



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE NORTHERN COUNTIES WORKING GROUP
Held at Leeds Bridge Club
On 04/09/14**

Northern Regional County Representatives:

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Lincolnshire	Deidre Fell	Manchester	Jeff Morris	Merseyside & Cheshire	Julian Merrill
Merseyside & Cheshire	Paul Roberts	North East	Val Gibson	North East	Liz Muir
Yorkshire	Lesley Millet				

Invited Members:

County	Name	Reason
EBU Board	Ron Millet	

Apologies:

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
EBU Board	Darren Evetts	Lancashire	John Brearley	Yorkshire	Phil Godfrey
Westmorland	Mike Rothwell				

Lesley Millet took the Chair at 10.30am.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were taken and matters arising were dealt with at the appropriate point further on in the meeting.

NATIONAL GROUP MEETING

LM reported on the National Group Meeting. She referred to various discussion papers which though useful, took away some of the pace of the meeting.

A major issue that arose was-

"How do we involve the 40 - 60 group" by Peter Bushby (Suffolk)

To be discussed later in this meeting.

There was a strong representation from the EBU Main Board - this showed interest but it was a bit over the top in terms of numbers. The main issue is that the recommendations which arise in the future are taken seriously.

However, it did demonstrate a concern about the future of Bridge generally and this shared concern of the EBU was noted.

Linked to this was the status and role of **EBED**.

AGREED - that Simon Barb be invited to a future meeting of the NCWG to explain its role and function.

On EBED concerns were also expressed

- 1) That it appeared no teachers held a Director's position.
- 2) That Simon Barb had on occasion managed a teacher in an unfortunate manner

AGREED That pending the meeting referred to above, EBED be recommended that direct teaching experience should be present at Board level.

Deidre Fell asked whether there were still funds available via EBED to run courses for School Teachers to teach Mini Bridge in Schools – as per the previous EBU Education Trust. She needed as much help as possible in Lincolnshire.

AGREED: LM said she would investigate.

UNAFFILIATED CLUBS a long and detailed discussion took place with many views being expressed as follows.

- It was felt there was a defensive posture by EBU; although concern from the EBU on the problem was noted and there was a readiness to hear any ideas.
- In discussion reference was made to a Commercial club -Waltham Windmill - highly successful but no interest in joining the EBU.

AGREED - RM, LM to undertake an overall study on Unaffiliated Clubs including a study of what unaffiliated clubs are there. A case study for North Leeds - enquiring nature style and numbers of players. LM asked others to conduct similar studies- VG commented and made specific points

- 1) Open arms approach to unaffiliated Clubs
- 2) Have to get down to very local level
- 3) Other sports are struggling - eg Golf - ask them how they are addressing the problem.
- 4) Issues of Conflict of interest – teachers frequently hang on to students.
- 5) The Leeds experience with a Contract for Services (NOT employment) with paid teachers and charged students.

Agreed: that this will work with concentrated populations but not rural communities. Manchester has many top class teachers with harmonious relationships. Teachers hang on to students BUT also the students are frightened to move on.

Some Counties are not good at communicating with their AFFILIATED clubs. Merseyside now starting to rectify this.

EBU and Counties should be the "Supporters of last Resort" where anyone who wants to know about Bridge can obtain support and guidance.

MARKETING DUPLICATE BRIDGE

The WG see a need for an EBU sales platform and "hymn sheet" on how to approach Unaffiliated Clubs.

There should be a variety of approaches depending on the size and nature of the club and depending on the "tone and style" of the Committee.

Taking this a step further, as an example, we should assist a Golf Club to set up a Bridge section if they don't have one. This might be a side route for people eventually to join an EBU affiliated Club.

MAKING DUPLICATE MORE ATTRACTIVE

Counties and EBU are over focused on Tournament level play. There is too little work with ordinary players and bringing on the next generation of high level players - though this is improving. Some Counties are looking at how to get more people involved.

There are problems in attracting people to the Club.

SUGGESTIONS were a charity event - hybrid players and those in classes. Golf Club Bridge Competitions. Affiliated Clubs could have an association with a non-affiliated Club using the Affiliated Club's premises.

IMPROVERS

The role of Improvers events and the Yorkshire experience was discussed. They hold 7 Improvers Events per year.

Merseyside hold events to break even to encourage people to play. In their Improvers events players do not have to be a member of the EBU. We need to know how common this is.

Manchester has 3x 1 days events for Beginners or Improvers. This is run at affiliated Clubs. There are also 2 Improvers events in tandem over a 2 day Congress.

Really Easy Afternoon - marketing is poor - inadequate information. Involves EBU and none EBU members.

This should be proclaimed with publicity as something new. Also simultaneous in 3 locations is new.

NORTHERN COUNTIES IMPROVERS KNOCKOUT.

Who is going to organise this as an Improvers pairs event.

AGREED - LM to coordinate but each rep from his own area to arrange things Round 1 is a qualifier in the local Clubs with a particular night identified as such.

Round 2 is a regional final on a Sunday.

Should be in the Late Spring at the end of the Season. There is an issue in the North East with premises.

It should be a simultaneous final at as many regional centres as reasonably needed -Leeds, Manchester, Bradford Liverpool/ Birkenhead/ Chester. 1/2 in the North East

Format: 24 boards - the Charge to be ordinary table money rates. Top 50% of Round 1 qualify?

Prize- trophy + money.

What is the mode of contact to Improvers and Teachers for these and other events?

AGREED –

LM/RM prepare a leaflet for circulation....

The County reps will arrange the contacts in their own areas.

AGREED -Produce a master list of teachers by County for the entire Northern Counties

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Advice was asked for - LM suggested contact with Phil Godfrey and Mark Bratley

SCHOOLS BRIDGE

There were problems getting an entrée to a school and also a teacher to sit in on the Bridge lessons. It's all about who you know. North East cannot fill the post of Youth Officer.

There are no rules preventing payment for teachers BUT must be a Contract for Services not an Employment Contract.

There was a suggestion of taster sessions for Mini Bridge and reference was made to...

AGREED - Simon Barb to discuss this on his visit.

REGISTRATION AS A CHARITY... Then get free Google advertising. LM/RM referred to a brief discussion with Jeremy Dhondy at Brighton who could see no "in principle " objection.

"HOW DO WE GET MORE 40 - 60 YEAR OLDS TO PLAY BRIDGE" DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

AGREED that this should be raised with the EBU. It should be a "hot topic" for discussion. In discussion reference was made to -Café Bridge, Shop Window Bridge, use of the National Railway Museum Teaching Educational Bridge. Progressive Bridge (successive stanzas in different locations)

AGREED to have as - HOT TOPICS.

1) "marketing EBU, counties and the game to the general public" -leaflets, publicity, press releases webinar etc.

2) A designed Sales Platform for approaching unaffiliated organisations

Other Suggestions on varying Bridge Sessions were

- In the gym after Exercise
- Coffee Shop Bridge
- Variable Start Bridge with 48 boards cut in and cut out from 5.00pm to 11.00pm – LM & RFM to investigate this further and report back to the next meeting

ON LINE BRIDGE

Is it detrimental to Club Bridge?

Need to encourage Clubs to be more attractive.

Drop in to Club to play when it is convenient for say one hour.

The meeting closed at 3pm with the next meeting to be arranged.