

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

The York Bridge Club

Thursday 18th June 2026 at 6.30pm

Sally Gregory, Chair of the Trustees of the Company & Charity, welcomed all attendees at the meeting. She explained there would be 2 meetings – firstly, for the Charity & Company and secondly, for the Bridge Club.

Apologies were received from Tricia Pearce, Rose Townwond, Piers Percival, Marcus Barbor, Cynthia Barbor, Graham Burnett, Judith Bray, Gillian Haynes, David Moore, Dene Pickles, Anne Bednarski & Morris Gregory

Minutes of previous AGM

It was agreed that the issued minutes were a true record of the meeting which had taken place on 6th June 2025.

Trustees Report

Sally presented a summary of the Trustees Report which is included on page 4 of the Financial Statements for Year ended 31st March 2026, as follows:

2025/6 has been another good year for our club. Our membership figures continued to increase and on 31st March stood at 375 (a 5% increase on the previous year). Our club is now the largest club in Yorkshire and the only one hosting England qualifying events in this region.

As notified in last year's report, further Trustees have stood down in this year. Azizah Clayton retired as a Trustee at the AGM in June 2025 after 5 years' service. Phil Godfrey and Philip Ashton have confirmed their resignations as Trustees with effect from this year's AGM in June after 16 years and 2 years' service respectively. I would like to express my sincere thanks to them all for their hard work and dedication to their roles whilst they served on the board as Trustees and Directors.

In accordance with our planned succession program, a recruitment process has just completed with the Trustees proposing to elect John Hayton as a Trustee for confirmation at the AGM. John will take over from Philip Ashton as our new Financial Controller.

The recruitment of new Trustees will support our vision and longer-term plans for the club and underpin its future development in the furtherance of our charitable aims.

The financial environment continues to be challenging with uncertainty around utility and food prices. As part of our longer-term investment plans, we are therefore looking to invest in further infrastructure items (e.g. additional solar) to reduce our dependency on external suppliers. We are also planning investments in electrification of internal doors where this will provide better and easier access for our less able-bodied members and visitors. And, in conjunction with the Acomb Sports Club, providing additional overflow parking that can be used year-round to alleviate parking pressures and provide easier, closer access to the club for those with mobility issues. Our capital expenditure plans over the next 12-18 months are in the region of £40 £60k. Where possible we will seek grants to reduce this outlay. These actions are in direct support of the Company and Charity objects.

The Trustees agreed to invest in the update and replacement of our Bridgemate scoring system to the new Bridgemate IIIs. The new system provides larger touch screen input and provides clearer and easier use for those with sight issues. We were able to secure grant funding from the Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association for part of these costs with the majority of the remaining costs very generously being funded by a member donation.

Our successful financial performance this year, and the Trustees' prudent decisions on the previous loan restructuring, have enabled us to fully repay our remaining member loans for the building of the new premises. In this financial year we repaid the final £24,750 out of an original total loan commitment of £153,000. We would like to formally record our thanks to those members who generously donated or loaned money to enable us to move and build our new club house. Repayment of these loans will release the club to explore financial models that encourage even greater participation in the game for both existing members and develop new opportunities within the local communities. In doing this, the Trustees will balance the needs for longer-term capital needs of the club with the day-to-day playing costs for members and visitors.

To meet our charitable aims, we have continued to build on links with the local community and have hosted events at the local library ("Acomb Explore") and at a local scouts group (with a Girl Guide experience scheduled for later in 2026) as well as hosting our own drop-in open days. Our unique Student bursary scheme, which is fully funded by member donations, and our Youth Academy, which is free to all U18 players, have supported those in full-time education to enjoy learning and playing with us for free thus broadening the availability of bridge to those in full time education. We expect to continue to build on these foundations in the coming year by taking bridge to communities in the area that have not previously had the opportunity to participate with the aim of increasing social interactions and reducing isolation.

Within the bridge community, we continue to widen our scope both in running external events (seminars and external competitions) and in sharing our knowledge and experiences with other clubs in the area. We have hosted two England qualifying events at the club and a national bridge league event together with a number of county level events. We have hosted a first ever Yorkshire Schools cup for U18 youths with members of our own Youth academy being part of the winning team. For the national events, we have again provided drop-in sessions for all players from the area to watch and discuss expert

players in action with the aim of furthering the experience and development of bridge in the area and more widely through the on-line platform.

Our teachers continue to provide a wide breadth of learning opportunities and have actively encouraged the integration of newer, less experienced players into our bridge community. The range of teaching that we now provide is larger than it has ever been and the success of this is evidenced by the numbers of new and existing players partaking in these courses and the numbers now venturing into a playing environment for the first time. This is a great credit to all the teachers, and I thank them all for their hard work and ideas.

In building our learners pathway we have ensured a good foundation for maintaining and building the club membership, introducing new players to the game and looking to make bridge accessible for all. A foundation of our charitable remit.

There are a lot of volunteers who give their time generously to support the activities of the club, and I would like to record my thanks to them all. Their help and support are very much appreciated. I would also particularly like to thank all the club committee members who have strived to deliver the excellent day-to-day operations at the club that enable us to provide the broad range of activities we do.

The ongoing success of our club depends on its members, not only in supporting, playing, and learning with the club but also in promoting and sharing their experiences with others, encouraging them to come and try.

Sally invited questions on the content of the Trustees Report and her accompanying narrative. There was 1 question about the planned investment of an electronic internal door just inside the main entrance. There was some concern about it's the forecast cost. Sally explained the cost was indicative, and the club will seek to obtain quotes to achieve a competitive price. However, the investment is necessary to ensure the club is in compliance of fire regulations.

Financial Report and Adoption of Accounts

Sally asked Phil Ashton to explain the key messages contained in the Accounts, which are as follows:

- The Independent Examiner has given the accounts a clean bill of health. (Sally read out the Independent Examiner's report).
- The Bridge Club is in a healthy financial position.
- The number of members and session participation has increased which is reflected in the increased reported income
- The bridge club is now debt free as all loans linked to investment in our premises have now been repaid.
- The accounts reflect the excellent business model being implemented by the Trustees and the club committee.

Sally invited questions on the figures contained in the accounts. There were no questions raised.

She asked the members and they unanimously agreed to adopt the Financial Report and Accounts.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Michael Sturge has carried out this role over many years Michael could not attend the AGM but has indicated he is willing to continue in this role for the next financial year. His offer was unanimously agreed by the members at the meeting.

Confirmation of Directors

Sally explained that the bridge club articles of association states there should be some rotation of directors.

At this AGM two of our directors are retiring and a new director will join the board.

The retiring directors are Phil Godfrey and Philip Ashton. Replacing the latter, John Huyton will join the board in the capacity of finance director.

Directors remaining on the board are Sally Gregory (chair), Michael Waller, Jonathan Latham and Judy Baines.

The meeting was unanimous in approving the proposed board of directors who will serve throughout 2026/27.

Sally went on to lead a presentation to each of the retiring directors.

She summarised the significant contribution Philip Ashton has provided to the bridge club. Philip took over the finance role from Keith Sowerbutts and went on to successfully implement the Xero accounting package which has improved the financial management of our bridge club. He provided his expert financial stewardship throughout the building of our new premises, and beyond that as the club has flourished at its new home. He leaves the financial management and financial stability of the club in a strong position for his successor to take over.

Sally presented a gift to Philip in recognition of the trustees and member's gratitude for his outstanding service to the club.

Sally then summarised the immense contribution of Phil Godfrey in serving the bridge club since he joined us as a student in 1995. He has been on the management committee for many of those years and a Trustee of the charity and a director of the company since its formation in 2012. Over many years he has been our expert on all bridge, IT and safeguarding related matters and is one of our most accomplished bridge players. He has hosted many Directors / Scorers courses and has always been available to help anybody who needed assistance in these key roles.

Over many years Phil was the clubs main link to the wider bridge world, the EBU and the YCBA. (and he served as a YCBA officer and EBU TD for many years too!)

Given Phil's dedicated long service to the club, the trustees propose he should be awarded honorary membership of York Bridge Club. The proposal was unanimously agreed by attendees of the meeting.

Sally then invited our honorary president, Stuart Kay, to give a personal testimony of Phil's contribution to the bridge club. They both worked together, along with Keith Sowerbutts, in setting up the registered charity and limited company in 2012.

Following a glowing testimony, Stuart presented a framed formula one commemorative print to Phil in recognition of his outstanding service to the club.

Phil thanked Stuart and Sally for their kind words and provided his perspective on how the bridge club has changed in his time as a member. When he joined it, York bridge was not a welcoming club. Since then it has changed beyond recognition into a sociable and friendly club with excellent facilities.

Sally explained that the formal business of the Company AGM had been completed.

Before commencing the Club AGM, she explained there would be a presentation of the Nora Penn Youth Award and some EBED Youth Awards to the young bridge players who have been attending the Club's Youth Academy.

The award ceremony was introduced by Rowena White who runs the Youth Academy, with presentations also made by trustee Judy Baines.

Rowena confirmed that Bertie is already part of the England under 16 team, and his younger sister Beth is training with the England team.

The Academy has also enjoyed success in the Northern school championships - Jacob and Barnaby were our successful entrants.

The Academy awards were as follows (surnames redacted):

Nora Penn award – Josh who received some bridge books and will attend a fully funded bridge weekend.

Nora Penn award Runner up – Barnaby

The academy follows a structured EBED course which recognises achievement at bronze, silver & gold levels. Award this year are:

Silver – Josh

Bronze – Oscar

Bronze – Ocean

Bronze – Barnaby

Bronze – Jacob

Mini bridge awards were also presented to Poppy and Scarlett.

Sally then invited Mark Dunkley, in his capacity of YCBA board member, to address the meeting. Mark explained the face-to-face Yorkshire League runs from October to March each year. In 2025/26 58 teams of 8 entered the competition which was split into 7 divisions. The winners of division 1, for the first time in 10 years, was the York A team.

Mark presented a glass trophy to Frank Dixon, the A team captain, in recognition of this outstanding achievement.

Club AGM

Sally invited Andrew Merrison to commence the club AGM with the presentation of his club chairman's report for 2025/26. The report read as follows:

Membership

- *At year end we had 383 members (this is still increasing year on year) such that we are now the largest club in Yorkshire*
- *We are especially pleased to have attracted a large number of very keen players from the University of York*

Playing

- *We now have a new annual blue pointed Swiss event – the first in Oct 2025*
- *We also have initiated a new, hosted IMPROVERS PLUS session on Thursday evenings*
- *Jonathan Sanders has successfully reinvigorated the internal teams league – with the highest number of team numbers for years (next season starts soon!)*
- *In the Yorkshire league, we entered a 6th team (the first time since Holgate)*
- *And York A Won the First Division league and went on to represent Yorkshire in the National Garden Cities Final (coming 6th)*

Learning

- *We have continued hosting external lectures: Andrew Robson (October), Michael Byrne (March)*
- *We have delivered multiple Free Taster Sessions at Acomb Explore library generating a lot of interest from new learners*
- *We continue to run full courses for absolute beginners and now have Term 1, Term 2 and Term 3 classes all running each week – with 37 beginner students*
- *First Step Duplicate continues to enable learners to transition to play sessions*
- *For established players, James Carpenter and I have expanded the diet of lessons available (Competitive Bidding, Defence, Declarer Play)*
- *We have also expanded the very successful TADSS franchise with a brand new TADSS(+) trial (currently due to finish in mid July – so hurry if you haven't participated yet!)*

Socials

- *(Aborted Halloween), Christmas, Spring*

Thank Yous

- *Finally, huge thanks to everyone who has volunteered their energies for the well-being of our club*
 - *TDs, scorers, dealers, catering supporters, librarians, table cloth launderers, transport coordinators, teachers, classroom assistants, refreshment procurers, committee members, and of course, **YOU** – the membership!*
 - *We really couldn't operate without you (all volunteers are ALWAYS most welcome!)*

Election of Club Committee

Sally read out nominations for the new Club Committee, each of which had a proposer and seconder. Nominations were as follows:

Chairman – Andrew Merrison

Vice chair – Jonathan Sanders

Committee members:

Jenny Guest

Robin Loft

David Mitchell

Joyd Mittra

Sheena Winchester

The meeting unanimously agreed that all the above nominations be accepted.

In recognition of Andrew and Jonathan's hard work through the year, Jenny Guest presented them each with a wooden carved cheese board, made by Robin Loft.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting was closed at 7.30pm.