

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 10th September 2020.

In attendance were Patrick Shields (President), Andrew Bull (Secretary), Mike Wignall (Treasurer), Ian Sidgwick, Nigel Mortimer and Jan Kinane.

Nigel and Jan, who had been invited to join the committee, were introduced and welcomed, and confirmed after the meeting their willingness to be seconded until the next election.

Apologies received from Peter Waggett, Roger Williams and Richard Butland.

Finance

1. Mike reported that all of the £10 fees for the online Swiss Teams events have now been collected. This is more than enough to cover the pay-to-play fees that have been requested so far by EBU (approximately £600).
2. Ian reported that we intend to maintain the entry fee for the Cleverly Cup at £5 per team for online play, though collection of the money will need to be organised differently.
3. It was noted that EBU are doing better financially than they had expected, due to a large uptake in online bridge; and that most counties are not suffering financially due to their minimal outgoings.

GCBA programme

4. We have continued to run Swiss Teams and 9-high Swiss Pairs and are running Swiss Teams, and Pairs and Teams Leagues on Monday evenings - this should be able to continue as it is until the end of the calendar year, after which we might have a change forced upon us (as certain software become unsupported). Peter is the admin for the Pairs League and Paul Denning for the Teams League.
5. We are planning to run a Learners Duplicate, having consulted with CBC and learnt that they have switched theirs into a Gentle Duplicate instead. It was agreed that this should run some weekday evening (not Tuesday or Thursday), rather than at the weekend.
6. Recently, bridge lessons have tended to be most popular with newly retired people, but during the Covid-19 crisis when various other activities are not possible, learning online could become popular with a wider range of people. It was noted that online learning is different from face-to-face learning (with quicker immersion into play), and that it was difficult to teach absolute beginners - both CBC and Tudor Bridge Club are currently only teaching people in their second year of learning. It was suggested that it may be possible to teach beginners who've played whist (or similar games) and are familiar with trick-taking. The question was raised as to what tools/software the English Bridge School has available for online teaching.
7. It was also noted that there are fewer geographical restrictions when teaching people online - however, we would prefer to be teaching people who will at some point be playing at local clubs (even if not at our own clubs).
8. There was uncertainty as to how much extra teaching would be available if we did find that there was a large demand for it - we would like to find more people willing to teach online. Patrick has an (incomplete) e-mail distribution list of teachers in the county - he is intending to inform them about Shark Bridge, which has useful features like Mini-Bridge, and the ability to have all of a group of students playing the same hand as declarer.
9. The virtual monopoly to date of BBO for online play was noted. The alternative platforms Real Bridge (which has sound and vision, so is more like face-to-face play, and is currently running

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trials) and Step Bridge (similar to BBO for the user) were discussed. It was suggested that we could help people to become familiar with these.

Survey

10. It was noted that many of the respondents to the survey we sent out recently had said that they didn't know how EBU and GCBA helped them. It was suggested that this is something that we should try to get included in the lessons for new players.
11. As we've noted before, EBU and GCBA need to be seen to be relevant to the wider bridge community, not just the high-level players, especially as the pay-to-play fees form part of the GCBA income, and most of the EBU income. It was noted that GCBA are quite unusual as a county in that we run regular evening sessions. It was re-iterated that our principal role is to support the local clubs, helping them to provide bridge sessions and teaching, and filling in any gaps that existed.
12. It was noted that we have provided support to a reasonable number of clubs. The question was raised as to whether we offered help to clubs, or whether they asked for help - it was confirmed that it is usually the latter; however, Patrick and Ian had organised the recent meeting with club representatives to ensure that clubs know that help is there if needed. Patrick confirmed that our strategy has been and remains to help all bridge clubs, but only the affiliated clubs financially.
13. Patrick has sent out the GCBA mission, vision and values statements to the committee. We agreed that we were happy for these to be published, so people know what our aims are, and to ensure that we are reminded of what we should be doing.

Other business

14. The issue of cheating in online play hasn't yet arisen for GCBA, but we agreed that we should be prepared if it does. Since we expect accusations to be rare, but any that arise will require a lot of checking, Patrick suggested that we pair up with another county (e.g. Oxfordshire) to have a committee of 2 people to carry out any investigations. Mike suggested that we should check what we are constitutionally entitled to do in such situations.
15. We will require new committee members, including some officer roles, at the 2021 AGM, so need to start thinking about possible candidates.
16. The next meeting will be on Thursday 1st October.