



THE CHESHIRE ASSOCIATION OF CRICKET OFFICIALS

Chairman

Martin Roberts

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Secretary

Brian Horrocks

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Treasurer

Barry Harwood

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CACO Annual General Meeting Minutes 24th February 2026 – Moss Farm

Meeting Opened 7.08 pm

Present

Brian Horrocks, Martin Roberts, Graham Church, Ian Greensmith, Barry Harwood, Ingeborg Bevers, Julie Rafferty, Sandra Mason, Derek Barnett, Andy Marsland, Tony Sayle, John Bowler, Dave Barnes, Alistair Davies, Parth Kapoor, Peter Hayes, Emma Mallinson, Gary Everatt, Graham Pugh, Chris Hyde, Simon Smith, Debayan Dey, Philip Greasby, David Page, Ian McDowell, Kevin Taylor, Steve Wilkins, David Tate, Andy Jackson, Brian Boys, John Potts, David Gane, Darren Sutcliffe, Keith Tysall, Ian Goldstone, Mike Carswell, Chris Rigg, James Emmerson, Mathew George, Andrew Carter, Carol Ingham.

Apologies

Mike Woollard, Steve Jackson, Bob Abel, David Hughes, Phil Thomas, Ian Wilson, David Holdsworth, Ian Wilkinson, Philip Barlow, Mike Boffey, Bill Alger, Simon Clarke, Barrie Burns, Rob Coombes, Anthony Jarvis, Keith Wells, Ian Barber, Terry Marnick, Dave Forster, John Whiteside, Ian Dutton, Ben Murray, Steve Wright. Ron Bedson, Jonathon Willoughby.

Minutes from CACO 2024 AGM and matters arising

None

2025 Reports from CACO Officials

Chairman

Martin welcomed everyone pointing out that the last AGM was in 2024 at the dissolution of the old umpiring associations. That AGM had reviewed 2024. The AGM held now in 2026 is the review of 2025. Technically then we have more than a year gap caused by the change to a single association.

Martin continued by presenting the Umpire of the Year awards from last season, one which was pleasantly supported by good weather. Whilst we still have two separate leagues to support, there are two awards as follows:

Cheshire County League – awarded to STEVE WILKINS

Cheshire Cricket League – awarded to JONATHON WILLOUGHBY

Steve was able to collect his award, whilst Jonathon had offered apologies for absence and so will



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receive his award at the Pre-season meeting.

For his report Martin briefed as follows:

As stated at the end of season meeting, he confirmed his thanks and appreciation to all officers for their diligence help and support during the last year. Because we are now in the closed season it doesn't mean that the work of the officers has slowed down. We continue to have meetings with the ECB and the leagues, preparing and delivering CPD and education courses (U&S), managing finances and, generally, getting ready for the 2026 season:

1. Our RODO, John Farrell has been appointed National Panel umpire's manager and has been replaced by Michael Grossett. Mike is currently RODO in the southwest and as the ECB has reduced the number of RODOs country wide from 4 to 3 he will add to his portfolio Cheshire, Lancs, Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland. Officers are scheduled to meet with Mike on 6th March 2026.
2. We submitted our proposals for funding to ECB and although not receiving all monies requested, we've received a fair share to implement our plans for 2026. Bids nationally exceeded funding availability.
3. True to its promise the ECB made us aware of regulation changes for the new season before 31st December 2025. Safety Regulations for Recreational Cricket have been changed in line with bowling directives to allow 12-year-olds, with parental consent and club approval, to play Open Age Cricket. The CCL will adopt this regulation as presented. CCCL will not be adopting the new regulation.
4. We should all be aware that full membership of ACO has now increased to £35 and direct debits will have been collected last month. Non-standing umpires who no longer require a DBS should have undertaken the free membership offering. If not, it is suggested they do so ahead of the 2027 season. The most recent membership list from the ECB shows Cheshire now has 189 officials compared with 210 in Nov 25. According to the list 3 standing umpires from last year are yet to renew their membership, those umpires who wish to stand in matches must be members and have a DBS. ECB is also in the throes of integrating its membership database with WTU. The idea behind this is to ensure that umpires without a valid DBS cannot be appointed to fixtures.
5. For some reason ECB ACO closed new membership applications towards the end of 2025 but has since reopened applications for membership so any new members can now apply. We are aware that this impacted one of our members.
6. ECB has advised that for the 2027 season 73 law changes are expected. This will require all standing umpires to attend a refresher course in the 2026 close season. It is hoped to see 100% attendance for these courses which will be significantly more than the 30% that have signed up for this year's winter CPD and refresher training sessions. Inge included more on this in her Education report.



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7. MCC will not be updating its laws app. Team cards are also not being updated but the ECB directive cards will be. These will be available for panel umpires at the pre-season meeting.

League matters:

1. Both leagues have agreed to the merging of the two leagues. This will in turn likely to lead to an open structure where 2nd XIs will play against 1st XIs. A steering team is looking at different work streams with a view to present initial findings to the leagues at the end of March 2026.
2. Given the above the CACO executive has decided to maintain umpire expenses at the same level in 2026 and will look for a substantial increase in the 2027 season. Minutes of meeting are published in the official's section of the CCB so this should not come as news to the membership.
3. Umpire numbers for 2026 face a worsening position. In 2025 we had 103 active umpires on the panel. Current panel membership for 2026 stands at 91. We welcome new members, the returning Alistair Davies, Jez Clein from the Liverpool Comp and new umpires to the panel, Martyn Corrin Ben Murray and Darren Sutcliffe. Sadly, 17 umpires will not be standing in the 2026 for various reasons. It looks as if we will be unable to provide umpires to all matches in Division 3 of CCCL in 2026 and unlikely to provide below Div 2 of the CCL.
4. Following on from topics discussed at the end of season meeting those of you that have attended the close season Thrilling Thursdays and the ongoing refreshers on Player Safety & Player Management and Conflict Management & Reporting will be fully aware of these topics; However, we have been asked to reiterate and remind all umpires of the following:

The ECB has issued instructions to umpires regarding Law 42.3.1 in relation to throwing the ball **AT** a player, umpire or another person in an **INAPPROPRIATE** and **DANGEROUS** manner with particular attention to the bowler throwing the ball at the batter. For the avoidance of any doubt the ECB has directed that where there is no attempt to run, the throwing of the ball at the striker should be considered dangerous and inappropriate and result in 5 penalty runs, even if the batter is out of their ground. The bowler can also expect to be reported for a Level 2 breach of Law 42. Furthermore, the ECB has directed that a **ZERO TOLERANCE** approach is to be adopted by umpires.

Inge and her training team have used scenarios from 2025 games in these sessions, and it is interesting that without fail attendees in these sessions decided that disciplinary action should be taken contrary to the lack of action taken in the 2025 season. So be prepared to act in 2026 and don't be shy of submitting a report to Derek and Chris. Umpires will only be asked to attend the disciplinary hearing if an appeal is lodged and then only if the Disciplinary Committee determine that the presence of the umpires is essential.



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1. All umpires are encouraged to have a post-match meeting with the captains leaving the ground. We have already received enquiries from clubs who feature towards the bottom of the fair play leagues to have more frequent reporting of fair play marks. They have been advised to ask their captains to discuss with umpires after every game the fair play mark awarded so that they get a better understanding so they can implement change immediately. On the topic of Fair Play, we were reminded that the maximum mark we should see for FP is a 4. To give a mark of 5 warrants justification and a brief report. Similarly, if awarding 2 or below a formal report of the captain or player(s) involved will be required and by definition should be a disciplinary report so that can be referred to in the report.
2. We have received an offer to sponsor blue umpire jackets. However, this is only available to those umpires who stand in CCCL matches as the jacket will be badged with the current CCCL logo which may indeed change on formation of the new league. My stance is that we are one association - Cheshire ACO (the preferred badge for the jacket) and it has been requested that jackets are available for all umpires. CACO will fund the difference in cost of jackets for those umpires this season with a view to being reimbursed when the new league takes office in 2027. This was opened this up to the floor to decide how the meeting would like to continue discussions. The majority supported the current stance.
3. John Edmonds has moved out of the area to Dorset to be closer to his family. John was an umpire, Member of the Education team and a Developer for Cheshire ACO and also served on the CCCL cricket committee as a Competition Secretary. John will be a big loss to Cheshire ACO. Can we please place on record our thanks and appreciation to John for the work he has undertaken for the benefit of Cheshire cricket, and we wish him all the very best in the future.

Secretary

Brian summarised the correspondence file as healthy and decidedly 'In Season' versus 'Close season'. Main topics were:

- Live streaming, Social Media Policy
- Umpire performance, Captains reports
- DBS requests, trials and tribulations
- Women's cricket discussion paper
- Laws of cricket
- New umpire onboarding
- ECB Funding
- WTU set up, admin and subsequent requests
- Playing regulations in leagues and cups
- Invitations to umpire in other cricket
- CPD training dates, training content

Emphasis was placed on Live Streaming where we had couple of incidences last year of clubs



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wanting to review umpires' decisions which is strictly prohibited. We are reminded that we can insist on Live Streaming being stopped if we have concerns. We wrote to Chairmen to emphasise this very strongly.

We also clarified that whilst there are two leagues, a difference in 'Wides' interpretation was allowed. In the Cheshire Cricket League wides are judged according to MCC laws (umpire judgement). In the County league wides are judged with the assistance of the 17-inch (blue) lines and leg side deliveries. An umpire therefore may see blue lines most weeks and then come across a ground where no blue lines are painted. This is OK at CCL grounds and should be expected (note that CCL clubs must paint 17-inch lines for T20 matches and if those lines are still visible for Saturday matches, this is not a concern. They do not have to be coloured blue).

Treasurer

Barry presented the accounts for 2025. A surplus of £1,070 is shown for the year ending 31st October 2025. This is due to a relatively successful bid for funding from the ECB. The closing balance of £17,270 includes the closing balance of the County League ACU&S and the CCL U&SA incorporated in autumn 2024.

In response to a question received prior to the AGM, all panel umpires paid their CACO £5 annual membership fee in advance of the 2025 season.

Thanks were extended to John Bone for undertaking the task of auditing promptly and effectively, also, to the dedicated volunteers in the Association for making the Treasurer role very straight forward.

Membership Secretary

During the 2025 season 3 newsletters were circulated. There have been calls for additional newsletters throughout the year, however, newsletters don't write themselves. We have asked previously, and will do so again, if anyone has news stories to share with CACO membership, then we'll be happy to include them in the next newsletter or circulate separately as appropriate. Alternatively, if anyone would like to take on the newsletter role as stand-alone task and publish more frequently – that is a possibility.

34 other pieces of email correspondence to CACO members were handled. Not all members would have been sent every email as some were targeted to different groups, e.g. panel umpires, newly qualified umpires etc. The main themes of the additional correspondence included pre and post season meetings, DBS process, ECB news, match regulations, umpire and scorer training. In addition, 98 email enquiries were received from members covering a wide range of subjects including: ACO membership, ACO contact details, DBS process, directions to cricket grounds, clarification of match regulations, where to find ECB match regulations, umpire training, how to access and use WTU.



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157 match appointments were made primarily across Cheshire Youth Cricket and Disability Cricket.

This has totalled 358 appointments due to the high level of acceptances only for umpires to later withdraw from appointments, which has added to the workload. Hopefully challenges making appointments will be addressed having CYC and CWCL appointments made through WTU for 2026 season.

Routinely, CACO committee meetings and regular contact with CACO Chair, CACO Treasurer and CACO Secretary regarding administrative and fiduciary matters (e.g. membership fee collection).

To ensure that CACO communications adhere to GDPR for using official's personal data, the database used for CACO emails is the one provided by ECB ACO. It is vital that all officials ensure their personal contact details are kept up to date with the ECB, otherwise they may not receive regular communications or invitations to meetings.

The email address for ECB ACO is: ecb.aco@ecb.co.uk

Appointments Officer

Ian thanked all of our members for cooperation during the season and, in particular, the help received from CACO officials. As mentioned earlier, only 91 umpires are currently available to Ian for the coming season. This reflects in the first week's availability where we (currently) have 59 umpires to distribute across both leagues. New umpires will be assimilated into the group and set up with WTU credentials. They will then start their careers off in the Cheshire Cricket League to gain experience.

A vital factor for appointment lies in DBS currency. No official can be appointed by WTU without a fully up to date DBS. All officials are responsible to maintaining their DBS with the ECB. New processes mean that two separate emails must be handled. Without this the DBS process will fail and a new application made. DBS are current until their end date. A renewal will have been prompted by ECB well in advance of this. ECB are tightening their processes to spot occasions where officials are appointed without DBS being current. Regional associations would be penalised in this case.

County Training Officer

Inge reported that in the 2024/25 training season a different and better format designed to be both useful and human had been introduced: every second Thursday of the month there was a session that combined CPD with a social, deliberately pitched as low-level learning and a regular chance to reconnect with colleagues and strengthen a sense of community. It was called *Thrilling Thursday*. To reduce travel distance concerns, the sessions alternated between Sale and Chester Boughton Hall, so that, over time, the travel burden was shared across the county. Sale was generally the more popular of the two evenings, but even then, attendance rarely reached 20; Chester Boughton Hall averaged closer to 15.



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In the run-up to the 2025 season a programme of refresher sessions was also delivered at the usual locations. Again, attendance plateaued at around 20. It is a concern that attendance over the last 18 months has not seen any improvement. Training is organised because umpiring is a craft that needs maintenance: laws change, regulations evolve, interpretations tighten, and experience is best exchanged in conversation, not in isolation. Cricket is also, by its nature, a summer sport with long weeks of fixtures and very little space to catch up properly with peers once the season is underway.

Watching cricket on television and occasionally leafing through *Tom Smith* is not sufficient preparation for another season on the field.

Feedback from captains' reports (often "sanitised" to the point where there is no way to trace patterns back to specific fixtures), repeatedly point in the same direction: a desire for greater consistency, and a perception that not all umpires are fully up to date with regulations and/or the Laws. That gap between what is being asked of us and what many are prepared to do to meet it is not sustainable.

Thanks were given to the tutor team. They have delivered well, prepared thoroughly, and by all accounts the sessions were valued by those who attended.

For the purposes of CPD in 2026 the Training Team have now developed a county-wide "matrix" of sessions across early February to early April. For each of the five session topics there are four different options for location, date, and time. The booking numbers remain low despite the widest and most flexible programme we offered to date. New members make up part of the bookings underlining that attendance from existing panel umpires is well below expectations.

Cheshire remains fortunate to have a strong tutor group. As mentioned, we have lost John Edmonds who has relocated to Dorset, but we have gained Martin Roberts. If any member would like to join the tutor team and help shape the standard of umpiring in the county, they would be most welcome.

Thanks were extended to all those who have engaged especially our tutors: Graham Pugh, John Edmonds, Barrie Burns, Alistair Davies, and now Martin Roberts. They have been generous with their time, and willing to support yet another demanding pre-season programme. Thanks also directed to the Board for continuing to support the education programme, in particular to David Sharpe for once again performing logistical miracles by getting another "Inge idea" neatly into the C-Vent registration system.

Martin followed up with some recent ECB findings. A recent ECB survey of preferred training styles revealed that two thirds of Cheshire umpires (50% of whom responded) wanted face to face training. One third preferring on-line computer-based training. The desired topics to be covered, as stated, were: Conflict Management, Progression and Positioning/Movement. Other requirements yielded were: Player Behaviour, Facilities and More interaction with colleagues. It is no surprise to find that all of our training offerings are designed to meet these specific requirements. The onus is on our officials to look after their own CPD.



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County Development Officer

In Barrie's absence, Martin reiterated that he has 26 umpires who had expressed an interest in

Pathway development in 2026. A deadline of 30th April 2026 is in place for anyone else wishing to register interest for this season.

County Scorers Officer

Sandra described the current scorer courses being offered. Reasonable numbers of attendees were coming along. Thanks were given to the Board for their support, and the new ECB representative has also spent time with Sandra. Evidence was quoted from last season where umpires had seen an improvement in scorer awareness and skills in dealing with DLS.

Women's Cricket Representative

Emma reported that development of the Women's cricket league was promising and thanked the committee for their support. The structure of women's cricket is growing and mirroring the men's game. In 2026 division one will receive independent umpires, appointed via WTU, by CACO. So far 36 umpires had registered interest in being appointed. There is work to do to set up team captains, however, a very positive mood exists in the process.

In 2026 season, CACO umpires needing to travel outside of the county to officiate (to Leigh CC, Leyland CC and Northop Hall CC) will receive normal match expenses plus a flat rate £10 towards additional travel costs.

County Safeguarding Officer

Julie presented her report to the meeting. Key points were:

- DBS remained a very key issue (as described earlier). Julie reiterated the need for personal responsibility in maintaining it with ECB. Cheshire Cricket Board can and will help in situations of difficulty.
- Junior scorers (under 18) should not be allowed to sit in scoreboxes with an adult unless chaperoned. Preferably scoring is done in an open environment. Umpires can help by watching for this situation.
- The question of open age cricket was addressed again. Julie remains ready to help in any situation, but the ECB regulations are supported, and we will watch for any situations where under 12 years of age players are in teams. Any junior cricketer still requires parental consent. Again, it is the club's responsibility to ensure these eligibility concerns are met, not the umpires.
- Anti-discrimination concerns should be handled through the disciplinary process. If an Umpire does witness concerning behaviour. We have the tools to report it. Julie will act of any such report.



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- As described earlier – Live Streaming policies must be adhered to. Julie can step in to areas of concerns where Live Streaming may be being used in underage situations that are of concern.
 - Any instances observed by umpires where drugs or other anti-social circumstance are found can be discussed with Julie.
 - Umpires should all be aware and up to date with Safeguarding and Anti-discrimination training. The latest training offerings are on the Cheshire Cricket Board website: Safeguarding training: <https://booking.ecb.co.uk/event/964d41dc-4854-4457-9265-2fd9cf21c435/summary>

Anti-discrimination training: <https://www.cheshirecricketboard.co.uk/anti-discrimination/introducing-the-boundary/>

Both courses are also accessible for umpires through the ECB Learning

Portal: <https://elearning.ecb.co.uk/login/index.php>

- Training for younger players and officials is being delivered by Cheshire Cricket Board which should bear fruit in years to come.
- In response to a query from the floor – Safeguarding training attendance is not transferable between sports. An umpire should complete the training for cricket even if similar (*not the same) training has been undertaken for say, Football.

Appointment of Auditor(s)

John Bone has been asked to continue in role.

Election of Officials for 2026

Martin pointed out that there were no nominations for officer positions hence the meeting was requested to agree for the current committee to be appointed en-bloc for another year. Since the Agenda was circulated last week Parth Kapoor had advised that he wished to stand down from his role as BAME representative which creates a vacancy. Parth was thanked for his contribution during his time on the committee.

Like any organisation we need to have a succession plan in place. It's inevitable that at some point committee members will stand down and will need to be replaced, if no one comes forward the outcome is clear. We could do with assistance in helping Ian and the team make appointments so if anyone is interested, please have a word with Ian Greensmith and/or Ian Goldstone at the end of the meeting or if anyone wishes to get more information from any committee member please do not hesitate to ask. Members can always be co-opted on to the committee so you can shadow, and we'll always find you something to do.

President – Derek Barnett OBE, accepted continuing in role.

Existing committee members had declared their willingness to continue in office and were duly re-



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elected en bloc. Two vacancies exist in the co-opted members. Parth Kapoor has stood down from the BAME role and we need a replacement. The Disability Cricket representative role is still open.

AOB

David Gane extended an invitation on behalf of Ashley CC who are holding a fund-raising event on 20th March. Umpires are invited to take a table at the event at Altrincham Football Club, at which Graeme Swan will be the main speaker. Indications of interest to David.

Meeting Closed 8.40 pm