



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLANDS COUNTIES WORKING GROUP
AT West Midlands Bridge Club
ON Friday 29 May 2015 @ 10.30am**

PRESENT

Oxfordshire	Robert Procter (RP)	Co- Chairman
Gloucestershire	Alan Wearmouth (AW)	Co- Chairman
Derbyshire	Arnold Chandler (AC)	
Nottinghamshire	Graham Brindley (GB)	
Worcestershire	David Thomas (DT)	
Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby (MW)	
Warwickshire	Mike Thornley (MT)	
Warwickshire	Judith Currie (JC)	
Leicestershire	Dean Benton (DB)	
Staffs & Shrops	Linda Curtis (LC)	

EBU Board (Warks) Darren Evetts (DE)

1. Apologies

Were Received from John Withers, Staffs & Shrops

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting are on the EBU website: these had been approved by e-mail

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

Nicky Bainbridge was not present so it was not known what progress she had made on her paper on NGS problems with different scoring programs. DE said that IT within the EBU was currently managed in house.

AC said that Derbyshire had now solved their problem with NGS for team events. He commented that some top players did not have NGS grades as they did not play club bridge. This created a problem when the county was running stratified or handicap events. DE said such players should be classified as AS. This would also apply with direct or anonymous members.

RP said it should be noted that the Midland Counties League representatives had produced a new set of rules for this competition which had been accepted by all the Counties.

4. National County Working Group

The NCWG had met and from the feedback from all regions had produced 3 working papers .There was a general discussion before looking at the topics individually.

MW said he thought it important to have events for the lesser or recreational players.

AW thought that the cost P2P made it too expensive for unaffiliated clubs and propriety owned clubs where the owner was running the club to make a profit. The players at these clubs were not interested in master points or the magazine.

DT said that table money was important, especially if a player was playing several times each week.

DB said that all counties were different, either by geographical size, number of clubs and playing strength.

AC said that 2 teachers had organised supervised play at a club on the same night as the club's normal session, hoping that when the supervised play ended, the players would join the main event as it was run on their bridge night. Other clubs had started a new session just for the new players.

RP said that he had recently played in a congress in France, there were no convention cards and inconsistent use of alerts and stop cards and very few director calls. He wondered whether we made bridge too complicated to the detriment of enjoyment.

Topic A - Improving the relationship between the EBU/Counties and unaffiliated clubs.

DE said that the Working Group structure was encouraging inter-county collaboration through meetings such as this and, consequently, inter-county events.

They were looking at the possibility of appointing Regional Support Officers to help Counties develop their relationship with affiliated and unaffiliated clubs.

AC said that following the recent publicity about Bridge as a Mind Sport, he had been approached by Radio Derby and did an interview with a presenter during which he had given a very basic lesson on playing bridge but also had been able to advertise that bridge lessons were available at 3 local clubs.

Several other counties said they had tried to do this but without success.

A suggestion was made that it might be useful for the EBU to produce a short booklet/ pamphlet on the benefits of joining the EBU and that the EBU consider a 'flash sale' with benefits for clubs joining by a fixed date.

Yorkshire area were to run an inexperienced player event where club or local heats were held, winners to progress to a regional final which would then be run as an EBU event. Hopefully, this would encourage them to affiliate their own club or to join an affiliated club.

DE asked the Midlands Region to consider running such an event. DE to investigate.

JC who was club liaison officer said that she had visited several clubs - there was a liking for master points, the magazine and diary but little knowledge of NGS, or rules and ethics. Players liked the social aspect of the game mainly. She had not yet visited any unaffiliated clubs.

AC said that some of his committee were concerned about infringing the Data Protection Act.

DE replied saying that provided mail was sent 'bcc' and only used in relation to EBU/County bridge activities, there should be no problem.

DE subsequently asked for the following to be included in these notes:

The data Protection Act permits the EBU to share data with its constituent members (Counties). That information may only be used for EBU/County purposes, and for no other reasons. (So anything to do with membership, awards, playing, newsletters etc.

The Data Protection Act also requires people to opt out if they do not want their contact information, etc, to be used.

If members wish to opt out, they can do so through the Members Area of the EBU website, or by writing to Aylesbury.

If a county needs assistance in accessing a list of members, please contact Michael Clark (Michael@ebu.co.uk). Please note however, that this list displays Primary members only (not dual members).

Counties are expected to take steps to maintain the confidentiality and security of this data/list, and to not allow it to be accessed by third parties or unauthorised persons. If sending emails to multiply recipients, the email addresses must be hidden (BCC). Anyone needing advice on this can contact Aylesbury.

Topic B - Developing a value proposition and a progression strategy for players at all levels that revitalises our membership.

AW had prepared 2 bullet point notes:

What the County offers to Clubs

All 11 points were agreed and it was thought that the FAQ's were very useful.

What the EBU offers to Tournament Players

All 7 points were agreed except that it was thought points 1 and 2 should be reversed.

Topic C - Structuring, staffing and motivating a volunteer workforce that we depend on at National and County level.

RP introduced a Paper entitled 'Best Practice for County Associations'.

It was generally thought that this document contained many good points and would be helpful to Associations. The document was considered to be too long by some.

DE wondered whether it would be useful to have a job description for each of the officer roles to help when filling vacancies.

AC thought that the balance sheet was as important as the P/L account and should be added to the Measurement Table.

It was agreed to commend it in full to the NCWG for discussion.

5. Blue Point Events

AC had prepared a paper for discussion.

He said that he was also aware that blue points were awarded for EBU sim pairs events and GB told the meeting that he had won over 80 this way which would convert to 27 green points.

DE said there was a cap of 50 green points which could be won via blue points.

Counties could run blue point events but they had to be a minimum of 36 boards run over 2 sessions at a cost of £2.65 per table per session.

There was a general agreement that blue points should also be awarded for ladder events, such as leagues.

AC was asked to revise his paper and forward it to DE for submission to the Tournament Committee.

6. Matters to forward to the NWG

AS the leaders of the Topics were present at this meeting, they were aware of these.

7. Any Other Business

DB enquired about Bridge Tabs. DE said that he had not seen them so could not comment.

It was agreed to add 'County Calendars and Competitions' to the agenda for the next meeting.

8. Date of next meeting

It was agreed to hold this at the end of September, actual day to be agreed by e-mail.

Arnold Chandler
Derbyshire
4 June 2015