



# **BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE GLIDING CLUB**

**SOARING WITH THE BEST**

## Bristol & Gloucester Gliding Club Strategic Plan

V 3.0, Nov 2017

Owner: BGGC Committee



## **Preface**

This document lays out a high level strategic plan for the BGGC with a 3-5-year timeframe. It is intended to lay out an overall direction for the club, supported by the members, which will guide current and future committees. This plan was discussed with members (21/10/17) and ratified by informal vote. The intent is that this will be used to prioritise and direct club projects, investments and action plans. The plan will be reviewed every 6 months and discussed with members at open meetings to gain commitment or agree changes; additional ideas, suggestions, modifications are welcome at any time and should be sent to [committee@bggc.co.uk](mailto:committee@bggc.co.uk).



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## **I BGGC Strategic Goal**

This plan is based on a strategic goal which assumes that the BGGC will position itself as a gliding club that is:

1. Financially Secure, with stable income, manageable debt and reasonable capital reserves
2. Developing gliding and glider pilots, from ab-initio through to advanced XC and as part of this produce competition pilots capable of competing at national (and possibly international) level.
3. Providing a 7 day a week operation with reliable launch facilities across a range of weather conditions
4. Providing members with the associated facilities that encourage them to come to the club and that support their flying activities
5. Providing a welcoming atmosphere, with good facilities and an active social scene, and that is attractive members of all types. This would include providing a structured and welcoming induction for new members, bringing them into the club as active and contributing participants.

In order to achieve this there are certain Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that we believe are necessary and this strategic plan outlines these and identifies actions or investments that will help meet these CSFs.



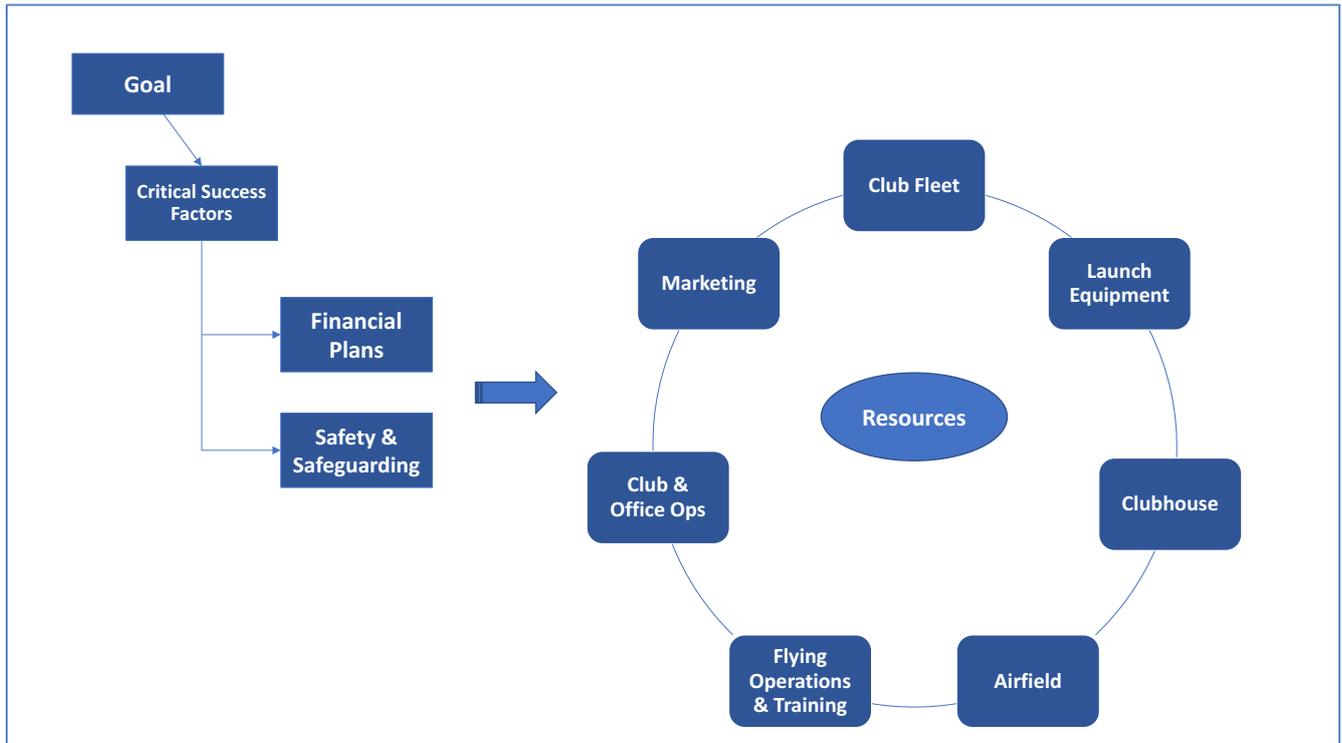
## 2 Executive Summary

The BGGC has been at Nympsfield for over 60 years, and in that time the nature of Gliding and the Gliding movement has changed in many ways. Part of this has been due to changes in society and in the nature of the work environment. Today's equivalent of the enthusiastic young professionals who made up a significant portion of the gliding movement in the 1970's and 1980's experience a much more demanding work environment, less leisure time and more debt. We are also faced with increased competition from other forms of aviation, particularly microlighting and paragliding, which are less time demanding and (in some cases) lower cost. At the same time, we do have new opportunities such as an active retired or semi-retired population and a new source of younger members who can now go solo at 14.

Remaining a viable club long term requires us to retain and recruit new members and provide facilities that meet the needs of a changing membership. We need an operation that is effective and efficient, and mixes professional and volunteer resource in the appropriate manner. Unusually in gliding we have a nearby competitor club at Aston Down, and we need to favourably differentiate ourselves from them in what we offer. We believe we have the opportunity to position ourselves as a centre of excellence for cross country and advanced training, offering members and visitors a wonderful site, with good facilities and training opportunities which allow them to progress from ab-initio to world class.

This document lays out current thinking and plans on how we should proceed over the next 5 years. As always, we can be confident that plans will change in reaction to events, but it is hoped that this document will act as a guide to current and future committees.

The layout of the document covers what we believe are the Critical Success Factors, the financial goals and initiatives, and then the plans for each area of the club that support these. Finally, we look at resourcing and structure to support the plan. The diagram below shows the relationships between the different elements of the plan.





## 2.1 Critical Success Factors

The following table summarises the goals and the CSF's

Goal	CSF's
Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members &amp; visitors have a safe environment to enjoy their flying in</li> <li>Ensure club complies with relevant BGA and CAA regulations and practices in our flying operation</li> <li>Ensure we comply with relevant legislative requirements (e.g. Health and Safety, Employment, CASC etc.)</li> <li>Protect individual members, officers and club assets from liabilities through club actions.</li> </ul>
Financial Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A balanced income with a proportion of our fixed costs being covered by non-flying revenues</li> <li>An efficient and effective flying &amp; launching operation to maximise return on our assets</li> <li>Good member retention so we control dependency on new members</li> <li>Control of costs vs revenue to achieve a balanced budget with sufficient operating surplus to fund future capital expenditure</li> </ul>
Pilot Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A suitable training fleet (dual and single seaters), covering both basic and advanced training</li> <li>A base of instructors that will support 7-day training operations</li> <li>A range of training offerings that provide a structured training path for all levels</li> <li>Supportive and encouraging environment for new &amp; developing pilots</li> </ul>
7 Day a week operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A mix of professional and volunteers to cover instruction, launching and field operations</li> <li>Reliable and well managed glider fleet, launch equipment and club operations</li> <li>A mix of both aerotow and winch launch facilities available 7 days a week</li> </ul>
Member Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good quality clubhouse with affordable member only facilities (bar, kitchen, accommodation)</li> <li>Flying related facilities to support training and XC flying</li> <li>Support facilities for club operations &amp; office work</li> </ul>
Atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured introduction for new members</li> <li>A range of membership packages for differing levels of interest and differing motivations</li> <li>A "clubbable club" where it is a pleasure to be a member</li> </ul>

Each CSF will be achieved through actions in a number of areas. These can be broken down into:

1. Finances: External and Internal income plans, efficiency and cost control
2. Club Fleet: Gliders and associated equipment (trailers, parachutes, instruments)
3. Launch Equipment: Tugs, winches, tow out vehicles, launch point vehicles and associated equipment
4. Clubhouse: Buildings and Facilities, infrastructure (utilities, networking, etc.)
5. Airfield
6. Club Operations: Systems and processes that support the club "back office" operations
7. Flying Operations: Systems and processes that support the flying
8. Training: Structure of offerings
9. Marketing: Pricing, promotion, positioning
10. Resourcing & Organisation

Each of these now will be considered in turn



## 3 Plans and Initiatives

### 3.1 Safety and Safeguarding

#### 3.1.1 Current Situation:

A review was carried out in January of club safety and safeguarding status. While no major issues were found with the flying operations a number of actions were required on the non-flying side and these are now in place or underway.

**Positives:** Good control and compliance management of the flying operation

**Negatives:** Some non-flying issues require attention – remedial actions underway

For some years the club has run in a split organisational and legal structure with all assets owned by BGGC Pty Ltd, while the gliding club operates as BGGC Ltd. Recently we have also added The Old Flying Club Ltd, as a subsidiary of BGGC Pty Ltd. Of these the operating company operates as a CASC (Community Amateur Sports Club) which gives us rebates from Rates and the ability to claim income tax back on donations (Gift Aid).

**Positives:** Some level of protection of club assets against potential aviation related claims, oversight of capital spend by committees, ability to split off non-flying revenue in case of hitting CASC limits. Gift Aid is proving to be a substantial income stream and helps fund both capital investments and support schemes such as instructor sponsorship.

**Negatives:** The multi-company structure requires additional volunteers to act as directors (over and above the Committee). In some areas boundaries of responsibility have grown unclear, and the current company structure needs to be reviewed in the light of the latest legislative environment. In addition the close relationship between the two has sometimes made it difficult to produce clear and easily comprehensible accounts for the operating company.

#### 3.1.2 Objective

Ensure club stays compliant with the associated regulations and practices relevant to our operation as a gliding club and as a business. Establish and maintain the necessary processes and roles to manage this and put in place safeguards for the club, club officers and members

#### 3.1.3 Plans and Initiatives

Safety and Compliance	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of compliance with BGA and CAA requirements completed</li> <li>Health &amp; Safety policy and process revised and updated</li> <li>Club liability insurance review and adjustments undertaken</li> <li>Tree maintenance adjacent to public roads completed</li> <li>Directors &amp; Operators liability insurance set up</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish ongoing processes and procedures for non-flying safeguarding</li> <li>Set up regular tree maintenance process</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>

Company Structure	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of legal structure of Pty and Operating company</li> <li>Clarification of financial roles, responsibilities and reporting</li> <li>Review and, if necessary, restate the lease agreements and asset classes between the operating company and the Pty.</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the “Wear and Tear” (i.e. rent) system and institute system that will ensure we build up suitable asset replacement fund.</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>



## 3.2 Finances

### 3.2.1 Current Situation

The current financial model means that membership numbers (of all types) are key to a sustainable financial position, as membership fees provide the biggest & most reliable element of our income. Over the past 5-10 years we have suffered from declining membership in the adult categories, although this has been made up to some extent by an increase in Student and Cadet numbers.

Operating expenditure is now under control, although there is always scope for future cost savings. Despite a drop in mid-week flying this season, income is remaining in balance with expenditure. However, the current situation is not sustainable long term as we are failing to generate sufficient income to build up capital. In 2017, we have improved our control over capital expenditure, but our reserves remain too low for long term sustainability or investment in growth.

We need to generate sufficient income to provide for future investment or replacement/refurbishment of aircraft or facilities. Some investment has taken place over recent years (e.g. workshop roof, winch hanger, winch purchase and refurbishments) but major investments on gliders, launching equipment, airfield and buildings are still required over the next 5 years for which we have insufficient capital reserves.

**Positives:** We have no significant debt and are generating (roughly) enough income to cover our costs. We have reasonable capital reserves to cover likely needs such as tug engine refurbishment or insurance excesses. The Gift Aid process has been very successful, generating substantial additional income which we can use for investment or to support initiatives such as the sponsored instructor training.

**Negatives:** We are at risk from declines in flying income and are at long term risk as we erode our capital without sufficient operating profit generation to replenish or build up a fund for future needs. Some of the gift aid benefits are “one off” as we claim for prior years and future contribution will be lower.

### 3.2.2 Objective

Our overall goal is to build a balanced revenue base with external income flows. To do this we need to: Increase our revenues from fixed fees (from members and non-members)

- Build up revenues generated from our key assets (airfield and buildings) through rentals or other schemes
- Increase membership base by broader base of non-core members (e.g. Associate, Temporary etc.)
- Build up non-flying revenue streams such as Café, Hanger/Workshop rental etc.

At the same time we need to improve our control of costs and look to direct investment to areas where we will reap long term cost reductions, for example better office systems or more modern (lower maintenance) equipment.

### 3.2.3 Plans and Initiatives

Balanced & Broaden Revenue Base	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up BGGC owned café subsidiary to operate a commercial café, aimed at general public and also providing services to members and catering for special occasions (eg Comps etc). Profits from the café to be fed back to club funds.</li> <li>• Re-institute regular Competitions from Nympsfield</li> <li>• Develop existing XC soaring courses</li> <li>• Generate additional revenue via “Gift Aid”</li> <li>• Continue to allow a small managed number of suitable powered aircraft to be based at the club with resulting hanger, membership &amp; ground rent incomes.</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run a number of pre-solo courses (maybe 1,2 or 3 day)</li> <li>• Consider mid-week “courses for members” allowing a small number of P2’s to book an instructor &amp; glider for the day or half day</li> <li>• Expand range of intermediate and advanced courses aimed at experienced pilots (depends on mid-week instructor availability).</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revive debenture plan or other funding mechanism for fleet acquisition</li> <li>• Encourage a broader range of social and associate members from the aviation community (e.g. Hang Glider pilots, LAA pilots, winter membership).</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek external sponsors for funding and set up a formal donations fund with associated fund-raising efforts</li> <li>• Get a team together to look at external revenue opportunities which can be done with minimal impact on flying operations (e.g. Horse Box parking, camping facilities, Solar farms, etc.)</li> </ul>
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<b>Manage costs</b>	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up annual cost centre budgets for each committee member &amp; establish monthly reports against the budget</li> <li>• Review weekend winch driver system and put in place a more appropriate and cost-effective way of rewarding weekend volunteers</li> <li>• Investigate new flying account system which would allow greater report flexibility and on-line access to data and reports by committee</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish revenue targets and year on year comparisons, integrate into marketing plan and publish to members</li> <li>• Carry out wider cost review and look for additional cost saving measures</li> <li>• Try and reduce time taken “firefighting” by our administrative team so they can spend more time on cost control, debt management, etc</li> <li>• Rebuild capital reserves to fund investments</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fleet rationalisation &amp; replacement to reduce maintenance costs</li> <li>• Look at options for launch facilities to see if we can reduce ongoing costs while maintaining availability</li> <li>• Put together an investment plan for support equipment (bus, tractors, tow-out vehicles, tractors etc.) to avoid/reduce maintenance costs</li> </ul>

<b>Improve Control &amp; Systems</b>	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate alternative IT solutions for flying system and accounting</li> <li>• Provide office with reliable Internet access, separated from members use</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate cloud-based Flying Accounts system (as used at Camphill &amp; other clubs)</li> <li>• Provide clearer separation between front-office and back-office activity and look at ways we can be more effective in our processes.</li> <li>• Evaluation what we need for office facilities (computing, office space, layout, storage etc.) Build investment plan.</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate options to improve launch point flight logging</li> </ul>



### 3.3 Club Fleet

#### 3.3.1 Current Situation:

Our current fleet has been built up in an opportunistic manner, often with actions taken to meet short term needs. We have a mix of manufacturers and a fleet of high hours single and two seat gliders.

**Positives:** We have a range of training machines and single seaters which have the potential to cover the spectrum from ab-initio to advanced. Single seat fleet appears to meet current needs.

**Negatives:** The current mix and age of the fleet is causing high maintenance loads and consequently significant downtime where gliders are not available due to scheduled or ad-hoc maintenance needs. We have an exposure on our Parachutes as the bulk of these were all purchased at the same time (after the clubhouse fire) so will all come up for replacement at once as their lifespan is time dependent.

#### 3.3.2 Objective

Move to a rationalised fleet, with lower-hour (& hopefully lower maintenance) 2-seaters from no more than 2 manufacturers. Establish a regular replacement and/or refurbishment plan across the fleet. Build a planned replacement cycle for time dependent equipment such as parachutes.

Develop a planned maintenance regime that allows us to carry out maintenance outside of peak season and with a balance of professional and volunteer input that optimises availability and keeps costs down.

#### 3.3.3 Plans and Initiatives

Fleet Rationalisation	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start to build an investment fund by disposing of older, high maintenance gliders (ASK 13, Grob single seater)</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide on long term strategy for our 2-seater manufacturers (eg ASK and DG) and establish an affordable purchase plan over next 5 years</li> <li>Look for a suitable 2<sup>nd</sup> hand (ideally ex-privately owned) 2 seater which complements the existing fleet.</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revive debenture plan or other funding mechanism for fleet acquisition</li> <li>Seek external sponsors for funding</li> </ul>

Maintenance	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Glider Captain system and regular maintenance “crews” in place</li> <li>Active member participation in glider maintenance</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build a central maintenance plan with scheduled professional maintenance (eg every 3 years)</li> <li>Build a planned replacement schedule for parachutes – look at refurbishment options to spread the costs.</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider a core winter maintenance period and member led projects to carry out ARC and other scheduled maintenance</li> <li>Run combined work-party &amp; social weekends in winter for intensive maintenance work</li> <li>Investigate collaboration with technical colleges in the area to get assistance in maintenance / projects</li> </ul>



### 3.4 Launch Equipment

#### 3.4.1 Current Situation:

**Winches:** We have recently purchased a 2<sup>nd</sup> Supacat winch and had both winches refurbished. The tow out vehicle has been replaced in recent years and a winch hanger constructed. We have had some issues with winch reliability since the refurbishment and this is under investigation. Currently the weak spot appears to be that the winches require a high capacity tow vehicle to position them on the field, and the Broughton is proving unreliable. In addition the Bus has had some problems and is a single point of failure for the launching operations.

**Tug:** The Pawnee continues to give good service, although an engine replacement is likely within the 5 year planning horizon. Trials with lighter weight tugs (eg Eurofox) have shown that they cope with only a limited range of conditions and glider weights. At the moment it is not known whether higher power versions of these would address these issues and a more formal trial is needed.

**Positives:** Good winching capacity and capable tug. Tow out vehicle working well, most of the winching equipment (except the Broughton) is either recently purchased or refurbished.

**Negatives:** Pawnee remains expensive to run on fuel costs compared to the rather less capable Eurofox – however a full assessment of long term ownership costs remains to be done. Significant expenditure on either a re-engine for the Pawnee or a newer tug will be required at some point

#### 3.4.2 Objective

Due to the specific limitations of the field, which can prevent safe winch launching in Southerly winds, we believe that we should continue to offer both aerotow and winch launching. The inclusion of aerotow provides extra peak launch capacity for the XC grid, assists in training and provides the possibility of positioning tows when that suits the soaring conditions. With the increasing number of heavier 2 seaters, club and private, we need to ensure that any tug is capable of launching the full range of gliders across a variety of conditions.

#### 3.4.3 Plans and Initiatives

Winching & Vehicles	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of current availability &amp; reliability issues – produce a recommendation on the long-term strategy for winch and winch equipment</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop planned replacement / refurbishment schedule for tractors, tow-out vehicles and Bus.</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TBC</li> </ul>

Aerotow	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate options to reduce maintenance costs on Pawnee</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate Pawnee engine replacement options &amp; costs</li> <li>Investigate alternatives to Pawnee</li> <li>Produce long term Tug strategy</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternate options – new tug models, electric tugs etc.</li> </ul>



### 3.5 Clubhouse

#### 3.5.1 Current Situation:

The clubhouse is an important part of the overall club facilities, alongside our flying and launching equipment. It forms the first impression for potential new members and an attractive club environment helps retain existing members and (hopefully) will encourage members to come up to the club and participate in with non-flying activities such as maintenance or social events.

The new clubhouse has been refurbished downstairs and “The Old Flying Club” café established under BGGC ownership but separate management. Initial results are positive and on plan, and we expect the café to pay back the initial investment within 3-4 years and start to make a positive contribution to club funds at the end of that period.

The Members Bar generates good profits and provides a convenient facility for members casual use. It is reliant on volunteer effort to stock and manage but remains a key component of club life. Some decorative upgrades will be needed during the plan period. Our plan is to retain the member “self-service” bar for the foreseeable future.

The Old Clubhouse is in poor state, in need of work both internally and externally. The members facilities are in need of refurbishment and the current layout does not ideally suit the club needs. The Instructors Flat is undergoing refurbishment but (in common with the rest of the building) there are basic problems with drainage and damp. The Old Clubhouse does however provide valuable and needed facilities such as briefing rooms, members kitchen, storage etc.

Internally the IT Network is undergoing significant upgrade and should provide a good base for future operations.

**Positives:** Good progress on the Cafe, successful catering & bar performance in Juniors week and while it is still early days the café appears to be tracking to plan. The upgraded network managed (just) to provide protected IT support to the competition & the office internet access is now isolated from members.

**Negatives:** Significant investment and work needed on the old clubhouse, and the nature of that building means that it will never become low-maintenance nor is it ideally suited for current club needs

#### 3.5.2 Objective

Continue to build the Café business so that it provides a stable source of income to the club which is not dependent on members or flying activity.

Provide a welcoming entrance to the members section of the club and provide members with improved kitchen, meeting/eating space, and briefing facilities. Provide suitable accommodation and shower facilities based on demand. Continue to provide a members bar, with “self-service” members access as today, but improve/update Bar facilities and environment. Build on an improved clubhouse to draw in more associate members.

#### 3.5.3 Plans and Initiatives

Old Clubhouse	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network Upgrade</li> <li>• Entrance lobby refurbishment</li> <li>• Instructors Flat refurbishment</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a fund raising/sponsorship team to support clubhouse development</li> <li>• Look to extend the members area, provide better briefing, dining and kitchen facilities, move stairs to give better access to upstairs briefing room and parachute loft</li> <li>• Renew external guttering, repair and repaint rendered external walls</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert “old clubhouse” gents into showers</li> <li>• Rationalise &amp; refurbish accommodation upstairs</li> <li>• Re-work the office/lobby area to give a more welcoming initial entrance to the club and a better work environment for the office</li> </ul>



New Clubhouse	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Café project and business development underway</li></ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand café services, support member activities (social events etc.)</li><li>• Redecorate members Bar and investigate bar furnishing options</li></ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Look at options for expanded use of the new clubhouse and café on ad-hoc basis and generate more income from external use.</li><li>• Could we encourage more associate membership e.g. from paraglider pilots, visiting light aircraft, etc?</li><li>• Could we host more external events, or use the café more to promote trial lessons and club membership?</li><li>• Can we use café for fund raising events to generate donations and/or income to back club investment projects?</li></ul>



### 3.6 Airfield

#### 3.6.1 Current Situation:

The BGGC is in the enviable situation of owning our own airfield. In addition to the airfield we have an attractive members caravan site, a number of hangars (club and privately owned), commercial premises and areas of land which are currently rarely utilised. The underlying nature of the airfield means that the field surface can be rough and that tracks around the field do suffer from wear and tear

**Positives:** Own field, good facilities, space available for hangars, caravans and additional buildings (subject to planning permission)

**Negatives:** Winch Track requires ongoing maintenance, field rough in places. Growth in trees around the boundary requires ongoing maintenance for safety purposes. South Hanger requires maintenance longer term or it will deteriorate.

#### 3.6.2 Objective

Continue to invest in maintaining the field surface and winch track. Look for opportunities to generate revenue from Caravan Site, Hangars and available land. Any practical proposal needs to have minimal impact on flying, meet all safety requirements and be capable of operating without requiring excessive management by the club

#### 3.6.3 Plans and Initiatives

Airfield	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General tidy up &amp; removal of scrap trailers, caravans etc</li> <li>• Initial tree maintenance programme completed</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winch Track maintenance / surfacing</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve airfield security and access control</li> </ul>

Caravan Site, Hangars etc	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlled, small, number of powered aircraft &amp; associated hangars welcomed</li> <li>• Site fee paying powered aircraft in "Tug" hanger</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for additional rental income from existing club hangars and aviation related commercial use</li> <li>• South Hanger maintenance (particularly doors and guttering)</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional uses for the trailer line &amp; NE corner of the field (e.g. camping, horsebox parking, solar power etc.)</li> <li>• Consider additional commercial buildings</li> <li>• Improve car park / hanger access surface to reduce dust</li> </ul>



## 3.7 Flying Operations & Training

### 3.7.1 Current Situation:

The Flying Operation is run by a mix of volunteer and (ideally) professional staff. Club volunteers run the weekend flying on a volunteer / rota basis. Mid-week is ideally run by a professional instructor / manager with club assistance. In 2017 season we have had difficulty in filling that role. We currently employ a mid-week winch driver and (in the absence of an available professional instructor) have employed an operations manager in order to trial the concept. The Ops Manager is there to help with mid-week organisation and maintenance. We have not run regular formal courses for several years and both weekend and mid-week instruction runs on a “casual list” basis.

**Positives:** Hard working volunteer force has provided partial cover for lack of mid-week instructor. We have also been able to provide self-authorising flying on most (but not all) soarable days mid-week. Advanced courses have continued to be successful and we have re-started running competitions. We run a highly successful Cadet programme and host the active BGA Juniors organisation. We generate a healthy revenue from Trial Lessons with a better than average follow up in terms of subsequent flights

**Negatives:** Current volunteer instructor force not sufficient to fully staff mid-week and weekend rota. Difficulties recruiting suitable mid-week instructors. Only limited new instructors trained in last 5 years, and an instructor force of which nearly half are over 60. Casual List operation mid-week means that we get variable numbers of P2's with little predictability. In addition we question whether the casual list system adequately meets the needs of our target P2 audience. Trial Lesson flying at weekend can interfere with club members and is impacted due to lack of full BI/Instructor rotas (currently running around 70% full) and is dependent on the overall launch rate we can achieve in peak periods. The Trial lesson experience overall could be improved and better organised – this is important as it forms the initial impression of the club.,

### 3.7.2 Objective

Continue volunteer operation at weekends, strengthen professional operation and provide a more structured, semi-professional, mid-week system. Aim to provide a reliable, 7 day a week, cost effective operation without putting excessive strain on members for volunteer activity. Provide greater predictability of mid-week operation.

Expand advanced courses and continue to run a competition most years. Continue to run Cadet program and increase emphasis on bringing younger pilots into active participation as BI, Instructor and XC pilots

### 3.7.3 Plans and Initiatives

#### 3.7.3.1 Weekend

Weekend	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cadet program continues</li> <li>• Increased sponsorship for BI and AI training introduced</li> <li>• Restructure weekend winch driver rewards system for next financial year.</li> <li>• Introduce formal daily briefings for club pilots under training</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to train 2-3 BI/AI per annum to get to a full staffed 4-week rota</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project to look at how we can improve launch rates overall?</li> <li>• Make more use of early morning slots in summer – maybe prioritise check flights for early arrivals.</li> <li>• Could we start running our own instructor courses?</li> <li>• Should we introduce more structured teams/roles for weekend operations?</li> <li>• How can we better manage trial lessons at the weekend?</li> <li>• Build a simulator to use as an integrated part of club training?</li> </ul>



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3.7.3.2 *Mid Week*

Mid-Week	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate alternative models for mid-week operations (eg Instructor + Ops Manager or other role combinations)</li> <li>• Introduce formal daily briefings for club pilots under training</li> <li>• Investigate possible sources of professional instructor for 2018 &amp; start recruitment process early.</li> <li>• Successful Junior Nationals and hosting of Juniors Winter Season event</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit suitable staff to provide mid-week operation with less reliance on volunteer instructors.</li> <li>• Introduce structured “day courses” for both members and non-members. Run a mix of casual list &amp; bookable course days</li> <li>• Continue to look for opportunities to run suitable competitions</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More advanced courses, e.g. Aim Higher, guest coaches, extended task weeks etc.</li> <li>• Courses aimed at non-glider pilots (eg “Spin awareness for PPL”)</li> <li>• Consider limited ab-initio courses (4/5 day) working with local B&amp;B's for accommodation.</li> <li>• Utilise web based system to organise flying mid-week</li> <li>• Consider promoting mid-week flying through local businesses (for example discount to campers at Thistledown)</li> </ul>



## 3.8 Club Office Operations

### 3.8.1 Current Situation:

Club operations are run by a mixture of staff and volunteers, with the office open 7 days a week. The club has a long-standing flying management system and a simple computerised accounting package

**Positives:** Current systems are adequate for basic needs, office staff are experienced in club procedures

**Negatives:** Current operations are labour intensive in some areas, office processes and procedures have developed over time and can be complex. Current systems offer limited facilities to members and committee and make it difficult to introduce new offerings/packages.

### 3.8.2 Objective

Establish an updated system for office management which requires less intervention and manual effort for day to day running. Allow office resources and time to focus more on club management areas such as cost control and/or dealing with potential members or trial lesson customers. Establish a cost-effective system for weekend cover

### 3.8.3 Plans and Initiatives

Back Office	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve office internet access and provide office with a protected network environment</li> <li>• Investigate cloud based flying account management systems</li> <li>• Gain experience in cloud based accounts systems (through café)</li> <li>• Start to update office IT equipment</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review weekend cover arrangements, roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Implement new flying account management system with improved member access, better marketing features and more flexible reporting</li> <li>• Continue to update office IT equipment</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can we make great use of Café staff to promote / welcome people to the club?</li> <li>• What is the right balance of volunteer input and how could we better assist the office staff?</li> <li>• Can we streamline some processes as new systems are introduced?</li> </ul>



## 3.9 Marketing

### 3.9.1 Current Situation:

Only limited marketing has been carried out in previous years with no formal marketing budget. For 2017 a number of actions have been put in place to revive & renew the marketing of the club. These include a new website, better suited to mobile access, revised branding and marketing “collateral” (banners, brochures, posters) and the production of a marketing plan. Initial efforts have been aimed at members and Trial lessons, with a plan to expand this to focus more on potential new members

**Positives:** Much activity underway, budget established, high level plan established

**Negatives:** Gliding remains a niche activity which makes targeted marketing challenging. Internal communications remain a challenge

### 3.9.2 Objective

Set up a long-term marketing process in line with the plan, provide a portfolio approach aimed at Internal Communications, Pilots at other clubs, Potential new members and Trial Lessons.

### 3.9.3 Plans and Initiatives

Promotion	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing plan &amp; budget agreed</li> <li>Regular “Chairman’s Newsletter” established</li> <li>New, mobile friendly website established with improved blogging facility</li> <li>New “house style” set up, initial (Trial Lesson &amp; Cadet) brochures in production</li> <li>New entrance signage and show banners produced</li> <li>Information &amp; Welcome point set up in entrance foyer</li> <li>Updated S&amp;G Advert produced</li> <li>“Fathers Day” Facebook campaign</li> <li>First local directory adverts placed for 4Q17</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand brochure range to cover potential members and other target groups</li> <li>Expand welcome point in entrance foyer (eg videos, signage, etc.)</li> <li>Further Facebook campaign activity</li> <li>Further club signage updates &amp; refresh</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restart “experience day” marketing via web agencies</li> <li>Friends and family discount or offer to market trial lessons</li> </ul>

Products	
Actions Underway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of existing product set completed</li> <li>Successful collaboration with Bristol University aerospace students</li> </ul>
Future Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce further structured membership offerings to complement “Solo and Beyond”</li> <li>Introduce set of structured mid-week courses and/or experience offerings</li> <li>More follow-up marketing after trial lessons etc. (relies on improved office systems)</li> </ul>
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand aerospace student offering to other groups</li> <li>Consider winter membership offer for pilots at other clubs</li> <li>Extend range of associate / occasional flyer memberships</li> <li>Introduce corporate membership schemes</li> </ul>



## 3.10 Resources and Organisation

### 3.10.1 Current Situation

The new committee structure was set up in January with defined committee roles of:

- Chairman
- Vice Chair (Engineering & Support)
- Finance
- Marketing
- Estates
- Secretary

In addition, a “Red Box” volunteer system was set up, intended to augment the committee and to handle much of the day to day operation. Of the 24 Red Box roles defined approximately two thirds have been filled with active volunteers at the time of writing (September 2017).

In the period 4Q2016 and 1Q2017 efforts were made by the current and prior committee to recruit an Instructor/Manager who would both act as Duty Instructor mid-week and also assist with the flying & equipment management and maintenance activities. We experienced difficulty in finding a suitably qualified individual who would be willing to undertake this role for the salary we were able to offer. One such person was found and then withdrew at short notice leaving us unable to find a professional instructor.

Various appeals were made to the members and local clubs, offering flexible employment contracts or payment of expenses (see Appendix) and further job adverts were placed but no candidates were forthcoming. At the same time a number of complaints were received from members (P2's, Club PI's, Private Owners and Instructors) concerning the lack of ad-hoc instructing, launch facilities and mid-week organisation and equipment maintenance.

Thanks to the strenuous efforts of our volunteer instructors we have been able to provide instructing & field management on an ad-hoc basis for 2-3 days/week. However, we believe that the use of volunteer effort is not sustainable long-term, does not cover all elements of airfield and equipment management and puts an un-reasonable load on the volunteers and office staff – plus does not deliver a predictable service to our members.

In addition, problems in co-ordinating operational activity (weekend and mid-week) have become apparent, and it is clear that there is much room for improvement in the way we operate. We therefore believe that this area of operations needs more focus in future years

### 3.10.2 Future Plans

#### 3.10.2.1 Committee Structure

We believe that the committee structure should be adjusted to allow greater focus on flying operations such as launch point operation, rotas, resource management, scheduling, trial lessons, and courses. This would of course be done in support of the CFI. We suggest that a committee member should have this area as a defined role & responsibility. We believe that it would be practical for the marketing role to be done as a “red box” and therefore plan to propose (at the AGM) that the committee structure is appropriately redefined.

#### 3.10.2.2 Mid-Week Staff

The trial of an airfield manager has shown that a suitable individual, while not in any way replacing a professional instructor, does improve maintenance, assists the duty instructor in getting equipment ready & packing away, and overall helps provide a more reliable service.

We believe that the ideal operational model for the soaring season is a professional instructor and an airfield manager (who ideally would also be able to drive the winch). This model frees the instructor to focus on delivering a more structured set of training offerings (eg 1-2 day courses, intermediate training, etc.) while the airfield manager is focussed



on supporting an efficient launch operation. We would envisage that this team is supported by volunteer tug pilots, instructors and that on busy days we may also employ a part-time winch driver.

However any employment plans are constrained by two factors:

1. **Budget:** The total employment costs for all flying staff needs to be kept within affordable bounds. While mid-week staff are unlikely to be totally self-funding they need to recover part of their costs from the mid-week offerings described in this document, and it is key that employment of mid-week staff does not drive up costs excessively for members overall
2. **Availability:** Any staffing strategy will be driven by the availability of suitable staff. For example a single, more capable, individual acting as instructor/manager could replace a less experienced instructor and airfield manager/launch assistant, but we are concerned that such individuals are difficult to find in the current environment. Furthermore a two-person team is better placed to support flying on quiet days when there are few members around.

There is a risk, identified by some members, that the airfield manager can be seen as a replacement for members working around the club and at the launch-point. Following the trial period in July/Aug we plan to review the job spec and working instructions to address this – for example when there are enough members at the launch point then the airfield manager can more usefully be busy elsewhere rather than running with wings etc.

Our proposal therefore is to advertise two roles, airfield manager & instructor, for 2018. If a highly qualified individual comes forward for a combined role this would of course be considered, but our expectation is that we will have both an airfield manager and instructor in place as a team for 2018. Note that neither role will include acting as tug pilot, however both roles do include club full flying membership as part of the package and if one or other of the two was able to be released from their duties to act as an occasional fill-in volunteer tug pilot when required then that would be advantageous.

### **3.10.2.3** *Volunteers*

With limited club staff the club is likely to remain highly dependent on volunteer resource, indeed as membership has declined over the past 10-20 years we now find that more input from volunteers is needed than ever. With less than 140 members, of which less than 100 are adult members, we now need many members to take on multiple roles. This will require we nurture a culture which supports and encourages members, new and existing, to take on volunteer roles and help both run the club now and develop the club in the future.

There are five types of volunteering activity needed:

1. Day to day flying operations: launching, instructing & organising
2. Committee roles, planning, prioritise, allocating budget, and overseeing club management (operating company and Pty)
3. Operational “Red Box” roles, leading the management of one part of club operations, working with the committee to put plans into action
4. Project leadership roles, taking the lead to investigate an area, build a plan & budget and then put that plan into action
5. Helping, working on projects or operational activity under the leadership of the Red Box or Project leader

From a committee perspective our plan is to put emphasis on recruiting for these roles, delegating to them and to look at how we encourage and reward volunteers.



## **Appendix Chairman's Letter to Club Members**

**Sent out 2nd June 2017**

### ***Mid Week Flying***

*As we have communicated recently the CFI and Committee are very well aware of the issues around mid-week flying and we realise the impact this is having - especially as we enter the summer. We are doing what we can to resolve these. While a full time instructor still remains our goal we all (members and committee) need to do what we can to keep the club operational until the time we can secure a suitable person. In summary the actions we've taken so far are:*

*Re-advertise for a Full Time professional, Offer expenses (mileage and subsistence) at the maximum allowed HMRC rates to any instructor who will commit to a cover a regular weekday, and Canvas BGGC and local club instructors for volunteers*

*We have now also agreed that we will offer temporary employment contracts to any instructor who wishes to take on a regular "day" or even half-day, either solely or by job share. This can be a flexible package and include lunch in the cafe! Please come and discuss with Greg or the committee if you are interested or know some-one (club member or not) who could help. We are still pursuing potential candidates and are looking at other options which might assist in providing a mid-week service.*

*We also call on the members to assist, so for example:*

*Would a group of P2's, maybe a tug pilot and an instructor like to form a "Tuesday Afternoon Club" or a "Thursday Morning" group to meet regularly and get flying going? For self authorising pilots would some-one volunteer to set up a forum group so we can get together and agree a flying day, maybe organise a tug or set up the winch driver with the office, and have a rota or volunteer to man the launch point? Are there other ideas that some-one would like to run with ?*

*The committee can only do a limited amount to enable this, we are very open to suggestions and volunteers and will be as flexible as we can afford with compensation or expenses - this is a time for us all as a club to put our heads together and solve the problem, at least until we can find a full time employee. Ideas, volunteers and suggestions to [committee@bggc.co.uk](mailto:committee@bggc.co.uk).*

*Dan Welch Chairman*



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