

# GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

## Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held online on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021

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

### Introductions

1. Ian welcomed the new committee members and the following facts got highlighted
  - a. Paul first joined the committee in 1981 and has done over 30 years on the committee.
  - b. Hylary – based in Newent - gets engaged in bridge in three counties (GL, WO, HE).
2. We discussed the draft induction pack prepared by Roger and agreed it was of value; he offered to be the custodian of it, and when updated Patrick will install it on the website. Various aspects or references (eg Duty Committee Member) need updating.

### Finance and Programme

3. NTR

### Report from Chief Tournament Director

4. Patrick reported that no changes are imminent, and the pattern of alternating Pairs on BBO with Teams on RealBridge, alongside the biweekly Swiss Teams and the weekly 9-High Swiss Pairs (all being well supported) will continue until the end of August unless conditions suggest the time is right for a face-to-face event. The most appealing option for a first face-to-face event is taking a weekend day and making it a 1030-1600 event including something in the way of County Training alongside a bona fide competition of some sort. Making the return to face-to-face a special event was agreed to be a Good Thing.
5. The Congress in the past has been run by a sub-committee jointly staffed by CBC and GCBA. We agreed we wished this to continue and that we would ask our previous representatives to continue in that role [LATER: Peter Waggett agreed but Jim Simons has asked to stand down]
6. Cheltenham BC had made proposals about the congress – that it should be fully online in 2022 and return to face-to-face in 2023. Patrick pointed out that the EBU was considering some restrictions on online Green Point events and we might not be able to replicate the 2021 format next year. [It was explained that the county has rights to 2 Green Point days per year and normally allocated one to the Congress and one to the Ross-on-Wye weekend in July. Herefordshire does likewise but receives a compensation from the Congress for use of its GP day]. It was agreed that the new Congress Sub-committee should examine the issues and make a proposal.

### Update from the Representative Events Committee

7. Richard reported that the survey he had initiated was not yet complete but that the most popular (long term) preference for the style of Midlands Counties League matches was face-to-face unless snow disrupted plans in which case the match would be online. On the choice of online platforms, RealBridge won easily.
8. Nigel reported that a survey at Tudor BC which showed that about 40% just wanted to continue online, and that about 50% encouraged the club to do a taster session on RealBridge (which will go ahead). A number of those present commented on the distractions on RealBridge; opinions on the choice of platform seem very divided. Patrick reported a strong preference across the Midlands Counties club bridge for BBO, but how much of this is just familiarity is unclear. The Tudor BC survey results were seen as a strong encouragement for organising hybrid events (online and face-to-face in parallel).

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## GCBA Role in Face-to-Face Restart

9. Ian asked about the survey which we had undertaken of inactive clubs. [The detailed results are available to new committee members – ask Patrick] The majority were indicating a desire to return very soon, although a number expressed doubts about exactly what mitigating measures might be appropriate.
10. Patrick reported that the EBU cannot offer advice on opening or closing because it does not ever know all the risks involved and it cannot afford to take on that sort of responsibility lest things go wrong. It is therefore cautious in all it says. Clubs need to make their own Risk Assessment and decide how important an early restart is to their members. The EBU is organising a seminar for clubs on 30<sup>th</sup> July (with a re-run in August) at which affiliated clubs can share ideas on, and discuss the issues around, re-opening.
11. The point was made that the premises are not always under control of the bridge club, and sometimes not as clean as would be desired. Some landlords may also restrict use of the premises (eg some are refusing access to the kitchen).

## Bridge Teaching in Gloucestershire

12. Three of those present had dipped into a lesson taking place under the new Yorkshire teaching initiative – an approach to learning which is pioneering a “university style” in which the main lesson is delivered as a lecture to a large audience, after which attendees link up with their bridge club (tutorial-style) for assisted play to re-enforce the lesson. Andrew was curious about the age group involved in this; as far as we know it is typical of recent bridge club intake, primarily because the advertising used the same channels.
13. It was noted that there is some very good teaching happens in Gloucestershire but that in large parts of the county there is no teaching on offer – and the GCBA is the only organisation able to tackle that problem. Online learning was recognised as very important and perhaps the only way for youngsters to pick up the game.
14. Nigel reported that plans were afoot for a Taster Session at the Chipping Sodbury Fair in September (as has been done in other years) but sign-up for this has been lower than before. During 2021 Tudor BC had shied away from teaching new beginners online but with prospects now of some face-to-face to cover the first few lessons, and then moving online, there were new possibilities this year (and this could be expanded if that helped the county). Patrick reported that others had been successful with newcomers online – but only after investing a number of lessons in mastering the technology. Once that is done, many problems such as revokes and insufficient bids disappear, and it becomes very easy for newcomers to practice online between lessons.
15. Patrick was reminded of an outstanding action from a previous meeting to chase through the U3A requirements in the county, which he would now progress.
16. There is some Youth Bridge active in the county – with Ro Kaye running one group.

## OTHER BUSINESS

17. It was noted that Patrick has been invited to join the Cheltenham Bridge Club CIO Management Committee; this is welcomed as a way to ensure the two organisations know what each other is doing.
18. We discussed how we could increase our support to county clubs, and it was agreed that further investigations of the Yorkshire Teaching initiative is the most productive path on offer.

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19. We discussed the idea of a clubs meeting at which to discuss issues of common interest. Paul reminded us that a number of attempts at this had failed in the past, but it was agreed that with the possibility of online meetings it might have better chance now of succeeding. An attempt early in the pandemic was a partial success, but a face-to-face meeting with suitable refreshments might do even better. It was agreed that a neutral venue for this might be worthwhile, and Hylary agreed to investigate the options for doing something like this in October. This would fit in with a sense of re-launching the game at clubs as they re-open.
20. We agreed to stick to the first Thursday of the month for meetings, but we would skip July and the next meeting was agreed to be on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August at 1900 hrs.

THE END