

Good evening

I want to begin by thanking all of you for coming tonight. It is important to get branch members along to an evening like this as well as a Speaker or a photo night to show support and to discuss issues that may be important in improving your experience of the evenings and enhance the overall value of your membership.

2016 was a leap forward on recent years in terms of bringing more members in to the group. Post A.G.M. discussions about not having any Air Britain advertising which could be handed out when meeting fellow aviation enthusiasts around Stansted and nearby fields resulted in an Air Britain business card. A batch was printed in time for the September meeting so any member wanting to take some to hand out could. The results have been very positive so far.

The branch had been talking at various A.G.M.'s and meetings over the past few years about how the group could benefit by the use of Social Media. Member Andrew Goldsmith after a little discussion with Webmaster Michael Jones decided to start a branch Facebook site up. At first there were a few concerns that it might be taking visitors away from the branch website and uncertainties over how it could be used. In fact website views increased from 14,723 in 2015 to 20,228 in 2016. After an initially slow start the Facebook group now boasts 265 members as of 6th March. The group has encouraged a friendly picture posting approach and small discussions. The group has also been used to post notice of meetings and Air Britain books. It certainly has the ability to get the branch noticed to a far wider audience than we had the ability to do in the past.

If the branch is to flourish for years to come it must have the ability to attract new members every year. It must find people with the skills to fill roles within the branch or even create new ones as technology and times change. A business will fail if it stands still without considering changes and progression; this applies to clubs and groups as well. Many clubs have folded in recent years due to inactivity and failure to recognise a decline in membership and interest. In the last year, two Country Markets within Essex have announced they will close due to the age and health of their members and family and the lack of helpers to run their weekly market. Part of the cause is a failure to attract new, younger members over a long period of time that will learn the ropes and ultimately replace them in given time. Hopefully as a branch we have broken this cycle but we need to be constantly working at this.

Finally I would like to say we have a big opportunity to promote the branch at this year's Air Britain Fly-In. As members we should use the chance of 100's of aviation Enthusiasts in one place to highlight what we have to offer. We already have the sales stand but we need to ensure our meetings for the remainder of 2017 and other branch details are available. Those who are interested should be able to discuss the branch with members and purchase some of our 50th Anniversary merchandise.

Thank you

Richard Jones
Secretary, Air-Britain Stansted Branch
St John's Church Hall, Stansted Mountfitchet
Tuesday 7th March 2017