

# Pétanque England



## Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2021 by videoconference

### Present:

Clive De Silva (CDS), Ken Buchan (KB), Martin Hughes (MH), Alan Roden (AR), Cary Bush (CB), David Baxter (DB), Colin Roper (CR), Toni Gates (TG), Ray Keemer-Richards (RK-R); Ajay Keemer-Richards (AJK-R); Barry Wing (BW); Gareth Sullivan (GS); Jim Marstin.

### 1 Apologies for Absence

Christine Spray;

### 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The previously circulated minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020 were approved as a true and correct record.

### 3 Matters Arising

None

### 4 Financial Results, National Grants and Future Opportunities

CB explained that he was not expecting the Board to take decisions on restructuring but rather to look at the reality of where the business stands. As part of an exercise looking at multi-tiered membership, he had researched how other NGBs operate and had concluded that we had a lot to learn from these organisations. He went on to point out that since the members survey last July, we had not arrived at any solutions to address the need to grow the grass roots. He pointed out that one of the main objects as stated in our articles was to promote the sport of pétanque but our budget provided only £2,000 to be spent towards this object.

CB introduced a chart showing historical financial trends. This showed that we continued to rely on membership fees and have increased our investment in international squads. He suggested that members should be entitled to see the results of this investment in some form of Key Performance Indicators to measure our progress.

He then went on to display the financial results for the last 2 years, the agreed budget for 2021 and a forecast for 2021 based on the assumption that :-

- (a) international competitions are cancelled,
- (b) there are limited domestic competitions and

(c) that membership levels remain at about the current take up of 52%. On these assumptions he estimated that there would be a net surplus of about £7,335 for 2021. He pointed out that there were additional risks such as those illustrated in KB's observations on tiered membership (item 5) relating to the possibility of leagues such as the Kent League opening to non-members. CB went on to show that over a period of 8 years from 2011 to 2018, 5,685 individuals had been members of EPA and that the attrition of members of about 400 per year had just about been offset by new members. CB then went on to display a membership age and gender profile showing that 80% of our members are in the 51 to 80 age group and that the gender split is roughly 1/3 female and 2/3 male. In addition, CB displayed a regionally analysed market sizing chart showing that the market penetration of PE licence holders to the total playing population amounted to 23%. He suspected that the market would be much larger if casual players were included. A further chart of Regional Sizing showed that 5 regions made up around 65% of the membership. CB posed the questions what control has the Board over regions? and what tools are we providing to support regions and clubs to build their membership?

CBs conclusions were that; -

- As an organisation we are stagnating and are now showing signs of contraction
- We devote few funds from our income to invest in the organisation, promotion and development of the sport nationally
- Any investment (mainly in the squad system) has come from reserves
- The majority of the membership comes from only 5 regions.
- The demographic of the membership continues to age
- The organisation is inwardly focussed and needs to look outside our existing paradigm to arrest shrinking membership and grow the sport

CB felt that we need to talk to other NGBs to learn from those who have been successful. He mentioned squash which although highly popular in the 80s and 90s had by 2018 experienced a major deterioration in membership, however in 2019 they had been able to increase membership by 30% and we could learn from their experience.

CB had conducted a high-level review of 108 of the 130 NGBs identified by Sport England and had found that on average NGB membership fee income averages 17% of total income compared with PE's 66%. Sponsorship was minimal and confined to the high visibility sports. Grants from SE averaged £1.5 million. Reserves are around 11 months of operating expenses compared with PE's 3 months. CB had gone on to carry out a more detailed review of 10 NGBs that provide a better comparison for PE and their target market. Membership Fees varied between £2 to £45 with at least 7 having

multi-tiered membership. Membership fees varied between 1% of total revenue income to 50%. Many NGBs were supported by SE grants and had an average of 37 employees. 3 NGBs were highly dependent on SE grants and 4 had some form of sponsorship. The average Board size was 10 and all NGBs had detailed 4-year plans with KPIs to measure success against goals. CB had identified 48 of the 130 NGBs which had received funding from SE. On average NGBs received £1.5M p.a. Grants are awarded for periods of 4 years and the next funding cycle is due to start next year. CB had carried out a detailed examination of an NGB (Rounders) which was similar to PE. The last accounts showed that the total revenue for Rounders amounted to £77k of which £24k related to membership subscriptions. Since Rounders obtained NGB status in 1999 it had secured successive tranches of funding in the region of £500k p.a. The NGB had 7 directors and 12 employees. Rounders currently faces the challenge of having been removed from the school curriculum.

According to CB it was clear that those NGBs who had been able to obtain grants from SE operated with a board including 1 or 2 high profile non-executive directors meeting 4 to 6 times a year with a paid CEO who reports to the Board and leads an organisation which delivers the goals set in the strategic plan. CB also pointed out that in order to obtain significant long term funding from SE it would be necessary to integrate with SE Strategy and comply with their guidelines for sport governance. CB went on to display various quotes from NGB Annual Reports illustrating the importance of SE funding to their activities.

CB explained that Sport England had just issued their latest proposals for the next four years entitled Uniting the Movement. Any funded schemes would have to fall into one of the stated categories. The 5 categories are:-

- Recover and Reinvent from the Pandemic
- Connecting Communities
- Positive Experiences for Children and Young People
- Connecting with Health and Wellbeing
- Active Environments

CB felt that there we could all think of opportunities that would fit one or more of those categories and would help to grow our numbers. CB;s understanding was that in order to access SE funding we will need at a minimum

- A strategic plan that aligns with their values
- Sign up to the Sports Code of Governance.
- KPIs that measure the progress against the plan.
- Willingness to be subject to regular reviews of our practice.
- Appoint people to the Board who are outside the sport to provide expertise in governance.

CB outlined what he viewed to be the next steps:-

- Follow up /communicate with other NGBs to seek help and guidance on Board/Organisational structures & how to pursue funding requests
- Develop a Strategic Plan
- Regularise out Constitution and Charitable status
- Hire a consultant to help structure the Board and strengthen Governance
- Establish a relationship with Sport England.
- Set timelines for the above actions and identify persons responsible.

CBs overall conclusion was that as a NGB, PE had failed in its mission to grow the sport.

- It has been stagnating for several years and any investment has come from reserves.
- The organisation is no longer sustainable in its present form.
- Peppercorn funds are made available to promote the sport.

CB's view was that if we want to grow we have to change and the only option currently available is to embrace the Sport England philosophy and build a sustainable organisation with their help. He then outlined a number of possible initiatives under each of the headings of the SE 4-year plan which he and TG had put together. He hoped this would help to stimulate other ideas in the coming months.

RK-R understood CB's proposals to mean that we should not be spending time on penny pinching projects to put pétanque terrains into schools with voluntary help as it would be more effective if this was initiated with funded professional help.

CB pointed out that so much more could be achieved if we could employ dedicated staff. For example, there are opportunities to engage with disability groups to promote pétanque as a disabled sport, possibly becoming part of the Paralympic Games. Such efforts are however beyond our existing volunteer resources.

KB pointed out that we are in something of a catch 22 situation because we cannot get SE funding unless we are compliant with the SE code of Good Governance and we cannot become fully compliant without the benefit of professional assistance (for which we do not have the funds). He suggested that there were some obvious changes which could and probably should be made in the short term. These included separating out operational management from the strategic role of the Board; reducing the size of the Board to 12; having a chairman appointed by the Board, rather than the members; ensuring the Board had 30% women & 25% independent non-executive directors; appointing someone other than the chairman to be the chief executive.

CB sympathised with this view but pointed out that some NGBs had secured SE funding for consultants employed to advise on improving governance.

MH pointed out that Boccia is an Olympic Sport which can be played by even the most severely disabled players. Paraplegics can deliver the ball via a chute with the slightest of movement. Accordingly, it is ideally placed to attract funding. Petanque may have a message in disability sport but probably only for wheelchair users. MH also mentioned that from his experience as a director of a major charity he was aware that it was particularly challenging to ensure that the organisation was continually compliant with the funding bodies requirements. He asked if CB was aware of any NGB which had been able to grow its membership base without SE funding. CB thought that Bowling might be such a body, but he had not fully researched the topic. MH also queried whether we could get some steer from SE to indicate whether the likelihood of success would justify the effort of framing a bid. CB agreed that it would be important to contact SE but so far he had not had any meaningful contact. CDS was in touch with a helpful member of SE team and would provide CB with the contact.

CDS agreed to contact SE to suggest a Zoom meeting between SE and interested PE members. CB also agreed to continue with his efforts in contacting NGBs to obtain information and guidance.

CB queried why so few NGBs were charities. KB pointed out that the Advancement of Amateur Sport had been made a legal charitable purpose comparatively recently. Most existing Charitable NGBs had secured recognition under different charitable purposes such as supporting disabled people (Boccia).

MH queried whether the process of applying for registration as a charity would hinder any bid for SE funding. KB explained that our recognition by SE as the NGB was conditional upon us obtaining charitable status. It was therefore a prerequisite of any bidding process. He suggested that we should complete the necessary supporting documentation urgently. The 2020 Annual report was now due, and he asked heads of commissions and any other contributors to let him have their reports within the next 2 weeks. He would then draft the report and submit this to CDS for his presidential contribution. The whole process would be completed within 4 weeks. CB confirmed that the annual accounts would be available within this timescale although it would not be possible for them to be audited. MH agreed to submit a skeleton business plan to Board members so that they can complete their sectional contributions. It was envisaged that the whole process should be completed so that the Charity applications can be submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Action  
KB

Action  
MH

*Attachment: Powerpoint presentation - CB*

## **5. Tiered Membership**

RK-R urged the Board not to further delay the implementation of a tiered membership system. He had received considerable interest from unaffiliated leagues in the associate membership proposal but cannot pursue this further until specific amounts had been agreed. His impression was that not many existing recreational members are likely to want to down grade to associate membership even if they had that option.

TG suggested deferring consideration of tiered membership until after her paper on structures had been looked at.

DB did not believe that we were able to make a recommendation to the Board. A new proposal was now being considered whereby players would become associate members by virtue of a club/league affiliation fee. This might have virtue over a scheme relating simply to creating individual associate members but had not been fully discussed.

GS asked whether the group looking at tiered membership had considered creating a higher tier of membership for national/international members.

DB considered that there were tricky implications arising from an increased fee for “elite” players because they might want to have more say in how that increased fee would be spent and to have more say generally in how the sport was organised at the highest level. CDS mentioned that the entry fee to national events had been increased to £15 per player meaning that if they entered all the ranking events, they will each be contributing an additional £40. MH pointed out that the entrance fees to ranking competitions was in any event hypothecated towards the support of international events. TG suggested that the Tiered Membership Group should speak to David Plumhoff about his proposals. MH did not think that there were more than 80 players in the “elite” playing group and the maximum revenue from this source would be unlikely to exceed £8,000.

BW was anxious that the Board should not keep running over the same ground without arriving at a decision. MH pointed out that a decision about tiered membership could have financial consequences. We would have to be prepared to see the 40% of our members who regard themselves as social members downgraded to associate membership. He would not therefore vote in favour of such a proposal. TG pointed out that this is why we can no longer rely on membership fees as our sole source of income.

RKR believed that we are likely to lose members regardless of whether we introduce associate membership. It is possible that 1 or more affiliated leagues will open their membership to non-PE

members, and it would be in our interests for them to downgrade to Associate membership rather than lose them altogether.

TG pointed out that we do not have a structure that interests players sufficiently for them to want to stay in the sport.

CB suggested that the issue of Tiered membership should be parked and dealt with once the tiered membership group had absorbed the various proposals being put forward including the David Plumhoff proposals. He agreed to continue as the Group's convenor and to report back with proposals as soon as they had been agreed. It was suggested that David Plumhoff be invited to join that group.

Action  
CB

#### *Attachments*

*Tiered Membership Briefing Paper & Club Survey Analysis – KB*  
*Tiered Licensing Proposal – David Plumhoff*

## **6 Future of the Sport**

BW considered that our main effort should be to get the sport on TV. He would like to employ a production company to achieve that. Currently we were reliant on MH and Chris Kitson to live stream our events and while that was of a good standard it was not high enough to get the sport on TV. He did not want to discuss the project aimlessly and would like the Board to take a vote on his proposal that PE should employ a production company to get the sport on Television. CDS asked where the funding would come from and BW suggested that PE should cancel participation in all international events and instead concentrate on the TV project as our main goal. The relative merits of TV coverage and streaming on outlets such as You-Tube were discussed. MH pointed out that even in France TV coverage of major events such as the world championships would only be shown on specialist sports channels and not the mainstream TV. Board members were reluctant to sanction crowdfunding or to allocate resources to a project without more detailed costings. BW was reluctant to devote time and energy on a feasibility study without assurance that the Board would support the project. CB pointed out that many of the proposals and ideas contained on BW's document ought to be included in a strategic plan where the benefits and costs would be set out. Any research carried out now would not therefore be wasted. MH suggested that as an interim measure much could be done to improve our existing streaming activity with additional facilities such as multiple cameras, slow motion replay function, pop up scoreboards etc. Extra people would be required to operate the additional equipment, and these would probably need to be paid.

It was agreed that BW work on his TV/Streaming ideas and put together a costed proposal.

Action  
BW

*Attachment: Emerging from Covid – Opportunities for Petanque (BW)*

## 7 PE Restructure

TG presented a discussion document on the need to restructure the organisation identifying what she saw as drawbacks and how these could be overcome. She regarded the priority as being the need to define the vision and mission of the organisation. DB pointed out that our objectives were set out in the company's articles but TG felt that we needed to be more reflective of the priorities being set by Sport England. KB agreed that formulating the vision and mission should be our priority but felt also that it was important to ensure that the Board concentrated on matters of policy and strategy and delegated operational matters to the management structure. He was uneasy at TG's portrayal of the Board as the link between all the operational structures. He felt that in practice the operational groups should be functioning in a joined-up way. CB agreed that there should be a structure which sits beneath the Board. MH also felt that that sub-groups should be inter connected in order to avoid a silo mentality. BW thought that it might be necessary to discuss operational issues at Board level. TG would like Board Procedures to be clarified.

It was agreed that CDS & KB would get together to formulate Board operating procedures. It was also agreed that CDS would contact all the contributors to the structural debate to prepare a single structural document.

Action  
KB/CDS

Action  
CDS

*Attachment: - PE Structures Document - TG*

## 6 Appointment / Re-Appointment of Directors

CDS reported that the Umpiring Commission proposed that Gareth Sullivan (GS) be appointed to be the chair of the Umpiring Commission in place of Bob Parker who had retired. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

KB explained that the three year terms of office of the 5 directors who were appointed by the Board on 24 February 2018 expire on 23 February 2021. It was customary to appoint the chairs of Commissions to be directors and he proposed that GS should be appointed a director in place of BP. He also proposed that the remaining appointed directors be re-appointed for a further term of 3 years. The elected directors who are due to retire by rotation at the AGM are those who have been in office the longest since they were last appointed. These were KB, RK-R and JM. KB and RK-R were not eligible to stand for re-election because they had served two consecutive terms of office. DB indicated that he no longer wished to remain on the Board. He had been on the governing committee since the BPA days and felt that the time had come for him to stand down. JM indicated that he did not want to stand for re-election.



The following proposals put forward by CDS were approved without dissent:-

Gareth Sullivan be appointed a director from 24 February 2021 for a period of 3 years.

Martin Hughes, Cary Bush, and Colin Roper be re-appointed as directors from 24 February 2021 for a further term of 3 years

Ken Buchan and Ray Keemer-Richards appointed directors from the conclusion of the next AGM for periods of 1 year and 3 years, respectively.

## 7. AGM 2021

KB indicated that this was still scheduled to take place on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June as a physical meeting although this may need to be reviewed following the PMs announcements on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. If restrictions still apply, we may need to revert to a “Zoom” type of meeting. If we can go ahead with a physical meeting, he suggested using the Holiday Inn at Reading which was reasonably priced and has been successfully used in the past.

Action  
KNB

## 8. Any Other Business

### 8.1 Strategic Plans

CB had a various strategic plans, mission statements etc from other NGBs and will circulate a selection of these for the information of the Board.

Action  
CB

### 8.2 Rule Books

DB asked that as the FIPJP have updated the rules should we now reprint these for issue to members. The cost of printing 10,000 books would be £1,200 with a further £300 in postage. Some members suggested that 10,000 copies might be excessive. DB confirmed that the budget for the costs of membership was sufficient to cover the quoted printing and distribution costs. DB would liaise with the umpiring commission regarding textual content/ acknowledgements logo etc.

Action  
DB

### 8.3 Photography at PE Events

MH had encountered a situation where Chris Kitson had asked for payment to supply photos taken at Petanque events. He suggested that it should be made clear to anyone taking photographs at PE events free of charge that they should be expected to supply copies of photos free of charge. BW agreed to include this stipulation in the standard agreement for taking photographs at events.

Action  
BW

### 8.4 Disability Officer

Various names of people who may be interested in taking up this role were mentioned. CDS agreed to follow these up.

Action  
CDS

### **8.5 Inter Regionals**

CDS had circulated the draft agreement for the use of Pontins which had been drawn up by the reconstituted IOW tours. He invited Board members to let him know of any concerns or queries that he should be raising with IOW tours. The date of any final decision about whether to go ahead with the Inter Regionals would be fixed along the lines of the NPP risk assessment for International Events

Action  
Board

### **8.7 CEP Juniors & Espoirs Championships.**

The CEP had been announced that these events were being re-arranged for a date to be arranged later in the year.

### **8.8 Home Nations**

The presidents of the Home Nation Federations have all agreed that this year's home nations be postponed until next year. CDS will be issuing an announcement after the meeting.

## **9 Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed to hold the next two meetings by way of video conference on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April and Saturday 10 May 2021 both at 10.00 a.m.

Action  
Board