

GLoucestershire County Bridge Association

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held at Cheltenham Bridge Club on Wednesday 12 June 2024 at 4pm

In attendance were Patrick Shields (President), Caroline Hartley (Secretary), Michael Wright (Treasurer), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Ian Sidgwick, Alan Stanfield, Jan Bailey and joining via Zoom Richard Butland and Richard Barlow, the GCBA "Bridge – It's A Big Deal" Festival Manager.

"Bridge – It's A Big Deal" Festival

Patrick welcomed Richard Barlow to the meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to establish how the GCBA committee could help to make the Festival a success.

Richard Barlow had contacted all affiliated clubs and non-affiliates with websites in Gloucestershire in March with a follow up in April. Responses were received from Stroud, Tudor and North Cotswolds two of which promised donations from regular sessions. Wootton are planning a full day of bridge with lunch. Fourteen U3A groups with contact details were also approached but there has been no response. Patrick reported that Cheltenham are approaching the Civic Society in respect of opening up their Grade II listed property as part of Heritage week. Gloucester BC and Churchdown BC are participating in EBED Autumn SIMS (surplus to Cancer Research) and the latter is planning two Taster Sessions in the room behind their venue café.

The discussion was opened up for ideas to raise money for Cancer research, events to show that bridge is fun and to raise the profile of the game. We noted that the EBU has 30,000 members and to raise £60,000 is very modest.

Discussion points:

- Make other Clubs in the County aware of EBED SIMS (with a link as it not easy currently to find details). These deserve higher profile in Festival advertising, PS to address in next broadcast to clubs.
- Flat pack collection boxes will be ordered for County to deliver to Clubs.
- Taster sessions. Venues could be libraries (Jan may have a contact though YB sessions), community centres and secondary schools. (There are 70 libraries and 70 community centres in Gloucestershire) These could also be done as pop ups. Rotary, WI and U3A groups may allow us access to their mailing lists. Advertising could be done in sports clubs (tennis, golf, cricket, etc) as well as physios etc [ie places where you find competitive people]. A [draft poster advertising Taster Sessions](#) is available from the EBU website.
- Wotton BC has approached a local senior school and will be trying out a Taster Session there in the autumn.
- How to energise Clubs to run Taster Sessions.: GCBA could offer to fund rooms; and approach Douglas Wright (3 Counties Bridge, Surrey) who may offer a Zoom session to explain how to run a simple MiniBridge Taster Session and/or produce a manual on how to run a MiniBridge session. (There is a need to take fear out of running a MiniBridge session). Teachers in the County could be approached to run these but others with enthusiasm rather than a qualification could too.
- Taster Sessions also need a follow up by Clubs with a training programme and practice/next steps/ gentle bridge sessions. Tewkesbury for example run a learners' section in parallel with their regular club session. It was noted that U3A bridge sessions

are often full and space limited. We could point Taster Session participants towards a learn bridge in a weekend course.

- Reach out to EBU for improved advertising materials and to approach celebrities for TV and national coverage (Claudia Winkleman, large number of followers in different age groups, Strictly and The Traitors).
- Set up a page on the GCBA website dedicated to the Festival.
- Café bridge events were discussed, but these are volunteer-heavy and Jan reported that whilst successful the Stroud event did not attract interest from other café users in the bridge being played.

Action Plan:

- Contact remaining clubs and follow up with others
- Promote EBED Autumn SIMS which runs during the festival
- Order and distribute collection boxes
- Start work on taster session initiative
- Decide on GCBA donation to CRUK and set up dedicated website page
- Feed back to the EBU on improved marketing material, celebrity endorsement and publicity to reach out to a wider audience

Richard Barlow was thanked for attending and left the meeting.

GCBA, the year ahead

Patrick started the discussion with “what should GCBA as an organisation be doing going forward?” and reminded the committee of the mission of GCBA to promote the game of bridge to new and existing players.

Expanding play at GCBA. We now have the NGS-9-High teams event running in the summer. Could those players form a division of the County league in the winter, this needs teams (possibly of six or more) with four turning up each time to play? Patrick to put this forward at the next session. We should not compete with Clubs but is there anything else we can offer and are the games we run still relevant?

We should attend teaching sessions and explain the world of bridge to learners – all about joining a club, social bridge, U3A, County bridge, congresses, European championship, playing online and the various platforms. Explaining where GCBA fits in.

Learning & Development: there are some deserts in the County. Should we be reaching out to teachers to fill these? We have started this work in Tewkesbury and the North Cotswolds but there is more to do. Another aim is to improve the quality of bridge played in the County. Patrick has run some sessions at Cheltenham and there is County training for GCBA too. We should ensure these are advertised as widely as possible. Gloucester are running monthly sessions covering a topic followed by the play of relevant boards supplied by EBED. Patrick had previously run short (10 minute) seminars at gentle bridge level. These could be reinstated. Play-and-discuss sessions previously run for County players could be re-started.

Extending our offering. Paul had circulated emails to Clubs regarding the Inter Club competitions, The Rank Xerox and Bredon Vale but there was very limited response. Should we circulate County members to ask what they are looking for? Noted that Clubs offering catering were often successful but this generally falls on the shoulders of volunteers.

Can we help improve the classroom to clubroom transition rate in the County by encouraging Clubs to run practice/gentle sessions?

Can we improve the pool of tournament directors/scorers in the County? National course concentrate of the laws and rules but could the County organise practical courses on how to run a session, movements etc.

Is there an appetite for establishing a new Club within the County? Perhaps with a different offering. This could be meeting in a pub after work or another food offering.

We should be encouraging Clubs and local U3A groups to work together.

Could we encourage non-affiliates to join the EBU? The first year is free but we could offer financial support for the second year?

Future meeting dates

Timing of meetings: Patrick suggested these should be about quarterly face to face for in-depth discussions, plus every 2 months on zoom for routine business.

Next meeting 7pm Tuesday 16 July 2024 (on zoom) for 1-1.5 hours, focussing on progress with BIABD.

Further meetings: w/c 17th September and w/c 20 November

AGM Monday 26 May 2025

Patrick thanked the committee for their contributions and the meeting closed at 5.50pm.

Caroline Hartley

Secretary