

Letter to SAA members – released 26.10.22

Dear Member

I write to provide you with an update on the current status of the SAA at the end of our 2022 financial year.

As I am sure many of you are painfully aware, the past year has proved to be a difficult time for SAA members and Council volunteers, due to a number of challenges, not least the need to secure the CAA Article 16 authorisation to allow members to fly above 400ft.

Throughout the year, a number of Council members have been fully committed to creating and constantly updating our submission to meet the ever moving targets set by the CAA, and I am delighted to advise you that we have now been successful in achieving the Article 16 authority, albeit this is for 2022 and an application for 2023 will now require to be submitted. A copy of our current active Article 16 authority is displayed on the website and will be circulated to club secretaries.

At the AGM last December the membership numbers were at a level where it was considered that a small increase in fees would be sufficient to cover members insurance and other associated costs. The membership fee was therefore set at £32 for an adult member at that time, however during this past year the SAA membership numbers have reduced considerably, most likely due to the lack of Article 16 authority, and the associated costs of Insurance cover and other sundry expenses have now increased.

With membership numbers falling and costs rising, it is expected that the 2023 membership fees for the remaining lower numbers will unfortunately have to increase to meet these unavoidable costs.

Also, as a direct result of former SAA members migrating to the BMFA to benefit from the Article 16 authority etc, the BMFA directors have now approached the SAA to request our assistance in managing, what is now in excess of 700 BMFA members within Scotland.

The SAA has for many years been affiliated to the BMFA, and the BMFA directors considered it would be appropriate to make an initial approach to the SAA before they embarked on creating an independent BMFA area in Scotland to cater for their now increased membership.

The SAA Council have recognised the seriousness of the situation and recently met to discuss the future financial and membership stability of the Association. It was agreed that the SAA directors should meet with representatives of both the LMA and the BMFA independently to ascertain if a future relationship with either was practical to boost numbers and ease the financial burden.

Following these discussions, the SAA Council consider there are now three options for the future direction of the SAA, and all current members are being asked to vote to determine which option is preferred to determine the way ahead.

Option 1 Maintain the SAA in its present format.

This option will ensure that the SAA remains under the current management structure with no external influences or alliances with other Associations, however it will require the annual membership fees to increase in direct relation to the anticipated costs for 2023, and it is considered that the membership fees will be:

£40 Adult member / **£48** Family membership / **£18** Junior member

The future viability of this selection, will be wholly dependant on the full commitment of a number of additional volunteer members to be enlisted to undertake the running and operation of the SAA Council (currently there are several vacant Council posts, which have remained unfilled for almost a year), and it will also be necessary to appoint suitably qualified volunteers to fill potential vacant positions on the Board of directors.

Option 2 Form an alliance with the LMA (The Large Model Association Ltd)

The LMA, is a registered Limited company similar to the SAA with a membership base in the region of 1200. It was considered that a formal business 'merger' may be possible to bring the two Associations together with a view to benefiting from operational synergies and potential cost reductions.

During the open discussions, it was suggested that a possible 'merger of equals' would be appropriate with the creation of a 'parent' company structure as a means to facilitate this alliance.

However it was subsequently considered that this arrangement may not allow the joint use of any existing Article 16 authorities and therefore both Associations would still require to pursue future Article 16 requirements separately. Also, the formation of a parent company would require new positions to be filled by volunteers drawn from both parties and concerns were raised in relation to finding suitable additional manpower to fill these new functions.

Whilst it was agreed that many synergies were found, and potential savings possible by removing duplicated costs, any new joint venture would require both parties to wholly commit ALL their existing funds into the 'parent company'.

As the individual incomes for each Association is generated from differing sources, there remains a level of uncertainty as to the viability and suitability of an alliance with the LMA structured in this manner.

No clear path was immediately obvious, however both parties remain willing to undertake further discussions should the SAA membership favour this alliance.

Option 3 Re-establish the existing affiliation with the BMFA.

The BMFA cover the UK and Northern Ireland and have a combined membership in excess of 30,000 incorporating over 800 clubs. They approached the SAA directors requesting our support to 'manage' all BMFA and SAA members in Scotland, and to re-establish the existing affiliation with the BMFA.

The SAA would continue to operate modelling activities in Scotland independently, and retain the current SAA identity, in a similar manner to the BMFA relationship with Northern Ireland, however with a number of necessary changes to the administration and finance aspects.

Future membership fees would be directed to the BMFA who in turn will provide all SAA members with full BMFA / SAA membership cards. It is estimated that the combined number of SAA and Scottish BMFA members are in the region of 1200.

A reduced membership charge of **£35 (Adult Fee)** for the first year has been proposed for ALL current SAA members (including those who hold existing joint BMFA membership).

ALL Scottish members will enjoy the benefits of the BMFA enhanced insurance cover, for both clubs and members, which gives a higher level of cover than the SAA holds at present.

The SAA management would receive a proportion of all Scottish income to fund local activities in Scotland, and would retain all our current banked funds, however the costs of major expenditure such as Insurances and Article 16 future regulatory requirements would be met by the BMFA.

There are a number of other benefits offered to SAA members and these are listed on the SAA website.

In view of the numerous financial and operational benefits to the SAA membership, the directors recommend this option as the best means of retaining the SAA identity for the future, whilst also re-establishing the affiliation with the BMFA and bringing together all model flyers throughout Scotland.

Your input is essential to ensure that the SAA future is determined wholly by the wishes of the membership and the SAA Council thank you for your submission.

Please email your selection to: members_vote@saaweb.uk or post to: SAA Membership Secretary, 47 Crofthead Crescent, Bellshill, North Lanarkshire, ML4 2BP, including your name and SAA membership number. Simply state which option you consider best meets the future SAA structure you wish. All replies will be dealt with in strict confidence.

Voting will close on 18^h November 2022 and the results will be announced on 21st November 2022.

Regards

Steve McDonald
SAA Chairman