

GLoucestershire County Bridge Association

Minutes for the GCBA committee meeting held on Tuesday 28 April 2025 at 7.30 pm at Cheltenham Bridge Club

In attendance were Patrick Shields (President), Alan Stanfield, Jan Bailey, Michael Wright (Treasurer), Paul Denning (Vice-President) and via Zoom, Ian Sidgwick.

Jim Simons, who has agreed to be the GCBA's Independent Examiner of the accounts for 2025, attended for the early part of the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Richard Butland.

Decisions taken since the last minute

- **Spend on T-shirts for Youth Camp attendees.** It was agreed by email to purchase a number of T-shirts in a variety of sizes, for use by Gloucestershire attendees at bridge events.

Minutes of Last Meeting (25 March)

The committee agreed that the minutes were accurate and are approved.

Finance

Michael recapped the key points from the commentary on the accounts which he had circulated to the committee. These included:

- Overall income in 2024-25 was very similar to the year preceding it (despite the UMS take dropping by over 40% as a result of the rate cut in September), and for the first time included £106 of interest following the decision to lodge monies, not immediately needed, in a deposit account.
- Overall expenditure rose by £1.2k of which the largest part was an increase in the charges for use of CBC premises. When we combine this with the donations the GCBA has made to charitable causes (Youth Bridge being the largest one) the accounts show a deficit for the year of just over £1k.

The conclusion was that the GCBA funds are in a healthy state. Jim Simons agreed with that assessment and reported that he had done a number of checks on invoices and calculations, and that he found the accruals being proposed to be sensible. He was thanked for his effort and left the meeting. He will sign the paperwork associated with the AGM in due course.

The meeting discussed the large amount of extra work that had been created in the past year by players not making prompt online payments for the events in which they played, or not identifying their payments well enough. It was agreed that the scheme introduced towards the end of this last season (payment for the Midlands leagues in one lump at the end of the year) should be good enough, but that we need to tell people that if they have not paid up by 31st March, then they will not be eligible for representative matches for the remainder of that calendar year. The committee had discussed the use of "name and shame" as a tool to encourage payment, but some present had misgivings about the use of this and it is not proposed to adopt this at this time.

The meeting discussed the management of small spends, and reminded itself of the decision of 16th October 2023, viz

- “It was agreed that we should have a policy on how much individual committee members are authorised to spend on behalf of GCBA prior to discussion with the rest of the committee. Ian proposed that the maximum amounts should be £500 for the President, £100 for other officers, and £25 for the rest of the committee. It was stressed that this would only to be done in exceptional circumstances where the money was needed before the issue could be discussed with the rest of the committee, and that discussion would always take place subsequently.”

Youth Bridge

Jan circulated a report prior to the meeting (summarised at Appendix 1). The committee thanked her and expressed its support for the planned events on the 18th-19th October.

Alan provided an update on a fresh approach to the Crypt School in Gloucester (where some Stroud primary school learners will be joining an already active bridge player), and raised the possibility of school learners having a match against an adult team if there was no other suitable school available for them to play against.

The Sunday game last week had gone well, and some photos would be added to the GYB website soon.

Patrick reported that Alison Nicolson had resigned from the post of County Youth Officer, a post she had held from just before the pandemic. The committee is very grateful for Alison’s contribution, and Gloucestershire is now recognised as a beacon county for Youth Bridge. We discussed the need to have a County Youth Officer, and agreed that its greatest value now was providing a contract for EBED in the county; it was agreed we do not need a CYO post, but that – as the committee lead for Youth Bridge – Jan would be that contact.

AGM Preparation

Patrick has emailed all clubs encouraging them to put forward someone to become a committee member to represent their members’ interest. It was noted that the dates for publication of the AGM agenda were very close, and that this needs to be sent to all affiliated clubs. The committee present all agreed (plus RB later) that they would put themselves forward again for election, and they discussed other potential candidates.

The committee reviewed the proposed changes to the Constitution and agreed it was ready to be put to the membership. Patrick will arrange that the proposal appears on the GCBA website.

The committee expressed its gratitude for the momentum which Caroline had given this process.

Growing the Membership

Ian recapped the EBU intents for 2025 (to grow the membership by 5%) and highlighted

- The appointment by the EBU of Mary Cousins as a new County & Membership Development Officer.
- The recently created video “ClassRoom to ClubRoom” designed to help clubs improve the transition rate for lessons into club membership.

We noted that our mission is to get more people playing more bridge, and that only some of that will spill into Duplicate Bridge, and only some of that into affiliated clubs and EBU/GCBA membership. In the discussion which followed these points came out:

- There is a Teacher Training course coming soon for Gloucestershire & Worcestershire; the attendees are all current club members who will afterwards be boosting their club teaching programmes. Some attendees at club lessons will not become duplicate players, but learn and prefer kitchen/U3A/social games.
- Current Cheltenham U3A groups (3 duplicate, 1 social) are all playing rather than learning groups, and some have very limited capacity and have waiting lists. Patrick will shortly run a course on bidding, for those who have been playing MiniBridge, to let them play in bridge games.
- Ian indicated that there is an audience for another Learn-in-a-Weekend in the north of the County but he currently lacked any teachers for this. We noted that for every learning experience we need an organiser and a teacher, and placing both responsibilities on the one person might be limiting the take-up of teaching jobs. Perhaps the County role is to help put the organisers in touch with the teachers.
- Ian reported that EDED were working on approaches to enlighten potential teachers and helpers to the breadth of materials of offer from EBED. The availability of EBTA membership sponsored by the GCBA, and for anyone in Youth Bridge sponsored by EBED, was noted.
- The committee agreed to the purchase of a projector for use by teachers within the county; Alan will progress this. We agreed that the new packs of cards already acquired will be offered to newcomers to any of our bridge events (beyond the “compulsory” attendance at some school tasters).

GCBA roles/tasks

Patrick is to make a list of tasks which could be managed by different individuals.

Future meeting dates

- AGM Monday 26 May 2025 at 1800 hrs
- First meeting of the new committee : Tuesday 17th June at 1730 hrs.

Patrick thanked the committee for their contributions and the meeting closed at 2040 hrs.

Update on Youth

- Since the last meeting, we have had the Spring Junior Bridge Camp at the Pioneer Centre. Ten Gloucestershire students attended. Four of them received their Bronze awards. All bar two of our group were able to compete in the Swiss Pairs event held on the Sunday afternoon. There is more information on the GYB website.
- EBED is now teaching 5cd Majors, strong 1NT openers and 2/1 as game forcing. Cheltenham and Gloucester youth teachers have switched from ACOL and will now be teaching the same.
- Gloucester - Alan has three tables in the lower school at Tommy's. Due to exams, his 6th form group has paused until the autumn term. He will be running a taster session at St Mary's Primary, Churchdown in June.
- Stroud - Alison Pritchard is running two groups at Foxmoor Primary. The higher level group is keen to have an inter-schools match, which the school will host.
- Cheltenham - Pittville and Cleeve after school clubs continue to run with low numbers. Cleeve and Balcarras have agreed that 6th form clubs can start in the autumn term.
- The CBC Club, which has young people from 13/14 different schools in the county, is gradually growing in numbers. We have young people working at four different levels, so any competition is a MiniBridge competition. In the Autumn we will increase our sessions to twice a month when the calendar allows.
- On the 18/19th October GCBA, with the support of CBC and EBED, will be running a two-day event at CBC. The plan is to have two lessons each morning and a competition (most likely Minibridge) each afternoon. No overnight accommodation. Students, teachers and helpers will bring packed lunches. Refreshments will be provided. The cost will be £5 per day. This event will be opened up for students out of county. GCBA will pay CBC for using the premises.

END OF UPDATE