



British Gliding Association

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Dear Sir or Madam

Equality Bill: Making it work. Ending age discrimination in services and public functions - A consultation

We are grateful for an opportunity to submit representations on behalf of our members. I write on behalf of the British Gliding Association (BGA) which is the National Governing Body responsible for the conduct of the sport of gliding in the UK. As the BGA's Development Officer and Equality Lead, I am authorised by the Executive Committee to make this response on their behalf.

Background

The BGA has 9,000 full member participants who glide regularly. A further 25,000 people participate in gliding each year. All this activity occurs at BGA member clubs operating from 90 sites within the UK, and between them operate 2,640 gliders completing some 316,000 launches per year and, in a year of reasonable weather, achieving some 1.5 million kilometres of cross-country racing – either competing with others or developing their own skills.

These gliding clubs are not-for-profit, volunteer-run, community sports clubs that offer vital sporting and recreational facilities to their respective communities and make a significant contribution to the health of their community. As such they fall within the criteria for the HM Revenue Community Amateur Sports Clubs status. Our gliding clubs currently contribute towards the government's PSA 3 targets for sports participation. These targets were designed with the general population's health in mind. Gliding has just secured funding to showcase gliding as an informal learning activity as part of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills' (BIS) Learning Revolution October Festival of Learning. With only one or two exceptions, all British gliding clubs have a turnover greater than £20,000.

As an air sport, gliding is currently adapting to an ever increasing regulatory environment in order to comply with European legislation relating to operating and flying aircraft. This is in addition to the changing rating systems for their airfields and changes in Child Protection legislation which involves increased numbers of checks for volunteers and coaches. In a volunteer run club, it is the members who need to cover the costs of running the organisation and to find the time for extra paperwork. All these factors have resulted in significant increases in costs - financial and time - for our not-for-profit, volunteer-run gliding clubs.

The recent sharp increases in fuel costs have had a direct impact on the cost of gliding in the UK. On top of this the volunteers who run these clubs, i.e. the club members, are themselves

facing challenges relating to the increase in living costs which means that retaining members (volunteers and sports participants) is an increasing challenge. This year, the BGA achieved the Foundation level of the Equality Standard for Sport – a formal recognition of the work the BGA does in striving to widen participation in the sport. There are many barriers to participation, one of which is cost. One of the ways to address this is to pitch pricing according to age. Younger people and those who are retired tend to have less disposable income than those who are at the peak of their earning potential.

There is much in the consultation which falls outside of the scope of the BGA, as a sport National Governing Body. However, the BGA's concern is that the Equality Bill currently before Parliament contains specific references to clubs and associations. In addition to this, the Bill also addresses price concessions and marketing targeted at particular age-groups. Although not specifically suggesting that sports and sporting activity would be affected by the proposed legislation, it is not currently excluded.

The BGA feels that it is appropriate to respond to Chapter 5 '*Other Sectors*' and Chapter 6 '*Next steps and timetable*' of the consultation document.

Response to specific consultation questions

Q 15: Do you agree that age-based concessions and benefits should be allowed to continue; are there any particular concessions or benefits which you believe should or should not be allowed to continue? Please state your reasons, with examples where relevant.

The BGA does agree that particular concessions should be allowed to continue.

There are many benefits for participants in gliding in addition to the more obvious benefits of learning to fly such as health, exercise, intergenerational activity, informal learning, and valuable volunteering experience.

In our work, we are aware of many barriers to participation, barriers we work hard to address. One of those barriers to participation is cost. We (and our member gliding clubs) know from experience that if we are to encourage maximum participation from people under 26 and over retirement age, we need to get the pricing right. Gliding clubs need to be able to offer a range of pricing to suit the needs of participants.

In the Foreword to the consultation, Michael Foster DL MP states that '*everyone has the right to be treated fairly and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.*'

For several years the BGA has run Junior Team training for promising young pilots, which has resulted in improved results in International competitions at both Junior and Senior levels with Junior team members progressing into the Senior team. The British Gliding team is currently ranked No 1 in the world.

So by targeting specific age groups, the BGA already give more people the opportunity to fulfil their potential – something that our sport needs us to continue with, if the sport is to survive. The average age of glider pilots rises by 6 months every calendar year so it is imperative that we attract and retain younger participants. To address this, the BGA is currently developing a Junior Gliding Strategy – specifically designed to attract and retain pilots under the age of 26. The current area of focus is the establishment of Junior Gliding Centres across the country. The project is currently in receipt of Sport England funding.

Q 20: Are you aware of any further age-based differences in treatment which would be prohibited under the legislation prohibiting age discrimination which you consider should be allowed to continue? Should these be protected by a specific exception and if so why?

After reading the consultation document, the BGA is unsure on whether the pricing strategies of BGA gliding clubs falls within or outside the proposed legislation and exceptions, so would welcome some clarification. Should the current practices fall outside of the proposed exceptions, the BGA would suggest that in the interests of supporting those most in need to participate in sporting activities, that the current practices are allowed to continue.

Q 21: Do you believe that there is a good case for a specific exception for an area which is not covered in this consultation document? Please state your reasons, with examples where relevant.

The consultation document discusses the Public and Private sectors, but does not address the Voluntary sector. The BGA is concerned with volunteer run, non-profit making, community sports clubs. The BGA believes that clarification relating to this part of the voluntary sector is required.

Q 24: Do you have any other points or issues you wish to raise relating to age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities, services and public functions?

Age specific goods and services, where they are beneficial or justifiable, should be permitted – especially where they are targeted to reach those most likely to be in need.

Q 25: Do you have any suggestions (for example regarding size, format, content, dissemination) to help ensure that guidance is sensible, proportionate and effective in helping public bodies and service providers deliver fair outcomes to consumers and the public?

The BGA would appreciate receiving guidance that BGA (volunteer run, non-profit making, community sports facility) gliding clubs could use.



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