

BGA Information Sheet - The British Gliding Association and Volunteers

In the UK, 5 million people give 1 billion hours of volunteering to sport each year. Gliding is essentially a volunteer activity and without the dedicated and talented people who give their time freely to support gliding in meeting rooms, in workshops, on airfields and in the air, the sport, the Association and its constituent clubs would undoubtedly struggle to continue to be as successful as they are today.

To help achieve the Associations aims, the BGA in its activities and planning will endeavour to proactively support the recruitment, development, appreciation and recognition of those who volunteer to lead, maintain and administer gliding at all levels.

Member Clubs Volunteer Policies

Retention of volunteers requires significant effort by the benefiting organisations – in other words the member clubs. With that in mind, the BGA encourages all member clubs to develop a club volunteer policy that should ideally take into consideration the need to recruit and recognise, then make the effort to develop and thereby retain volunteers as an integral part of the club management plan.

Recruitment, Recognition and Retention

Retention of volunteers is a key issue that should be assisted through recognition of effort and development of knowledge and skills. A new volunteer generally needs plenty of support. It is in the interests of the benefiting organisation to ensure that the individual is recognised – someone actually says thanks! – as well as given adequate training and direction to enable them to be successful in the role and therefore meet the needs of the organisation. A successful volunteer is generally a satisfied volunteer and is therefore likely to remain with the role long enough to develop the experience needed to make a real difference.

An important aspect of volunteer development is the two-way communication between the volunteer and the club management. Without clear feedback, neither party is aware of each other's requirements or problems. A volunteer co-ordinator with good people skills may be the right person to provide a communication between the time conscious and generally strategic thinking club committee and the nuts and bolts volunteer.

It can also be very helpful for volunteers if they can access relevant regional or national information. The BGA website provides advice across the full range of club activities, and expertise is freely available on most subjects from individuals who work as volunteers within their own clubs. The BGA office can advise who is probably the right person to talk to.

Available Advice

Training volunteers is often difficult because of time and financial constraints. The BGA periodically arranges seminars and training courses. Details are made available in the BGA Newsletter or on the BGA website www.gliding.co.uk. Other organisations face similar difficulties to gliding and can offer tips; the Royal Yachting Association is developing a volunteering section on its website at www.ryavolunteering.org.uk and Volunteering England offers advice, including that relating to legal issues, at www.volunteering.org.uk.

Finally, please don't forget that even the most motivated volunteers will eventually want to move on – **succession planning** is a really important but often overlooked aspect of meeting the needs of volunteers and the clubs that they serve.