system.

BGA Airworthiness activities in the field

During 2022 our CTO Gordon MacDonald's 'webinars', continue to be well viewed and received. These have diversified in their content ranging from Part-66L refreshers to basic 'Club maintainer' content relevant to all commers. Our regional Technical Officers (RTO's) continue to provide valued technical advice at the membership level over wide aspects of the technical side of gliding. The BGA continues its programme of Quality Audits largely on behalf of CAA, led by Keith Morgan and Andy Brind. We thank all these for their assistance including those a BGA Head Office who have maintained a timely airworthiness process.

Howard A Torode
Chair

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