

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 5th May 2022

In attendance were Ian Sidgwick (President), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Mike Wignall (Treasurer), Patrick Shields (Secretary), Jan Bailey, Andrew Bull, Richard Butland, Hylary Kingham, and Roger Williams – plus Alan Wearmouth as chair of the REC, and Toby Roberts as a Cheltenham BC representative. Apologies were received from Nigel Mortimer.

Finance

1. Mike had circulated a draft of the 2021-22 accounts. He noted that there was a large (unwanted) profit primarily because we had chosen not to undercut local bridge clubs in our pricing for online events. He declared that his ambition to cut the GCBA reserves was still there, but that this transition period was not the time to tackle that. He noted that the GCBA was keen to support a return to face-to-face bridge and to that end had refunded GCBA membership fees to clubs to help them through the past year, and gave an additional grant to Cheltenham BC. Whether to support face-to-face bridge to the extent of subsidising it in the long term was still an open question.
2. Mike reported that the recent Cheltenham Congress looked likely to provide a profit of over £1k to be shared between GCBA and the Cheltenham Bridge Club (down a few hundreds from the previous year).
3. We noted that we do not yet have nominations lined up to replace Mike as Treasurer when he must stand down at the coming AGM – but some possibilities are still being investigated.

Report from Chief Tournament Director

4. Patrick reported that although the qualifying round attendance for the County Pairs had been very disappointing, there were 16 pairs signed up to play in the face-to-face final on 7th May.
5. The suggestion had been made that the start time for GCBA live Monday events be pushed back to accommodate those playing in the Lockdown League. It was decided that no particular delay would be ideal, and that the possibility of playing a Lockdown League match from CBC was a way around this – so start time will remain 1900 hrs.
6. Patrick had produced a list of the current position on the County trophies (attached), which showed that events fell into three categories
 - a. Identical (if now online) events : eight of these, some still in progress
AGM Pairs, Summer Teams, Individual, Knock-Out, County Pairs, Leagues (1,2,Cleverly)
 - b. Close parallels : five of these, of which three have cups
Summer Individual, Winter Pairs, Winter Teams, Spring Pairs, Spring Teams
 - c. Dropped (or at least shelved) events : twelve of these
For pairs : Mens, Ladies, Mixed, Flitch, Ace of Clubs, Leonard Cup,
For teams : Cotswold Cup, Everett Cup, Bredon Vale, Teams-of-8, Rank Xerox
Cross events : Victor Ludorum

We discussed whether we wanted the same large list of trophies in the future as we had in the past. Points made included

1. The totality of the events is part of the GCBA identity and events which might have been thought to have a slightly random end result had value in giving a winning opportunity to lesser players.
 2. We still keep online and face-to-face events as separate contests while a combination of the two could generate a more inclusive events spanning the whole county. [Patrick will investigate]
 3. GCBA has been slower than other organisations to move back to face-to-face games, but has re-started and depends somewhat on player reaction; more face-to-face would be welcome.
7. We discussed some options for encouraging entries from the county into national knock-out competitions, and in particular the NICKO. We agreed that some form of financial support to entries would be a Good Thing, and Paul was tasked with preparing a firm proposal on this for the next meeting to consider.

Update from the Representative Events Committee

8. Alan reported that the REC had met today, and confirmed their intent to continue with the policy of picking the best possible team for matches, whether these were online or face-to-face. The Community Identity of the teams is important, and face-to-face attendance is encouraged to help this build.

9. We discussed the question of if and how GCBA-organised (primarily online) games compete with those of clubs in the county; it was suggested that a joint planning exercise could better enable the GCBA and the bridge clubs in the country (particularly Cheltenham which has most options) to provide a better set of options for players in Gloucestershire.

Report from Club Buddies

10. Ian reported on a successful meeting of eight people to discuss the future of bridge in the North-East corner of Gloucestershire, from which a set of seven actions are being taken forward. The most interesting is the creation of a shared, online list of all the bridge opportunities in the area – an example of clubs cooperating for the benefit of the players, rather than competing with each other. Publicity material provided by the EBU was distributed, and there is a plan for some of the clubs to trial Duplimated boards.
11. Hylary reported that Newent had restarted live games, but noted that the first evening had better attendance than the second – a phenomenon Patrick has seen elsewhere. Other clubs – with daytime games, and sometimes lunch includes – were running with much better numbers.

Teaching

12. Patrick reported that the EBU Education WG was actively cataloguing the online teaching options available with the intention of making the opportunities visible to clubs needing help, and to students; if a suitable option is discovered the Education WG might work with that provider to tailor and improve the offering.
13. Jan reported that Schools Bridge was due to restart the next week at Gotherington Primary – although expected numbers have dropped because of the alternative outdoor activities on offer.

OTHER BUSINESS

14. We agreed that Ian would report on the clubs meeting in the North-East as input to the newsletter.
15. We noted the changes proposed to the EBU Bye-Laws; Patrick summarised the key changes, which were driven primarily by issues around online cheating, as (a) enabling an unpublished reprimand rather than published sanctions for a certain class of players who admitted the charge against them, and (b) not publicizing the conviction of those who admitted the charge. There was a suggestion that publicity should be one of the sanctions, rather than mandated according to other circumstances.
16. Jan reported of some Ukrainians now in the area, and how tennis clubs and the Lido were offering them free or privileged access; we agreed to be as generous as we could, but noted that on BBO games, we have little flexibility.
17. We agreed that the AGM would be held ONLINE on the evening of Sunday 12th June, and be followed by a bridge game. Patrick will investigate the use of the CBC Zoom account, as was done last year.
18. The next meeting will be on Thursday 2nd June 2022 at 1800 hrs.

THE END