

## **BGA CLUB MANAGEMENT GUIDES**

### **About Conflicts of Interest**

## About Conflicts of Interest

### Decision Making

Who makes the decisions? How similar are they to the people who originally established the club and to the broader make up of the club members? Gliding has traditionally been a sport for well off, white men and in the early days the BGA's office was on Park Lane and the Annual Awards Dinner was featured in Tatler. Club Committees tended to be comprised of the great and the good. Everything evolves... but has the representation on the Committee evolved too? The concept of 'lived experience' is a hot topic in modern governance discussions – having an inclusive governing body helps inform healthy decision making.

It may not be possible to have all the groups represented on the Committee, but when making a decision that affects the juniors, people with additional physical needs, or female pilots for instance, how much weight is given to their lived experience of a problem and potential solution? Unconscious bias may render the reported problem invisible to those without that lived experience.

We all have these unconscious biases; they are a fact of life.

To help mitigate these decision makers should ask more questions and take time to understand how the different perspectives are considered. This is especially important when making any decisions that affect minority groupings within the membership and people with a variety of experiences and needs. A classic gliding example is catering for the needs of very light pilots.

### Conflicts of Interest

Everybody has their own personal range of experiences and cultural history which they use as points of references during decision making. This is normal. However, when making decisions in the best interests of the members of the club, some attention should be paid to the various interests in play. Some will be impossible to remove, for instance asking all club members to leave the room when discussing the club's tariffs. The point is that thought should be given to the factors being considered as part of the decision making process.

We should also appreciate that the club will be richer if the committee is comprised of people with a wide range of interests and lived experiences because the resulting decision making is more likely to be representative of the wider club membership. However, when sitting in a meeting, the person should be wearing the organisation's hat and making decisions according to the interests of that organisation. If judgement, and subsequently, the decision-making process is clouded by a person's other interests, then that is a conflict.

It is good practice to hold a '*Conflict of Interest Register*' with practices for members of the governing body to follow, even if that person is confident that their judgement is not being clouded.

Another important area for potential conflict is a **Connected Person**. The definition varies according to the context and the organisation(s) involved. It usually includes the immediate family members of the committee member, including domestic partners and their immediate families and the companies, businesses, and organisations that they control. This aspect is particularly important to consider if there is financial gain involved, such as payment to carry out work, or the awarding of a contract.

To avoid family domination, at least three members of the committee should not be either related to, nor cohabiting with, other committee members.

NB an employee cannot hold voting rights on the committee, as 'The Committee' is the employer.

**Conflict of Interest Policy**

The manner in which the club handles conflicts of interest should be set out in the Club's Governing document and therefore will not need to be duplicated in a separate club policy document. However, it may be helpful to create an information sheet about conflicts of interest.

If your club's governing document does not currently include a section on Conflicts of Interest, the relevant Article in the 'BGA Articles of Association for Gliding Clubs' (Article 17) can be used as a starting point. The club will need to get them checked by a suitably qualified lawyer before presenting them to the membership at a General Meeting for adoption.

**Taking Conflicts of Interest into account**

Considering potential conflicts should be a normal part of the decision making procedures. To set these up well, and to minimise potential conflicts there are a number of key points in the Committee cycles to give the topic specific attention.

1. *Before appointment*

It is better that everyone joining the Committee understands what constitutes a Conflict of Interest and if there is one that is too much to accommodate, that they don't stand. Making the information sheet widely available is helpful. Check for potential conflicts at the nomination stage.

2. *On appointment*

Include the information sheet in the joining pack, as well as instructions about how to register interests, and the need to register any new conflicts that may occur during their tenure. Check that they have registered any interests before the first meeting.

3. *During meetings*

Checking for Conflicts of Interest should be an agenda item and any conflicts are then handled as per the governing document.

**Sample Conflict of Interest Register**

Name	Role	Organisation / individual	Nature of Conflict	Risk: Low / medium / high
Ron Jones	Treasurer	Ron Jones Building Supplies Ltd, Owner	Potential supplier for club project	High
Ron Jones	Treasurer	Local youth club, treasurer	An interest in another local organisation	Low