GCE Membership Strategy

1. Purpose of this Strategy

This Membership Strategy sets out how GCE will attract, engage, retain and communicate with its members, in line with the Society's Rules, in particular Rules 3.1 and 4.4. It is intended to be a practical, living document that supports GCE's core purpose as a Community Benefit Society (CBS), while ensuring that membership remains open, inclusive, informed and meaningful.

The Strategy recognises that members are central to GCE's legitimacy, governance and long-term sustainability. It therefore focuses not only on growing membership, but on maintaining strong, two-way relationships with members over time.

2. Membership Principles (Rule 3.1)

In accordance with Rule 3.1, GCE's membership will be:

- **Open and voluntary** – open to individuals and organisations that support the Society's objects, without discrimination.
- **Community-focused** – prioritising people with a genuine connection to, or interest in, the community served by GCE.
- **Democratic** – operating on a one-member-one-vote basis, regardless of shareholding.
- **Affordable and accessible** – with a share structure designed to balance accessibility with financial resilience.

Membership is not treated as a purely financial transaction, but as participation in a shared community endeavour.

3. Membership Objectives (Rule 4.4)

GCE's objectives for membership are to:

- Maintain a healthy, engaged and informed membership base.
- Ensure membership reflects the community GCE serves.
- Enable new members to join and existing members to exit in a fair and transparent way.
- Support the Society's financial resilience through community share capital, while respecting the voluntary nature of membership.

- Provide clear routes for members to participate, be heard and hold the Board to account.

4. Membership Lifecycle

4.1 Joining

New members can join GCE by purchasing the minimum required shareholding, subject to the Society's Rules.

In 2026, GCE will launch an Open Share Offer to:

- Welcome new members who wish to support the Society.
- Provide an opportunity for people who were previously unable to join to do so.
- Reinforce openness and renewal within the membership base.

Clear, plain-English materials will accompany the share offer, explaining:

- The purpose of GCE and its community benefit.
- The rights and responsibilities of members.
- The risks associated with community share investment.
- The non-speculative nature of shares in a CBS.

4.2 Participation and Engagement

GCE uses multiple channels to keep members informed and involved:

- **Quarterly Community Catch-Ups in the Pub**
  Informal, drop-in sessions held locally, providing opportunities for members to:
    - Hear updates from directors and volunteers.
    - Ask questions and share feedback.
    - Discuss priorities and emerging issues in an accessible setting.
- **Member Communications**
    - 7–8 targeted member update emails per year, covering performance, decisions, challenges and opportunities.
    - Formal notices as required for AGMs, share offers and rule-based matters.
- **Local Media Engagement**
    - A monthly contribution to *News and Views*, a local print publication received by many members, ensuring consistent visibility and transparency beyond digital channels.

These channels are designed to reach members with different preferences and levels of digital access.

4.3 Governance and Democratic Engagement

Members are encouraged to engage in the formal governance of GCE through:

- Attendance at the AGM.
- Voting on resolutions and director elections.
- Standing for election to the Board, where eligible.

The Board will ensure that key decisions are communicated clearly and in a timely way, and that member feedback is considered as part of decision-making.

4.4 Leaving Membership

GCE recognises that members' personal and financial circumstances change over time.

The 2026 Open Share Offer will be accompanied by a share withdrawal facility, enabling:

- Existing members to apply to withdraw share capital, subject to the Rules and the Society's financial position.
- An orderly and transparent process that balances individual needs with the long-term stability of GCE.

Members will be provided with clear information about:

- The conditions under which withdrawals may be permitted.
- The discretionary nature of withdrawals.
- Likely timescales and any financial constraints.

Cessation of membership and repayment of share capital are related but distinct processes governed by the Rules.

5. Inclusion and Accessibility

GCE is committed to making membership accessible and inclusive by:

- Using clear, non-technical language in communications.
- Offering a mix of in-person, print and digital engagement.
- Holding events in familiar, welcoming community spaces.
- Being mindful of cost barriers and local circumstances.

6. Data, Records and Privacy

Membership records will be maintained accurately and securely, in line with data protection legislation. Members will be informed how their data is used and how to update their details.

7. Review and Monitoring

This Membership Strategy will be:

- Reviewed periodically by the Board.

- Updated to reflect changes in the Society's activities, membership profile or regulatory environment.
- Used alongside operational plans for communications and community engagement
- The Management Committee will report annually at the AGM on membership numbers, trends, and any material changes to this Strategy.

8. Status of this Document

This Strategy supports, but does not override, GCE's Rules. In the event of any inconsistency, the Rules take precedence.

Approved by the Board of GCE: 16.02.26