

LAA AGM 2018

MOTION 1

The Annual General Meeting acknowledges that its resolution of October 2016 to rescind the award of the Woodhams Trophy to Tracey Curtis-Taylor was unjustified and inappropriate to the values of the Light Aircraft Association.

Proposer: Stewart Jackson. Mem No 029383. Seconder: Tim Wheeler. Mem No 041156

Supporting statement by Stewart Jackson:

I was one of many members who left the 2016 Annual General Meeting deeply ashamed that a vindictive, irrational motion had somehow been driven through, despite the fact that more than three-quarters of the members who were present voted against it. I urge LAA members to recognise that what was then done in their name was wrong.

1. The 2016 AGM resolved that Tracey brought the Association into disrepute because she falsely claimed she had flown alone on her long-haul biplane flights, and that she should therefore be stripped of her 2014 Woodhams Award. But:
 - the citation for the award did not mention flying solo; there was plenty of evidence that Tracey repeatedly credited her support team;
 - there was no evidence that — even if she had practised the subterfuge of which she was accused — the reputation of the LAA had been damaged.
2. This motion arose out of a protracted, abusive social media campaign against Tracey, seemingly motivated by personal grudges. From early 2016 a series of hostile emails to the Board from a handful of people including a newly-joined member, culminated in a long-standing member being persuaded that it would be appropriate to present a motion at the 2016 AGM which would embarrass and humiliate her (and as collateral damage, also insult the Chair of the Awards Committee, Harry Hopkins).
3. It is doubtful whether this objective could have been achieved without errors of judgement at Board level. The draft motion presented in late September 2016 was found to libel a commercial company. The proposer could have been told to try again. Instead, the Chairman himself rewrote it. The Articles empowered but did not oblige him to do this. It went out to members as part of the AGM agenda with no accompanying explanation. As is apparent from redacted proxy ballots, some members were puzzled. It is likely that most were under the impression that the motion was just one of the suite of proposals from the Board to which co-operative non-attenders customarily give their assent.
4. In this instance the unusually large number of proxy votes for the motion does suggest on-line and telephone campaigning by those behind it, including the recruitment of new members: some proxies voted on nothing except to support the motion. Hence the bizarre figures: votes of those present, 17 for, 57 against; proxy votes 142 (including 36 cast by the Chairman) for, 8 against!

Any attempt to justify these proceedings on the grounds that LAA rules were not actually broken misses the point.

Injustice was done. Let's admit we made a bad mistake that made — and will continue to make us, if we don't do the right thing — look like an out-of-date club of misogynists. Let's put these matters behind us and go forward to hand down the values of Light Aircraft flying to future generations, regardless of gender, class or creed. I urge you to support the motion.