



British Parachute Association

Action Plan: 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009

Cover: World Cup 2007 Silver Medal winners in action – British Freefly Team Outbreak:
Jim Harris, Mike Carpenter and Andy Newell (camera)

Introduction

The British Parachute Association (BPA) is the National Governing Body for Sport Parachuting in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The BPA is well positioned within the organisation of parachuting competition and safety on a global basis. Parachuting is the largest of the aviation sports with some 80 countries represented on the International Parachuting Commission (IPC). The IPC is a Commission of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) - the World Air Sports Federation - the International Governing Body for Air Sports. The BPA is affiliated to the FAI through the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom. The BPA delegation has influence on these organisations through holding a Vice Presidency of IPC, the Chairmanship of an IPC subcommittee, providing a Safety Adviser to the IPC's Safety and Technical Committee, and two delegates to the Royal Aero Club. The BPA is a founder member of the European Parachuting Union (EPU), of which the UK delegate is the current Vice President. The BPA is the governing body for all sport parachuting in the UK and is the only Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) approved parachuting organisation in the country.

Safety and Training and the Legislative Framework

The BPA is recognised internationally as having an enviable safety record. This has been achieved by dedicated work over the years, which continues unabated. The legislation covering parachuting in the UK is the Air Navigation Order (ANO), which was enabled under the Civil Aviation Act 1982. Article 57 (Dropping of persons) states that before parachuting can take place an operator (Club / Team) must have a written 'Permission' from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). It is the operators' own responsibility to put in place a satisfactory operations manual. All UK sport parachuting Clubs, Centres and Display Teams, both civilian and military, operate in accordance with a single, shared Operations Manual – the BPA Operations Manual – supplemented by their own local Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The CAA must be satisfied regarding the fitness and competence of applicants for parachuting Permissions. The BPA has the expertise to monitor and inspect clubs and teams, and to make reports and recommendations to the CAA. All 'Permissions' issued by the CAA to sport parachuting clubs and teams in the UK are made on the recommendation of the BPA. The BPA also operates to an 'Exposition and Civil Aviation Authority Schedule of Approval', reference GA/101/96. This sets

out the organisation and procedures acceptable to the CAA and describes the responsibilities, control and inspection procedures by which the BPA assures compliance with the terms of its CAA Approval.

Historically, the BPA has been regulating sport parachuting since 1962. Prior to 1984, parachuting from an aircraft in flight (other than in an emergency) was prohibited in the United Kingdom and could be conducted only under the terms of exemptions from the Air Navigation Order. With the Air Navigation (Second Amendment) Order 1983, which came into effect on 31 January 1984, parachuting became a permitted activity, subject to the CAA granting a written permission in accordance with appropriate conditions specified in such CAA permission documents. A comprehensive parachuting manual was required, incorporating various provisions relating to aircraft and operational safety procedures. In 1996, the BPA produced its Exposition and CAA Schedule of Approval to meet this requirement.

Today, the required operating standards for sport parachuting in the UK are set out in a cascade of documents comprising:

- CAP 660 - the CAA's minimum requirements for the grant and renewal of parachuting permissions
- The BPA Operations Manual represents the accepted standard for sport parachuting in the UK. Clubs and Centres may achieve an acceptable standard for operations by compliance with the BPA manual.
- Individual Club & Centre Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) amplify the BPA Operations Manual in the light of conditions that apply specifically to that Club or Centre.

Collectively, these documents represent a Code of Practice that was, in the main, developed by the BPA itself. All of the above involves a vast amount of work and fortunately the BPA is ideally placed to carry this out to a consistently high quality. If the CAA had to carry out the work itself, the cost might be so great that the continuing existence of sport parachuting in the UK might be threatened.

During the past few years, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has come into being. EASA is responsible for civil aviation throughout Europe. All national aviation authorities such as the CAA will, in effect, become regional offices for EASA. All aspects of sport aviation throughout Europe will only have one voice within the European legislative forum, and this will be via 'Europe Airsports' (EA). Parachuting will only have a voice through a European parachuting organisation, hence the formation of the European Parachuting Union (EPU), with the BPA being a principal player. The BPA Technical Officer, Tony Butler, is Vice President of the EPU.

Safety and Training Targets 2008/9

1. Influence European Union legislation within on parachute flying activities – budget £1K (from BPA running costs)

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) describes itself as ‘the centrepiece of the European Union’s strategy for aviation safety’. Its mission is to promote the highest common standards of safety and environmental protection in civil aviation. Whilst this is a laudable aim that commands wide support, the downside is the prospect of all-encompassing pan-European legislation that, because of its broad-brush approach, could threaten the continuing enjoyment of sport parachuting activities.

Sport parachuting in the UK enjoys a regulatory regime that has evolved as a result of a carefully negotiated evolution, over the years, with the UK Civil Aviation Authority, as outlined in the previous section. With the coming of pan-European regulation, it is vital that sport parachuting interests across the EU should come together to make sure their voice is heard and that provision for appropriately regulated sport parachuting activities, without the burden of undue additional regulatory costs, should continue to be enjoyed within the EU. The UK model in which the sport is self-regulating under the terms of an Exposition granted (and regularly audited) by the regulatory authority, offers in our view the most practical way forward.

The BPA, together with the French and German parachuting associations - we are the three largest sport parachuting associations in Europe - are together spearheading work through the European Parachuting Union to meet the challenge of safeguarding the sport’s future under the new EASA regulatory regime. This is all behind the scenes work about which the average sport parachutist may know little. But it is work of great strategic importance. If European regulation does not accommodate sport parachuting broadly in the manner of the existing regulatory regime, our sport could face a possibly unbearable burden. There is a real threat of in our view unnecessary additional regulation set by regulators driven by laudably altruistic motives but who simply do not understand our sport and how its regulation has evolved to date. The immediate goal of the EPU, working in concert with Europe Airports, which represents all airports, is to make sure the legislators hear our voice.

2. Increase the number of Instructors in all disciplines – Funded from BPA running costs, direct costs recovered by income from course fees

Even though 448 may seem like a good complement of Instructors, the vast majority have other jobs and only instruct on a number of weekends during the year. Therefore, Clubs and Centres are always short of qualified instructors, especially in Tandem Parachuting, which is by far the fastest growing area of the sport. Back in 1997, there were approximately 9,250 Tandem descents – by 2007 this had increased more than threefold to 30,800. There is also a natural wastage of tandem

instructors in particular because tandem parachuting is the most physically demanding type of parachute instruction. Each year approximately 20-25 tandem or other instructors do not renew their instructor's rating. This target is to run at least six courses during 2008 to qualify a target of 17 new instructors.

3. Train Club & Team personnel to conduct Risk Assessments - budget £2K (from BPA running costs)

Risk assessments are carried out generally throughout industry and it is foreseeable that they will become a requirement within sporting aviation in the not too distant future. Therefore, it is essential that the BPA, after its pioneering work in this field over the last five years, remains at the forefront of this important work to build a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement in safety. Historically, few parachuting Clubs and not all Display Teams either conducted risk assessments or had the personnel capable of conducting them. The Association has therefore developed sport parachuting risk assessment guidelines for Clubs and Display Teams. It has also trained personnel from Clubs & Teams around the UK to carry out Parachuting Risk Assessments. Training of more Club and Team personnel is now essential to assure the production of suitable and sufficient risk assessments for all Clubs and Teams. It will also help further to spread the culture of proactive safety management within our sport.

Competitions

One definition of sport is 'any activity where an individual or team can compete against others'. British skydiving produces its own athletes who compete on an international level with a high level of skill, dedication and commitment, usually funding training camps themselves. However, international competition is not a level playing field when it comes to funding, as sport parachutists from some countries receive generous funding from their governments to pay for extensive training. This naturally has a positive effect on their competition performance, and makes the achievements of British competitors all the more remarkable.

Competitions Targets 2008/9

1. Support development of established BPA competition coaching personnel to strengthen the skill base of the current competition coaching team, provide access to World Class competition coaches who can work on specific skills – budget £10K

Since the inception of our Skills Coaching Roadshow events, interest and participation levels have risen to a level visible internationally. The BPA-rated coaches delivering support to these events have relied on personal background and

individual efforts to develop their own coaching skills, many having gained past experience as World Class competitors.

The BPA Competitions Committee plans to extend the skill base of current BPA-rated coaches by use of outsourced coaching workshops programmes run by accredited coaching organisations. In order to improve coaching skills, the targeted areas would include communications skills, mental toughness and competition preparation.

The BPA will support at least two coaches attending at least 2 x workshop events on the development of generic coaching skills. When combined with our coaches' high level of technical skills specific to our sport, this will provide a powerful combination to deliver World Class coaching to the membership.

2. Coaching support to champion teams - support non-senior 2008 National Champion teams with access to coaching for progression into the senior category and access to category 1 events – budget £3K

BPA competitions are categorised to allow a staged growth of experience from beginner to expert levels to encourage participation. In order to ensure that those teams or individuals preparing to make the step to expert class are supported, the BPA will make available to these champions, the coaching resources able to assist this transition.

The funding of expenses for our coaches' to train emerging champions will refresh a continued presence on the international arena for our sport. Coaching of individuals / teams to develop both technical and mental skills will be targeted as they progress to the highest level of each discipline.

The option to send multiple teams to Category 1 events occurs again in 2009 and the Competitions Committee will reserve for those selected the opportunity to gain World Class experience in their discipline.

3 Raise standards of the UK competitor base - provide at least 6 coaching events throughout the period for established champions and expert coaches to work with competitors - budget £12K

The Skills Coaching Roadshow events will be financially supported by the Association by way of a refund of expenses (traveling, subsistence, etc) incurred by coaches. The events will be run at no other cost to the BPA and will provide skilled coaching resource free-of-charge to up-and-coming skydivers in all disciplines, who have to pay only for jump fees and equipment costs, where applicable. The coaching will be delivered in the form of support at competitions and also as stand-alone coaching events.

Roadshow events across the UK are requested by the membership and approved through the BPA Competitions Committee. Discipline Representatives on the

Committee co-ordinate the series of events across all disciplines. In order to refresh the National skill base, current and former champions donate their time and effort to deliver experience and technical content to non-senior competitors. Emerging talent has the opportunity directly to interact with the best our sport has to offer. The continued success can be seen with BPA competitors ranking highly in International competitions such as recent European Championships in the new discipline of Vertical Formation Skydiving (VFS) where we took the Gold. The motivation generated at these events is a driving force for competition attendance, making us proud to be able to boast organizing here in the UK amongst the largest skydiving competition events in the world.

4. Retain the level of UK National and International judging expertise to current establishment and maintain suitable judging equipment stock - budget £6K

The BPA has a long history of supplying internationally qualified judges to World Championships and other international competitions, which is a tribute to the commitment of our judges. This target is to retain our current establishment of judging expertise.

Support will enable the Association to deliver seminars for trainee judges, replace those who retire and to re-evaluate existing judges training and qualifications for at least 50% of our judging team. The re-qualification period is bi-annual and so at least 50% of the judging team must take part in to the programme of re-evaluation to meet the needs of the national or international governing body and continue to remain current.

Judging equipment will be refreshed as required to support the emergence of new competition disciplines.

Note: The 2008/09 budget for Competitions is lower than usual, so we can carry forward **£19,083** towards sending our National teams to future World Championships in which we expect to be successful and offer exposure to the international media.

Development Targets 2008/9

1. Improve the functionality of BPA website to provide more and better services to Members and the wider public - budget £3K (£6K in total, shared equally with the Communications Committee)

During the last Action Plan year, web development consultants were shortlisted and invited to tender to a specification for a new website for the BPA. The specification had been drawn up jointly by our Communications Committee (which oversees the

front-end or user interface) and the Development Committee (which oversees the back-end functionality). The Eureka moment came when one of the consultants – who subsequently won the contract – propounded a database-driven website as the best solution to enable the Association to provide online membership renewals, which is a facility that the Membership expect in this day and age but that our existing database and website are not able to provide, fundamentally because they are too old and were never designed for such interactivity.

A four-stage implementation plan has been agreed: (i) new web pages; (ii) new database; (iii) online elections, and (iv) online membership renewals. The new website will also include a search facility, which the present website lacks. The new website was commissioned by the April 2008 Council meeting, and preparation for implementation of the first stage is now well under way with a view to publishing the new web pages during the first few weeks of the new Action Plan year beginning on 1 July 2008. The consultant has been refreshingly honest and has warned us to expect two weeks of disruption when stage (ii), the new database, is introduced. However, we are assured that its additional capacity and facilities to serve the membership will soon begin to commend it to members and staff alike. Moving up to newer technology always causes a jangle or two of the nerves, but as with most things the key is in the planning.

We hope that by this time next year we shall be able to report a successful new membership database that has improved the quality of service to members and the quality and reliability of data collection. But we are aware that, realistically, there are likely to be trials and tribulations along the way and that it will be a testing time in particular for the staff at the BPA Office, for whose loyalty and continuing support the Council is extremely grateful. Once fully implemented, the convergence of the BPA database and website may help to ease the exceptionally heavy burden on the staff at renewal time each spring, and this is an outcome to which both members and staff aspire.

2. Pilot implementation of selected new funding stream/s - budget £500

The BPA supports the 2012 London Olympics. At the same time, we are disappointed to see that exchequer funding has been channelled away from non-Olympic sports, including sport parachuting. We simply do not believe this to be fair, and have been campaigning against it. That said, exchequer funding for sport parachuting safety and competitions has already been sharply reduced and the BPA has been informed that it will taper off to nil in the financial year 2009/10. We have therefore faced reality and are seek to make good the loss of exchequer funding with income streams from other sources.

Because we are primarily a safety and training organisation, the BPA has not been overtly commercial, and is constituted as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. However, we live in a commercial world and recognise that there may well be opportunities for income generation that we have not identified let alone exploited. Two years ago, the Development Committee established an income streams working party to identify and review alternative sources of funding for the

sport. This work continued during the previous Action Plan year, when a long list of potential revenue-earning activities was whittled down to a shortlist of those new initiatives that appeared to offer the greatest potential for the generation of new revenue streams. At least one of these new initiatives will be piloted in 2008/9. At the time of writing, although no firm decision has yet been taken because evaluation is still in progress, there is one new initiative that appears to have the potential to generate a new revenue stream orders of magnitude higher than our other ideas. If this is pursued, it may become the main focus of this target. Additionally or otherwise, two or three other initiatives may be piloted. See also Communications target 4, 'Explore the feasibility of creating an historical image archive of British parachuting', which has the potential to generate a modest new revenue stream if a Heritage Lottery grant or other funding can be obtained to cover the one-off start-up costs.

3. Support and encourage Clubs & Centres to run more safety events - budget £1K

Skydiving safety events have proved to be effective and popular in other countries such as the USA and we believe should be further developed in the UK. The BPA offered pump-priming grants of up to £100 each to Affiliated Clubs & Centres to bring in expertise from outside their own Club Membership to run safety evenings in 2005/6 and 2006/7. This was broadened to include a wider range of safety events in 2007/8, and the limit of £100 maximum per event was lifted. The uptake of these grants has continued to be modest, with applications received and granted for two events in 2005/6, one in 2006/7 and four (all at the same Centre) in 2007/8. (It should be noted that a number of Centres run safety events entirely from their own resources – using local expertise- rather than calling on a BPA grant to help to cover the cost of bringing in expertise from outside the Centre.)

We remain convinced of the merits of continuing with the principle of this target, having broadening it out to encompass any safety-themed sport parachuting event organised by a BPA Affiliated Club or Centre. We wish to encourage cross-fertilization of safety expertise between Centres, and are therefore keen to encourage 'outside' speakers whose expenses may often be higher because they may have further to travel. Grants will be considered as a contribution to meeting any reasonable cost associated with a safety event at an Affiliated Club or Centre. A total budget of £1K is available to support eligible events by application on a first-come, first-served basis.

4. Increase media coverage of skydiving in local UK media - budget £250

A new template has been designed to be downloaded from the BPA website. It is for first-time jumpers to complete and forward to their local media, to give an insight into their experience and what encouraged them to make the jump. Many human interest stories are likely to emerge from this, from skydiving grannies to people jumping to raise money for a charitable cause, to young people who had counted the days until they were old enough to make their first skydive. Local media have a

good appetite for unusual and upbeat items of this nature, particularly when accompanied by a photograph, which first-time jumpers are encouraged to send with their text. We hope that this will help to provide a higher profile for skydiving among the public, and increase awareness of the locations of local or regional parachuting centres. We hope it may encourage a few editors to take a day out of the newsroom to experience first-hand the exhilaration of a skydive!

5 Research the promotion of the sport to young people – budget £500

The aim is to be in a position to offer Clubs & Centres the opportunity to host a day-long event aimed at educating young people about the sport of skydiving using video, talks and, under supervision, let them get hands-on practical experience with ground-based training equipment such as trolleys, hanging harnesses etc. The culmination of the day is envisaged to be a Formation Skydiving trolleying competition - making skydiving formations on the ground belly-down on wheeled trolleys - with medals awarded as prizes. The day would be aimed at young people below the minimum age to skydive (16 years old, with parent's/guardian's written consent) who are related to skydivers and from the local area.

The benefits to a host Club or Centre include:

- Local families who have never been to the Drop Zone are invited and get a full understanding of our exciting and vibrant sport. Those parents are both a potential income stream (for tandem skydives, at least tea and coffee!) and source of complaints, which might be less likely once they are invited in to find out what it is all about.
- Publicity on local radio and in newspapers.
- Potential future customers.
- Informed customers who understand this is a sport and not just an 'extreme fairground ride' and so increase retention

The advantages to the BPA include:

- Increased media profile for the sport
- A better educated public on our sport
- Better educated participants in skydiving, leading to higher retention rates
- Enhanced potential for public funding and increased profile with funding bodies
- Potential Champions of the future?

There is a need to run a couple of pilot projects with the aim of creating a structure for the day. This structure then can be rolled out and offered to Clubs & Centres throughout the UK.

The legal and organisational issues that need to be researched include: safeguarding young people (Independent Safeguarding Authority registration requirements for trainers / coaches and mentors), health, safety and welfare, and logistical and organisational arrangements with Clubs & Centres.

Communications Targets 2008/9

1. Publish a new BPA website – budget £3K (£6K in total, shared equally with the Communications Committee)

As already noted in Development target 1, the Communications and Development Committees have jointly commissioned a new BPA website www.bpa.org.uk. The Communications Committee is concentrating on developing the front-end look and feel of the website, as it will interact with members and the wider public. In 2007, the Communications Committee organised a competition for Members to design a new website. The winning entry, by Tom Urbanski, has been used as the basis for the look of the new site. The Committee has now turned its attention to navigation routes through the website to make it as easy as possible for members and the general public to use. Brainstorming sessions have highlighted that there are many elements to the 'feel' of a website. As a National Governing Body of an exciting and colourful sport, and with a strong emphasis on safety and training that underpins the BPA's role in the self-regulation of the sport, the Committee has thought carefully about the image the Association wishes to present to the membership and the wider world. Exciting and colourful yes, but also dependable, as an authoritative source of reliable information. This thinking has helped to inform the style of the new website.

2. Prepare to publish a new Mag website or web pages – budget £1.5K

The BPA's Skydive Magazine has its own website www.skydivemag.com. This originally came online at the same time as the BPA website and, as with the BPA website, showing its age in terms of dated design, poor navigability and limited functionality. A typical comment from Members is that there is a lot of useful information on the BPA website, but it can be frustratingly difficult to find. The Communications Committee has therefore invited the web developers who were contracted to develop the new BPA website (target 1 above) to quote for a new website for the Magazine. The two websites will interface with the same database, which will service members through the BPA website and non-member magazine subscribers through the Skydive Mag website. There is an economy of scale to be enjoyed by redeveloping the two websites together.

Subject to formal acceptance of the quotation by the BPA Council, it is envisaged that a new Magazine website will be added as another phase to the development of the BPA website. The Magazine website will continue to have its own web address and personality distinct from the BPA website – its character will continue to be

celebratory and inspirational, providing in-depth articles and features covering between them just about every aspect of the sport. The new Magazine website is likely to include more of the Magazine's content online, with the aim of promoting the printed Magazine to new subscribers (especially those outside the UK) and as a resource for timeless educational articles for BPA Full Members, who receive the Magazine inclusive to their annual membership subscription. The website will continue to be a point of sale by offering an online subscription facility, which will be serviced by the new database.

3. Publish a BPA Skydiving calendar 2009 - budget £2K (from BPA running costs)

The BPA has been publishing an annual skydiving calendar since 2004. It has gone from strength to strength, and is now eagerly anticipated by the Membership each year. The calendar is issued free-of-charge to Full Members with the December issue of Skydive Magazine. The calendar has won widespread praise and appreciation from the Membership and beyond, and has proved to be an excellent way to help spread the word about our sport. We have been gratified that the level of support from advertisers in the skydiving community has enabled us to reduce the production cost each year from advertising sales. The overall cost to produce and distribute the calendar is roughly £5K and the encouraging response from advertisers has reduced the net cost to the BPA to £2.8K in 2005, £2K in 2006 and £1.5K in 2007, and £1.8K in 2008.

4. Explore the feasibility of creating an historical image archive of British parachuting - budget £250

This target had been triggered by a kind officer of a former BPA magazine Editor to make available his bank of some 5000-7000 images from the 1960s to the 1980s for digital capture by the BPA. The Communications Committee sees it as part of a wider project and has also been in touch with two well-known skydiving photographers who hold substantial collections of images and who have both expressed broad support for the project.

The idea is to build an online image bank to record the history of sport parachuting in the UK from its origins in the 1940s to the present day. Once established, the archive would continue on a rolling basis to include today's images that will become the archive of tomorrow. The Communications Committee has researched the costs and arrangements for the digitization of images and believes this should be done by a specialist professional agency to assure consistency and quality. The images would be labelled with meta-data, which would yield a searchable database. Criteria for the selection of images for admission to the archive would also need to be developed. Only still images would be included, at least to start with, because moving images would be likely to use too much bandwidth.

The Committee plans to explore the possibility of applying for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund because the archive would be a unique record of the history of our sport.

Now appears to be an entirely apposite time to begin this project. Some of the pioneers of sport parachuting in the UK are sadly no longer with us whilst others are of great age. Many have kept treasured images of the sport from the past and it would be a missed opportunity not to seek to archive these images in a way that could inform, educate, entertain and inspire future generations in our sport as well as the public at large. The images would also provide a valuable archive of National Champions over the years as well as aircraft, equipment and locations. An image archive also offered a basis for the possible subsequent production of archive material in other forms, such as written history of the sport and the historical display in the BPA Board Room that previous BPA Councils have contemplated over the years, but which has never come to pass because archive material had never been consolidated into an accessible central source.

It may be possible for the archive, assuming it can be established, to become self-supporting. It would be available free of charge for BPA Members to use, and for personal use by the public (including as a valuable resource for students) for information and educational purposes.

The archive also offers the opportunity of making images available for a fee to business and commerce for commercial applications. Any commercial exploitation of the archive might be likely to yield income say on a 50/50 basis between a photographic library and the BPA, the BPA share in turn being split say 50/50 between the BPA and the photographer, such that the BPA might receive a 25% share of the income. These figures were of course purely an estimate at this early stage. An advantage of such an arrangement was that the archive would generate little additional work for the BPA but could give rise to a new, albeit modest, income stream (see Development target 2 'Pilot implementation of selected new funding stream/s').

5. Investigate a new, more durable type of membership card – budget £250

The present Membership card for Full Members is laser printed in-house on thin card, and supplied with clear plastic wallet into which the card is designed to be inserted. This type of card was chosen some six years ago because, even with the additional cost of the plastic wallet, it was considerably easier and cheaper to produce than a bank-style plastic card. However, it is less durable and now that time and technology have moved on, the Communications Committee will review the types of card currently available in to see whether a more durable type of membership card may now be a more attractive option for us.

Administration Targets 2008/9

1. Review and, if appropriate, update the BPA governing instrument - budget £750 (from BPA running costs)

The Companies Act 2006 offers a new format for the governing instrument of companies - Articles of Association (formerly Memorandum & Articles of Association). In line with the planned move to online renewals, and the piloting of online voting (through Electoral Reform Services) in the election of the Council in 2007, the Council is keen to include provision for electronic communication with members on matters of formal company business (such as notices of general meetings, etc). At the same time, omissions from the current Memorandum & Articles of Association have been identified and these need to be rectified. Together these considerations have prompted this target, to update the BPA's Memorandum & Articles of Association and recast them in the new format of Articles of Association. The aim is to present to an AGM for formal approval a draft of the updated Articles of Association. The work will be started in the 2008/9 Action Plan year and, if all goes well, it may be possible to put a draft of the updated Articles to the AGM in January 2009. However, we recognise that it is more important to get this right than to do it quickly and it may be that the draft is not put to the AGM until 2010. We shall try for the earlier date if at all possible, but are not setting this as a formal part of the target.

2. Support and encourage online membership renewals - budget £500 (from BPA running costs)

The planned introduction of a facility for online renewals (see Development and Communications targets 1) will mean significant changes to the methods of work at the BPA Office. For this, staff training and development to operate the new database and its interface with the BPA website will be required. The introduction of the new system of online renewals is likely to prove to be a challenging time!

3. Make available BPA Council and Committee paperwork in e-format – budget £8K capital cost (from BPA running costs)

The elected BPA Council of Management reflects the wider Membership in including people from all walks of life, and all degrees of computer literacy. One Council Member manages all his committee papers electronically and refers to them at meetings using a laptop. At his request, the BPA Office has pioneered a system of sending as much of his weekly post as possible electronically rather than in hard copy. This target is to offer to extend this facility to other Council Members, and to scan digitally most of the documents not currently available in electronic form with the objective of offering soft or hard copy papers for BPA meetings. This will require replacement of the near life-expired photocopier at the BPA Office with a photocopier scanner connected to the office computer network.

4 Purchase a laptop for BPA secretariat's use to service meetings – budget £600 (from BPA running costs)

This is linked with target 3 above, and will allow BPA staff providing the secretariat for meetings to share a pool laptop with a view to piloting their use of more electronic papers at meetings, and possibly to taking contemporaneous notes by typing them direct into the laptop. It may prove to be a challenge to break longstanding practices based on hard copies of papers and handwritten notes, but the intention is to try. One possible outcome might be electronic committee papers and handwritten notes, a halfway house. We are not proposing to burn all papers and banish all pens as we see greater use of electronic papers at meetings as a natural progression rather than an imposed diktat.

5. Install WiFi at the BPA Office – budget £150

This is linked with targets 3 and 4. If more Council Members are to avail themselves of electronic papers, it makes sense that they should also be able to have Internet access via their laptops during meetings. The BPA website is a treasury of even more papers and a wealth of information that may need to be referred to from time to time during meetings. A WiFi Internet access hot spot at the BPA Office will provide this, for use by Members and staff both during and outside meetings.

Financial aspects of the Action Plan

Appended are:

- 1 The forecast accounts for the year 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009
- 2 Historical and cash flow forecast over a three-year period, 2007 to 2009

It is imperative for the BPA to maintain a high ratio of assets to liabilities to allow for an unpredictable insurance market. In April 2004, we saw the cost of insurance for our sport increasing by a massive 150%. If our accounting ratios were set at normal business levels, and insurance premiums increased out of proportion, for instance by a major incident, the very existence of the BPA and sport parachuting in the UK could be threatened. The high ratio of assets to liabilities provides a buffer against this highly undesirable, but nevertheless foreseeable, scenario. The wisdom of this approach was sadly brought home by the steep increase in insurance premiums, particularly for aviation-related activities, consequent upon the events of 11 September 2001. Another factor contributing to the sharp increase in insurance premiums over the last few years is the increasingly litigious nature of a society in which we are bombarded by advertisements in the media to make 'no win - no fee' compensation claims. Funds have therefore been reinvested in capital bonds to maximise capital growth in order to maintain reserves and enable special projects to be funded in years to come.

The principal revenue stream of the Association is through its Membership subscriptions, with additional income generated through Affiliation fees, Magazine subscriptions and advertising, courses, publication sales, shop sales and website advertising. The focus of most of the targets in the Action Plan 2008/09 is to create even higher standards of safety, improve the quality of the sport for Members and Drop Zone Operators, and produce more UK medallists at World Championships.

Safety and training, supporting the continuing development of sport parachuting in this country, and further improving the skills of our competitors, remain at the top of the BPA's agenda for the year from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009.

Exchequer funding from UK Sport will help the BPA to:

- remain operational and safe
- develop our up-and-coming athletes to world class standard with a view to the World Parachuting Championships 2010
- enhance skills at all levels
- improve still further communication within our sport and between our sport and the general public.

The BPA is keen to drive forward the clearly specified targets set out in this operational plan, and thanks UK Sport for investing in the future of sport parachuting during the year ahead.

John Smyth
Chairman
British Parachute Association

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