

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 1st December 2022

In attendance were Ian Sidgwick (President), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Ben Ritacca (Treasurer), Patrick Shields (acting Secretary), Hylary Kingham, and Roger Williams.

Committee Administration

1. Ian had a proposal for a useful candidate who might be seconded to the committee to make up its numbers. Those present all agreed that this was a good candidate and Ian will relay the offer to join us.
2. For the Representative Events Committee, the broadcast request by Ian had received only one reply and we were all happy to accept Peter Waggett as the new REC Chair. Ian will inform him of this.
3. Ben reported that he had a partially developed approach to the management of the GCBA Reserves, and that this would come forward to the committee soon.

GCBA Programme

4. Patrick asked whether the County Knock-Out (current entry 8 teams) should allow teams which lose in the first round a second chance, and it was agreed to introduce a repechage, allowing two of the four losers to progress to the quarterfinals and giving two of the first-round winners a bye to the semi-finals. The allocation of the byes was decided (matches 1 and 4) and then a blind draw took place to allocate the eight contesting teams to slots in the draw. Patrick will prepare a chart for this and publish the draw.
5. We discussed whether or not to open up Cheltenham Bridge Club on a Monday League evening when only one match was offering to play face-to-face (we had so far resisted this, requiring two matches). We agreed that we would although it was likely that no catering would be on offer. We also agreed that when a GCBA League match happens at Cheltenham Bridge Club on any other day, then the GCBA would pay the £42 fee which the CBC charges for such events – using the £60 per team entry fee to cover this.
6. Patrick proposed that the Monday night programme for January-April 2023 would be the same pattern as for the Autumn of 2022. It was agreed that it will be so, plus Patrick was asked to investigate with Cheltenham BC whether – to avoid conflict with the popular online GCBA events – the GCBA could try a different evening (probably once a month) for a Pairs Game in order to encourage the GCBA players to return to face-to-face bridge.

The Role of the GCBA

7. A discussion took place on the GCBA position with respect to online vs face-to-face bridge. It was agreed that both are important forms of the game and deserve equal respect, but the balance we strike between the two had to be driven by the preferences and needs of the cohort of players whom we support. With a wider geographical spread, and the wide availability of decent competition online, there is inevitably a smaller appetite in County-level players for face-to-face than is true for Club-level players. The continued support of both forms, but including what we can do to build up face-to-face more, is our way forward.

Other Topics

8. Patrick pointed out the new facilities on offer from the [EBU to track in-year accumulation](#) of Master Points, making it easier to identify (and possibly encourage or reward) those who have perhaps reached a plateau in terms of ranks, but have had a strong year at this time. For the moment, we will advertise the lists on the GCBA website, and at the next meeting we will consider whether there are further actions which the GCBA could take to encourage interest in Master Points, which could then be an inducement for people to play more bridge.
9. Ian reported from attending (with Patrick) the EBU AGM on 30th November. Both were able to meet face-to-face with people they had only met on Zoom, and the meeting was deemed by the attendees to be a most welcome return to live meetings. Ian was able to engage with others on discussions around (a) better approaches to purchasing, (b) options for a bridge club as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and (c) potential sources of grants for bridge clubs. The most contentious item discussed was the EBU plans for the restriction of County-run One Day Green Point Events to being live events, but in the end the proposal was strongly supported.

10. Patrick asked for thoughts about two aspects of the planned Junior Fund-Raising event (Saturday 7th January 2023 at Cheltenham BC). These were (a) at what standard to target the event when the Junior Squad members attending were looking for a learning experience and possibly some challenging bridge, and (b) at what price point would we maximise the funds raised by the event. On the first, it would be ideal to have multiple training streams, but this would necessitate extra tutors. On the latter, it was noted that there have been charity events charging £25 per person which have been accepted by the player community.
11. We did not have time for Patrick's report on his visit to Churchdown Bridge Club, but it is copied below
12. Ian indicated that he had a suitable candidate for the committee input to the next County newsletter. The next meeting will be on Thursday 5th January at 1800 hrs.

THE END

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Patrick's report on visiting Churchdown BC

This was arranged through Perry Poole (the club secretary) and involved attendance at a club committee meeting, which preceded a club duplicate in which I played with a willing member. At the meeting, I explained the mission and role of the EBU and of the County Association, emphasising that the GCBA wants to help all bridge play in the county, and welcomes ideas as to how it might do that better. The committee included people who knew something of the GCBA and some who were unfamiliar, suggesting to me that within the club at large there is probably a very small proportion who understand the role of the GCBA. The Churchdown BC facilities, management of the game, and their new location, cannot be faulted.