



Community in Spotlight British Gliding Association October 2021

General Aviation is a diverse and varied sector made up of multiple different communities. The successes and challenges for one community - such as the sailplane community - may be vastly different from others such as those operating powered aircraft training organisations.

The new Community in Spotlight initiative is led by the CAA GA & RPAS Unit to provide an opportunity for General Aviation Partnership (GAP) members to talk about their community and membership organisation. This work forms part of the regular GAP meetings and is used to highlight particular communities to share and highlight what is happening in their community. Each area is unique so the GAP and CAA are keen to hear about demographics, how the community might be changing, where they see themselves in 5 years' time and recent successes and challenges.

These community presentations are combined with an on-site visit by the General Aviation (GA) team to get to know members of the community and membership organisation and to talk about any current successes and challenges.

The [British Gliding Association](#) is the governing body for the sport of gliding in the UK, providing advice and assistance to the 78 gliding clubs operating in the UK today. Support is given on a wide range of topics including safety promotion, finance, airfields, regulations, guidance on operations, marketing and taking a leading role in the development and promotion of gliding. The BGA is a non-profit making organisation, run largely by volunteers.

Our meeting on 14 October 2021, was the first in the Community in Spotlight series. Here Pete Stratten, MBE who is the CEO of the BGA and other key members of his management team spent time sharing further insight into the workings of the BGA, their working relationships with gliding clubs and discussed key concerns including future possible ways of working.



BGA highlights

Formed in **1930**

Declared Training Organisation

Continuing Airworthiness Organisation

78 gliding clubs in UK

2,150 aircraft

6,000 pilots

900 instructors

380 airworthiness inspectors

225,000 flights per annum

The BGA and the gliding clubs they support are, in the majority of cases, run by volunteers with very few employees. First and foremost, a sport led by a community spirit to support one another in the pursuit of a sport they all passionate about.

Gliders or sailplanes as sometimes referred to, have some unique qualities; most do not have engines; a team of people are required to work together to achieve the objective of launching and recovering a glider. Some do have a self-sustaining engine which can be deployed in the air if required, some use power to self-launch, and others, known as touring motor gliders, have a non-retractable engine and propeller. The costs associated are reasonable and provide an affordable entry point for aviation enthusiasts, many who go onto to fly professionally.

Glider pilots were early adopters of electronic conspicuity; the Mid-Air Collision (MAC) risk was recognised and from the late 1990's affordable technology became available to assist pilots with effective lookout. Now almost all gliders use a form of electronic conspicuity which has not only greatly reduced the risk of MAC, supporting look

out and safer flying for gliders, but also helps other pilots sharing the airspace. Glider pilots also use electronic conspicuity inputs to aid their search for rising air.

The development of fold away electronic propulsion supports self-launch and self-sustaining flights, which helps avoid the need to land in the nearest field when rising air is not available. This technological development has been underway for the last twenty years. Whilst meeting with the BGA, we discussed delegation. The BGA is currently delegated to make recommendations to the CAA for the issue of a Part-SFCL Sailplane Pilot Licence to holders of a BGA Glider Pilot Certificate.

Another area of discussion is in response to the EASA decision to extend a light version of a Part-66 engineer licencing regulations to Part-21 Sailplanes, the BGA has been working with the CAA to (a) grandfather existing inspectors to Part-66L; and (b) to develop a bank of questions for the CAA Part-66L sailplane examinations modules. The CAA is now undergoing final stages to develop the CAA e-Exam system for Part-66L allowing the BGA to invigilate exams conducted at BGA sites.

Whilst on our BGA visit, Sophie O'Sullivan, Head of the General Aviation & Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems had the opportunity to experience aerotow launched flight in a glider, piloted by Fran Roberts a member of the British Women Gliding Team.





Sophie said **“It was fantastic to have the opportunity to fly with Fran. I was really taken by her knowledge and passion for gliding. The whole day was a good opportunity for us to discuss on-going work with the BGA such as our plan to increase delegation to them where possible and our continued work to bring the part 66L engineering exams online as part of our work on e-exams and modernisation.**

I was struck by the amount of work the BGA is doing to encourage the next generation of glider pilots and encourage diversity in their community overall – it was really great to see this.”

The BGA is also responsible for gliding competition in the UK and for the [British Gliding Team](#), one of the most successful teams in international gliding. The UK will play host to the [Women’s World Gliding Championships](#) in August next year. Hosted at The Gliding Centre at Husbands Bosworth, around 100 of the world’s top sportswomen will race their gliders over 14 intense competition days and thousand of miles to become World Champion. With 6% of glider pilots being female, opportunities to showcase the sport of gliding in the UK are invaluable and provide a fantastic opportunity to inspire the next generation of male and female glider pilots.

This is interwoven with the future proofing the sport of gliding with the network of Junior

Gliding Centres (JGC) the BGA set up. Each JGC is a BGA gliding club that has received accreditation recognising that the club that policies, procedures and support systems in place to encourage pilots aged under 25. Subject to completing the required training, it is possible for a young person to fly a glider solo at the age of 14 providing a fantastic opportunity to open up the world of aviation of the next generation of aviation enthusiasts and providing that first step into a possible career in aviation.

Thank you to the BGA for taking part in our Communities in Spotlight initiative.

