



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE NORTHERN COUNTIES WORKING GROUP**
Held at Leeds Bridge Club
On 03/06/15

Northern Regional County Representatives:

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Lancashire	Jeff Smith	Manchester	Ben Beever		
Merseyside & Cheshire	Richard Alcock	Merseyside & Cheshire	Paul Roberts	North East	Val Gibson
North East	Liz Muir	Yorkshire	Lesley Millet (Chair)		

Invited Members:

County	Name	Reason
EBU Board	Ron Millet	

Apologies:

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
EBU Board	Darren Evetts	Lincolnshire	Deidre Fell	Manchester	Jeff Morris
Westmorland	Mike Rothwell				

1) LM took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2) The minutes were presented and several corrections were indicated

3) MATTERS ARISING

JS referred to unaffiliated clubs and the need for the inclusion within the EBU range of activities.

The key may be unaffiliated Members not Clubs.

There is some slight University activity but it was agreed this has declined

The minutes were approved.

4) **NATIONAL WORKING PARTIES MEETING - 23rd February 2015**

The topics were reviewed by LM and others

- a) Improving Club EBU relations
- b) Bridge as a value proposition
- c) Structuring and motivating volunteers

Most of the discussions were on (c).

The view was working parties are not the best way forward.

The topics were OK but not the most important.

Concern was about membership. We should aim at young people & 50+.

REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFICER (RSO)

A lengthy discussion took place on this issue

What do other counties feel about a regional support officer?

Should it be several counties, regionally organised and salaried?

The current one club liaison officer is too big a brief and too big a job. It is not a successful model.

A support role could end with the same challenge.

A RSO has to be located in the north or on in a WP group.

Who funds this post as counties are reluctant to contribute? Thought it would be expected if the WG wanted a significant say in the activities of the RSO.

This post would need control and direction; there were issues to address and objectives of what the person was supposed to do:-

a) What are the results supposed to be?

AGREED – the prime objective is the resulting increase in membership numbers and increased play sessions at EBU Clubs.

b) How long will they work in that post and what resources will they need?

c) There is a need to research what the picture on the ground is and bring this to the counties for them to act.

d) There is a need for support for failing counties within the WG as well

e) Need more information on where clubs and teachers are. EBU home page, County Homepages and websites like learnbridgeyorkshire.

There is an EBED pack on how to introduce Bridge into schools

f) A lot of good information coming out from EBU and elsewhere- a RSO would implement and disseminate this.

g) How would you define the role of liaison - what are his terms of reference?

h) How do people come to Bridge?

It was re-emphasised that an increase in membership and sessions played is the prime objective.

h) The post has to be largely self-financing over a 5-10 year period.

i) Focus was needed. Break the work down into categories. Is this the function of counties? The RSO would need management but from where?

j) There was not room for both a Club Liaison Officer and a Regional Support Officer.

k) If the position is filled in all WG areas, then there should be liaison between different areas.

l) A different skill set was required for publicity and promotion. For example Reference to HoL game - one player with Cerebral Palsy in a wheel chair + one with behavioural difficulties – both contributed to the event.

m) It was **AGREED** that the right Salary scale – c£20,000 or in the low 20's for a postgrad. Big mileage was involved. This was a guesstimate.

n) The job should be held by someone who is living locally.

o) The position would form a succession route for future Bridge administrators.

p) Should the Counties contribute to costs – it was tacitly agreed there should be something. But there was a strong resistance to paying at the start.

RECOMMENDED Initial funding should be by the EBU, but if there are results that are measurable and stated beforehand then the Counties would consider making a contribution.

q) Who trains RSOs and who do they report to?

RECOMMENDED The first line is to EBU if only for day to day running costs but then there should be arrangements of support for and involvement with the counties.

r) There needs to be a central register support system of specialist services that the counties and a RSO could call upon.

- s) which leads to a series of symposia on specialist subjects.
t) How will all this fit with the top 3 objectives of the National WG - is a mismatch.

SUMMARY OVERVIEW – A RSO Regionally based working with the Counties, with national support – the key is what is the outcome - it's about objectives and results. Never mind the process, though that needs defining, focus on the results.

IMPROVERS PAIRS COMPETITION

The WP received a report from Jeff Morris in Manchester and a report from Phil Godfrey on the final at York.

The qualifying rounds were Kendal 16 pairs, Manchester 10 pairs, Ashton 20 pairs Larkhill 1

Unaffiliated - 36 pairs!

Darlington 14 pairs in the final

Manchester final 12 pairs

York 28 pairs in the final

Lessons for the Future

A written procedures sheet would have been useful.

No one ran this event as a profit maker.

NE has to pay a hiring fee and probably made a loss.

A successful event with good numbers from scratch

More clubs would have participated with more advance notice.

It was an opportunity to reach out to Unaffiliated Clubs.

Final organiser needs more advance information and some support.

Circulate the national results to all the Northern County Websites.

A letter of thanks to Paul Hackett for encouraging and making the presentations in Manchester & Phil Godfrey from Yorkshire for co-ordinating the final.

LEARNBRIDGEYORKSHIRE

As requested by other members of the working party, this was described and reviewed. Merseyside wished to take up the option for use of the format for free in their area. Manchester expressed an interest as well.

Contact should be made with James Ward who would assist in implementation.

UNAFFILIATED CLUBS. (UCs)

NEBA. Reported on their experience and activities. They have made a decision in principle to revise their attitude to UCs – they will assess the field to engage with them.

Research found more clubs that are unaffiliated than EBU linked. Some, with more than 16 tables often play in the same premises as EBU clubs. UCs will be invited to a NEBA event.

A marketing sub-committee is to be set up with projects some needing finance and some that can be started immediately. This involves posters with times and dates of events, flyers for teaching.

This makes slow progress but it does work.

Leeds' experience is different with little interest shown. Does it depend on the style of approach used in each area?

NEBA have organised for Bridge Teaching at Wearside -14 people have applied for training to be teachers. This is driven by an enthusiastic secretary but with support for others.

Discussion then took place on a special membership for Unaffiliated Clubs. Without EBU Support may not happen.

MERSEYSIDE AREA has 66 clubs (This excludes clubs with a Bridge section golf, etc) - 17 only are Affiliated - 8 to Merseyside, 7 to Manchester and 2 to Lancs. The rest - 39 - are Unaffiliated!

The Cheshire Bridge network exists as a competitor to EBU -17 clubs (some large) pay table money - For example Eaton Bridge Club has 12 tables with a members' waiting list. This is run by an EBU teacher ...This is not the only UC with a waiting list.

The WP was concerned about the scale of this - is our approach the correct one?

What is the right standard?

Are we too structured especially on TDs and the rule book (attention was drawn to the new slimmed down Blue Book and how rules on bidding, etc were at the option of individual clubs)

Should there be a publicity campaign for members - there are arguments for this but what PR is there to encourage clubs to join the EBU.

Merseyside's experience is that the league is none EBU but most individual members are!

The WG found this remarkable.

A guide to attitudes... A club on Merseyside has one evening of Friendly No Fear. This approach gets 20 tables. A standard night has 6 tables....

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, EBED & OTHER MATTERS

There was an offer of a meeting at Manchester Bridge Club - Simon Barb would discuss teaching Bridge, experience on this and organising a course to teacher teachers. Gerry Cope would be invited as well.

AGREED LM to contact to clarify arrangements.

It was felt that full attendance was needed with substitutes if necessary.

There should be an Agenda with topics and a constructive dialogue. To be held in September.

6th form colleges were showing some resistance to Bridge being introduced.

The view was A levels take precedence and things such as Bridge were a distraction.

We should be concentrating on places such as University Bridge clubs – working with existing University Bridge Clubs – ie Manchester & Durham as to how can get into the University BCs.

Maths degree students in their 1st year was also a good target.

Mention was made of the EBU, VAT and Sport England appeals. If these were successful Bridge would be far more eligible for grants for Bridge education and development in the future.

Next Meeting - to be arranged in conjunction with the Simon Barb meeting