



National Presidents Report

Annual General Meeting 2011

The AGM marks the close of another challenging year for our Association. Our members have competed at home, in European and World events with various levels of success, but I shall report more about them in a few minutes.

A challenge to our Association which mostly goes unnoticed has been coping without a National Secretary and Director of Playing, despite the extra burdens these vacancies have imposed on me and the Management Committee we too have had our successes.

Just in time for the new season we launched our new on-line membership application and database system. It was a steep learning curve for us all and of course there were the inevitable bugs and technical difficulties but the system soon proved to be a success.

It was envisaged that some 20% of our members may register online in the first year but that figure was exceeded within 3 months. Of our current 2,721 members over 52% or more precisely 1,415 renewed or joined online. The new system also shows that to date 466 members have not renewed but we are still receiving applications for membership so the final figures for the year are not yet known.

We took back the responsibility for issuing individual licences from our regions because towards the end of last year and during the initial set up of the new system several anomalies came to light. We found active Clubs that were not registered with the Association and a number of members with licences which had not been included in the Regional returns and therefore not entered in the National database. The Association had received no money or notification of these clubs or individuals so simply put they were not members of our Association. It is vital that we have accurate and up to date information about our clubs and individual members so it was clear to me that we had to tighten up what and how we do things.

We are arranging a meeting for Regional Membership Secretaries to take place before the new membership year to demonstrate and review the online system, Ang Gaughan our National Membership Secretary will be announcing the date and venue soon.

In 2010 I submitted an application to Sport England to bring about the full recognition of the EPA as the Governing Body for Petanque in England. The constitutional change we adopted in July was sent to Sport England and shortly afterwards I received confirmation that our modified constitution met their requirement in terms of meeting the recognition criteria and that the EPA is now recognised as the National Governing Body for Petanque in England. We are now permitted to display the Sport England logo on our website however, our clubs and regions should not display the logo unless they have received funding from Sport England.

Last year the AGM agreed a proposal from the Great Western Region to produce a coaching/promotional DVD. I can report that the filming for the DVD has been largely completed and is going through the final stages of editing and adding the voice over. There may still be some filming required, but this is minimal and I understand is likely to be for visual demonstration purposes.

The filming went very well and I would like to thank Burnham PC for the use of their facilities and Debbie Elcome, Samantha and Kaylee Thatcher, it was a long and sometimes tedious day but they were very professional in their attitude and made sure that their concentration never wavered.

The original costings stated by Great Western Region (£1,500) in their proposal have proved to be very optimistic. Although the location of the filming was changed from its original location in Bath to Burnham to reduce some of the travel expenses and other cost reducing measures have been implemented it looks like this project will very likely run over budget.

We are hoping to have the final copy in the near future and will look to start offering copies to clubs to purchase shortly afterwards.

Despite several reminders from me that our renewal date was imminent, our insurance brokers issued the papers just one week before the renewal date, five days later their demand for payment arrived.

I pointed out to them some errors in the renewal documents and accepting responsibility for the lateness in producing these they agreed to extend our cover until the end of March so that the errors could be corrected and a new condition could be complied with.

The new condition was the requirement for a “Risk Assessment” for each and every event at any level in the Association.

Having explained at length that it was impossible to give them risk assessments in March for every event throughout the year our Insurers finally agreed to renew our cover on receipt of a sample Risk Assessment form. The third draft version of the form was agreed and has been distributed to all Regions and Clubs, it is also on our website in pdf and MS Word formats to download.

To clarify a point – yes we are required to have a Risk Assessment for every event. That said once a template form has been completed for a venue that same assessment can be used for other events, all we then need do is review and if necessary update the Risk Assessment.

However, I do feel that our brokers have failed to give us the service we should have or indeed did have in previous years. I am now in discussion with a new broker who is obtaining quotes from underwriters for our insurance needs.

In October the Management Committee agreed to sign up to the Sport and Recreation Alliance led “Voluntary Code of Good Governance” for the Sport and Recreation Sector. The Code is designed to enable sport and recreation organisations to aspire to and maintain good governance. It is a tool to help Boards, in our case the Management Committee, perform our role by outlining seven simple principles in the following areas:

1. Integrity: Acting as guardians of the sport, recreation, activity or area
2. Defining and evaluating the role of the board
3. Delivery of vision, mission and purpose
4. Objectivity: Balanced, inclusive and skilled board
5. Standards, systems and controls
6. Accountability and transparency
7. Understanding and engaging with the sporting landscape

Each principle is accompanied with practical considerations and thinking points. The Code is endorsed by Hugh Robertson MP, minister for sport and the Olympics, who places governance issues very high up his list of priorities. But more importantly than that, it is

endorsed by sport itself. The Code has been produced by sport for sport. It is not being imposed from above and although the Sport and Recreation Alliance has played the leading role in its development, it is not their Code. It represents a set of principles developed through consultation with a wide range of governing bodies and county sports partnerships. The ownership by the sector and the development of the Code was supported by Sport England, UK Sport, the British Olympic and Paralympic Associations, SkillsActive and Birkbeck University.

Simply put, a sports sector which observes the principles in the Code will be a sector better equipped to meet any challenge.

At the Inter-Regional Championships I discussed with the Regional Presidents my concern that our current structure was weakening our Association. Some years ago we would have four "Council" meetings each year, this was when the Regional Presidents and Officers of our Association would meet to discuss ideas, the operational issues of the Association and playing matters including the format and rules of competitions. A lot of very good work was done in preparation for and during the meetings.

I believe we need to get back around the table to discuss not only what we are doing but what you are doing as well. I am sure that these meetings will ensure our organisation remains transparent and will dispel any mystery or confusion there may be about what a National Officer is required to do. I will be inviting all Regional Presidents to meet with the Associations National Officers at least twice in the coming year and trust they will all grasp and welcome the opportunity to work with us for the future of our Association.

Earlier this year I wrote to every member explaining how we had amassed £20k and asking everyone for their idea on how they thought we should use the money. A summary of the responses was discussed at the Congress of County Regions and a few months ago the Management Committee, taking the top 3 suggestions, decided to use the money to establish a "Development Fund". This financial support aimed at helping with terrain improvements, promotion and coaching needs will be overseen and administered by a sub committee chaired by the National Treasurer. The committee's first task will be to draw up an eligibility criteria and procedures for the presentation of applications by registered clubs.

In May whilst umpiring a Scandinavian Championship in Oslo I had a very positive discussion with representatives from the Danish Petanque Federation (DPF) about setting up a 4 Nation annual event. We met again last month in Denmark during the CEP's Espoirs Championship and with the President of the Netherlands Petanque Federation (NJBB) have agreed to invite Luxembourg to join with us. The details of the competition have yet to be agreed but the initial plan is to have 5 teams in each national squad, if successful this event could replace the much missed North Sea Tournament giving more international playing opportunities to our members.

At the Confédération Européenne de Pétanque (CEP) Congress the nations agreed to the introduction of a "Veterans" European Championship. This will be for the over 55 year age group and will most likely be a Triples event. The first Championship will be held in Denmark during August 2012, I have informed the CEP that our Association will take part in this new championship, our qualifiers will be held in May and June.

We shall still hold the over 50's Doubles Championship which in 2012 will again be held at the Brighton and Hove Petanque Club in September.

It has always seemed daft to me that the team to represent our Association at the European or World Championships are not our Triples Champions, after all they are our top team or why else do we invite them to compete at this level. So in view of this and in part to overcome the lack of support for our international qualifiers and triples championship events we are making some changes to the tournaments.

The Triples Championship will replace the current International Mens Qualifiers, the Women's Triples Championship will replace the current International Women's Qualifiers and the Junior and Espoirs Championships will replace the International Qualifiers for their respective categories. Both the Espoirs and Juniors Championship will be held over 2 days to find the top teams to represent our Association at an international event.

The Triples and Women's Triples Championship will also be held over 2 days but there will be 2 venues on each of the 2 days. The top 16 teams in each classification will go forward to take part in a one day event to find a top 8 who will play in a "finals" event to find the EPA's Champions.

We will adhere to the representation format set for the Men and Women's teams at our last AGM, this year the winners of the Triples Championship will be invited to represent our

Association at the 2013 European Championship and the Women's Triples Champions will be invited to represent our Association at the 2012 European and 2013 World Championships.

This brings me back to the playing successes for the past year, I am sure you join me in congratulating all our winners;

Singles Champion - Dean Seville

Doubles Champions - Kevin Gifford and Sofiane Lachani

Mixed Doubles Champions - Dean Seville and Clare Brooks

Over 50's Doubles Champions - Jeff Mitchell and Cyril Edwards

Junior Triples Champions and World Championship team - Chris Peel, Chloe and James Urquhart

Women's Triples Champions and World Championship team - Sarah Huntley, Emma Longstaff and Stephanie Moulden

Champion of Champions Triples - Matt Eversden, Phil Winston and Jonathan Sewell

Doubles - Chris Bailey and Kevin Gifford

Shooting - Frank Depreaux

Mens European team - Herve Bavazzanno, Jerome Rousseau and Sofiane Lachani

Junior team (Netherlands) - Emma Longstaff, Josh Littley and Sam Thatcher

England v Wales Junior Squad - Christopher Peel, James and Chloe Urquhart, Sam Thatcher, Kaylee Thatcher and Josh Wilcox, Daniel Baker, Martin Brooks and Cameron Tubb, Meri Young, Jessica Shosmith and Harry Waldie

Home Nations Squad - Jason Thompson, Neil Phillips, Dean Ashby, Graham and Kim Elcome, Dean Seville, Raymond Austen, Barry and Dianne Scott, Claire White, Ben Gallimore, Joe Sheffield, Miles Gooda, Rob Munday, Jack Blows, Phil Winston, Ashley Odell, Richard Patterson, Mark Robertshaw, Tony Mann, Jeff Mitchell, Debbie Elcome, Aaron Mitchell, Michael and Monty Quaia and Robert Rozsahegyi.

Inter-Regional Challenge - Kent

Inter-Regional Champions - Chiltern

I take this opportunity to congratulate the outstanding performances by Sofiane Lachani - Quarter Finalist at the European Shooting Championship, Sofiane Lachani, Herve Bavazzanno and Jerome Rousseau - Quarter Finalists at the European Mens Championship , Chris Peel - Quarter Finalist at the Junior World Shooting Championship and Sarah Huntley, Bronze Medalist at the Women's World Shooting Championship.

As you know we are looking at an alternative venue for our Inter-Regional Championship and Challenge Tournament. Earlier this week Adrian Thomas, John Thatcher and I spent two days at the potential new venue Mill Rythe Holiday Village. We were given access to a number of chalets, experienced both an evening meal and breakfast and continued negotiations with IoW Tours. I believe we have addressed most if not all of the concerns raised by our members through their regions. There are just couple of finer details that must be sorted before I would be prepared to sign a contract on behalf of our Association but I am pleased with the progress we have made. I will report back to our regions immediately I have more news.

Finally as you all will know I announced at our last AGM that I was retiring as National President this year. I have served our Association as a National Officer for 16 years, the last 6 as your President and felt that it was time to take a rest.

Unfortunately a candidate for this office has not come forward, this left me with a choice ,either suspended the Association until a candidate did come forward and then call an Extraordinary General Meeting for their election or I stand again for another two years.

Well as you know I have chosen not to suspend the Association but to continue as your President. It does give me the chance to complete a few outstanding projects but let it be known this is my very last term in office.