INTERNATIONAL BREAST CANCER PADDLERS' COMMISSION

5th IBCPC CONGRESS

DRAFT MINUTES

Date: 27 August 2026
Location: Aix-les-Bains, France
Format: In person
Chair: Meri Gibson – President, IBCPC
Secretary: Ann Forbes Arndt– Secretary, IBCPC
Recording: The Congress was recorded for preparation and verification of the Minutes.

Minute format: These Minutes follow the official Congress Agenda. They provide a concise institutional record of the substantive reports, discussions, resolutions and follow-up actions. Informal and personal exchanges are not reproduced.

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1. Welcome by President

Context

President **Meri Gibson** opened the 5th IBCPC Congress and welcomed delegates, National Representatives, Regional Coordinators, Country Liaisons, guests and representatives of the wider international Dragon Boat community.

She acknowledged the presence of representatives from the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF), European and national Dragon Boat organisations, the Bahamas and Pan American Dragon Boat community, together with messages of support received from different parts of the world.

President Gibson reflected on the wider purpose of IBCPC and referred in particular to the experience of breast cancer paddlers from Senegal who had intended to participate in the Festival but had been unable to obtain the necessary visas. The example illustrated the continuing barriers faced by survivors in some countries and the importance of international outreach, inclusion and practical support.

During the opening remarks, **Claudio Schermi, President of the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF), was invited to briefly address Congress**.

President Schermi recalled his longstanding relationship with the breast cancer paddling community and recognised the distinctive contribution of IBCPC to the international Dragon Boat movement.

He reaffirmed IDBF's respect for the history, identity, mission and governance structure of IBCPC and expressed his confidence and support for **Meri Gibson as IBCPC President**, also acknowledging her role as **Senior Vice President of IDBF**.

He recognised the contribution of the IBCPC Board and Management Group and underlined the importance of shared responsibility, constructive debate and service to the organisation's mission. He confirmed IDBF's commitment to continued institutional cooperation with IBCPC.

Decision / Outcome

Congress noted the opening remarks and institutional messages.

Status: INFORMATION

Action(s)

None.

2. Congress Formal Matters – Secretary

2.1 Verification of Representatives and Quorum

Context

The Secretary reported on registration and the verification of representatives attending the Congress.

The number of representatives present, together with valid proxies lodged, was sufficient to meet the quorum requirement.

Decision / Outcome

Quorum was confirmed and the 5th IBCPC Congress was declared duly constituted.

Status: PROCEDURAL

Action(s)

Secretary to retain the final attendance and quorum record with the official Congress documentation.

2.2 Confirmation of Proxy Votes Lodged

Context

Proxy votes lodged for the Congress had been checked through the registration process.

It was noted that proxies would also need to be taken into account during the election verification process.

Decision / Outcome

Valid proxy votes were accepted for the purposes of Congress voting, subject to final verification where required.

Status: PROCEDURAL

Action(s)

Secretary and Scrutineering Committee to retain the final verified proxy record.

2.3 Presentation and Approval of the Agenda

Context

The official Agenda was presented for approval.

A delegate proposed that Congress consider the establishment of an independent group to undertake a broader review of the IBCPC Constitution and Bylaws.

Following discussion on procedure, it was agreed that the matter would be addressed later in the meeting as additional business.

Decision / Outcome

The Agenda was approved by clear majority, with the governance review matter to be discussed later in the Congress.

Status: RESOLUTION

Action(s)

Governance review proposal to be considered later in the meeting.

3. Introduction of National Representatives

Context

National Representatives, Regional Coordinators and Country Liaisons were introduced and recognised.

Congress acknowledged their important role in connecting IBCPC with teams and local communities, distributing information, supporting new and existing teams and contributing to regional and international development.

Their contribution was recognised as an important factor in the substantial growth experienced by IBCPC.

Decision / Outcome

Congress recognised and thanked the National Representatives, Regional Coordinators and Country Liaisons for their service.

Status: INFORMATION

Action(s)

None.

4. 2023 Congress Minutes

Context

The Minutes of the 2023 Congress were presented for approval.

Discussion focused on several governance and record-keeping matters, including:

- the absence of numerical vote counts for some decisions;
- the distinction between matters deferred to a later stage and matters referred back to the Board;
- implementation of changes to the Constitution and Bylaws;
- the timing of publication of Congress Minutes.

The Secretary explained that votes at the 2023 Congress had been decided by a clear majority and therefore individual numerical counts had not always been recorded.

President Gibson stated that amendments requiring Congress approval had not been introduced without the appropriate authority and that changes resulting from Congress '23 decisions had been implemented accordingly and in a timely manner.

The concern regarding the late publication of the DRAFT 2023 Minutes was acknowledged. The Secretary confirmed that the process would be improved for future Congresses.

Motion

To approve the Minutes of the 2023 IBCPC Congress as circulated.

Decision / Outcome

The 2023 Congress Minutes were approved by clear majority.

Congress also recognised the importance of preparing and publishing future Congress Minutes within a more appropriate timeframe.

Status: RESOLUTION / ACTION

Action(s)

- Future Congress Minutes to be prepared and made available more promptly.

5. Per Capita Growth Analysis & Strategic Development

Presented by Meri Gibson

Context

President **Meri Gibson** presented an analysis of the international growth of IBCPC and the opportunities available for future strategic development.

IBCPC had grown from approximately **190 teams in 19 countries in 2018 to more than 430 teams in 43 countries in 2026**.

The President emphasised that this development had been supported by the work of National Representatives, Regional Coordinators, Country Liaisons and volunteers throughout the organisation.

Previous outreach initiatives included activity in Israel and Egypt, the Bahamas and Caribbean, and Croatia. Strong development was also noted in countries including Brazil, Argentina and Italy.

Strategic Development

President Gibson noted that considerable potential remains both within existing IBCPC countries and in countries where Dragon Boat is already established but breast cancer paddling has not yet developed.

The wider international network of IDBF was identified as an important potential resource for future development and cooperation.

The presentation proposed a greater focus on regional development, supported by better data and closer cooperation between established and developing communities.

Three practical areas of work were highlighted:

1. development of a **tiered growth framework** in consultation with Regional Coordinators and National Representatives;
2. testing a **mentor–peer model**, pairing established communities with developing regions;
3. creation of a repeatable and reliable process for maintaining current membership and per-capita data.

The Board had previously approved the acquisition of a professional **data platform** to support this work.

Decision / Outcome

Congress noted the Per Capita Growth Analysis and the strategic development direction presented.

Status: INFORMATION / STRATEGIC ACTION

Action(s)

- Strategic growth framework to be further developed with Regional Coordinators and National Representatives.
- Mentor–peer development model to be considered for pilot implementation.
- IBCPC to establish a repeatable process for maintaining accurate growth and membership data.
- Growth presentation and supporting information to be made available to members.
- Presentation to be made available on the IBCPC website

6. Treasurer's Report

Presented by Sue von Richter

Context

The Treasurer's Report was presented by **Sue von Richter**, who had been working closely with Treasurer **Janice Melville** and had assumed the role of Interim Treasurer as Janice progressively stepped aside due to health reasons.

President Gibson explained the circumstances and Congress recognised Janice Melville's contribution and service to IBCPC.

Sue von Richter outlined her professional experience in finance, accounting, taxation, financial reporting and not-for-profit administration.

A consolidated financial overview covering the period since the previous Festival was presented.

The financial information included funds held in New Zealand, Euro and Canadian accounts.

It was explained that the organisation remained below the applicable New Zealand statutory threshold requiring an audit. The financial statements had nevertheless been subject to professional and legal review. The accounts had been approved by the board and had been filed with the relevant tax and charitable trust government departments.

Discussion

Delegates requested greater clarity regarding some significant expenditure categories, particularly:

- Festival site visits;
- flights and accommodation;
- outreach and development expenditure.

President Gibson explained that Festival site visits form part of the preparation and oversight arrangements for IBCPC events and are part of the MOU signed with the festival organisers .

She also clarified that some travel connected with IBCPC activity is personally funded or supported by third parties and does not therefore represent a full cost to the organisation.

The President and Interim Treasurer acknowledged that expenditure categories should be more clearly separated in future financial reporting.

The treatment of funds held in different currencies was also discussed. It was explained that retaining funds temporarily in their original currencies may reduce unnecessary conversion costs and provide greater flexibility for future expenditure.

Financial Management Development

The Interim Treasurer reported that:

- a full four year budget had been prepared;
- the organisation should move from spreadsheet-based accounting to professional financial software;
- improved classification of expenditure would be introduced;
- future audit requirements and costs would be considered as the organisation develops.

Motion

To accept the financial statements as presented.

Decision / Outcome

The financial statements were approved.

Congress supported the continued professionalisation of IBCPC financial management and clearer future reporting.

Status: RESOLUTION / ACTION

Action(s)

- Interim Treasurer to progress implementation of the annual budgets.
- Professional accounting software to be introduced.
- Future financial reports to provide clearer breakdowns of significant expenditure, including travel, accommodation and outreach.
- Future audit requirements and associated costs to remain under review.

7. President's Report

Meri Gibson

Context

President **Meri Gibson** presented her formal report on the development of IBCPC during the current term and its future direction.

She reported that the growth achieved since 2018 had substantially increased the membership, geographical reach and operational responsibilities of the organisation.

The President noted that this development had resulted from sustained outreach, local leadership, international partnerships and a significant contribution of voluntary work.

Strategic Framework

The President confirmed that IBCPC's strategic direction is structured around three main pillars:

1. **Growth and Development**
2. **Engagement**
3. **Governance**

She reported that the organisation now requires clearer allocation of responsibility in areas including:

- revenue development;
- strategic partnerships;
- regional growth;
- communications;
- outreach;
- Festival development;
- governance.

The President emphasised that existing Festival levies, sponsorship arrangements and voluntary support would not alone be sufficient to support the scale of future development envisaged.

The organisation therefore needs to develop larger and more sustainable partnerships.

Governance and Transparency

President Gibson addressed concerns and discussion regarding transparency and governance.

She referred to the use of newsletters, webinars, financial publication and other communication channels and acknowledged that some processes, including the timing of Congress Minutes, could be improved.

She also recognised that the Constitution and Bylaws, which remain substantially based on the governance framework established during the earlier development of IBCPC in 2010, now require a more comprehensive review.

Heritage and Medical Leadership

The President recognised the contribution of important figures in the history of breast cancer Dragon Boat paddling.

Particular recognition was given to **Sandy Smith**, whose contribution is remembered through the Sandy Smith Global Finale; **Dr Don McKenzie**, whose pioneering research and vision were fundamental to the development of the movement; and **Jane Frost**, together with other pioneers, volunteers and survivors.

The President also reaffirmed the importance of the IBCPC Medical Advisory Panel and the need for reliable, evidence-based medical guidance.

Future Festivals and Development

The Future Festivals Committee has developed a longer-term pathway covering **2030, 2034 and beyond**.

The organisation is also considering smaller regional and wellness-style events between major international Festivals.

The **Bahamas Wellness Retreat 2028** was identified as an early example of this developing model.

Board and Volunteers

President Gibson recognised the work of current and former Board members and the significant personal commitment required from volunteers.

Particular appreciation was expressed to Secretary Ann Forbes Arndt and those who had supported the organisation and the preparation of Congress.

The President concluded by emphasising the need to protect the values and identity of IBCPC while strengthening the structures required for its future.

Decision / Outcome

Congress received and noted the President's Report.

The report confirmed a future direction based on continued growth, stronger governance, improved organisational systems, sustainable partnerships and service to the international breast cancer paddling community.

Status: INFORMATION / STRATEGIC ACTION

Action(s)

- Board to continue development of the organisational structure and allocation of responsibilities.
- Partnership and sustainable revenue development to remain priorities.
- Governance work programme to continue.
- Future Festival and regional event pathway to be progressed.
- Approved data and management systems to support future organisational development.

8. Voting and Procedures – Secretary and Chief Scrutineer / Election Officer

Context

The Secretary and Scrutineering Committee explained the procedures for the election of the Vice President and Secretary.

Congress was advised that:

- elections would be conducted by secret ballot;
- separate ballots would be used for each position;
- one valid selection was required on each ballot;
- ballots with multiple selections or inappropriate additional markings could be declared spoiled;
- completed ballots would be collected by the independent Scrutineering Committee;
- counting and verification would take place separately from the Congress;
- results would be announced once verification was complete.

The procedure for other Congress votes by show of cards was also explained.

For matters requiring a simple majority, the applicable threshold was confirmed as **50% + 1**.

Decision / Outcome

Congress noted and accepted the announced voting and scrutineering procedures.

Status: PROCEDURAL

Action(s)

Scrutineering Committee to conduct and verify the elections in accordance with the announced procedure.

9. Voting for Vice President and Secretary Positions

Context

The nominee list and candidate information had been circulated prior to Congress and candidate webinars had been held.

Congress proceeded to vote by secret ballot for the positions of:

- Vice President;
- Secretary.

The ballots were collected by the Scrutineering Committee.

Further verification and a recount were subsequently required, including verification of proxy votes.

Decision / Outcome

Voting was completed.

The final verified results were not available before the Congress was required to conclude due to the Festival programme.

Status: PROCEDURAL / PENDING

Action(s)

- Scrutineering Committee to complete the recount and verification process.
- Official election results to be communicated following confirmation.

Agenda Note: The official circulated Agenda did not contain a numbered Item 10. These Minutes therefore continue with Item 11 in accordance with the circulated Agenda.

11. Amendments to the IBCPC Bylaws

Context

Proposed amendments to the IBCPC Bylaws had been circulated in accordance with the timetable stated in the official Agenda:

- first circulation: **28 June 2026**;
- second/final circulation: **14 August 2026**.

The Secretary explained the applicable voting procedure and the requirement for a simple majority of attending Teams.

The proposed amendments were considered by Congress in accordance with the circulated documentation.

Discussion also reflected a wider concern that the current Bylaws and governance framework require a more complete review in view of the significant development of IBCPC since their original preparation.

Decision / Outcome

The proposed Bylaw matters were considered and voted upon in accordance with the applicable procedure.

Congress also recognised the need for a broader review of the Constitution and Bylaws beyond the individual amendments presented at this Congress.

Status: RESOLUTION / GOVERNANCE ACTION

Action(s)

- Approved amendments to be incorporated into the official Bylaws in accordance with the Congress decisions and circulated texts.
- Wider governance review to be progressed as recorded below.

Additional Business Agreed During Adoption of the Agenda

Comprehensive Review of the Constitution and Bylaws

Context

Congress returned to the proposal raised during approval of the Agenda concerning a broader review of the IBCPC Constitution and Bylaws.

Delegates expressed support for meaningful member involvement and suggested that the composition of any review group should consider appropriate representation from different regions.

President Gibson agreed that a comprehensive review was now appropriate and welcomed member participation.

It was proposed that an **Expression of Interest** be issued for members wishing to contribute.

Decision / Outcome

Congress supported progressing a comprehensive review of the IBCPC governance framework through an appropriately structured working group or committee.

The detailed structure and parameters of the review will be developed by the Board.

Status: ACTION / GOVERNANCE

Action(s)

Board to develop:

- scope and terms of reference;
- composition and selection criteria;
- appropriate regional representation;
- working timetable;
- Expression of Interest process.

The Expression of Interest is to be communicated through National Representatives, the website and other appropriate IBCPC communication channels.

12. Guest Speaker – Dr Tracy Sexton

Context

Dr **Tracy Sexton**, radiation oncologist, breast cancer survivor, paddler and Chair of the IBCPC Medical Advisory Panel, addressed Congress.

Her presentation reviewed important developments in breast cancer treatment over approximately twenty years and combined professional medical experience with her own experience as a breast cancer survivor.

Key Points

The presentation covered major developments including:

- advances in chemotherapy and targeted therapies;

- HER2-targeted treatment;
- expanded genetic testing;
- increasingly personalised and gene-directed medicine;
- immunotherapy;
- shorter radiotherapy programmes;
- improved techniques to reduce cardiac and lung exposure;
- ongoing research into treatment reduction for selected patients.

Dr Sexton also highlighted the increasing evidence supporting physical activity and exercise as important elements in recovery and survivorship.

She described her own introduction to Dragon Boat and the importance of the sport in providing physical activity, belonging and a community of shared experience.

Decision / Outcome

Congress received the presentation with appreciation and recognised the importance of maintaining strong evidence-based medical guidance within IBCPC.

Status: INFORMATION

Action(s)

Medical Advisory Panel to continue providing appropriate medical and scientific guidance to IBCPC and its members.

13. Guest Speaker – Melissa Adams

Context

Melissa Adams, psychologist, breast cancer survivor, Dragon Boat coach and Team USA para-athlete, shared her personal experience of diagnosis, treatment, recovery and sport.

She described how breast cancer treatment and reconstructive surgery affected her physical identity and how Dragon Boat enabled her to rebuild confidence and trust in her body.

Her journey progressed from new paddler to coach and subsequently to international para-athlete.

She also described representing Team USA as a paddler and drummer, including the use of both verbal and sign-language communication.

Central Message

The testimony focused particularly on **inclusion and opportunity**.

Melissa emphasised that many survivors enter the sport believing that they are not athletes or that physical limitations may exclude them from meaningful participation.

She encouraged coaches and leaders to create opportunities for people to discover their capabilities and to ensure that breast cancer survivors can find a place within the Dragon Boat community.

Decision / Outcome

Congress received the testimony with appreciation and recognised its strong connection with the values of inclusion, participation, recovery and community.

Status: INFORMATION

Action(s)

IBCPC to continue promoting inclusive opportunities for breast cancer paddlers across different levels of participation.

14. Votes Announced – Chief Scrutineer

Context

The Scrutineering Committee continued the verification and recount process in relation to the Vice President and Secretary elections.

The President confirmed that she was not involved in the counting process and that results would be announced only after independent verification had been completed.

At the time the Congress needed to conclude, the final verified result was not yet available.

Decision / Outcome

No final election result was formally announced before adjournment.

Status: PENDING

Action(s)

Chief Scrutineer / Scrutineering Committee to complete the verification process and communicate the official results through the appropriate IBCPC procedure.

15. Introduction of IBCPC Board

Context

The Agenda provided for the introduction of the IBCPC Board following the election results.

As the final election results remained under verification, the formal introduction of the complete post-Congress Board could not be concluded during the available meeting time.

Decision / Outcome

The matter remained pending completion of the election process.

Status: PENDING / INFORMATION

Action(s)

IBCPC to confirm and communicate the updated Board composition following verification of the election results.

16. Close of Congress

Context

The Festival opening programme had been brought forward and delegates were required to leave the Congress in order to attend the scheduled activities.

The election verification process remained in progress.

A motion to adjourn the Congress was moved and seconded.

Decision / Outcome

The motion was carried and the 5th IBCPC Congress was adjourned.

Status: RESOLUTION

Action(s)

Outstanding election results and the resulting Board composition to be communicated after completion of verification.

Additional Congress Administration Matters

During the Congress, delegates also raised two practical matters for future consideration.

Language Accessibility

A delegate noted that detailed governance discussion conducted only in English may be difficult for some international representatives to follow fully and requested that future Congresses consider interpretation or other language-support arrangements.

The importance of accessibility was recognised, while delegates also acknowledged the potential financial and organisational implications.

Parliamentary Procedure

A delegate recommended that future Congresses consider appointing a designated **parliamentarian or procedural adviser**.

The objective would be to provide a single recognised source of procedural guidance, assist the Chair and avoid multiple competing procedural interventions from the floor.

Decision / Outcome

Both recommendations were noted positively for future Congress planning.

Status: ACTION

Action(s)

- Board to examine practical and financially sustainable language-support options for future Congresses.
- Board to consider appointment of a parliamentarian or procedural adviser for future Congresses.

Institutional Conclusion

The 5th IBCPC Congress reflected the substantial international development achieved by IBCPC and the increasing governance, financial and organisational responsibilities associated with that growth.

The **Per Capita Growth Analysis and President's Report presented by Meri Gibson** provided the main strategic framework for the Congress. They identified a future direction based on **growth and development, engagement and governance**, supported by stronger regional structures, better data, sustainable partnerships and an evolving Festival programme.

The Financial Report confirmed the importance of continuing to professionalise accounting, budgeting and financial reporting as the organisation develops.

The governance discussions recognised that the structures which supported the earlier development of IBCPC must now evolve to remain appropriate for an organisation operating across more than forty countries. The commitment to a broader review of the Constitution and Bylaws therefore represents an important element of the next stage of development.

The contributions of **Dr Tracy Sexton and Melissa Adams** also ensured that the institutional discussions remained connected to the fundamental purpose of IBCPC. Medical progress, exercise, recovery, inclusion, shared experience and community remain at the centre of the movement.

President Gibson's overall message was to recognise and respect the history and achievements of IBCPC while continuing to strengthen the organisation so that it can serve a larger and increasingly diverse international breast cancer paddling community with integrity, inclusion and purpose.

Addendum to Congress:

Outcome of the election:

Vice President – Kris Kunze

Secretary – Veronica Carlos