

# **WCF Management Committee Report 2024**

This report covers the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

## **1. MEMBERSHIP**

### **Members and Recognised Croquet Organisations**

As at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 there were 29 Members of the WCF across 6 continents. 13 are Full members, 5 are Associates and the remainder are Recognised Croquet Organisations (RCOs).

We were pleased that Portugal upgraded from an RCO to an Associate Member. Growth in that country is most welcome and we encourage you to visit them.

We also welcomed Corfu, a long-standing croquet playing island who have been hosting both GC and AC tournaments for many years. They joined as the Greek RCO. Talks are underway in Athens and we hope that further clubs will join Corfu in due course.

## **2. CHAMPIONSHIPS**

### **WCF Events Held in 2024**

#### WCF GC World Championship

This was the only WCF event held this year. Congratulations to Blake Fields on his Gold Medal. Full results and a tournament report can be found here: <https://worldcroquet.org/2024-golf-croquet-world-championship/>

Problems with the pre-event planning and administration caused some disquiet a few weeks prior to the event. The serious probability of the event being moved to Florida with just 5 weeks to go was only narrowly avoided. It eventually went ahead at CBCC as originally planned, and the player feedback confirms that it was a good venue, players enjoying the benefits of a venue where all 80 players are at one venue for the duration.

Lessons have been learned from the pre-event issues. In due course Members may be consulted with respect to some amended regulations.

#### Player Survey:

The players were surveyed after the championships and this can be found on the WCF website: <https://worldcroquet.org/world-championships/world-championship-surveys/>.

#### European Events

There were also three European championships held during 2024: GC Singles Championship, AC Singles Championship and the Women's GC Championship. (See details in the ERC section below).

The European Club League continued for its second year. 29 teams from 9 Member countries participated.

The WCF Management Committee would like to express our thanks to the all the hosts and their various armies of volunteers. Without the tireless efforts of clubs and volunteers throughout the world, we could not host our championships, and we really appreciate the hard work that goes into making each and every one of them a success.

## Forward Calendar

The WCF Forward Calendar has provisional hosts in place out to the end of 2029. Many of these are still at the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage, especially from 2027 onward. We welcome additional EOIs for these events. <https://worldcroquet.org/world-championships/upcoming-events/>

The ERC Forward Calendar is confirmed for 2025, with some EOIs received for 2026. Please can interested Members send in EOIs for 2026 and onward. <https://worldcroquet.org/european-regional-committee-erc/erc-events/erc-forward-calendar/>

### 3. STRATEGY

The Business Plan was reviewed during Quarter 1 of 2024. Our new President, José Álvarez-Sala, consulted with the Management Committee and a new strategy was defined. This was shared with Members in April.

<https://worldcroquet.org/wcf-business/business-plans/>

The Business Plan covers the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2027.

We welcome feedback and comments from our Members and are open to amending the strategy should this be required following Member input and consultation.

### AC Regeneration

One of the key initiatives in the Business Plan has been to work out ways to stop the decline of Association Croquet. This historic and traditional variant of our sport is struggling to recruit new players. A new Working Group was launched during 2024, and you should hear more from them during 2025.

However, we'd like to share a recent success story from Spain. Spain has more than 2000+ GC players, but the end September quarterly country rankings showed just one player! This was partly because they had moved their annual AC championship to November. A series of Coaching and Referee training took place in October, as well as two tournaments. A set of "how to" videos have also been created and circulated.

Spain report well over 40 new AC players. We look forward to watching their progress in future years. A full report on all this activity, including learnings they would like to share, in case they can be of use to other countries, will be published early in 2025.

*If you have similar stories to share, including ideas on how to revitalise AC, please send them to the Secretary-General who will discuss them in the AC Regeneration Committee and share them onward as appropriate.*

### 4. CAPITAL GRANTS

The MC encourages any Member wishing to improve its facilities to consider putting together a project which the WCF can part-fund. The WCF will always limit itself to match-funding which means that the Member must expect to raise at least 50% of the project funds itself.

Topic 122 approved a €15,000 grant to the Telč Croquet Club, Czech Republic in 2023, and the work was completed early in 2024, with the lawns now in use.

### 5. EUROPEAN REGIONAL COMMITTEE (ERC)

The ERC has now been running for 3 years.

*Events held in 2024:*

In May 2024 the GC Singles Championship was held at the Sussex County Croquet Club in Sussex England, Congratulations to champion José Álvarez-Sala from Spain.

<https://worldcroquet.org/2024-european-gc-singles-championship/>

In August, Compton Croquet Club in Eastbourne, Sussex, England held the European GC Women's Championship. Congratulations to Champion Maria Taylor, also from Spain.

<https://worldcroquet.org/2024-european-gc-womens-championship/>

Later in August, the Carrickmines Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, in Dublin, Ireland, held the European AC Champions. Well done to James Death from England, the new Champion.

<https://worldcroquet.org/2024-european-ac-championship/>

European Club League – 2024 was its second year. 29 teams from 9 Member countries participated, in 7 heats held at Clubs around Europe. The final was held in Madrid in October and was won by Real Club de la Puerta de Hierro (Spain). <https://worldcroquet.org/european-regional-committee-erc/2024-european-gc-club-league/>

#### *ERC Event Regulations*

Concerns were expressed that the ERC variations to the WCF Event Regulations were overly limiting and the quality of entrants was therefore too weak. This was reviewed at some length, with a consultation and then a vote.

Topic 137 was approved in October.

The new regulations can be found on the ERC Forward Calendar page:

<https://worldcroquet.org/european-regional-committee-erc/erc-events/erc-forward-calendar/>

#### *ERC Committee*

After 2 years some of the committee had reached the end of their terms. We'd like to thank John Swabey (Germany) and Daniel Larsson (Sweden) for their work on the committee over the first couple of years.

Roberts Stafekis was re-elected and remains Chair. We held an election and welcomed Alan Looney (Ireland), Duncan Catterall (England) and Michael Böer (Germany).

#### *ERC Event Co-ordinator*

ERC Events take up nearly as much time to plan, organise and administrate as WCF championships. Recognising this we recruited a new Event Co-ordinator to handle this administration.

A warm welcome to Martins Grinhofs from Latvia who took this on in September 2024.

<https://worldcroquet.org/martins-grinhofs-appointed-erc-event-co-ordinator/>

#### *Website:*

The ERC is currently working on the design and launch of a separately managed website. This will facilitate operation and maintenance of ERC related webpages. The new site will be easily accessed from the WCF website. Until this launches, news about the ERC can still be found on the WCF website:

[www.worldcroquet.org/european-regional-committee-erc/](http://www.worldcroquet.org/european-regional-committee-erc/).

## **6. DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **Specific Working Groups**

In 2023 there were five Development Working Groups. Progress has been slow but see below for a brief synopsis of activity.

#### *Working Group 2 – Development of a global player and games database*

Phil Cordingley has been drafting a specification for this over the past couple of years, with a view to the WCF then producing the database.

Over this time, off-the-shelf packages offering this type of functionality have become more widely available. The committee have asked Phil to see if any of these might be suitable, and if so, whether the work he has done to date could be repurposed to provide such a supplier with a specification. It is likely such an approach may cost more, and require some compromises in terms of functionality delivered, however, it would be quicker to launch. We will report more on this early in 2025.

#### *Working Group 1 – Development of a global handicap system*

This group has been waiting for the output of Working Group 2. Following the delays to WG2 it has been decided to re-open this workgroup with a view to making headway with those items which are not related to WG2. A new team is being put in place and we hope to make progress during 2025.

#### *Working Group 4 – Development of GC online referee training and accreditation*

<https://worldcroquet.org/online-rules-training-and-study-pack/>

Late in December 2023 we launched a suite of modules providing a complete study plan of the GC rules, suitable for those wishing to study all or part of the rules. Both the WhatsApp group and the Facebook page associated with this material were used during the year by those with questions about the rules or material.

During the course of 2024 we have launched the associated on-line test.

Some UK referee courses have now been reduced to a one-day course which concentrates with the on lawn activities, the online material and test being used extensively as pre-work.

This workgroup is now closed, being a live and on-going service provided by the WCF, in association with Ian Shore from the Chiltern Croquet Academy.

*Some interest has been expressed in producing similar material for AC Referees. If anyone wishes to volunteer to support such an initiative, please contact the Secretary-General.*

#### *Working Group 5 – AC Regeneration*

<https://worldcroquet.org/ac-regeneration/>

The number of ranked games in the AC Rankings has declined by 11% in the past five years. All Members are reporting a decline. There has been no reported growth in AC during 2024.

To identify whether the WCF can help halt this decline, a working group was launched early in 2024 with Debbie Lines as Chair. Some 3 meetings have now been held and the group expect to consult with Members within the next couple of months.

Recruitment, retention and growth of AC relies heavily on the grass roots volunteers at our clubs, however, the committee are developing some ideas with respect to how the WCF might be able to assist.

Work on this subject is expected to be a priority for 2025.

#### *Working Group 6 – Sponsorship*

Initial scoping of what is required is under-way. We hope to share this with Members early in 2025. A committee will be formed in due course.

#### **Would you like to volunteer?**

The WCF is a volunteer organization. If you would like to help with any of the above activities, please get in touch. We can move faster on these initiatives, if we have good, willing and able volunteers.

## **7. WCF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS**

### ***The WCF Website***

The website continues to operate well. No issues.

**The WCF YouTube channel:** [www.youtube.com/worldcroquet](http://www.youtube.com/worldcroquet)

This site continues to showcase some of the very best videos of top class, international croquet from around the world. Playlists provide links straight to videos created by WCF Members and International croquet players. There are currently 422 subscribers.

**Facebook Page** [www.facebook.com/WorldCroquet](http://www.facebook.com/WorldCroquet)

This site continues to post news items on a regular basis. It now has over 1.2k followers.

### **Live Streaming**

The 2024 GC World Championship and some of the European Championships this year featured livestreaming. The growth in capability of this has been phenomenal, with numbers of viewers much increased. Players around the world now expect to get livestreaming.

However, the MC are conscious that the cost, in terms of both money and volunteer effort, is large and not all events may be able to offer the same levels going forward. We will continue to work with hosts to provide the best livestreaming possible.

Our thanks to all the many volunteers involved this year.

### **Newsletters**

Newsletters are published on the WCF website approximately every three to four months depending on activity and are intended to ensure that all those interested in what the WCF and the MC are doing are adequately informed and kept up to date.

They can read or download at: <https://worldcroquet.org/mainnews/newsletters/>

### **Media Committee**

This committee met early in 2024.

A WhatsApp group for advertising events was launched. The use of this will be reviewed in early 2025.

Longer term initiatives, such as how to advertise croquet more effectively, or create promotional and training videos, were put on hold. It was decided to await the completion of a Feasibility Study on WCF Sponsorship. This may identify opportunities to develop the above areas, and if so, how they could be funded.

## **8. COURSES**

Two referee courses were held this year. One in Riga, Latvia and one in Edinburgh, Scotland. The WCF would like to thank Ian Shore, Ian Cobbold and Ron Carter, who travelled out to run these courses.

The candidates were asked to prepare using the WCFs Online Training and Study Pack which was launched in December 2023. The use of this for pre-study has worked well, and as a result the Edinburgh course was run over just one day. The morning was largely devoted to on-court tuition and the afternoon for the written exam and on-court test.

If you'd like help organising a similar course next year, please get in touch.

## **9. COUNCIL BUSINESS**

### **Council decision-making**

The Council made 9 decisions in 2024. There were two elections.

There is one open consultations at the year-end which are due to close during January.

#### Decisions

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 126 | GC Knock Out seeding Consultation. 30 votes in favour, 12 against.<br>Block Separation by Grade approved as the method for determining KO seeding after the blocks. . |
| 133 | 2024 Budget and 2022 Accounts approved. 45 votes in favour, none against.   |

- 131 Statute and Regulation amendments approved. 43 votes in favour, none against for all 5 files: our Statutes, plus the Administration, Sports, Event and Finance Regulations.
- 132 Ranking amendments for Returners and Fast Improvers. 43 votes in favour, none against.
- 130 Code of Conduct Policy approved. 40 votes in favour, none against.
- 134 Privacy Policy approved. 41 votes in favour, none against.
- 135 2025 WCF Fees Proposals. 40 votes in favour, none against.
- 136 Portugal upgrade from RCO to Associate Member. 50 votes in favour, none against.
- 137 ERC only - change to ERC Event Variations to Regulations. 26 votes in favour, two against.

Consultations/votes still under consideration at year-end:

- 138 Revised Under 18 Child Protection forms. Closed 22<sup>nd</sup> October.  
*After the first consultation, the documents have been revised and sent out for a second consultation with those Members who provided significant feedback to the consultation. We expect version 3 to be circulated to all members early in the New Year.*
- 142 2030 AC WTC Tier 1 Format Proposals – Member Consultation. Closes 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
- 143 2025 Budget for Member consideration. Closes 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.

Elections:

- 139 Nomination to MC – Jim Nicholls, from Australia elected 17<sup>th</sup> December.
- 140 Election of Brian Havill as Independent Examiner - elected 29<sup>th</sup> December.

## 10. STATUTES, REGULATIONS, POLICIES and APPROVALS

<https://worldcroquet.org/wcf-business/statutes-regulations/>

### **Ball and Hoop Approvals**

Balls - the Invictus Balls were approved for Championship in October 2024. Approved until November 2027.

Hoops - the Cerrajería Artística Borrajo, Spain (3 Finned Stainless) were approved from March 2024

### **Our Policies and Regulations as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024**

<b>Policy/Regulation</b>	<b>Effective date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Summary of key updates during 2024</b>
WCF Statutes	27.8.24	13.6	Amendment to clause 144 to reduce re-work. Clause 121 change to timings of annual reporting. Other minor amends. Addition of clause 116 Code of Conduct. Amendments to fee structure for regional entities in clauses 127.2 and 153.5
Code of Conduct Policy	27.8.24	1.0	New in 2024.
Sports Regulations	27.8.24	9.5	Appendix 2 – Clause 7.4 (clarification to Replacement Ranking List following a withdrawal) Appendix 3 – Type of Place – Clause 3.3 (clarification re Qualifier Events and their entry requirements) Appendix 2 – Singles Events, Allocation of Places (new clause 5.3.4) Remove all references to the discontinued Developing Nations Plate Appendix 2 – Clause 1 definitions

			<p>Clauses 4.2 Ranked games definitions and 4.3 GC minimum games requirement</p> <p>Inclusion of various clauses relating to the adoption of the new WCF Code of Conduct: changes in 1.1 define WCF Affiliate and in 4 and 6 specifying revised duties of officials and Appeals panel.</p> <p>Other minor amends and clarifications.</p>
Ranking Regulations	8.6.24	1.3	<p>Clause 3.34 AC Fast Improvers and Returners</p> <p>Clause 5 publication criteria</p> <p>New clauses 7 and 8 Fast Improvers and Returners.</p>
Privacy Policy	10.5.24	1.2	New in 2024.
Event Regulations	29.4.24	5.2	<p>Various minor wording amendments to appendices.</p> <p>Remove references to Developing Nations plate.</p> <p>Remove references to specific event entry fees.</p>
Guidance to Bidders & Hosts	2.4.24	5	Various updates
Administration Regulation	29.3.24	6	<p>Removal of references to 'council meetings'.</p> <p>Appendix 2 - add support for qualifier events into Tournament Group responsibilities.</p>
Finance Regulation	29.3.24	1.5	<p>New clause 12.4 Refunds.</p> <p>Amendments to Appendix A – WCF Investment Policy: 3 - update bank definitions; 8.4 - removal of names</p>
Equipment Regulations	24.12.23	6.4	No changes in 2024
Refereeing Regulations	30.6.22	1.6	No changes in 2024
Gender Policy	9.4.22	1	<p>No changes to policy in 2024.</p> <p><i>Note: A Review Group was put in place early in 2024 to review the policy. This group have met regularly during the course of 2024. Their recommendations are nearly ready to go to the MC for review.</i></p> <p><i>We expect proposals to be circulated for consultation early in 2025.</i></p>
Hall of Fame Regulations	3.6.18	3.0	No changes in 2024.
Child Protection Policy	1.10.05	1	<p>No changes to policy in 2024.</p> <p>A consultation to improve the Under 18 Parental consent documents is in progress.</p> <p><i>[Note: a full review of this policy is scheduled for 2025]</i></p>

## 11. WORLD RANKINGS

### **Ranking System**

Council approved changes to how Returners and Fast Improvers are managed within the GC Ranking System.

A new document: "The Ranking Systems Explained" was published. This briefly explains the intended use of the various options available on the online ranking pages.

A new option "Established Grades" has been made available. This option reduces the impact of deflation and is an optional listing available to Members should they wish to use it in their domain.

### **Other Ranking Matters**

GC and AC Country Rankings continue to be published every quarter on the WCF website.

The MC would like to thank the hard work of the Ranking Officers and their Assistant Ranking Officers (AROs), who ensure that results are entered properly. Without their efforts, the ranking system would not be able to produce such accurate data.

The AC Rankings continue to be run by Chris Williams.

Richard Bilton took over as GC Ranking Officer. The GC AROs are: Richard Bilton for England, John Christie for New Zealand, Peter Freer for Australia, Stephen Mulliner for Africa and the rest of Europe, Jeff Soo for USA and Eduardo de la Rocha for Spain.

## **12. LAWS and RULES**

### **AC Laws**

Little activity on the laws was required during 2024.

The AC Laws committee has now been in place 8 years and many of the existing team had reached the end of their term.

Our many thanks to Ian Vincent, a previous Chair, who left after very many years. We welcome Jeff Dawson as the new England Representative.

Graeme Roberts, who has been chair of the committee for many years, retires as the CNZ representative and is replaced by Vince Neall. Graeme will stay on, undertaking the role of MC representative.

Thank you also to those remaining on the committee for another term: Elizabeth Fleming (Australia) and Martyn Selman (USA). We appreciate your continued support.

The committee will select their new chair in early 2025.

### **GC Rules**

In October, the GC Rules Committee issued its first Official Rulings on the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. These can be found: <https://worldcroquet.org/croquet-information/golf-croquet/the-rules-of-golf-croquet/>

The GC Rules Committee has also required changes as at the end of 2024.

Stephen Mulliner, who has served two terms and chaired for many of them, retires. England replace him with the very experienced Ian Shore.

Amir Ramsis, Egypt, has served for two years and is also required to step down. We should be advised shortly who will replace him.

John van der Touw from Australia has volunteered to stand again for a second term, as has Wayne Gair for New Zealand and Alfonso Urbano for Spain. We thank them for their continued support.

The committee will select their new chair in early 2025.

### **Advantage GC**

The MC worked closely with Roy Tillcock with respect to approving the new tables launched in November. The technical nature of this work does require a fair degree of analysis. In light of this, the MC feel that future such updates would better be handled by a dedicated committee of experts on the subject.

Topic 141 consultation closed on 31.12.24 and feedback received approved the set-up of an Advantage GC Committee. There was no negative feedback, so this was approved straight away (as per Statute 144.2 and Administration Regulations, Appendix 1, clause 6.3).

Four nominations were received for the committee. The MC will formally convene this committee early in 2025.

### **13. HALL OF FAME**

Inducted into the Hall of Fame this year was Ian Burrige. As well as being a top Welsh international since the 1990's, Ian has worked hard coaching and mentoring players and has helped administrate our sport, both locally for Croquet England and as a previous WCF President.

His citation on the Hall of fame can be found here: <https://worldcroquet.org/world-croquet-federation/hall-of-fame/wcf-hall-of-fame-members/>

### **14. FINANCE**

The 2023 yearend accounts were reviewed by Brian Havill our Independent Examiner and published on the website in November.

The 2025 Budget is currently with Members – see Topic 140 which closes on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.

Topic 135 approved new fees both for subscriptions and events. This takes effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

#### Banking:

The WCF has three current accounts in place. Funds across these accounts, at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, amount to £29,172.

Deposit a/c - £50k has been deposited in a Lloyds 95-day call-off account at 3.46% interest.

The Friends of WCF savings account is held with United Trust and the balance as at the end of 2023 was £41,861. It is held for two years at 5% maturing 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2025. We await the 2024 end of year statement.

### **15. UNPLANNED ACTIVITIES**

The MC often find that they have to fire-fight unexpected issues. In 2023 we were distracted by Barclays closing down our account, and many days of effort were spent sourcing new accounts. 2024 was no different. This year the two most time-consuming unexpected issues that we had to deal with were:

- Ensuring the GC Worlds went ahead as scheduled
- Managing breaches in the Code of Conduct

### **16. ELECTIONS**

**Management Committee:** congratulations to Jim Nicholls who was elected to the Management Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> December.

**Independent Examiner:** The MC express our thanks to Brian Havill who continues in this role for 2025. Approved 29<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

## 15. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### Thank you to Samir Patel

After ten years on the Management Committee Samir has bowed to the pressures of work, family and his Croquet England commitments and decided to create space for someone with more time, energy and fresh ideas. During his time with the WCF he has helped to strengthen the WCF in many ways, not least with his expertise around tournament formats and regulatory matters. He was involved in the setup of the ERC, helped with the roll-out of Advantage GC, helped set up and run our Facebook page, and much more. Whatever the issue, Samir has taken the time to think it through carefully and provide sensible and practical input.

The MC would like to thank Samir for his hard work and commitment. We wish him all the best for the future.

### ***Members of the Management Committee***

As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, the members of the WCF Management Committee are:

José Álvarez-Sala (Spain), President  
Debbie Lines (England), Secretary-General  
Peter Payne (Switzerland), Treasurer  
Begoña Elizaburu (Spain)  
Graeme Roberts (New Zealand)  
Jeff Soo (USA)  
Jim Nicholls (Australia)  
Mohamed Raslan (Egypt)  
Roberts Stafeckis (Latvia)

## 16. OTHER MC BUSINESS

There were no other matters of note to report which have not been covered elsewhere. The MC continues to operate efficiently by email, with the added support of monthly video conference calls.

***The MC would like to thank everyone who has helped us during what has been an extremely busy and at times, difficult, year. Without the many volunteers that help on our Working Groups, serve on our committees, and of course, organise and run our Events, we could not operate. Thank you to you all.***



Debbie Lines  
Secretary-General  
4<sup>th</sup> January 2025