

Minutes of SWF Committee meeting held Monday 17th March 2025 at 7.00pm by Zoom

Previously submitted reports may be found at the end of the minutes

1. Present

- a. Paul Francis, Peter Kirby, Linda Shaw, Mike Rice, Chris Ham, Andru Blewett, Tony Mayer, Gill Wheeler, Brian Wilson

2. Apologies

- a. Stephen Custance-Baker

3. Minutes of last meeting

- a. Separately circulated and agreed as correct

4. Matters arising

- a. These are covered in the agenda

5. Treasurer Report

- a. Advert to raise funds to augment the prize fund for the GC Championship to be held at Budleigh was discussed
 - i. Agreed the usual advertising rate would be charged **Action: Linda**
 - ii. Noted SCB objection **Action: Linda will contact him**
- b. Financial report – separately circulated and accepted – available on request
 - i. Noted PK comments re possible Corporation Tax liabilities
- c. Corporation Tax report – separately circulated – was discussed at length and the following points noted
 - i. The difficulty of finding informed, reliable and clear advice e.g. how income should be recorded – what is mutual, what is not?
 - ii. That in the longer term our liability is likely to be small but we are running the risk of penalty charges for failing to file returns so far
 - iii. That a very clear brief/terms of reference would need to be written if we were to seek paid, specialist advice
 1. We do have funds to cover the likely cost of this
 - iv. The difficulties inherent in finding relevant information on HMRC website
 - v. The extent to which CqE (or other similar body) might be able to give clear guidance – not advice!
 - vi. That we cannot be in a unique position and that many unincorporated clubs (croquet and elsewhere) may be unaware of their potential liabilities

d. Actions agreed:

- i. Member clubs to be informed of the situation at year-end **Financial report AGM**
 - ii. CqE to be approached officially, setting out our position/concerns, seeking 'advice'/guidance, asking for briefing sheet for member clubs **Peter/Linda**
 - iii. Clubs / Federations to be asked for suggestions re Treasurer, expertise on CT for sports organisations, specialist tax consultants **Linda/Peter**
 - iv. To make contact with HMRC so we are on the system **To be agreed**
- e. PK's notice of his intention to resign as Treasurer was noted and his offer to remain til a successor is appointed was gratefully accepted
 - i. This would need to be someone comfortable with managing the CT aspects of this

6. Leagues Report

- a. Separately circulated and noted
- b. There have been some delays due to teams withdrawing, some conflicting bookings etc but information re dates and Team Captains has been circulated to Match Secretaries and the final information will be circulated by the end of the week
Action: Gill
- c. Not everyone can access the documents in the format presented, GW is managing this
- d. Some clubs are struggling to raise teams and a solution could be to allow joint teams to take part in leagues in such circumstances. It was agreed to propose that the rules be amended to allow for this
 - i. **Action: Gill/Stephen** to draft wording to bring to next committee meeting

7. AGC Working Group update

- a. Mission accomplished!
- b. So far attempts to get all the info into one document for the website have been unsuccessful
 - i. **Action: Linda** to send these to Andru who will attempt this – fall-back position is they go on individually
- c. Noted that this debate might shape up into potentially 2 motions to the 2025 AGM
 - i. That all GC handicap leagues be played level and appropriate bands be worked out
 - 1. If successful that means we can ignore all the AGC / ES debate
 - 2. But if it fails we will have further debate about AGC - and I think that a proposal about this will need to be made by someone anyway, on the understanding that if level play is agreed, the AGC/ES proposal will not be discussed

8. SC Tournaments

- a. Noted that the SC tournaments are SWF events
- b. The Rules that were to have been presented to 2024 AGM for ratification should now go on to 2025 AGM

9. Development Report

- a. Separately circulated and noted
- b. **Action: Linda** to circulate clubs' contact details to Dev Team
- c. Winter Zooms will be on Wed evenings from the autumn
 - i. **Action: All** Ideas for topics to Paul please

10. Coaching Report

- a. Separately circulated and noted
- b. Noted the low attendance at the Refs' Refresher day despite its importance and usefulness
 - i. **Agreed: Paul** explore with Laws Committee making regular refresher sessions a requirement in order to retain Referee status

11. Handicapping report

- a. Separately circulated and noted
- b. Noted the achievement in getting two recommendations from SWF adopted by Handicapping Committee
- c. Discussed planned meeting between Federations' Forum and Handicapping Committee which Mike will be attending

- d. Noted SCB's previously presented analysis of Home Advantage / Win bias 2021 – 2014
 - i. **Action: Mike** will follow up to discuss possible reasons for this and offering support

12. Welfare Report

- a. Discussed the issues one club is facing which Chris is supporting and will seek support from Andru / Paul if required
- b. Noted it is not easy to identify club welfare officers
 - i. **Action: Chris** to discuss with Ron Carter
 - ii. **Action: Linda** to remind clubs to keep CqE Directory up to date via Cygnet
- c. **Action: Chris** will undertake on-line training now he has the link

13. Constitution, policies and related

- a. Report noted
- b. Volunteers from outside the committee will be sought to support this **Action: Linda**

14. Feds Forum update

- a. Report previously circulated and noted

15. Rep to CE report

- a. Brian reported
 - i. No one has expressed an interest in the position of CEO so job-share options are being considered
 - ii. Information re forthcoming Trustee elections will be issued in March
 - iii. The proposed establishment of Constituency areas will not affect Federations' geographical areas

16. AOB

- a. None

17. Schedule of meetings

- a. May 8th
- b. July 17
- c. Sept 18th – apols Brian
- d. Oct 16th - must be between 14th and 24th – AGM preparation
- e. AGM 23rd November
- f. December 11th – after deadline for league entries

League Secretary Report

League Summary

- In January, Exeter withdrew from AC Advanced 3, Short croquet and Golf croquet level play.
- East Dorset B has been added to the AC Advanced 3 division.
- Taunton Deane has moved from AC Federation Central to South to balance the blocks.
- In February, Bradford on Avon entered a second Short Croquet team in the North block.
- In March, Bath withdrew from the Short Croquet North block
- All the fixtures are in place, except for the Short Croquet North fixtures from Bradford on Avon.
- Link to SWF Fixtures 2025_Summary file

Individual e-mails to Match secretaries confirming the fixtures and Captains' contact details will be sent when all the dates are confirmed

Development Report

SWF DO team

- Has been announced to clubs. DOs to contact their clubs in next few weeks by email/phone to club secretaries (**can we have a full list please**).

New club in Stroud

- There has been a positive initial meeting with Stroud Town Council, more information to follow.

U18 project

- Several SWF clubs attended recent training day in Woking.
- To date, the clubs involved are: Bath, Cornwall and Swanage.
- Further training days are in the planning stage with one likely to be held in the SWF area.

Zooms

- By the time of the meeting, the last of the 24/25 series would have been completed.
- In October, I would like to change the day from Tuesday to Wednesday. Topics to be discussed at next SWF Committee meeting?

Coaching Report

Coaching course 2025

Course is underway with 10 participants, two Zoom sessions completed and three to complete before practical day at BOA on Wednesday April 30th. To date, very positive about the participants. Clubs involved are: Bath, Bradford on Avon, Bristol, Budleigh, Nailsea, Taunton Deane and Winterborne Valley.

Course should be cost neutral once Croquet England subsidy is claimed.

GC Referees

Refresher and courses completed. Five of the eight passed the exam and practical and so qualified. Three failed one of the two elements and plan to re-sit in the late summer.

Need to finalise the final costs but it would appear very few claimed travel expenses. I also need to submit subsidy claim to Croquet England (£200).

SWF subsidy between £400 and £500.

2026 Plans

Propose we just run a one day GC Referee Qualification course in 2026. No refresher.

This means we can cut accommodation costs and reduce the SWF subsidy.

Handicapping Report

I have now sent 3 emails to Chris Roberts without any reply or acknowledgement. I've learnt that if you copy Chris Williams he will help on certain topics but some queries go unanswered.

I hosted the zoom meeting last week on Handicapping.

GC-AC conversion. This now appears on CqE website and was a full page article in the latest Croquet Gazette. I've had more positive comments than I expected, obviously others saw it as an issue. The current conversion table doesn't go as far as our proposal but it's a start. I can still see examples where AC handicap is too high.

How to complete your handicap card Our GC example is now on CqE website thanks to CW. I need to ask him to put AC on as well. I have re-written the narrative at request of CW but that is yet to change.

One-Ball I've asked Handicapping committee to review rules. We try to encourage GC players to play but then if their handicap is above 8 they get penalised. Same applies for AC players above 20. Reading their minutes they do cover One-Ball.

Constitution, policies etc

Quite a bit going on here. As presented at our last meeting, I'd like us to have a clearer set of policies / guidelines etc on matters not related to League Rules – tho' there may be some overlap. I know this is a complete turn-off for some but please bear with me.

Eventually we need to think about pulling all this together in an easily understandable way for our members with easy access on our website. A prelude to this might well be a 'communications' survey to try to find out who uses what we currently present, how useful they find it, what else would they like to know and how would they want to have this presented.

I'd also like us to consider establishing a simple members' agreement so that my joining SWF, clubs undertake to behave in line with these- and to communicate appropriately with their members about SWF events etc. Initial thoughts welcome.

- AGM 2024 Proposal 8 – to realign League Rules with Tournament Regs
 - Our response has been sent to Bristol CC and will be included in report to AGM 2025 – no further correspondence from Bristol CC

- Complaints
 - Updated policy attached – much simpler and great feedback from CqE Complaints Administrator, Michael Blair
 - Need particularly to agree on appointing Complaints Mediators – I got the impression there is a level of willingness to help with this from other Feds
- Catering League finals – Bristol CC have asked me to raise this: Does the Committee want to make a response at this stage?

At the next AGM Bristol CC is considering proposing that SWF payments to host clubs of semis and finals matches include a payment for refreshments (tea, coffee & biscuits) rather than leave it to the finalists and host club to agree as is the situation now. They might suggest the designated home club provide cakes.

This is as a result of a bad experience at a 2023 final. The SWF committee addressed that at the time through an article in Cygnet Sept 2024:

**** Catering arrangements*

These are not covered by SWF League Rules but the current trend is definitely for visitors to bring their own lunches but for the host club to offer tea/coffee/biscuits/cake – for which they may charge.

The fee from the SWF is to cover lawns and equipment.

In the League Rules, Appendix 4.5 states that the 'Home team' remain responsible for tea/coffee/cake etc for both teams

"The 'Home' team shall remain responsible for the provision of simple refreshments (hot and cold drinks, biscuits and/or cake, but not lunches) for both teams."

Constitution

We received three comments/queries relating to the constitution pertaining to how proposals to AGMs are managed.

I've sent holding replies to the people concerned (all individuals rather than representing their club as far as I'm aware) but I think we need to send them a fuller reply after having considered the issues they raise.

One option might be to invite a few people to be part of a fixed-term working group to try to resolve these?

The first arose out of the subsequently-withdrawn Proposal 7 re Short Croquet Tournaments.

It was clear from email exchanges that several people were really upset it had even been suggested - I think this is not a valid objection – we should be encouraging questioning about the best way of managing events but it was seen as a personal attack on John Grimshaw – though not by him as far as I'm aware

This is the core of what was written (*with my comments in italics*):

"When a talented individual is doing a good job, his/her authority should be respected. ... If people are to enjoy their jobs and to continue to do them, they need some freedom to make decisions – ie "manage".

I am not saying that suggestions should never be made but they should be made directly and discussed with a much smaller group than an SWF AGM.... *(this was a proposal, not a suggestion – I was remiss in not sharing it with John and Chris before it was circulated and apologised to them both at the time)*

So, should proposals be considered at an AGM if they substantially change an area that someone has been managing with huge success? *(I don't see why not in principle but it does raise sensitive issues)*

I looked at the SWF Constitution and I don't think it covers the scope of "proposals". *(That is true, but do we need to do anything about it?)*

The second:

"It may be a pedantic point but an amendment is a proposal.

I am a delegate, mandated to vote in a particular way by my club, usually through the club committee. Club members need advance notice of anything to be discussed and voted on at the AGM to guide how they want the delegates to vote. This is particularly relevant with delegates at the SWF AGM discussing fundamental rule changes.

At xxx we had a good deal of discussion across the club about the GC advantage motion. Our GC players were strongly against the motion and that was how I voted although I personally was in favour. I hardly ever play GC and so was not in a position to reconsider that vote if an amendment was proposed and accepted for discussion at the meeting.

The strict application of the SWF constitution actually makes it difficult for clubs to offer amendments and needs a mechanism to ease that situation. The committee might consider an amendment (it sounds like I am going in circles) next year that proposals must be with the Secretary by the end of September but clubs and the SWF Committee may submit amendments to that proposal up to 21 (or some other number) days prior to the meeting.

What do we think?

The third

One thing I noticed when reading the [SWF Constitution](#) prior to the AGM was the wording in 7.7 (my use of bold): "A Proposal to a General Meeting may be passed **by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote.**"

A couple of comments/questions:

- Rather than "of those present" (which doesn't take account of the vote distribution), should it be "of the votes cast" or perhaps "of the votes available" (see below) or similar?
- And does "simple majority" mean a majority of the votes cast (ignoring abstentions/failure to vote) rather than a majority of the votes **available**, which is more in line with the current wording "of those present"? For instance, would a motion pass if 25 votes were available but (to take an extreme example) the yes/no count was 3/2 (which assumes 20 abstentions)? At the AGM on Sunday, it was clearly a majority of the votes cast, despite the wording in the Constitution. Either way, it may be helpful to clarify it in the Constitution.