

12th January 2026

Dear LAA Member

Board Statement to LAA Members: Conduct Prejudicial to LAA – Mr Colin Hales

As Chairman of the Association, and on behalf of the Board, I am writing to members following the conclusion of the appeal process relating to the Board's decision to expel Mr Colin Hales as a member of the Association for conduct which the Board considers to be prejudicial to the LAA (in accordance with Rule 8a, Rules of the LAA). The appeal hearing, which had been delayed at the request of Mr Hales for personal reasons, was held in person on 15 December 2025 by the LAA President, Mr Brian Davies, at LAA HQ Turweston.

Following the hearing, and having considered all the extensive written evidence put before him by both the Board and Mr Hales, the President submitted his findings and recommendations to the Board. The President concluded that Mr Hales did not deny the evidence presented to him at the hearing and that, while he did seek to justify his actions, Mr Hales did not provide a reasonable explanation for his behaviour. The President noted that Mr Hales did not acknowledge the impact his behaviour was having on LAA staff or the harm being caused to the reputation of the LAA, both with members and the wider public.

The President further concluded that the Board had correctly implemented Rule 8a and that the decision of the Board to expel Mr Hales from the LAA membership was appropriate and proportionate.

In accordance with Rule 8a, the Board has considered the President's findings, which uphold its original decision, and has decided that the decision to expel Mr Hales from the membership for an indefinite period should stand. Mr Hales has been informed of the President's conclusions and the Board's decision.

Conduct prejudicial to LAA

At the AGM which followed the announcement of the Board's decision to expel Mr Hales as a member of the Association, I undertook to provide members with a fuller statement of the circumstances once the appeal process had been concluded.

The Board considered that it would not be appropriate for it to release the precise nature of the charges levelled against Mr Hales whilst the appeal process was ongoing. However, the Board notes that Mr Hales gave details of the charges in his letter published in the January 2026 edition of *Pilot* magazine.

The Board charged Mr Hales with having engaged in conduct that it considers may be prejudicial to the LAA. In particular:

- Sustained inappropriate and denigrating communications sent to members of LAA staff, despite repeated warnings to desist from sending such communications.
- Making unfounded, inappropriate and vexatious allegations that Mr Hales was being victimised and/or discriminated against by the LAA, its members of staff and officers, and which the Board considers were being made in order to exert pressure on the LAA / influence LAA decision making

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- Making threats of unfounded legal action against LAA its members of staff and officers, which are then not pursued, and which the Board considers were being made in order to exert pressure on the LAA / influence LAA decision making.
- Failure to comply with safety obligations which led to revocation of Mr Hales' Inspector authorisation.
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The charges largely relate to Mr Hales' conduct and not, as previously asserted by Mr Hales, to issues of a technical nature.

The written evidence available to the Board and considered by the President during the appeal process (which included extensive written evidence submitted by Mr Hales) comprised substantial email correspondence between Mr Hales and the LAA over a period of 3 years.

While it is not necessary or appropriate for the Board to go into the detail of the extensive evidence supporting Mr Hales' expulsion, in the interests of transparency and to refute incorrect assertions made by Mr Hales publicly, I address each of the charges briefly in turn:

1. Over a period of 3 years, Mr Hales has persisted in sending inappropriate and denigrating communications to the LAA, in which he has made derogatory, insulting and threatening remarks to / about LAA staff, and which are considered by the Board to be wholly unacceptable. These sorts of communications would be considered unacceptable in the workplace and have no place in a members' organisation like the LAA. On multiple occasions Mr Hales was told to desist from sending such communications and asked to communicate with LAA staff in a more temperate and respectful manner, which he chose to ignore.

2. As referred to in his letter to *Pilot* magazine, Mr Hales alleges that he was victimised by the LAA's refusal to grant his application for Night IFR inspector authorisation, along with other examples of alleged victimisation. The LAA refutes these allegations in the strongest possible terms. Mr Hales was provided with the full criteria and an explanation of why his application for Night IFR status was refused. Mr Hales claimed that another inspector had been given preferential treatment to expedite his application. This was categorically refuted at the time; the individual had fully complied with the application process, something which to date, Mr Hales has never completed. Mr Hales alleged at the time that he was being discriminated against and used threatening and abusive language in emails to LAA staff, which the Board considers was done to exert pressure on the LAA / influence LAA decision making. The evidence considered by the Board and the President contained other examples of allegations by Mr Hales that he has been victimised and / or discriminated against, frequently accompanied by threats to pursue legal action, and which the Board considers was done to exert pressure on the LAA / influence LAA decision making. All allegations of victimisation and / or discrimination by the LAA against Mr Hales have been, and continue to be, refuted.

3. On multiple occasions Mr Hales has sent emails to LAA staff and officers that contain intimidatory language and unfounded, inappropriate and vexatious threats of legal action which have not been pursued and which the Board considers were made in order to exert pressure on the LAA / influence LAA decision making.

Most recently, and as referred to in his letter to *Pilot* magazine, Mr Hales made a threat in late August 2025 to sue the LAA CEO and seek damages from the LAA for what he describes as the release of "sensitive" information to a "member of the public". While it would not

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be appropriate for the LAA to comment on an ongoing legal case to which it is not a party, the CEO was contacted last year by an individual owner of a Permit to Fly aircraft who sought clarification of Mr Hales' status as an inspector. Mr Hales' inspector status is not sensitive information. The *Find an Inspector* page of the LAA website contains details of all LAA inspectors. At the time when the CEO received the request for clarification of Mr Hales' status as inspector, his details had already been removed from the *Find an Inspector* page. Any legal action taken by Mr Hales against the LAA or CEO will be robustly defended.

4. Mr Hales' inspector authorisation, which was the subject of a separate review, in accordance with the guidelines provided to inspectors upon their appointment, was permanently revoked in March 2025 for reasons which have been explained to him and which include a failure to comply with safety obligations. Mr Hales has publicly called into question the ability and competence of certain LAA officers and staff to opine on Regulatory, technical and procedural matters, including the revocation of his authorisation. The decision to revoke Mr Hales' authorisation was taken following a hearing by the LAA CEO, an authorised post holder approved by the CAA under the terms of the Association's A8-26 Approvals Exposition and the former LAA Company Secretary, who is a King's Counsel. The revocation was related to wilful behavioural and procedural violations not Mr Hales engineering ability. Other suitably qualified and competent LAA members of staff including the Chief Technical Officer and the Chief Inspector, who are also CAA-approved post holders, were involved in the review process. One of the possible consequences of failure to comply with safety obligations by an inspector is removal of that inspector's LAA membership, which is why this charge was included and considered by the Board as evidence of conduct by Mr Hales which may be prejudicial to the LAA.

Board Hearing on 17 October 2025

On 26 September 2025, I wrote to Mr Hales in my capacity as Chairman of the Board setting out the above charges (along with supporting documentary evidence) and requesting Mr Hales to attend a hearing to explain his conduct to the Board in person at LAA HQ Turweston on 17 October 2025 at 1100h (alternatively via video link). It was explained to Mr Hales that he would be permitted to be accompanied at the hearing by a person of his choice. It was further explained to Mr Hales that, pursuant to Rule 8a, if he failed to provide an explanation of his conduct satisfactory to the Board, the Board may decide, in its absolute discretion, that he should be cautioned, suspended, required to resign or expelled as a member of the LAA. I received an email from Mr Hales on 1 October 2025 indicating that he would not be able to attend a hearing on 17 October 2025 due to a prior professional commitment and that he would suggest a date for the hearing post-AGM.

On 5 October 2025, I wrote again to Mr Hales offering four alternative dates for an in person or virtual hearing with a wide selection of time slots around Mr Hales' professional commitments (details of which he had helpfully provided). The Board stated that it wished to give Mr Hales the chance of a fair hearing but that if he was unable to attend on any of the numerous alternative dates/times provided, the Board would assume that he did not wish to avail himself of the opportunity to explain his conduct and would therefore proceed with the hearing on the original date and time of 1100h on Friday 17 October in his absence. Having not received a response to my email of 5 October 2025 and in the interests of fairness, I wrote to Mr Hales again on 11 October 2025 giving him the opportunity to respond formally to the charges in writing in advance of the hearing that would take place on 17 October 2025 (with a deadline of 1700h on 16 October 2025 for any written responses).

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Mr Hales elected not to accept any of the alternative hearing dates / times offered to him or to provide formal written responses to the charges. The hearing therefore took place on 17 October 2025 in his absence, when the Board considered the charges and the evidence before it. It was not the case that Mr Hales was expelled simply because he failed to attend the hearing.

It is a matter of note and regret that Mr Hales has chosen to publish false and inaccurate statements on social media and in his letter to *Pilot* magazine during the course of this process. Mr Hales has been clear that he does not intend to apologise for his conduct. The Board does not intend to address the individual false and inaccurate statements made publicly by Mr Hales. The LAA has already responded to the false allegations regarding a CAA investigation following a whistleblower by Mr Hales but they are, of course, refuted.

Director Nomination and AGM Conduct

Several members have questioned the Board's actions, both in terms of the timing of the decision to commence the Rule 8a process and the statement made to members in the LAA magazine regarding Mr Hales' nomination for directorship.

For the avoidance of any doubt, the CEO wrote to the Board on 25 March 2025 recommending that the Board consider Mr Hales' ongoing membership of the LAA broadly for the reasons discussed above. That was around four months before Mr Hales wrote to me indicating that he wished to be nominated to stand as a director.

As to the Board's statement in the LAA magazine, the Board owes duties to the LAA, its members and its shareholders. In the exercise of those duties, the Board considered it appropriate to notify members and shareholders that Mr Hales' inspector authorisation had been revoked and that the Board did not endorse his nomination to be elected as a director. Throughout this process the Board has taken legal advice on procedural matters and, without any waiver of privilege in that advice, concluded that it was appropriate to conduct the hearing in advance of the AGM and to make the statement in the LAA magazine.

It followed from the Board's decision to expel Mr Hales as a member of the LAA with effect from 17 October 2025, and notwithstanding his right of appeal, Mr Hales no longer satisfied the criteria to stand for election to the Board of Directors under the LAA's constitutional documents. For this reason, his name necessarily was removed from the ballot sheet at the AGM on 19 October 2025 as any resolution to appoint him would not have been valid (given he no longer satisfied the relevant criteria for election).

While the Board felt that it would not be appropriate to go into the details of the process at the AGM pending the outcome of Mr Hales' appeal to the LAA President, I nevertheless held a substantial Q&A session during the course of the AGM, as I wanted to ensure that the membership felt listened to and to answer questions within the parameters of what was publicly available information at that time.

As stated above, the President has concluded (following a 2.5 hour appeal hearing and having considered extensive written evidence submitted by both the Board and Mr Hales) that the decision of the Board to expel Mr Hales from the Association was proportionate and appropriate.

The Board and President have seen and noted the comments published by Mr Hales on Facebook on 11 January 2026. The President has categorically confirmed that it is not the case

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that the outcome of Mr Hales' appeal was determined by reference to the potential implications of reinstatement of his membership on the LAA CEO or Chairman. Any suggestion that Mr Hales' appeal has not been handled fairly is entirely refuted by the President.

In conclusion, the Board recognises the impact on Mr Hales of its decision to expel him from the Association. It is a decision that was not taken lightly. The situation is regrettable, but the Board could not ignore Mr Hales' ongoing conduct. The Board welcomes all constructive feedback and dialogue with its members and inspectors, but derogatory, abusive and threatening language will not be tolerated. In reaching its decision, the Board had in the forefront of its mind the duties owed to LAA staff, and its members and shareholders. The Board now considers the matter closed.

Yours sincerely

Eryl Smith
Chairman, LAA.

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