

Pétanque England



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors held on Saturday 6th June 2020 by videoconference

Present:

Clive De Silva (CDS), Ken Buchan (KB), Martin Hughes (MH), Alan Roden (AR), Barry Wing (BG), Ray Keemer-Richards (R K-R), Ajay Keemer-Richards (J K-R), Cary Bush (CB), Jim Marstin (JM), David Baxter (DB), Colin Roper (CR), Christine Spray (CS), Toni Gates (TG)

In Attendance:

Gareth Sullivan (Umpires Commission)

1 Apologies for Absence

Bob Parker

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The previously circulated minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 16th May 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

3 Matters Arising

3.1 Receivables (Confidential Not for Publication).

3.2 Expense Claims and Budgetary Control

The draft revised expenses and budgetary control procedures had yet to be finalised and it was agreed that this should be carried forward to the next meeting.

Action CB

4 Appointment of Sport Development Group Chair & Members

It was agreed that the following should be appointed to the Sport Development Group:-

Ray Keemer-Richards (chair)
Tom Wilson
Peter Hardy
Jim Marstin
Ken Buchan
Christine Spray
Janice Keemer-Richards
Barry Wing

KB reminded the meeting of the Terms of Reference of the Sport Development Group as set out in the PE Rules.

R K-R indicated that the group may draft more detailed terms of reference when PE's future strategy was clearer. He intended to convene a meeting of the group within the following week and would report back to the Board.

Action R K-R

5 Job Allocations

It was agreed that Janice Keemer-Richards be appointed as Safeguarding Officer in place of Annette Eggleton.

Action
J K-R

It was agreed that Barry Wing be appointed as the chair of the Events Group in place of David Mason. Barry would like to see more structure to the playing calendar so that national, regional events etc would each take place on the same weekend in each month. DB and BW agreed to convene a meeting of the Events Group as soon as possible to frame ideas for the coming year.

Action
DB & BW

6 Current Finances and Predicted end of year balance

CB went through the forecasted income and expenditure account for 2020 compared with the 2020 budget and last year's actual figures. The estimated surplus for 2020 was estimated at £10,959. Provision had been made for further playing squad expenditure amounting to £15,200 about 75% of the budget figure. MH considered it unlikely that all of that allocation would be spent.

7 2020 Membership Fees

It was noted that there would be an estimated surplus of £10,959 this year. This would enable a refund of £5 to be made to each member who had renewed this year. CB pointed out that it was not possible to effect partial refunds through Paypal. He believed that members' requests for a refund would be motivated by various reasons including financial hardship and being unable to take part in particular activities. It was highly problematical for refunds to be actioned for these reasons centrally and he suggested that refund monies should be sent to regions on a pro rata basis and that they should decide the basis upon which refunds should be given to members. It was possible that the regions may wish to refund part of the regional precept. BW pointed out that many members were seeking refunds simply to "make a point" and /or did not appreciate that any refund could only be for a part of the fee. David B considered that any surplus for 2020 should be used to make good part of the deficits incurred over the last 3 years. He regarded the task of making wholesale refunds to be organisationally too difficult. It was not clear at this stage what playing opportunities and expenditure would be incurred during the remainder of this year and he favoured waiting until next year to decide any refund policy. The possibility of making refunds across the board to members renewing next year

was considered but this would unfairly reward the 6-700 members who had not renewed this year. TG suggested that instead of offering membership refunds members could be given free entry to competitions. This could increase event participation. MH made the point that many membership organisations were appealing to their members to show support even though members had not received the full benefits. . He felt that many PE members would respond favourably to an appeal not to ask for refunds so that PE could relaunch itself after the Covid-19 disruption. He suggested that PE's liability to make refunds should be crystallised now rather than for it to be deferred until later this year or next year. It was agreed that CDS would draft an all member message about refunds for approval by the Board.

Action CDS

8 2021 Finance & Onwards

CB circulated financial reports summarising the financial results over the last 7 years and two forecasts covering the future 5 years. The first set of forecasts was based upon the 2020 membership levels and the second on the assumption that membership would rebound to the 2019 levels. The first set of forecasts showed an estimated deficit of £26,638 for 2021 rising to a deficit of £55,138 in 2025. The second forecast (based on 2019 membership levels) showed an estimated deficit of £11,319 for 2021 rising to £35,874 by 2025. It was agreed that PE could not sustain these increasing deficits and that it was necessary to reduce expenditure and /or secure additional funding streams to ensure that PE remained financially viable. Some options concerning the funding of international championships were considered but it was agreed that further discussion would be deferred until after the membership survey results were available.

KB was anxious not to postpone agreement of the budget for 2021. It was agreed that this could not be left until detailed costings for the international championships became available from the host federations. TG felt that October was too late to fix the budget.

9 PE Competitions 2020

DB felt that October was probably the earliest date by which government restrictions would be sufficiently relaxed to enable competition to take place. CS thought it unlikely that the restrictions on large gatherings would be lifted in the near future, There was a risk of a spike in infections in September following the reopening of Schools & Universities and there could be a further episode in December.

BW had spoken to Mike Cubitt at Gravesend who was willing to host the national titles in October. BW suggested that in order to avoid large gatherings it may be better to have area qualifiers feeding in to a last 16 competition at Gravesend.

It was agreed that the Events Group be instructed to draw up some contingency plans for October if restrictions were lifted to enable a limited playing programme. Meanwhile all competitions had been cancelled although it may be possible to organise online shooting events.

Action Events
Group

10 Inter Regionals 2021

CDS had spoken to Geoff Holt of IOW Tours who had confirmed that he was still waiting for the site to re-open so that he could arrange a site visit. CDS explained that the proposed venue was the Pontins Holiday Village at Pakefield near Lowestoft. It could accommodate 1,200 guests and the accommodation was reported to be better than the Hayling Island accommodation. IOW estimated that the likely cost would be between £135 to £145 per person fully catered. This would be about £30 cheaper than Hayling Island. There were 4 areas available to use as playing terrains, but Geoff Holt estimated that only 2 of those would be needed to accommodate the 108 lanes we required. Floodlights were available for the shooting competition. It was agreed that the proposed agreement with IOW Tours be circulated to those Board Members who had not previously seen it.

Action KB

BW felt that the existing IR format requiring 12 games to be played over the weekend was too onerous because it could result in games not finishing until about 8.00 p.m. He felt that if the number of games were restricted to 5 each day it would give players an opportunity to have some relaxation in the evening. It was agreed that the Events Group would review the format and see if it can be improved.

Action
Events
Group

MH noted that there was more than sufficient capacity at Pikefield to accommodate the usual number of 800 attendees and that it might be a good idea to invite Jersey to take part.

DB mentioned that the Events Group had been investigating various options in case the proposed Pontin's arrangement fell through. It was agreed that the Events Group should keep these under review.

Action
Events
Group

11. PE Website

CDS noted that currently too few people had access to the website. He thought that it would be beneficial for section leads to have access so that they could regularly update their pages. MH agreed to run an online training session on how to use Word Press for those Board members who were interested. The

session would last about 1 hour. He will email the whole Board to find out who wanted to receive the training.

Action MH

MH pointed out that the website and Facebook generated a substantial traffic of users. He would circulate a summary of the website and Facebook usage statistics so that the Board was aware. The volume of traffic was sufficiently significant for it to be 'monetised' for example, by having banner ads on the website. TG was reluctant to engage commercially with big companies if it would disadvantage the small businesses which had provided loyal support to PE over the years.

Action MH

MH had received feedback from the members' survey that it was too complex. GS thought there was too much content in the "About" section. For example, it was not the obvious place to look for information about umpiring. MH's son was an expert in digital marketing and would be prepared to look at the website to see how it can be improved. There could be other members with expertise who could offer their assistance.

Action MH

12. Social Media

Some concerns were expressed about the negativity of many comments on facebook as these were giving the organisation a poor image to the outside world. The possibility of creating separate pages for news and discussion with the latter accessible only by members was considered. It was noted that Petanque England News still existed. This was operated by Annette Eggleton and confined itself just to PE News. MH thought it was exceedingly difficult to control social media. There was a fine line between censorship and moderation. There was a need however to deal with online bullying or abuse and it was agreed that the facebook rules would be revised to include a warning that anyone responsible for such posts would be removed as a member.

Action MH

Many organisations had a social media policy and it was agreed that KB would draft such a policy for consideration by the Board.

Action KNB

It was noted that in accordance with the Board Members' Code of Conduct, directors should not use social media to express personal views that were at variance with agreed Board Policy. DB observed that often the problem was not that directors used facebook to speak out of turn but that they failed to respond to issues that were raised. It was agreed that individual directors could deal with requests for information which fell within their area of responsibility but any official Board responses to issues raised on facebook would be made by CDS.

Action CDS

13. Assembly

CDS & KB will agree a date for the Assembly and circulate this to the Presidents & Board.

Action KNB

It was agreed that Assemblies should in future be routinely conducted as video conferences as this would increase participation.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 Chris Mann, Racing Club, Southern Counties

Request for PE to extend the membership period to 31 December 2021

Action KB

Action: - Reply explaining the Board's policy on subscription refunds

14.2 John Coomber, Duke of Wellington, Kent

Request for PE to reduce the membership subscriptions for 2021

Action
KB

Action: - Reply explaining the Board's policy on subscription refunds

14.3 Mike Stocks, Bourne Abbots PC Mercia

Request for PE to help promote the Coates Village Doubles

Action KB

Action: - Club to be advised to submit an entry in the playing calendar via the website online form and to use PE facebook

14.4 Mark Cooper, Thorley PC Eastern

Request for advice on how to become recognised and nominated for playing for their country, region

Action KB

Action: - Reply explaining regional qualifying events and national ranking events

14.5 Terry Basson, City of Bath, Great Western

Suggests that continued support to international players should be judged on their success rate against other clubs abroad

Action KB

Action: - Advise submission of suggestion via the consultation exercise.

14.6 Terry Bason, City of Bath, Great Western

Request that PE funds club's visits abroad

Action KB

Action – Reply advising that PE does not have sufficient resources

14.7 Gill Mason, Luton PC Chiltern

Request that ladies seeking to qualify for the International Women's Day competition should not have to travel to a venue outside their Region.

Action: - suggestion to be referred to Hassi Leverett

Action KB

14.8 Gill Mason, Luton PC Chiltern

Suggestion that PE runs an online second-hand merchandising service.

Action
Sport

Action; - Suggestion referred to the Sport Development Group **Development Group**

14.9 Alan MacCormack, Mansfield PC Mercia

Suggestion that licences should be plastic “photo ID” type cards.
Action: - Reply pointing out that the substantial cost of producing and posting plastic membership cards to members is beyond the resources of PE now but that the position will be reviewed when finances permit. In the meantime, suggest that the look of home printed versions can be improved by laminating.

Action KB

14.10 Chris Bigmore, Honiton, Devon

What steps are planned to improve communications with members and potential members other than through social media.
Action: - Reply indicating that all member emails are used to communicate directly with members and that the President is planning to produce regular newsletters which can be posted on club notice boards. PE does not and cannot for data protection reasons maintain a database for non-members and relies on the website and social media to communicate with non-members.

Action KB

14.11 Leslie Gardiner, Sports Bar, Chiltern

Can the veterans be allowed to play as a team of 4:
Action request referred to the veterans lead

Action CDS

14.12 Richard Watkins, City of Bath, Great Western

Suggestion that we pull out of international championships for 3 years and fund top players to coach at club level.
Action: - encourage member to submit the suggestion in response to the consultation exercise.

Action KB

14.13 Ken Jeffries, Ditton. Kent

Concern expressed concerning the wording of the Examiner’s certification of the accounts.
Action: - Treasurer to explain the wording

Action CB

14.14 Board Structure

TG asked for information about the Board sub-groups.
CDS will compile and circulate a “family tree” of the Board structure.

Action CDS

14.15 Fund Raising

BW suggested that where PE are asked to support open events it should ask permission to conduct fund raising activities such as raffles. The suggestion would be referred to the Events Group..

Action Events Group

14.16 Need for Showcase Events

BW thought that many of our international players lacked experience of competing in highly charged situations in front of

large crowds. He recommended that we should try and create a showcase atmosphere for the final stages of our own events.

Action
Events
Group

14.17 Umpiring

BW considered that umpires should deal more strictly with habitual offenders for foot faults etc and with those who deliberately distracted opponents at critical moments. GS explained that umpires had to abide by the official rules of pétanque. He considered that there were too few umpires at events such as the Inter Regionals. The Umpiring Commission was in the process of training about 10 umpiring recruits for qualification, but the programme had been suspended because of the lockdown. He thought that the standard of umpiring should be improved but this could lead to fewer umpires. MH reported that preliminary results from the survey indicated that most members would not be opposed to the payment of umpires. CB pointed out that the costs of umpiring were an expense of the competition it was not funded centrally. Competitions should be cost neutral to PE. CDS suggested that the Umpiring Commission should prepare and submit proposals for improving the umpiring function.

Action
Umpiring
Commission

14.18 Tiered Membership

R K-R explained that he and JM had some ideas on tiered membership which they intended to bring before the Board.

Action
R K-R

14.19 Membership Recruitment

BW suggested that there should be an incentive scheme for members to recruit others.

Action Sport
Development
Group

14.20 President's Email Address

CDS asked that all emails addressed to him should be sent to president@petanque-england.UK

Action
Board

14.21 Email Responses

CDS asked Board Members to give immediate acknowledgement of emails received.

Action
Board

14.22 Monthly Profit & Loss Accounts

CDS asked if monthly Profit & Loss Accounts could be prepared for the Board. CB indicated that they would not be reliable unless expenses are submitted promptly.

Action CB

15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place by way of video conference on Saturday 18th July 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

Action
Board