PETANQUE ENGLAND AGM MINUTES 29.3.25

Venue: Kewstoke Village Hall, Weston Super Mare BS22 9XB

Present: Board:
Colin Roper (CR) President, Cary Bush (CB) Treasurer, Pippa Boardman (PB), Peter Aldersey (PA)

Members:
Janice Keemer-Richards, Ray Keemer-Richards, John Thatcher, Rose Thatcher, Ann Barton, Adrian Thomas, Gerald Barton, Martin Hughes, Gavin Naylor, Tania Beadsmoore, Richard Savory

Before the meeting, the President referred to the sterling work carried out by Ray Keemer-Richards in a variety of key roles over some fourteen years. Ray was now officially retiring. To warm applause from those present, CR presented Ray with a specially prepared certificate and a PE engraved paperweight.

Ray responded with a few graceful words of thanks and reminiscence, emphasizing how much he had valued the support and friendship he had received from many members throughout this period.

1. Apologies had been received from:

   Tom Wilson, Lynn Wilson, Mark Bell, John Edmondson, Richard Stevens, Mike Pegg, Simon Adamsdale, Vivien Middleton-Sams, Steve Slade, Elaine Aldersey, Adrian Gingell, Jonathan Ruddle, Frank Charlesworth, Christine Peat, Diane Harrington, Steve Harrington, Peter Ostil-East, Jean Wilmot, Chris Wilmot, Andy Wilmot, Neil Ryder, Stephen Harris, Claire Rickman, Keith Wannell, Allan Edwards, Graham Deasy, Mandy Cartwright, Steve Lombard.

2. Quorum

   To be quorate, we needed 130 members present in person or by proxy. CB confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

3. Minutes of last meeting

   These had been circulated in advance of the meeting. There being no matters arising, their acceptance was proposed by CB, seconded by PB.

4. Directors' reports

CR introduced those directors present.

Turning to the reports, most (including the President's) had been circulated before the meeting. CR proposed they be taken as read. This was acceptable to those present. CB then read Richard Stevens' report. Gerald Barton asked whether a breakdown of monies received by regions was available in Sport 80. CB confirmed these were available.

CR went on to focus on a few issues arising from the reports.

- Mark Bell had been working to make our current website easier to access and was also getting to the final stages of producing the new website. To general agreement, John Thatcher welcomed the efforts being made to make the information more accessible.

- PA ran through his new approach to our present inadequate public liability insurance. His changes should enable those clubs prudent enough to have bought stand-alone cover to cancel it – a significant saving.

  Martin Hughes queried the cost and was concerned that we were 'giving non-PE members something for nothing'. He wondered how many 'Club' members would discontinue their membership.

  PA's view was the cost (£750) was modest and that the benefit accruing to clubs was much more significant. Any loss of members would only be apparent next year but even if all 300 Club members cancelled – unlikely because in electing to become Club members, people were taking out a PE membership which just happens to include insurance – the loss to PE itself would be limited to £1200.

  Turning to the issue of encouraging independent leagues to affiliate with PE, PA said that there were several initiatives afoot. He would like to see us able by this time next year to claim that PE represented 10,000 players (up from the present 3,000). Already, two leagues had affiliated and more were actively in the pipeline; in 2025 he would be liaising with regional presidents to identify many more.

Gavin Naylor made the valid point that we must ensure that such leagues will be playing to 'PE rules'. John Thatcher reminded us that regions, leagues etc had their own 'rules' and what we should really be talking about was compliance with the international rules. These points were taken on board.

- CR then turned to the issue of complaints and disciplinary matters. It was incumbent on all levels of the organization to spot problems early and nip them in the bud. One issue alone had involved Mike Pegg in many, many hours of work and incurred significant legal costs. The uneven quality of club and regional management was an issue on which the board would need to work.

- CR went on to talk about our 'desperate shortage' of umpires. There was a course scheduled next month but we need to encourage younger members to come forward.

- Martin Hughes queried CR's criticism of an international team's unprofessional behaviour, suggesting it had offended certain players and was unfair. 'Losing was bad enough', he said! CR was unrepentant, emphasizing that in representing our country we should behave with the utmost professionalism.

5. Approval of accounts

Reflecting on this being the 13th set of accounts he'd presented, CB lamented – not for the first time – the incredibly low member turnout. Were it not for specific efforts made by directors, this AGM would have been nowhere near quorate. Less than 2% of our 3000 members either turned up or submitted proxies of their own volition. Apathy was rife and we must persuade more members to get involved. The present voting system is plainly not working, and we must look at alternatives.

CB then presented and briefly ran through the results of 2024/25, which showed a trading profit of c £7,000 (2024: £21,000) and a £7,000 increase in our reserves.

The three main revenue streams – club registrations, member fees and competition entries – remain constant, though many fees have not increased for well over a decade and are well overdue an increase.

Turning to expenses, he highlighted the key areas on which to focus, viz:

- Travel – 50% up on 2023/24 and by far the largest item
- Membership costs – basically Sport 80; some teething issues but Sport 80 does offer significant advantages over previous systems.
- Competitions – a one off increase due to an event in Holland.
- Insurance – driven mainly by new covers, plus the modest increase in our PL premium. This area remains under close review.

CB's report sparked a vigorous debate focused on the need (or not) to increase fees together, with John Thatcher suggesting that if we were to keep our (already low cost) sport viable, we had to increase fees somewhere. He asked if we had had any requests to use the Development Fund – yes, was the answer, but nothing appropriate.

Martin Hughes picked up the suggestion that member apathy was driving the board to consider alternative ways to generate member interest and involvement. Not surprisingly, the few members actually present were not keen to see their votes disappear. This led to some consideration of how best to create a working democracy; it was pointed out that a 'one vote per club' concept might need to be tweaked to allow for the reality that club member sizes varied from as low as ten to over a hundred.

The debate veered to international team selection criteria. Tania Beadsmoore considered that women were disadvantaged in the criteria for selecting women's teams. Martin Hughes disagreed. Gerald Barton wondered why, if we hadn't done well in European competition, we would then enter World events. Gavin Naylor, on the other hand, considered that the two should be considered entirely separately.

Finally, a proposal to adopt the accounts was made by John Thatcher and seconded by Adrian Thomas. It was accepted unanimously.

6. <u>Appointment of directors</u>

It was noted that the three board appointees were not subject to approval, and the meeting then voted to approve the election of Tom Wilson and Claire Geddes to the board.

7. Determination of membership fees for 2025

   This had already been extensively debated in the preceding item. CB had outlined the present fees, and the numbers of members involved in each category. He suggested that there needed to be regular reviews; not having increased club fees for well over a decade was ludicrous when the cost of living had increased by 50% in that period.

   A formal proposal to keep all fees unaltered for 2025 was made by CB, seconded by Martin Hughes.

8. Resolution to 'fix' the date of future AGMs

   This proposal from the board fell into two parts:
   - To agree a fixed date – the last Saturday in November. This was agreed without demur.
   - To require that any proposed resolutions be submitted 28 days prior to the meeting. After objections from the floor, CB withdrew this part of the proposal.

   The item re-ignited the debate over how best to overcome the almost total apathy shown by members in the running and development of their sport and their company.

   It being noted that any change would in any event have to be considered by members in a general meeting, the question once again was whether club votes would be a better way of generating debate and involvement than individual votes when history showed that hardly anyone bothered.

   Martin Hughes suggested some form of hybrid system might be a possibility, with some issues being reserved to individual members,

   CR said the board would consult widely on this. He intended inter alia to convene a meeting of regional presidents to help gauge the mood of members around the country.

Any Other Business

CR formally declared the meeting closed and thanked everyone for their attendance. He then opened the meeting up to an informal discussion for people to raise issues that concerned them.

Tania Beadsmoore asked who, ultimately, is responsible for managing/resolving complaints of bullying/harassment and the like. CR's response that it was for clubs to manage and, if necessary, refer to their region. That was fine in theory, said Tania, but not every region had appropriate controls and officers in place. The board accepted that this was something they needed to review and take ownership of.

Gavin Naylor had four discrete points to make:

- GDPR. He deplored the recent data breach and sought assurances that it would not happen again. CR said that PE have already taken steps to ensure that our approach to GDPR is more robust.

- Integrity of regions. He sought reassurance from the board that they would not lightly sanction the creation of new 'breakaway' regions as a response to internal disharmony within a region. CR agreed and PE have already taken steps to ensure that such applications fully meet our requirements before accepting them.

- Non-playing managers. Why should we insist on them paying for a 'competitor' licence in events in which they were not even playing? Club memberships perhaps were acceptable by full competitor licences seemed an 'over-the-top' unnecessary expense. PE will review this requirement – maybe Club licences were the solution?

- Safeguarding. Major events such as the Inter Regionals need – required, even? – a nominated safeguarding officer. Gavin sought reassurances that measures be put in place before future events. All regions should have a safeguarding officer in place.

Finally, Martin Hughes asked why Sport 80 could not make available the names of squads in advance of events? There was no GDPR issue involved and other organisations, eg British Archery (also through Sport 80) had no such qualms. PE will be reviewing its position in allowing publication of tournament team information as quickly as possible.

31st March 2025
PWA