

Minutes of committee meeting of Somerset Contract Bridge Association

on 15th July 2024

via Zoom

In attendance:

Alan Evans

Richard Feetenby

Colin Simcox

John Cockram

Michael Wigmore

Sheree Pavey

Andrew Ridgers

Annie Holder

Simon Brooke

Frank Coltman

The meeting was called to discuss the current and future situation of the West of England Congress set for the 11th to 13 October at the Winter Gardens in Weston Super Mare.

Frank C had called the committee to discuss concerns. The weekend that the congress was due to be held clashed with another major event at Weston being the Beach Race. This presented a serious problem as virtually all the accommodation had been booked for attendees to that event.

Frank C had booked the Winter Gardens for 2024 and 2025. A contract for the bookings had yet to be issued but the venue had reminded him that a deposit of £1,000 was due by the end of July.

A very major concern was the very low bookings and the possibility that SCBA could suffer quite a large loss if the event went ahead with significantly fewer numbers.

Richard F stated that receipts were over £1000 below last year at this point. With accommodation difficulties he envisaged a potential drop in revenue which might leave a deficit of £2000 this year. A further assessment would be needed at the end of August.

John C suggested Friday alone be cancelled and Richard F didn't believe this would have much impact and attendees would still face the lack of accommodation for the Saturday night. It was also thought Friday was a moderately successful day of the congress.

Andy R asked whether it would be possible to move the Championship Pairs and the Friday events to Woolavington. The maximum number of tables possible would be 32. The venue however was likely to

attract more local members. Annie also pointed out the availability of hotel accommodation in Bridgwater.

Upon checking the calendar for Woolavington it was noted that the hall was booked for the 13th. Cossington Village hall was considered too small for consideration.

The committee then ran through the various options and benefits of continuing the event or cancelling immediately or later.

Andy R suggested we pay the £1,000 deposit and if absolutely necessary cancel if bookings didn't improve and lose the deposit.

Richard F pointed out that we must give reasonable/generous notice to participants and Frank C agreed as many may have booked accommodation and need to cancel without penalties.

It was concluded that the lack of accommodation was unsolvable. John C suggested we were left with pulling out of Weston and moving somewhere else or pulling out altogether. It was mostly felt pulling out altogether was not a favourable option.

Colin S suggested that we should really promote and attract Somerset members who wouldn't necessarily need accommodation. He felt this would be an ideal opportunity to push for local members to participate. Often the fear of high standards put local people off but the stratification in Swiss pairs would make them realise they'd be playing like with like. As accommodation wasn't available and parking is not ideal could the committee consider the idea of bussing clubs there and back with County subsidising the cost. Each committee member could take 1 to 3 clubs and promote the congress as vigorously as possible. Essentially Colin didn't think we should be changing venues. The committee overall were in favour of following Colin's suggestion.

Alan E had some reservations on the idea of bussing participants, logistics may make this very difficult and wondered whether the costs would outweigh the potential revenue.

Richard F would need to know by the end of August whether it was feasible as the balance is due 4 weeks prior to the event. He also pointed to the hard work that goes into putting on such an event and the losing out financially.

Frank C checked his figures and reported that half of all entries were in by the end of July last year and Richard F reported that £4,850 was paid after the 1st August.

It was concluded that the committee should meet again at the end of August after a push on the local clubs. The deposit would be paid.

Frank C said he thought the event should be cancelled, Sheree P and Richard F both agreed with him. The rest of the committee disagreed and wanted at the very least to wait until the end of August for an update on entries especially after promoting the event at the clubs.

Meeting finished at 12.30pm.

Minutes prepared by Sheree Pavey