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Cloud hanging over model flying club



The scale Piper Cub, which the club is planning to fly from Sicily next year in a fund raising activity in aid of the Dar tal-Providenza. Picture: Jason Borg.

Members of the Hal Far Model Flying Association held an open day yesterday hoping for happier days - when the club would have a site it could really call its own.

The association uses a tract of land opposite Motherwell Bridge at Hal Far. The land belongs to the Malta Development Corporation, which allows the club to use it.

However, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority has earmarked the site for development for light industry, making the club's future uncertain.

Club secretary Philip Chircop said he had been asking to be given the title to the site for the past 15 years, and had official correspondence with the Land Department dating back 13 years.

The club, he said, felt that the authorities were not giving it the necessary support.

The association's roots go back 18 years, when a group of 13 friends used to meet at Hal Far to fly their model helicopters. Five years later the association was set up officially.

Mr Chircop said talks have been going on with several government entities and departments but there was still no satisfactory outcome.

The club had repeatedly been asked to identify alternative sites - which it always did - but none of the sites could be given to it, for various reasons.

One of the sites suggested by the authorities was an old airfield near Dar tal-Providenza on the outskirts of Siggiewi. It would have been ideal except for the existence of a pig farm, Mr Chircop said.

Club president Philip Mifsud said the association had about 200 members.

The membership fee includes third party insurance. A model aircraft was not a toy and all security precautions had to be taken, he said. However, if well handled, they were not dangerous and the club's youngest member was 13.

The club, which is non-profit, has its own flying instructors and all assistance is given free of charge. The statute lays down that all the money raised should go towards costs and the Dar tal-Providenza.

Asked what it cost to take up the hobby, Mr Chircop said basic equipment would cost about Lm200, while for a helicopter it would be about Lm350.

Club members went by four grades: beginner, novice, intermediate and experienced.

The open day is held annually and next year a flight from Sicily is planned with a Piper Cub 1/10th scale, the same aircraft which crossed from Gozo to Malta last year. The aim would be to raise money for the Dar tal-Providenza.

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