

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 2nd September 2021

In attendance were Ian Sidgwick (President), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Mike Wignall (Treasurer), Patrick Shields (Secretary), Andrew Bull, Richard Butland, Jan Kinane, Hylary Kingham, Nigel Mortimer, Roger Williams. Apologies were received from Alan Wearmouth, invited as Chair of the Representative Events Committee.

Finance

1. Mike provided some background on GCBA finances. GCBA cash assets are a more than adequate buffer for the future, but he cautioned that we need to be seen to spend for the good of all forms and all levels of bridge in the county – as our membership fees come from the full spectrum of bridge players.
2. The primary expenditure is entry fees for national competitions in which Gloucestershire is represented. Income currently comes from 3 sources
 - a. UMS – County membership from players at affiliated clubs (which has been given as a grant to clubs over lockdown).
 - b. GCBA organised games – which have been primarily self-financing in the past, and still are. The practicalities of fee collection in the online world has led to some ad hoc arrangements, with the simplest being the BBO charge of BBO\$4, which is set there to avoid under-cutting and thereby competing with any clubs in the county. Our costs for running a session on RealBridge is about 80p per player per session (and we have charged for some of these), and for the self-organised Swiss Events it varies between £1.20-£1.60 per player per series (and we have charged for some but not every series).
 - c. Profits from Cheltenham Congress and the Ross-on-Wye event, less in the past year than before but a welcome £1300.
3. For the future, rental charges for Cheltenham BC as a venue are looking to be in line with the past, but catering is about to become more expensive, which affects weekend events and in particular Midlands Counties League games, for which the cost of a home game would come out at about £26 per team member. Away games average a cost of £12/person and online games average a cost of more like £1/person. Charging different rates for different matches is considered impractical; the REC is requested to consider the issue and propose a long term pricing structure, while we adopt a charge of £10 per person for the immediate match.
4. We agreed that the following principles should underlie our pricing strategy
 - a. We will not compete with affiliated clubs in the county on price.
 - b. We will aim the open weekend events are primarily self-financing.
 - c. We will set online prices at a level which does not unduly discourage participation in live events because of the price of those.
5. We agreed that our charges for the coming season would be as follows
 - a. Any event held on BBO : BBO\$4.
 - b. County League (played on RealBridge) : £60 per team (ie £3 per player per session) for the scheduled 5 matches in 2021.
 - c. Cleverly Teams : £8 per team.
6. No changes were proposed to the £10 fee for the Online Swiss Teams and Swiss Pairs – and we agreed offline that we would let this cover all remaining series which happen in 2021.

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Report from Chief Tournament Director

7. Patrick raised the following points
 - a. The only suggested rules changes for the Autumn Programme are (a) Pairs League becomes divisions of eight rather than six in response to feedback from the recent survey, and (b) we consider a break after 5-matches in the League if numbers are suitable, as this allows more flexibility post New Year, and in particular lets us consider a return to face-to-face. Both were agreed.
 - b. Plans for the special events on the Saturdays 2 October and 27 November have yet to be made. The intention remains multiple bridge games, some tuition and lunch. It was noted that Cheltenham BC catering is preparing an offer, and that any other food consumption must take place off the CBC premises.
 - c. We noted Alan's concerns that the date provided by the EBU for the Ross-on-Wye event next year creates problems with the venue. Our preference is to get permission from the EBU to clash with the Scarborough Congress and run one week earlier.
 - d. We noted that Jim Simons had taken up his role as treasurer for the Cheltenham Congress and the Ross GP Event while on this committee – but was now stepping down. With finances being much simplified for online events, it was not clear how onerous the task would be in the future. We decided to run for now with one representative on each organising committee.

Update from the Representative Events Committee

8. Richard reported that a survey had been carried out which indicated that almost all relevant players were willing to play Midlands Counties matches face-to-face. He had offered Oxfordshire the chance to do this for our September match but for various reasons this had not proved convenient for them – so that match will be on RealBridge. Our Nottinghamshire match – home in November – might be run live, but that will not be decided until closer to the time.

GCBA Role in Face-to-Face Restart

9. Ian asked the committee to consider whether or not we were sufficiently appraised of, and appropriately active in, efforts to re-start face-to-face bridge across the county. We noted that, while we had been leaving the choices to individual clubs, we were willing to help – having given a grant to Cheltenham BC to help with their re-opening expenses, and being willing to help others on suitable requests. The extent of re-opening across the county was not clear – and a suggestion was made that we should be highlighting opportunities for face-to-face bridge on the county website (since done, 15 clubs found to be active).
10. We discussed the possibility of returning to Cheltenham BC for Monday night events. Patrick explained that the primary reason was that a number of players have expressed the view that they would shun the travel (which means we might lack the critical mass to make the game attractive) and that switching modes were conditions to change would be disruptive. We agreed that
 - a. We would investigate with Cheltenham BC the possibility of trying our some Mondays this autumn, and
 - b. If teams in the County League wanted to play their matches face-to-face, we had no objection to that. Arrangements for use of Cheltenham BC for that purpose will need investigating.

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Risk Management for the GCBA

11. Ian had produced a draft Risk Management proposal focussed on which risks that might leave any of the GCBA volunteers liable, under the law, as a result of actions taken in support of the GCBA. He noted that a fuller risk assessment could include performance risks (failure to achieve plans etc). As circulation of Ian's draft had gone awry, we agreed to postpone discussion until the next meeting.

Meeting with Bridge Clubs to discuss Futures

12. Hylary had been investigating venues with a view to a Clubs' Meeting in late October, and a school candidate near Stroud had emerged with a possibility of the last weekend in October or the first weekend in November (Sunday afternoon in both cases). She suggested that we needed to include food and a decent game of bridge, in order to encourage attendance. To make the bridge viable, we should invite foursomes from each club. Provision of bridge equipment needs to be considered, but a quick discussion suggested that answers would be found.
13. Mike confirmed that there is no funding issue with such a venture. Hylary was asked to develop a draft agenda for the session, to ensure everyone can understand what it is trying to achieve. We agreed a primary part was relationship building between the GCBA and the community of clubs. [We did not discuss whether we would invite non-affiliated clubs to this].

OTHER BUSINESS

14. The next meeting will be on Thursday 7th October at 1900 hrs.

THE END