



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EASTERN COUNTIES WORKING GROUP  
AT ST BARNABAS COURT, CAMBRIDGE  
ON Wednesday 15 January 2014 @ 2pm**

**Eastern Regional County Representatives:**

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Bedfordshire	Michael Collins	Cambs & Hunts	Paul Bond	Cambs & Hunts	Chris Jagger
Essex	Dennis Valtisiaris	Essex	John Williams	Hertfordshire	Bernard Eddleston
Hertfordshire	Mike Minting	Norfolk	Roger Amey	Norfolk	Peter Coates
Suffolk	Peter Bushby	Suffolk	Jeff Orton		

**Invited Members:**

County	Name
EBU Board	Darren Evetts

**Apologies:**

County	Name	County	Name
Northants	Trevor Thrower		

**Chairman: *Bernard Eddleston***

1. Bernard welcomed members and thanked Chris for hosting the meeting
2. Darren gave some background to the working groups making the following points:
  - a. The objective is to elect two representatives to the National Group
  - b. The terms of reference are not 'draft' but are subject to and open to editing by the National Group if required
  - c. Communication will be key to our success
  - d. The support of Counties and Shareholders to ideas for change will add weight.

**Meeting Summary (see later pages for details)**

1. The formation of the County working groups was welcomed.
2. All elements of the EBU must embrace change to achieve the desired results
3. The Counties have made progress in the following areas which can be shared and built on:
  - a. Best behaviour at Bridge
  - b. Transparency

- c. Efficiency and P2P reduction
  - d. Relationships with affiliated clubs
  - e. Feeder sections or clubs alongside or within affiliated clubs
  - f. Non-expert participation in County events
4. The Group would welcome help from the EBU as follows
    - a. Getting Bridge onto the education curriculums and having an NVQ approved
    - b. Improved Road Maps from Student through Supervised Play to Main Club sessions
    - c. Help Clubs to purchase/rent own Premises (not necessarily financial help)
    - d. The EBU continuing its work to transform its image
  5. The Counties need help from the EBU and/or other Working Groups in the following areas:
    - a. Driving Youth participation in Bridge
    - b. Driving growth in the 40/50/60 year age range
    - c. Succession Planning
  6. The Eastern Counties Working Group elected John Williams (Chairman of Essex) and Peter Bushby (Secretary of Suffolk) as their representatives on the National Group
  7. The Eastern Group agreed to meet again if possible before the National Group meets and will arrange a time and venue by email.

## Discussion Details

1. Bernard welcomed everyone and introduction were made
2. Darren gave some background to the working groups making the following points:
  - e. The objective is to elect two representatives to the National Group
  - f. The terms of reference are not 'draft' but are subject to and open to editing by the National Group if required
  - g. Communication will be key to our success
  - h. The support of Counties and Shareholders to ideas for change will add weight
3. Bernard stated that involving Senior people from Counties was more likely to achieve change than the previous Regional Committee
4. Bernard then opened the meeting up for discussion and the views from each County were shared. The key points of the discussion have been grouped by topic for convenience:
  - a. The Working Group Is a Good thing
    - i. Working Groups are a good thing as focused and time-bound
  - b. The best future for English Bridge may be radically different to the status quo
    - i. We (both the Counties and the EBU) shouldn't limit our thinking to what can be achieved with only small steps.
    - ii. What would we build if we started with a blank sheet of paper?
  - c. The Counties need for change
    - i. Counties need not only to be aspiring to provide a best-practice service to their members but measuring themselves to ensure they do so
  - d. The EBU's need for change
    - i. The EBU is still perceived as arrogant and not always listening. This is a legacy of past projects (P2P, Regional Committee) pushed through with very limited discussion and was felt to be partly responsible for this. The need to learn from this and change is vital to the future success of the EBU
    - ii. It is important that the EBU Board proactively senses its environment enabling it to respond and change most effectively. Their representatives at these meetings may learn more than is minuted and their feedback is a valuable source of input whilst the EBU await the formal recommendations from the National Group
    - iii. There will be ways the EBU can help fuel growth. Some early ideas include:
      1. Getting Bridge onto the education curriculums and having an NVQ approved
      2. Improved Road Maps from Student through Supervised Play to Club Sessions
      3. Help Clubs to purchase/rent own Premises (not necessarily financial help)
    - iv. When P2P was introduced the EBU refused to allow adverse comment in English Bridge and thus an uncontrolled debate took place in Mr Bridge. The EBU must encourage dissenting voices to encourage a feeling of participation in the change and in case they contain pearls of wisdom.
    - v. Shareholders should not be relied on as an effective means of control. Shareholders meeting suffer from poor and ineffective dialogues.

- e. Best Behaviour at Bridge
  - i. Counties have been tackling this issue firmly and it has improved but unwelcoming behaviour still inhibits people moving from social to Club bridge.
- f. Transparency
  - i. Several Counties have improved this particularly in the areas of Team Selection and Meeting Minutes
- g. County Efficiency
  - i. Several Counties have been able to reduce their P2P by streamlining and reducing costs
- h. Relationships with Clubs
  - i. Several Counties have improved relationships with affiliated Clubs by ensuring that they are visited and nurtured by Committee Members. Andrew Urbanski has helped in some Counties by visiting several Clubs in the area
  - ii. Non-affiliated clubs still do not welcome advances and seem intransigent.
  - iii. It is difficult when non-affiliated Clubs get many of the benefits of affiliation since they have many EBU members playing there
- i. Participation in County Events
  - i. Some Counties have driven growth by targeting events at average+ Club players. Some members were inhibited by not wishing to play top experts so 'B' flights have been popular alongside an expert or Open flight. Teams competitions where expert players are excluded have also been popular
- j. Youth participation
  - i. Seen as impossible for some with growth coming from those in 40s/50s/60s
  - ii. Young Poker players would make great Bridge players but would walk away from a traditional Bridge Club environment. How can we attract them?
  - iii. University Bridge has died out or is in its last throes. We believe this is due to the lack of Bridge Players coming through from schools
  - iv. Difficult for Counties to reach out to Higher Education establishments even where these have been identified.
  - v. The EBU might help with a Bridge NVQ, or by getting Bridge on the National Curriculum, a ready-to-go Pack for Teachers or in some other means over and beyond Mini-Bridge.
  - vi. Counties have people who have achieved a lot locally but lack the time or means to have a county-wide impact
- k. Migration from Social Player or Bridge Student to P2P
  - i. Some Clubs have made good progress by having 'feeder' sections either alongside normal duplicates or at alternate dates and times. Notable success has been seen at Bedford, Chelmsford, Hitchin and Stansfield amongst others.
  - ii. The EBU may be able to help with a Road Map from student to P2P building on these Clubs experiences and what it already gives its BFA Teachers

- l. Driving growth from 40/50/60 year olds
  - i. A lot of interest from this age group and a growth in afternoon bridge
  - ii. No correlation in successful bridge teaching between EBU and non-EBU
  - iii. Counties have people who have achieved a lot locally but without the time or means to have a county-wide impact
  - iv. Some Counties have seen results from encouraging Clubs to teach
- m. Dedicated Premises
  - i. The most successful clubs own or rent their own premises
  - ii. Could the EBU arrange cheap finance and/or a 'get your own premises pack' covering the practical and legal steps to go through if you are considering this?
- n. Succession Planning
  - i. Many Counties struggle to get good volunteers to help run things
  - ii. Need people in their 40s/50s/60s who are energised to give back to Bridge
  - iii. Difficult to find someone with the time and ability to drive education
  - iv. Having dedicated people driving projects gets results e.g. Spring Foursome growth several years ago
  - v. One way of getting energy is to pay. Even a modest honorarium made a difference in other Not-for-profit organisations attendees have been involved in