

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

## Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021

In attendance were Ian Sidgwick (President), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Mike Wignall (Treasurer), Patrick Shields (Secretary), Andrew Bull, Richard Butland, Hylary Kingham, Nigel Mortimer, Roger Williams, and Judy Sanis (CBC Representative). Apologies were received from Jan Kinane.

### Finance

1. Mike reported that the proposed grant (£1000) which was promised to Cheltenham Bridge Club to help with re-opening expenses has now been paid. He noted that when we introduced at the start of lockdown, the policy of returning to their club the members' County subscription, we did not discuss for how long this would last. We discussed it now and it was agreed that the policy would cease on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021. We also noted that the County UMS player subscription can only be changed at a County AGM, and only comes into effect the following April.

### Report from Chief Tournament Director

2. Patrick had a number of minor points to discuss first
  - a. We noted that Peter Waggett was willing to continue as a County representative on the joint GCBA-CBC committee which oversees the arrangements for the Cheltenham Congress, and thank him for that. Alan Wearmouth has agreed to continue in the corresponding role for the Gloucestershire-Herefordshire event at Ross-on-Wye. Jim Simons has asked to stand down from his role in both those events, and we need to find someone with the appropriate skills to support these on the financial front. We noted that there are likely to be restrictions imposed on Green Point allocation for online events; the only approach whereby we can be sure both will be GP-events is to run at least one in face-to-face mode. It was agreed that our intent is that the joint GBCA-HCBA Ross-on-Wye event would be a live event in 2022.
  - b. It had been postulated that a survey of Monday night players' feeling about online and live bridge would be useful, but we agreed it would be rather more useful sometime later in the year, once the re-opening of live games had been experienced.
  - c. It was agreed we would run a County Individual Championship online on the Bank Holiday Monday 30<sup>th</sup> August.
  - d. We discussed TD training, and Judy described ideas currently being formulated in CBC circles, for a new entry-level weekend being run by Sarah Amos – followed by something more traditional next year. There may be scope in these for others clubs to participate. This committee agreed that if such proposals did come to pass, the GCBA would be very receptive to offering some financial support to such a venture especially if open to all of our clubs to participate.
3. Proposals for the GCBA programme for Autumn 2021 were put forward; the reason for this restricted horizon is uncertainty as to how re-opening, the pandemic, and people's behaviour will change over coming months. It was agreed that it was appropriate to hold back on 2022 planning until closer to the time. The proposal is that the programme would consist of
  - a. Monday night games remaining online, with a mix of pairs-oriented games and the County League in a programme very much like that of Autumn 2020.
  - b. Two Saturdays (18<sup>th</sup> September and 27<sup>th</sup> November) would be devoted to a full day event, comprising a match-point pairs event, lunch, a teams event (draw for team-mates) and possibly some teaching/training sessions. There might be a way of organising this to cater for the full range of playing abilities, if there are enough numbers.

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The proposal was agreed, subject to agreement being reached with Cheltenham Bridge Club about the live sessions. The extent to which the Monday Night programme in 2022 remains online would be reviewed in November.

## Update from the Representative Events Committee

4. Richard reported the results of the playoffs for the Inter-County League Champions, to which GCBA had earned two places as a consequence of the Markham team's performance in 2019-2020 and of the first team's performance in 2020-2021. Both teams won their respective playoffs – the County has never had two wins in the same year before now.
5. Richard reported the results of the survey conducted of MCL/MCOL players about the return to live bridge, indicating that the strongest vote was for face-to-face except for the more distant counties in winter, and that there was a strong preference for RealBridge over BBO as a platform. Patrick reported that the MCWG had earlier today agreed that the Midlands Leagues would default to online games on RealBridge for the next year, although any pair of counties can change to play face-to-face if both agree.
6. Finally, Richard noted that he was in his seventh year as Chair of the REC, and he felt this was the right time to stand down. Alan Wearmouth has agreed to take over from him, and this arrangement was endorsed by the committee.

## GCBA Role in Face-to-Face Restart

7. Ian reminded us all that we were, appropriately, mirroring the stance of the EBU on this – helping to disseminate information to clubs but leaving it to clubs to make their own decisions in their own particular context about restarting live bridge. We will respond to requests that come to us, but no more active role was appropriate.

## Risk Management for the GCBA

8. Roger had done some work on this which had circulated around the committee. It was noted that although the GCBA has few assets which might be at risk, there were still risks arising from reputational issues and from contracts (and more). Ian has received copies of three insurance policies from EBU but they are as opaque as you would expect and an approach of avoiding risk rather than relying on insurance after the event is to be preferred.
9. Ian offered to generate a framework Risk Assessment for the GCBA, building on what Roger has started, and circulate it to allow the full committee to brainstorm for what needs to be addressed; the committee agreed this was the best way forward. Ian also noted that Cheltenham Bridge Club had been very active in developing a set of Management Policies, of which a number could also be relevant to the GCBA.

## Communications Strategy for the GCBA

10. To allow us to engage better with the GCBA membership, Ian and Patrick had reviewed our currently communications approaches, and proposed the following strategy for the GCBA
  - a. We continue with the website as the primary source of reference information, and encourage members to be actively on the lookout for information there.
  - b. We continue with Facebook pushing out items pulled from the website and other sources, and look to means to encourage more members to be using it.
  - c. We use direct email as follows
    - i. Going out to clubs typically every two months, primary authorship Ian
    - ii. Going out to all players once a quarter : primary source for this Patrick as CTD, with contributions from Ian

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- iii. Going out to Monday night players most months (but skip months when we do all players); primary authorship Patrick
  - iv. Going out to teachers is on an ad hoc basis.
  - d. The County Newsletter continues on a roughly monthly basis, and we try to supply/source news for one page, leaving Garry to fill the other with useful advice. The newsletter is advertised on all the channels listed above.
11. In discussion, Roger issued a plea for more items to use on Facebook as well as support with inputting. we agreed we should try to get more news (rather than bridge teaching) into the County newsletter. It was agreed that we would adopt the above strategy. Judy suggested that a check on whether we had the right club contacts was due, and Ian agreed to include that in the August broadcast to clubs (since done).
12. It was noted that a copy of all GCBA broadcasts is maintained in Dropbox (link available from Patrick).

### **Bridge Teaching in the County**

13. Patrick reported a survey conducted by the EBU which suggested that a third of clubs had no suitable contact to which they could direct interested newcomers to the game, and that half of clubs had no facility for running Assisted Play (novice) sessions. Ian suggested that stock check of the county capacity for teaching would be useful; while Cheltenham is home to an enormous proportion of county bridge and county teaching, there are large parts of the county where nothing is available. There is a list of teachers on the county website, but it is far from clear whether or not it is up to date.
14. It was agreed we would wait until the EBU Board decided on how to take forward the results of the recent survey (expected fairly soon), before we as a county decide on an action plan.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

15. Hylary continues to investigate the venue options for organising a meeting of representatives from all clubs in October. This would fit in with a sense of re-launching the game at clubs as they re-open.
16. We agreed to stick to the first Thursday of the month for meetings, and the next meeting will be on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September at 1900 hrs.

THE END