

Minutes of BGA AGM 2025-05-22

Time and Means

The meeting was held on 2025-05-22, at 20:00, by Zoom.

Attendance

34 members attended, exceeding the quorum of 20.

This included the following directors:

Andrew Ambrose-Thurman (AAT) – Clubs and Membership

Ai Guan (AG) – Tournaments

Colin Williams (CW) – President

Daniel Milne (DM) – Online and Social

Phil Beck (PB) – Finance Director

Sam Bithell (SB) – Health and Safety

Sebastian Pountney (SP) – Secretary

Stephen Tweedie (ST) – Technical

Toby Manning (TM) – Youth

In addition, Peter Fisher (PF) – Membership Secretary.

Proxies

The following proxies were designated:

- AG for Leandro Marcolino
- Alex Rix (AR) for Francis Roads
- CW for Richard Hunter and Louise Bremner
- Matt Marsh (MM) for Jonathan Chin
- SP for Angus MacIndoe

The meeting was recorded to facilitate accurate minute-taking, and it was agreed that the recording would not be kept after the minutes had been agreed.

Minutes of 2024 AGM

These were not disputed.

2024 Accounts

PB explained the accounts.

The BGA was stated to have taken a loss last year of £1,868.

The reserves, however, were described as ‘very healthy’ at £49,000.

AR asked when the membership rates were last raised.

TM answered that it was in 2012, and that the rates were raised to above the break-even point in order to leave ‘headroom’.

Tim Hunt (TH) cautioned that an annual deficit of £2,000 was not much, and did not call for any ‘enormous kneejerk action’.

CW replied that the Board wished to move towards a balanced budget.

TH asked what level of reserve would be healthy, and whether this had been reviewed.

CW answered that it was reviewed under Jon Diamond, and judged to be 3x annual expenditure.

Harry Fearnley (HF) said that it was decided two years ago as 2x annual expenditure, and mentioned that the current reserves significantly exceed that amount.

CW replied that expenditure was anticipated in several areas, especially IT, where now the BGA had addressed its ‘technical debt’ the Technology Committee could look into a new membership system, and a possible move to a managed server solution; but that he did not have cost estimates for this work.

Gerry Gavigan (GG) said that the BGA was constantly updating its server, and recommended moving to a host-managed solution as this had worked well for the website of the London Go Centre (LGC).

CW replied that the Board wished to move the BGA website to a host-managed server, but cautioned that the migration of data would be difficult and would require a dedicated team. CW also warned that the maintenance of the current server was heavily reliant on Jonathan Chin.

TM proposed that the 2024 Accounts be approved.

The 2024 Accounts were approved *nem. con.* (without dissent).

CW proposed to appoint Richard Wheeldon (RW) as Financial Examiner.

This motion was passed *nem. con.*

Annual Report

SP was appointed as Secretary.

ST and DM are standing down as directors. TM will temporarily replace ST as Technology Representative, with support from MM, pending renewed availability of ST.

CW reported that the UK, under Team Captain Bruno Poltronieri, had placed fifth in the Pandanet European Go Team Championship (PEGTC).

EGF

CW described issues in the Youth Commission as a 'source of friction' with the EGF (European Go Federation).

CW stated that Manja Marz was the BGA's preferred candidate for the replacement of Martin Stiassny as EGF President at the end of 2025, and expressed optimism for EGF change and transparency. GG said that Vladimir Danek or Flavien Aubelle might stand for the role.

CW reported that the UK will two European Championships in 2026: the European Pair Championship and the European Women's Championship, and possibly also the European Student Championship in 2025..

Tournaments

AG reported that new tournaments had been created in Newcastle and in Tonbridge, Kent; and that the British Championship final match would be at the LGC.

TM, Helen and Martin Harvey (for kit transport); AG; and the tournament paper's contributors were thanked.

Members Report

AAT presented the Members Report, noting that the BGA have statistics of the strength of club players.

AAT reported that:

- online club meetings had been in decline since the end of Covid-19 lockdown;
- the number of club players had fluctuated over the previous two years;
- a quarter of clubs have only 2—3 players, but most think they're doing well;
- most club players are ranked 5—9k.

Martin Harvey asked for an explanation of Fig. 9 of the report. AAT explained the chart, but wasn't sure of all the details.

AAT to look to improve or explain the presentation of that chart for next year.

PF reported that membership was 'fairly constant'.

Health and Safety

SB reported that due to the BGA's new events insurance policy, events were now required to file risk assessments, and that he had been helping organisers to do this. He added that the BGA had encountered no health and safety incidents in 2024-5.

BGJ

Patrick Ridley was reported to be standing down as editor of the British Go Journal (BGJ). Candidates were sought to replace him.

Youth Report

TM reported that the Youth Go Camp faced declining attendance and would probably be cancelled, but that 102 youth players had attended a tournament over the past year.

HF expressed surprise at the limited interest of youth players from Hong Kong, or of Chinese extraction, in the camp.

Alison Bexfield, Tony Atkins and the other youth officials were thanked.

Disputes Panel

Jon Diamond reported (by note) that the panel had handled two complaints last year, neither of which could be fully addressed. The first complaint could not be substantiated; and in the second case, the player judged against was not a member of the BGA, and had left the country.

As a result of the work done, Alison Bexfield has submitted a report to the Board with a number of recommendations.

The board is to examine Alison Bexfield's report.

Motion 2: Removing Directors Cap

The amendment of accidental wording in the BGA's Constitution, that maintained the previously abolished cap on the number of directors, was approved *nem. con.*

The text of the motion was:

In Article 33, clause (f), delete the words "up to five" and replace by "additional".

Motion 3: Levy Adjustments

CW said that 2-3 years ago, the tournament levy was reduced to encourage in-person tournaments. He explained that the costs of affiliation to the EGF and IGF (International Go Federation) had risen substantially, from £600 to £2,200 per year. He cautioned that there was 'no crisis' due to the BGA's ample reserves, but that the situation was not to be ignored.

GG warned the BGA to 'tread carefully' when increasing costs, reminding the Board that the BGA didn't hear from most members. He asked whether increasing the tournament levy would not reduce tournament attendance.

GG continued by saying that the levy burdens tournament directors with inconveniences not adequately considered, including that the new values ended in £-.50 instead of whole pounds. MM and TH agreed.

GG remarked that most BGA members attended only one tournament per year, and few went to more than two; and said that this meant the levy increase was not as efficient as a raise in the membership rate.

GG also recommended that the BGA should adopt the approach of the French Go Federation: to only allow BGA members to play in British tournaments.

CW expressed concern that this would discourage beginners and casual players, and mentioned that many British players are not BGA members.

CW cautioned that information was unavailable on the fragility of membership numbers in response to an increase in membership rates.

TH asked why the motion was not presented with a revenue increase estimate. He advised charging non-members a higher levy to encourage them to join the BGA, which GG agreed with. He also said that the BGA should charge a levy on its own tournaments, to not give them an unfair advantage in attracting players.

AR pointed out that additional rates for foreign players would hurt the London Open and Not the London Open tournaments.

RW expressed scepticism at raising costs without a clear purpose, which he wanted the BGA to declare. He also commented that it was dangerous to damage the circulation of the paper BGJ, due to its important communication role.

TH said it was time to raise the membership fee, rather than the levy. GG agreed, saying that the paper BGJ was an economic drag. MM supported a members' fee rise, which he called not unreasonable due to the increase in printing costs over the last decade.

SB evaluated the BGA's membership as 'incredibly small'. He reiterated that there was no data to predict the effect of raising members' fees.

He advised that the BGA focus on increasing its membership, which would provide a natural rise in revenue.

Voting Order

All amendments to both motions were voted on before a vote was taken for either motion.

Text of Motion 3

(Proposed by the Board)

With effect for tournaments starting on or after January 1st 2026, the BGA levy charges will apply to events submitted to the EGD at the following rates:

- *£1.50 for a BGA Member / £6.50 for a non-BGA member*
- *There is no longer a reduction for members of other national associations*
- *No charge for players in their first ever Go tournament*
- *No charge for U18s*
- *No reduction for students, or other concessions*
- *Any event for which the BGA does not provide the equipment will have a 50% reduction applied to the calculated total*

*There will be no charge for unrated events not submitted to the EGD, which of course includes 13*13 or smaller board events.*

Amendment 1

(Proposed by members)

Add the words "face to face" to clarify that online tournaments will continue, as now, not to have a levy. The revised motion will read "... will apply to face to face events submitted to ..."

The Board considered this a clarification point, already supported.

Passed *nem. con.*

Amendment 2

(Proposed by members)

Replace “There is no longer a reduction for members of other national associations” with “Members of another national Go association will be treated as if they are BGA members”.

The Board had no objection to this amendment. Passed *nem. con.*

Amendment 3

(Proposed by members)

To ensure equal treatment between BGA run and other tournaments, add the following as another bullet point to the motion: “BGA tournaments will be subject to the same levy as other tournaments”.

Passed *nem. con.*

Motion 4

With effect from July 1st 2025 the annual membership cost for those receiving hard copy journals will increase by a further £5, except for the Youth player rate which will increase by £2.50.

For current members this change will take effect on their next membership renewal payment, meaning multi-year memberships may be unaffected for some time.

Amendment 4

(Proposed by members)

The motion should be amended to read “With effect July 1st 2025, the annual subscription rates should be increased by the following amounts:

- Non-youth with printed journal: £9*
- Non-youth without printed journal: £2*
- Youth with printed journal: £5*
- Youth without printed journal: £2*

Each year, on July 1st, the rates should be adjusted to the nearest £ such that the additional fees raised by those receiving the printed journal cover at least 90% of the average costs of printing and distribution of the journal over the previous 12 months.”

This was voted on. There were 11 for, 14 against and 9 abstaining. It was not adopted.

Amendment 5

(Proposed by members)

With effect July 1st 2025, the annual subscription rates should be increased by the following amounts:

- Non-youth with printed journal: £7
- Non-youth without printed journal: £0
- Youth with printed journal: £3
- Youth without printed journal: £0

Each year, on July 1st, the rates should be adjusted to the nearest £ such that the additional fees raised by those receiving the printed journal cover at least 90% of the average costs of printing and distribution of the journal over the previous 12 months.

This was voted on. There were 18 for, 8 against and 8 abstaining. It was adopted.

Vote on Motion 3

Motion 3 was voted on, with all three proposed amendments. The amended text was:

*With effect for tournaments starting on or after January 1st 2026, the BGA levy charges will apply to **face to face** events submitted to the EGD at the following rates:*

- £1.50 for a BGA Member / £6.50 for a non-BGA member
- **Members of another national Go association will be treated as if they are BGA members**
- No charge for players in their first ever Go tournament
- No charge for U18s
- No reduction for students, or other concessions
- Any event for which the BGA does not provide the equipment will have a 50% reduction applied to the calculated total

*There will be no charge for unrated events not submitted to the EGD, which of course includes 13*13 or smaller board events*

BGA tournaments will be subject to the same levy as other tournaments.

There were 16 for, 11 against and 6 abstaining. It was passed.

Vote on Motion 4

Motion 4 was voted on, with Amendment 5. The final text was as in the amendment:

With effect July 1st 2025, the annual subscription rates should be increased by the following amounts:

- Non-youth with printed journal: £7
- Non-youth without printed journal: £0
- Youth with printed journal: £3
- Youth without printed journal: £0

Each year, on July 1st, the rates should be adjusted to the nearest £ such that the additional fees raised by those receiving the printed journal cover at least 90% of the average costs of printing and distribution of the journal over the previous 12 months.

There were 22 for, 3 against and 9 abstaining. It was passed.

EGC Presentation

TM made a presentation on the viability of holding the EGC at Stirling University, Scotland, in 2028 at the earliest.

He detailed that the venue had a café and bar, as well as conference services and the capacity to house 1,000 participants.

TM reported that it would cost £25,000 to secure sufficient rooms.

CW said that if this goes ahead then the BGA would seek sponsorship. HF suggested approaching DeepMind.

TH suggested to plan to break even with 400 visitors and cope with 1,000. He asked how the BGA could scale the event, and what hard commitments would have to be made (and when).

TH asked about the financials of recent EGCS.

TM replied that Toulouse, and perhaps Leipzig, had made a surplus.

TH suggested polling for volunteers. GG asked how many were needed, and whether the BGA would reimburse international volunteers for their travel (TM answered 'partially'). MM recommended the preparation of a detailed plan to engage with volunteers.

GG asked whether the BGA was settled on Stirling. TM replied it was not.

GG recommended finding a site keen to host the EGC.

CW said the budget of the EGC Working Committee was £250.

AOB

SB reported that the BGA had held a competition, with nine entries, to find a replacement logo; and that the Board had shortlisted six, including the current design.

The meeting closed at 23:00 and the chair thanked all those who had lasted the course.