

SUFFOLK COASTAL REGION

MINUTES OF 1st AGM

Location: The Riverside Centre, Stratford St Andrew, IP17 1LL

Date: Sunday 20th October 2024

Attendees:-

Elected officers: Richard Baker, Simon Fletcher, Paul Lee

Club representatives: Deborah Bell (Kettleburgh), Adrian Crowe (Tattingstone), Paul Shaw (Meadlands)

Other voting members: Mike Acott, Lorenzo Austin, Steve Bell, Michael Blezard, Paul Fletcher, Jeff Grist, Alan Halls, Carole Harding, Jeff Leigh, Martha Rios-Hall, Mike Rios-Hall, Karl Scott

Apologies:-

Elected officers: Martin Inglis, Kim Speed

Club representatives: John Willis (Eels Foot)

Other voting members: Peter Lumb, Phil Pearson

1. The meeting commenced at 13.12 with a welcome from the President, Simon Fletcher.
2. The President gave his report on the activities and sporting achievements of SCR over the last year.

“To begin with, I would like to put on record what an honour it has been being your President in what was our inaugural season of being a Region in our own right. Many thought it would never happen, many thought we would fail, many just couldn’t understand the reason behind it all. I am glad to say we have proved many doubters wrong and now stand proudly amongst the other regions in the Petanque England family, making ourselves known and showing our playing ability at a national level, creating a few raised eyebrows and many more words of praise and support.

A lot of this is down to all my fellow Committee members who do an awful lot of work in the background, work that goes unseen by most, but nonetheless their efforts are what has pulled us together. Yes, we have had a few teething issues and a steep learning curve, but it has been handled in the best way we can, always learning but more importantly always moving forward. So, a big thank you to them and others who have helped along the way, and whilst not naming them here, a few of them will be recognised later today once we move onto the End of Season Awards.

During 2024 we sent players to the International Women’s Day Doubles Grand Finals, the Champion of Champions Grand Finals and of course sent a Championship Squad to the Inter-Regionals at Pakefield last month. Isolating each of these events, I must say how proud I was of our Ladies, firstly taking part in our Regional IWD Doubles, providing two teams to the Grand Finals held at Whitnash, near Leamington Spa. Competing for us were Niki Acott & Janet Strutt (our IWD Winners) and Stephanie Adamson & Amy Brewer (our Runners Up). Both teams did well at this level, but especially Steph & Amy who in their first game thrashed Kent 13-0, collected a 10-8 versus Great Western and then a bye to progress in the Gold competition, winning their first knock-out game 13-0 versus Mercia before losing 12-13 to Chiltern in the Gold Quarter Finals, placing them in the Top 8 in the country. Members of other regions who were there on the day commented how good our Ladies Teams were. We held Regional Championships for the Singles, Doubles, Triples and Veterans Triples and congratulations to all winners and finalists in those events, your awards are well deserved and look forward to congratulating you at this afternoons Presentations. Coming onto the Champion of Champions event last weekend held at Gravesend RFC in Kent. The Saturday saw the Doubles contested with myself & Paul Fletcher, Phil Pearson and Baillie Inglis representing Suffolk Coastal. Whilst not getting off to a great start, both pairs found themselves in the Bronze category in the knock-out stages with Phil & Baillie losing the Bronze Semi-Final to a Sussex team, that myself & Paul subsequently beat in the Bronze Final. Meanwhile Sunday saw our Triples of Karl Scott,

Carole Harding & Martha Rios-Hall (Triples winners) and John Willis, Paul Lee & Adrian Crowe (Runners-Up) battling it out. Strangely due to the awkward number of teams entered and the need to put byes into the knock-out stages, despite not winning a match, John, Paul & Adrian ended as Bronze Consolage Winners. Karls triple team, fared much better, reaching the Silver Consolage Final and eventually being runners-up.

And then the big one.... During the season we held 2 Regional Qualifiers to determine our squad to go to the Inter-Regionals at Pakefield in September. As we had 9 triples enter, we knew we would only be able to send a Championship squad (which requires 8 triples). Over 2 days of play, one of which had to be abandoned due to inclement weather, our team was established and all the necessary communication with PE was done along with all the relevant accommodation booking etc. The weekend itself saw us start, as all new regions do, in Division Two of the Championship alongside Yorkshire, Heart of England, Sussex, Central, Eastern, Great Western and Thames Valley. Yorkshire & Eastern were the two regions who had been relegated from Division One the previous year and some of us were predicting them to be the hardest regions to face. And what does lady luck do, well we get those two in our first two rounds!! However a 4-4 in Round One against Eastern gave us heart and then a 5-3 win versus Yorkshire in Round 2 was even better. During the rest of the 5 further rounds, we sat in 4th place at the end of Day One. The 5 regions you play on Day Two are based on a system of where you finish on the first day. This meant we didn't face Central or Eastern again but faced everyone else. Winning 6-2 versus Yorkshire on Day Two being a highlight, and by the end of Round 10 we were still in with a chance of potential promotion. However, Rounds 11 and 12 were unkind to us losing 6-2 to both Sussex and Heart of England (our two closest promotion rivals) saw us slip away and Central over took us leaving us in 5th place overall in our very first season. Whilst this may sound disappointing, when you analyse all the results, I calculate that if we had picked up 5 more wins, others above us would have had fewer wins, especially if those 5 wins had come in Rounds 11 and 12, and we could have been looking at debut season promotion. We are the highest ever placed region in their debut season (in recent times Central were 6th last year in their first attempt and around 10 years ago Mercia were 7th, so at least this is something to take forward). I think that perhaps our lack of playing 12 games in two days saw many of our players tiring at the latter stages and the surfaces used for the Inter Regionals are rough, stony and can be difficult and we perhaps do not play on enough surfaces like that currently. Food for thought....

I was particularly irked by the fact that PE didn't acknowledge our first appearance, especially as they were so busy welcoming Scotland and Wales at the opening speeches, in the official programme and at the presentations, something that was noticed by others outside of our region at the time and has been commented upon since in social media, face-to-face conversations etc. Aside from that, a huge pat on the back to all members of the squad for getting us noticed, it was very pleasing from that aspect. We hope that this will create further appetite for a larger entry at the Regional Qualifiers next year, so that we can take a Challenge Squad as well (a further 4 triples) and possibly even a Junior team. The Challenge may look very appealing next year, especially as I have it on good authority that Petanque North West should be entering for the first time ever but also in the Championship, Wales may be sending a full squad rather than just a Challenge Squad. We shall see....

Due to our greater image in the pétanque public eye, myself and a contact are currently working together on arranging an official Regional Challenge Match next year versus Thames Valley. They would like to host us at one of their venues near Oxford at a date still to be arranged. This will be at least 6 triples worth of players, possibly even up to 10 triples dependent on their decision. Details will be issued at a later date. Then in 2026, they would like to also host us, this time involving a Three-Way Challenge with Petanque North West. Again, there are no further details at this stage.

So, summing up, we have had a very eventful but satisfying first season as a region. We have properly landed onto the national pétanque scene, which when I and the late Jimmy Robinson set up the Suffolk Coastal League way back in 2007, seems such a huge step in a relative short space of time, but we are here now, so let us really make it count in 2025 and beyond.

Finally, just a big thank you to all of you who believed in our vision and have provided your support in whatever way by obtaining a licence, playing and representing the Suffolk Coastal Region at whatever events you could, long may it continue. I look forward to 2025 with even more enthusiasm.

Simon Fletcher

3. The Secretary gave his report for 2024.

In its first year of existence, Suffolk Coastal Region has experienced many successes. Membership has exceeded all expectations and there we now have 50 full members and 2 junior members. It is hoped that all will renew in 2025 and that others, who have been waiting to see how things go in the first year, will now step forward and affiliate to SCR. Also, we will be looking to recruit more younger members and the upcoming junior coaching event is the first step towards achieving this.

There were some initial struggles to get the club affiliation process working, partly because of an online system that is far from intuitive and partly due to changes in PE personnel. Despite the difficulties, Tattingstone Wheatsheaf became the first SCR affiliated club in March 2024. Newly affiliated clubs at Kettleburgh and Eels Foot followed and with the transfer of the Meadlands club to SCR we now have four affiliated clubs. Again, we have exceeded the numbers predicted in our proposal to PE. Many SCR members are not signed up to a club, possibly because this is another aspect of the Sport80 site that is not straightforward to use. If any member would like assistance to affiliate to a club, please don't hesitate to contact me.

SCR affairs are conducted by your Regional Management Committee (RMC). This consists of the elected officers and a representative from each of the affiliated clubs. In 2024 five officers were elected by members, the President, the Chairman, the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Youth Development Officer. The Club reps were John Willis (Eels Foot), Deborah Bell (Kettleburgh), Paul Shaw (Meadlands) and Adrian Crowe (Tattingstone). RMC has met four times since April; all meetings were held online.

A SCR Facebook page was available from the start of the year, initially to keep members updated on upcoming regional activities. It now has 108 members and is increasingly used by members to discuss regional issues and to share photos from regional events. We are grateful to Paul Fletcher for his photography at events and his work in producing a photo montage to head up the page. The SCPA website has been used by SCR to make documents available to members, to notify members of events and to allow members to register for events. A new SCR website will be set up in time for the 2025 season thanks to Richard Baker.

Finally, I would like to thank all SCR members for their support and also my fellow RMC members for giving their time and effort to make a success of the Region in its inaugural year. I am very much looking forward to what 2025 will bring for SCR.

Paul Lee

4. The Treasurer presented the region's accounts to date. He stated his opinion that the accounts showed that SCR was in a solid financial position at the end of its first year in which many one-off expenses had needed to be covered. He thanked Peter Etheridge for reducing these expenses through his donation of trophies for each of the regional competitions. He explained that PE/Sport80 had not forwarded precepts from four members. This was thought to be due to these members' precepts having been sent to their former regions, but PE/Sport80 had not responded to communications and so this could not be confirmed. Most of the annual income in future years is expected to come from competition entry fees, not the precepts. The current entry fee of £7.50 per person per event is in line with the fees charged by other regions.

The accounts had been independently examined by Matt Conway.

5. RMC proposed that the SCR constitution was amended as below:

CURRENT:	PROPOSED:
Clause 8.1e	
The quorum for an AGM shall be 50% of the elected officers of the RMC plus an additional 30% of the voting members of the SCR. One of the President or Chairperson must be present and at least two from the President, Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer.	The quorum for an AGM shall be 50% of the elected officers of the RMC plus an additional 10 voting members of the SCR. One of the President or Chairperson must be present and at least two from the President, Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer.
Clause 8.2d	
The quorum for an EGM shall be 50% of the elected officers of the RMC plus an additional 30% of the voting membership of the SCR. One of the President or Chairperson must be present and at least two from the President, Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer.	The quorum for an EGM shall be 50% of the elected officers of the RMC plus an additional 10 voting members of the SCR. One of the President or Chairperson must be present and at least two from the President, Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer.

In a show of hands, the proposal was accepted by all members present. There were no abstentions or votes against.

6. RMC proposed that the regional precept should remain unchanged at £5 for the membership year commencing 1st April 2025. In a show of hands, the proposal was accepted by all members present. There were no abstentions or votes against.

7. SCR Officers for 2024/25

The following nominations were received by 29th September 2024:

President: Simon Fletcher	Proposed: Paul Fletcher	Seconded: Paul Lee
Chairperson: Martin Inglis	Proposed: Matt Conway	Seconded: Paul Lee
Secretary: Paul Lee	Proposed: Phil Pearson	Seconded: Adrian Crowe
Treasurer: Richard Baker	Proposed: Deborah Bell	Seconded: Steve Bell
Membership Secretary: Phil Pearson	Proposed: Richard Baker	Seconded: Paul Lee
Youth Development Officer: Kim Speed	Proposed: Phil Richardson	Seconded: Martin Inglis

As only a single nomination had been received for each post, the nominations were accepted without a vote.

8. No other business had been notified to the secretary by 29th September 2024.