

SUFFOLK COASTAL REGION

INAUGURAL MEETING – SUNDAY 15th OCTOBER 2023,

THE RIVERSIDE CENTRE, STRATFORD ST ANDREW, IP17 1LL

MEETING MINUTES

Those Present:

Simon Fletcher	Janet Strutt	Paul Fletcher
Martin Inglis	Chris Johnson	Pat Clarke
Richard Baker	Jackie Johnson	Caroline Gunn
Kevin Cumming	Deborah Bell	Adrian Crowe
Rachel Bergstrom	Martha Rios-Hall	Wendy Cooper
Sian Hart	Carole Harding	John Willis
Jan Lovell	Karl Scott	Pat Willis
Niki Acott	Geoff Bell	Richard Blezard
Peter Etheridge	Paul Shaw	
Phil Richardson	Hilary Ward	

(For the purposes of these minutes, each person will be referred to by their initials).

Meeting Commenced approximately 4.00pm

GENERAL OVER-VIEW

SF opened the meeting with giving everyone an over-view of what obtaining Regional status involves and what documents we need to present to Petanque England, for them to verify and ratify, before granting Regional status. SF also covered some of the timeline of what has already been put into place and the reasons why some of the process has taken longer than first expected.

The over-view also covered what holding a Petanque England licence provided to an individual in terms of increased playing opportunities, both on a Regional footing, but also nationally and ultimately internationally if someone was to progress along that path.

SF set out what tournaments we would be expected to hold as a new Region, which include a Regional Triples, Regional Doubles, Regional Singles, International Womens Day Doubles, Regional Over 50's and/or Regional Veterans (this being Over 55's, to match with the CEP Standard, the European Petanque Confederation).

Winners of these events, along with the runners-up, would be invited by Petanque England to then take part in the Champion of Champions event, whereby each of the other English regions send their respective winners and runners-up to each year.

It was also outlined that a significant part of being a Region, is that we get the opportunity to take part in the annual Inter-Regional Championships, these currently contracted as being played at Pakefield, Lowestoft for the next 3 years we believe. This consists of a Championship event, whereby we can send 8 triples, a Challenge event whereby we can send an additional 4 triples and then the Junior event, where a junior triple can also be entered.

To get a squad for the Inter-Regionals, we would need to hold 2-3 qualifying rounds, to determine our best 8 to 12 teams, to go forward and represent us at the IR's.

SF spoke about the requirement of Petanque England to have the following documents submitted to them by the first week of November 2023, to give them time to review and come back with feedback, comments etc, in sufficient time for the Licence Renewal Website to be prepared in time for membership renewals from 1st January 2024, although current licences expire on 31st March 2024.

Documents Required:

- Proposed Regional Boundaries
- Proposed Regional Management Structure (Mandatory & Optional Officers)
- Proposed Precept Level
- Proposed Projected Membership Numbers, both individuals & clubs
- Confirmation that a distinct separate Bank Account has been set up

During the over-view SH spoke that taking out a Petanque Licence is a commitment and that she had covered around 3,000 miles this season playing in various events, some of which are compulsory if you decide to attempt to qualify for the Regional Team and then subsequently do, but also the other Regional events such as Triples, Doubles, Singles, IWD Doubles & subsequent qualification to the National Finals, but others commented that some of those tournaments are optional and are personal choice as to whether you enter.

Either way, SH is to be commended greatly on the events she has competed in and the mileage that she travelled this season, similar to what some of the rest of us have also covered this season.

DISPELLING CONCERNS

Following the setting-out of what being a Region entails, MI, SF, RB, all clarified that everything we are looking to do Region wise will not impact on how the Suffolk Coastal Petanque Alliance is currently run, as the two will be separate entities, and the Region will have to work around current and future League obligations.

AC and several other attendees were concerned that with the calendar having to accommodate more events, that fulfilling League fixtures would become even more difficult.

MI stated that it would be sensible to host Regional events on Saturdays or even some Bank Holiday Mondays so that it doesn't affect player numbers on a Sunday.

JL raised a point later in the proceedings, but it makes more sense to place the comments in this section, that was the Coastal League a Sunday League? This question has often been raised and was answered again that yes, it is a Sunday League but if your opponents agree to play on a different day, then that's an agreement between the two teams. We apologise to JL for over-looking her question at the time but eventually came back round to getting it answered.

Many within the league believed we were attempting to get everyone licenced and all teams licenced, but this is not the case. The entire concept around getting Regional status is that this gives those that want to play at higher levels and advance their own game play, we are providing them with that platform to play on, within the confines of their own home area, rather than having to travel further afield, as currently happens.

NOMINATIONS OF OFFICERS

It was outlined that there are 4 Mandatory positions a Regional Committee must have, these being President/Chairperson, Vice-President/Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Beyond that, there are a whole range of other "Optional Positions" that can be filled such as Safeguarding Officer, Regional Umpire, Regional Coach, Website/Communications Officer, Youth Development Officer, Membership Secretary, Competitions Secretary etc.

RB stated that we are willing to accept Nominations for people to become part of the Regions Committee Structure and whilst not filling a specific role at the moment, we can review and decide the best fit for each nomination to satisfy the criteria that Petanque England want us to provide.

CG asked if people can self-nominate, to which the answer was yes.

During the discussion of officers, MRH asked that the Regional Committee be much more rigid and firm on who does what and how matters get decided and the formal process in which decisions and information are passed on to the members.

It is imperative that the Regional Committee is a straight-thinking, focussed group of individuals.

It also needs to be recorded here that to be a serving Officer on the Regional Committee, you MUST have a Petanque England Licence. Obviously this is a bit difficult at the moment, as we haven't got the Coastal option to take out a licence at the moment, and if you did take out one now, it would expire until March 2025 as an Anglia Licence, so you would have to pay a £10 "Transfer Fee" to get your licence altered.

REGIONAL FINANCES

Firstly the Precept Level was discussed, in that every single Region can determine their own Precepts. This is an additional fee that is added to the core £25 Petanque England Licence Fee. Currently other regions Precepts vary from £0 to £10, with SF running through all the Precept Levels in all the other regions. Anglia and Eastern, our two neighbouring regions, both currently have £5 as their Precepts.

As we would be a new Region and sending a squad to the Inter-Regionals, MI said there would be an element of kit needing to be purchased to kit out our teams.

SF replied that it would make good sense to use the new Coastal shirts we had for Belgium 2023, as a lot of those that would hope to qualify for the Regional Team, already have these shirts, due to their participation in matches in Belgium and Wales during this year.

SH raised a good point, that she believes that the IR rules were that no shirt sponsorship can be on Regional kit, SF to check this out.

NA raised the point of where finances would come in from, for the Regional Funds. SF explained that the Precept money is paid to the Region based upon how many Licence Holders take out a Coastal Licence. Added to that, all the Regional Tournaments and Qualifiers that would need to be held would generate income from their respective entry fees, at say £5 per person per tournament.

So assume we have 30 Licence Holders in "Year One"

$30nr \times £10 \text{ Precept} = £300$

10 teams of Triples attempting to qualify for Region, playing in 2 Qualifiers

$3 \text{ players} \times £5 \text{ each} \times 2 \text{ qualifiers} = £30 \times 10 \text{ teams} = £300$

Regional Triples say 8 teams $\times £15/\text{team} = £120$

Regional Doubles say 12 teams $\times £10/\text{team} = £120$

Regional Singles say 20 players $\times £5 \text{ each} = £100$

International Womans Day Doubles 12 ladies $\times £5 \text{ each} = £60$

Regional Veterans Doubles? Say 8 teams $\times £10/\text{team} = £80$

That's approximately just under £1,100 and whilst there would be some element of trophies and medals to present for each of the events, its still a considerable income based on a sensible level of entry, better number of entries would generate more income.

NA also commented whether there would be a separate Bank Account for the Region with audited accounts and how much of the League money would transfer over.

SF stated that there would be a clearly distinctly separate Bank Account for the Region and that NO monies would be transferred across from the League. As stated earlier the League

is completely divorced from this Regional aspect and the Leagues money stays with the League.

With regards to audited accounts, yes we would have to have the yearly accounts audited for governance purposes because as a Region, if ever we were to disband, dissolve etc, then there is the legal obligation that any remaining positive bank balances can be claimed by Petanque England.

NA at this point, also raised the question of how much was currently in the Leagues accounts as there are currently no Annual Report on these. SF and MI stated that we had just paid out circa £500 for the League trophies (both Summer & Winter) that had been handed out prior to the meeting, approximately £146 for the Ladies League and £138 for the websites annual fees. Added to this is the £80 for the hire of the Hall for the League Presentations plus this meeting, so in the last few weeks over £860 had been paid out, leaving the League account at around £100, which basically was the £5 per person for playing in the day before's match versus Norfolk. However, the Winter League Fees are now starting to coming through, so we should end the year on around £300'ish. (*This is much more a League matter, but as NA raised the point, its worth recording the answer here).

PEOPLE OBTAINING LICENCES

Some people didn't know that Licences are obtained via Petanque Englands Membership Platform, Sport:80.

SF explained the process that Petanque England need to have Regional Status granted by 31st December, so that Sport:80 can have Suffolk Coastal as a Regional option, once everyone starts their membership renewals in April 2024.

He went on to say that the only thing we CANNOT influence is people at the other end of the country deciding to take out a Suffolk Coastal licence, as happens with other regions, who have had recruitment "policies" that see them have Regional members way outside their boundaries. This is possible for anyone to do, as its all personal choice at the end of the day but we wouldn't know if someone chooses to do this until we receive a notification from Petanque England that we have a new licence member in "x" part of the country.

AC then questioned whether we would be "parachuting" in better players from further afield to replace our own players by somehow determining that they "werent good enough". JW and PF countered this by stating that even if an "outsider" joined our Region, they would be entitled to be invited to our Regional Qualifiers and would still have to qualify for the team, rather than just placed straight into the Regional Team.

ARE WE GOOD ENOUGH? IS THERE THE APPETITIE?

DB started off the conversation that often Coastal players are reluctant to play “outside of their bubble”, because they feel they aren’t good enough to compete at a higher level, but she strongly felt that a lot of Coastal players under-estimate themselves and if only they took the next step, they would see how much on an even keel with a lot of other players further afield they actually are.

To prove this point, SF then read out Coastal matches on their travels this season as follows:

BELGIUM TOUR

V PC Denakker 11-11 Draw

V PC Koksijde 58-41 Win

V PC De Vuurtoren 15-17 Loss (Narrow)

WALES TOUR

V City of Llandaff PC 11.5 – 9.5 Win (with one drawn game)

V Greenlawn Boules Club 11-13 Loss (Narrow)

ENGLAND

V Norfolk 39 – 25 Win

So overall across those 6 matches, we had 3 wins, 1 draw and 2 narrow losses amounting to 145.5 wins against 115.5 (representing a near 56% win ratio)

(POST NOTE – If you win 56% at Inter Regional level, you will come around just above mid-table, so it’s completely doable).

DB stated that she loved being part of Suffolk Coastal, and loves playing in these matches as part of a Coastal team, as she feels comfortable with her team-mates around her and those in the team.

(POST NOTE 2 – Special mention to CH and KS who made their Suffolk Coastal debuts the day before at Norfolk and both were unbeaten with 5 wins from 5 games each, making them the 3rd and 4th best players on the day, out of 48 players overall).

MI called for a show of hands as to actually who held a current Licence and out of the 28 attendees, 18 raised their hands.

SH asked what the minimum number of members were required to become a region and MI stated it was 12, as Wales only enter a team at the IR's in the Challenge. The question of what was our target number of members (sorry didn't note who asked that question). MI/SF stated that we are looking for 30 in Year One of Regional status, taking into account that there were at least 12-16 others not available for the meeting due to holidays, other matters etc, that would also be in favour of achieving Regional status.

REGISTERED CLUBS

PS raised the point about clubs being registered and where Meadlands Stowmarket stood within that question. SF answered that our Regional boundary was being set to potentially include Meadlands as a Coastal venue. PS stated that Meadlands was the only location in the Coastal that was big enough to host Regional competitions.

However MI and SF mentioned that there were two other venues that we had in mind for hosting such events.

NA asked if these venues were "secret" or could all know them, so she was advised that we had considered Eye as one venue, subject to there being sufficient space, as conflicting reports have been received on how big it actually is. Also MI and KC are aware of a venue over at Clopton (near Grundisburgh) with a cafe and toilet facilities but no further discussion has taken place at this stage.

JW also commented that the Eels Foot have been given permission to expand by up to 4 more pistes, making 10 in total but is subject to manpower and funding, but grant funding is being looked into.

Coming back to Meadlands, PS wanted some reassurance that if Meadlands was to be used by Suffolk Coastal Region, that they would get a guaranteed number of events held there per year. As we have around 8 to 10 extra events to host in total, it was agreed that the Region could guarantee Meadlands 4 events per season, not always the same events each year, but a commitment to 4 significant events per calendar year.

COACHING

Both KC and SH raised the issue of receiving some coaching from a qualified person in the near future, and as a Region we should then be able to have some sort of formal coaching day.

DB replied that we previously had Mark Bell down from Norfolk to conduct a coaching day with the Ladies League and it would be something we could look at again, just noting that there would be an element of cost as you have to reimburse the coach for travelling expenses.

AGENDA

At around 50 minutes into the proceedings, CJ stated that 50 minutes had passed and yet we hadn't cleared Item 1 of the Agenda.

It was explained to him that the meeting had become much more a Q&A Session, with as many questions from the floor being answered as possible.

CONSTITUTION

A main part of our submission to Petanque England is a formal Constitution and SF mentioned that we were using Mercia Regions Constitution as a template for ours, as it was easily accessible via the internet and it's a constitution that has already been accepted by Petanque England.

Paul Lee (not in attendance) has been studiously working on this document and the assembled asked that they get to see a Draft of this Constitution. Both RB & SF committed to having that document, alongside others, placed onto the Website by Tuesday/Wednesday this week (17th/18th October).

At this stage MI asked who would be in favour of the formation of a Region, with only around 50% raising their hand. The others, quite rightly, stated that they couldn't decide until they had seen the content of the constitution document. Hence the imperative nature to get it up onto the website asap.

As we are attempting to keep everything to one side of the Coastal Alliance, we are proposing just "Suffolk Coastal Region" as the Regional name.

FINISH OF MEETING

As the meeting was then reaching around an hour in length, AC stated that probably not much more could be achieved beyond that time and with the Riverside staff cleaning up around us, it was decided that the meeting needed to be completed by 5pm.

FORWARD TIMESCALES

17th/18th October – Constitution & Other Draft Documents onto Website (RB/SF/Paul Lee)

By 22nd October – Setting up of Regional Bank Account (MI – work commitments allowing)

27nd October – Latest Date for Self Nominations (Via the form on the SCPA website)

By 5th November – Initial Submission Documents to Petanque England (SF)