GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held on Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 7.30 pm at Cheltenham Bridge Club

In attendance were Patrick Shields (President), Caroline Hartley (Secretary), Michael Wright (Treasurer), Paul Denning (Vice-President), Alan Stanfield, Jan Bailey and Richard Butland.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Ian Sidgwick.

Decisions taken since the last minute

- Agreement for EBU Blue point license for the Newent Bowl Swiss Teams (22/3/25) confirmed with Brian Dorey on 13 October
- Award of a grant of £500 to Tewkesbury Bridge Club towards the cost of Bridgemates

BIABD

Richard Barlow confirmed that in excess of £107K has been raised for Cancer Research UK. He has written to all Gloucestershire clubs that participated to ask for their feedback and in particular any lessons learned. Michael confirmed that GCBA made a contribution of £166 based on income for the week of the festival. Richard will produce a report for the next committee meeting.

Finance

Michael circulated the month-7 figures to 31 October 2024 and his report prior to the meeting.

- Patrick thanked Michael for his report and the work he has undertaken on the accounts.
- It was agreed that £20K should be placed on deposit with Barclays. This will attract interest on unused funds. Michael will look at achieving the right balance of interest and access to the money. Our target will be a maximum of £5K to be retained in the current account; Michael is to set out proposals for the future of our Reserves.
- The Cheltenham Congress accounts for 2023 and 2024 had been finalised and circulated prior to the meeting. These were accepted.
- Going forward CBC will take responsibility for the Congress. The current congress bank account will no longer be required and will be closed with the funds being spilt 50:50 to CBC and GCBA. In future years GCBA will receive £150 in recognition of the award of its One-Day Green Point entitlement to the congress (Herefordshire does the same for the congress's second day). Steve Bunker, CBC manager, is likely to be responsible for Congress in 2025. Michael offered his financial expertise if needed. Paul offered to distribute Congress leaflets at prior Congress events if it would help with advertising. GCBA will continue to receive 50% of the surplus of the Gloucestershire and Herefordshire July Congress

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- The committee agreed to continue to subsidise junior youth weekends and camps where a need is established. EBED give a reduction of £100 to pupil premium children. GCBA give a £50 (sometimes more) reduction to all children. The price has been £150 for 2 nights, which has enabled some children to go for free. The availability of this support will be advertised through those currently running youth bridge. The Youth Bridge team were grateful to EBED for the provision of 3 tablets to allow juniors to take part in the "generation game" on Sunday evenings. It was noted that organisers should maintain a list of equipment held by Youth Bridge although it was recognised that GCBA insurance would not cover any loss or damage.

Youth Bridge

Jan circulated a report prior to the meeting. Current activities:

- Sessions have restarted at CBC on Sunday evenings once or twice a month.
- Taster session on 11 December at Cleeve School for year 7 and 8 students (12-13 year olds). This will be an after-school activity.
- Taster session on 28 January at Pittville School. Over 200 year 8 students will attend as part of an activities day. Richard Croot from EBED will attend both events and EBED may provide financial support for cards and handouts that Jan would like to give participants to take away at the end of the sessions. Patrick has found some suitable cards and Alison can provide the MiniBridge handouts. The hope is that maybe 10% of these students may sign up for Sunday youth bridge at CBC.

Alan reported that he will start a group comprising 4 sixth formers playing at Thomas Rich's, Gloucester in January. They will have access to the Smart Bridge service from EBED which teaches bridge via a web service and includes videos and quizzes. The hour a week with the students will be used as a catch up to reinforce and assess their progress with the lessons. Alan has not been able to make contact with Denmark Road to establish current activity (if any) there.

Patrick sees the future thrust for Youth Bridge being in senior schools and learning being self-supporting. Once a contact is established in a school the format would be to grab a board and play in a self-learning environment. He suggested that MiniBridge was appropriate for learning at any level. Alan added that the first session on Smart Bridge included bidding and transfers! His view is that Smart Bridge has a good structure and is well delivered. Currently there are no hands to support the lessons but these are in the pipeline.

An interschool competition would follow once a number of schools were on board. It was agreed that this type of competition would be welcomed by schools and students. Alan stressed that it should be conducted in a friendly fashion and Jan thought that it should be in a MiniBridge format as not all competitors may have been taught bidding. Patrick intends to produce a MiniBridge learning path.

It was agreed that the GCBA should adopt the EBU safeguarding policy (CBC are adopting the same policy) as it exists. The EBU policy is being updated and will be adopted once in place.

Pauline Sanderson has reinvigorated the Gloucestershire Youth Bridge website with a link from both the GCBA and CBC websites. The new site is now live.

Constitution

Caroline had circulated an annotated copy of the Constitution marked up with possible changes suggested by committee members and highlighting differences with the revised EBU model County Constitution.

The following areas were discussed:

Objects of the Association: It was agreed to alter 2.1 to read "To promote Bridge in all its forms in the County of Gloucestershire and to encourage participation in inter-club, inter-county and national competitions". Promotion of EBU affiliation was discussed but it was agreed that this was implied in our desire to improve the playing experience, and a specific objective was not required.

Management of the Association: Michael and Caroline are to put forward some replacement wording for 3.5 in respect of dual authorisation. The length of service as an office holder and membership of the committee (3.6) were also discussed. This paragraph is not included in the EBU model County constitution. Caroline agreed to look at this and make a recommendation for the next meeting.

Life Members. All agreed that service to the County and bridge could be acknowledged through a nomination for an award from the EBU. There is no useful purpose for life membership and this paragraph should be removed.

Timetables and the necessary quorum for AGM/EGM meetings were discussed. It was agreed that to remain democratic these should not be reduced in timescale or number. A date has already been marked for the AGM and early notice/making the event attractive through free bridge/persuasion from committee members to attend will regenerate interest.

Schedule of disciplinary procedures. Under paragraph 2 a dispute at an EBU affiliated club can be referred to the GCBA, and there may be an expectation that an appeals/review process is available to County clubs although it has never been exercised in Gloucestershire. It was agreed that whilst the GCBA would be willing to help a club through a disciplinary process that it has nothing to add in most cases. We noted that our current documentation was created to address disciplinary issues at GCBA events, rather than those occurring at an affiliated club. The constitution should reflect this more clearly.

Further work will be done on the areas unresolved above and other issues not yet discussed. The constitution will be visited again at the next meeting.

Use of the GCBA surplus

Committee members were asked to put forward ideas for use of the surplus and Caroline had collated these for discussion at the meeting. The following ideas were discussed

Increasing EBU membership.

Non-affiliated clubs are offered a free trial membership to the EBU (since Covid when take-up was high to gain access to online facilities). About half choose to carry on after the trial. Half of players at non-affiliated clubs play elsewhere and therefore may have the perks of membership through an affiliated club. Patrick mentioned the EBU model of funding through UMS could be a deterrent. The question of financially assisting non-affiliated clubs was raised for example helping with room hire. It was agreed that helping with equipment was more palatable. Alan suggested that as we form closer ties with all clubs through the buddy system we may be able to identify better how we can assist individual clubs.

Increasing the number of players in Gloucestershire

Where not enough volunteers are available, paying for teachers could increase the amount of teaching happening; we noted that if the GCBA pay teachers then there is control over the quality of tuition offered. Alan advised the committee that there is a three-counties teachers' get together planned. Further ideas may come from that. There is no local club teacher training currently scheduled but his view is that it is better to train a group of members from one club rather than individuals from a number of clubs. It is daunting to be solely responsible for club teaching.

Giving something back to members

The GCBA could finance or underwrite a training day by a nationally known teacher. Patrick reported that Andrew Robson had run a course for 37 tables in Ludlow this month.

Giving something back to clubs

Patrick reported that the BIABD cards had been welcomed by clubs. Is there an opportunity to offer further supplies as part of the celebration of 100 years of contract bridge in 2025?

Encouraging the take up of bridge at University level

EBED are putting together a scheme where a "seed" player will set up a club at a university and they will provide the technical equipment to run the club for students by students.

Encouraging Youth Bridge

Providing students who attend taster sessions with a pack of cards was discussed. Patrick can obtain these at a cost of £1.50 per pack (these are BIABD cards). Patrick will look in to the cost of cards that advertise GCBA and/or GYB on the reverse with links to the websites or a QR code. It was agreed that the GCBA should purchase an initial 100 packs of cards that would be available for the planned taster sessions.

Review of the financial support offered to players representing the County

Support is currently less than some other counties give for representative events such as the Tollemache. That support has for some years covered accommodation only in the case of players in the Tollemache Final who also played in the qualifying round. For any events where the GCBA selects the players, we agreed that the GCBA will pay entry fees and that any prize money is split between the players and the GCBA. Some competitions are played online but it was agreed that where travel is required GCBA will reimburse fuel costs. On this point Paul updated the committee of his win with Alastair Catchpole in the Edgar Foster Cup. He will pay over half the winnings.

GCBA roles/tasks

The list of "Tasks needing Volunteer Support" was circulated prior to the meeting. The committee noted that the County and GYB had been restyled by Pauline Sanderson. The layout of both websites is now clearer, uncluttered and visually attractive. It was agreed that Caroline should write to Pauline to express the committee's thanks.

Patrick would like help with updating and generating a membership list. This task involves taking the EBU list of members in Gloucestershire and adding in players from a Bridgewebs list who reside outside of the County but who have previously taken part in County events.

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Paul is our EBU shareholder and has the opportunity to vote at the AGM on 27 November on the revised articles and board elections.

Honours boards. Paul continues his discussions with Peter Swales and the situation is close to being finalised. It was noted that Pauline will be adding details of winners of the various trophies to the website.

The EBU are organising a new competition, the Corwen "9 high". The same number of pairs as the Corwen will be allowed to enter from each County; the competition will be held on RealBridge. Patrick will organise a qualifier, probably on the same day as the County Pairs final.

Paul will provide a list of "defunct" trophies. The committee can then decide what should be done with them.

Steve Bunker, manager of CBC, has expressed a keen interest in involvement with County initiatives.

Numbers for club online games have fallen. A suggestion was made that County clubs could collaborate to run viable online games.

Future meeting dates

Next meeting 7.30pm Tuesday 14 January 2025 at CBC

Further meeting 7.30pm Tuesday 18 March 2025 at CBC

AGM Monday 26 May 2025

Patrick thanked the committee for their contributions and the meeting closed at 10 pm.

Caroline Hartley

Secretary

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