



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLANDS COUNTIES WORKING GROUP

at Dunchurch Village hall
on Thursday 18th January 2018 at 10.30am

PRESENT:

EBED	Donna Wright	Nottinghamshire	Clare Batten (CB)
EBU	Gordon Rainsford	Nottinghamshire	Graham Bindley (GB)
Gloucestershire	Patrick Shields (PS)	Oxfordshire	Rob Procter (RP)
Leicestershire	David Pollard (DP)	Worcestershire	David Thomas (DT)
Northamptonshire	Nicky Bainbridge (NB)	Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby (MW)

APOLOGIES:

Derbyshire	Jim Parker	Leicestershire	Dean Benton
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ABSENT :

Gloucestershire	Jim Simons	Staffs & Shrops	Linda Curtis
Warwickshire	Judith Currie	Warwickshire	Mike Thorley
??	Liz Hall		

CHAIR: Nicky Bainbridge

ITEM 1 : Minutes of Last Meeting (9 Nov 17)

1. The minutes as had been circulated were agreed subject to a change to paragraph 6 which now reads "NB was proposed (by MW) and seconded (by RP) as the new chair, and when no opposition was expressed, she was declared as the new chair, to take over at the end of this meeting".
2. It was agreed that PS would liaise with GR to get all our minutes onto the EBU web site, and GR indicated that draft minutes would be easily handled with an appropriate caveat.

ACTION 18jan18.1 : PS to arrange publication of the minutes.

ITEM 2 : Task Team Update

3. NB explained her continued engagement with Graham Smith on TT issues; the team consists of NB, GS plus Leslie Millet as the NCWG lead, and Ron Millet as an EBU Board member. The EBU was working to assign a Board member "as a sponsor" to each Regional CWG; we had pondered Rob Lawy but he is now engaged with the SW group (and lives too far away anyway). We agreed that representation from Aylesbury as today gives the MCWG adequate engagement with "EBU Central".

4. The future of the Task Team is unclear; it had no documented remit and is believed by some to have as its single function - to get the Regional CWG structure working again. It is not clear what formal status the TT recommendations have when the EBU Board minutes report just that "The Board gave a positive response to most of the suggestions raised in the report ...". There was some dissatisfaction expressed about the lack of successful communications between the Task Team and the Counties and the EBU membership at large.
5. The proposal for a revised set of Terms Of Reference for this group, just after we had agreed our own, was seen as both wasteful of effort and disrespectful of our work. The wording in that version drove in the direction that EBU Central and the Counties were in a master-slave relationship, rather than in the partnership this group believes we need in order to properly promote bridge in this country. We noted the reaction from Somerset CBA to the approach that had been made to them about an RCWG, and were not surprised at their rejection of the concept. [Later: Tony Russ has indicated that discussion with EBU Board member Rob Lawy has generated a different understanding, and SCBA will now engage].

ACTION 18jan18.2 : GR undertook to explain to the next EBU Board meeting the desire of this group to work with EBU Central, as equal partners, in furthering bridge.

6. Mention was made about issues with EBU IT system at this time, and GR offered to help with any specific issues people had.
7. This group re-confirmed its expectation that the creation of a National CWG sitting between ourselves and EBU-central would be a detrimental move. This group will look to the existing Task Team Recommendations for useful ideas, but it does not feel committed to anything the TT has (covertly) published.

ITEM 3 : MCWG FORWARD SCHEDULE

8. NB had prepared a draft calendar for the year for the MCWG and we now reviewed it. There are emerging dates of key EBU & EBED meetings (and the plan for the EBU Strategy) which might change things, but for the moment we agreed
 - a. with the main thrust of a mix of 2hr and longer meetings, and
 - b. to move the second meeting of the year to 26th April, with a view to having enough information about, but still enough time to feed into, the EBU Shareholders' meeting in May, and
 - c. at the fifth meeting (15 November) to invite all other counties to attend, and to offer them some value (perhaps a show&tell on some topics of interest) to make the journey worthwhile.
9. We noted that although some of our and the EBU formal documentation specifies "Duplicate Bridge", we believe that non-Duplicate Bridge play will feed into Duplicate Bridge in due course, and we ought to take an interest, and to be supportive, of all forms of bridge.
10. The current draft calendar is attached as Appendix 1.

ITEM 4 : Group Skills & Experience

11. Before embarking on an MCWG action plan, we reviewed round the table the experience and skills which the various team members brought with them. The highlights were

- a. NB: experience in high level IT system rollout, but now full time on bridge.
- b. PS : retired civil servant working in IT, but now full time on bridge (directing & teaching).
- c. DP : experience as a local government ombudsman in handling complaints.
- d. GB : ex lecturer and EBU TA teacher, the County Special Events coordinator.
- e. GR : ex bridge club manager and chief TD, en route to EBU General Manager.
- f. DW : a project manager and a Data Protection Officer, with experience of having set up a charity.
- g. DT : worked in planning & consulting, was trained as a bridge teacher in 1970 when there was a written exam for teachers (!)
- h. MW : IT background but a focus on marketing strategies for many years, and still teaching this.
- i. RP : retired accountant who enjoys exploring bulk data to find undiscovered truths.
- j. CB : originally a maths teacher but then IT in the NHS and now back to teaching.

12. A couple of times during the discussion various attempts were reported, and the need/desire was expressed, to learn more of what matters to the bridge players who are much less experienced than the members of this group.

ITEM 5 : Agreeing Work Packages

13. Around the table we identified our individual top priority for action within this group. It was then agreed that this set of issues/tasks would be taken forward with the identified leader agreed for each -

Issue	Task	Owner
The County and National bodies are not well placed to provide support to bridge teachers whom they cannot identify or communicate with.	to uncover ways in which identification can happen and a dialogue can be initiated.	NB
A serious proportion of those going through classes do not progress to duplicate bridge.	to identify the causes and the remedies for this, noting in particular the ideas put forward by Abbey Smith.	GB

Issue	Task	Owner
There is a growing gulf between the non-competitive duplicate player and the competitive duplicate player and this impedes the transition of newcomers to the latter camp.	to understand why this is so and to propose solutions to it.	PS
Many duplicate clubs are not affiliated to the EBU and many are not known to the county associations, and therefore not supported by these bodies.	to understand if and how a county and a national body can provide support to these clubs in order to better promote bridge.	RP & MW
There is a lack of understanding of where EBU revenues come from and go to; concerns and any false perceptions need to be addressed.	to understand what the true position is and to find a way of presenting this that is informative and transparent.	DT
The IT systems managed at Aylesbury cause frustration for a number of county and club managers, and some fixes would be very helpful.	to identify (with GR) the best approach to aligning the interests of clubs and counties with the capabilities of the EBU in the future.	CB & NB

ITEM 6 : AOB

14. GR pointed out that an EBU Forum (on-line discussion group) can be made available for County Working group issues, on request.
15. We noted the continued growth of Stamford Bridge Club, and would welcome news of the bridge player recruitment activities in Yorkshire.
16. We noted how some clubs have developed their own rules for their bridge games; GR advised that while clubs have full freedom to select which Regulations they wish to adopt (and they may invent their own), changing the Laws of Bridge is a step which even the EBU cannot undertake, and the clubs concerned should be counseled on avoiding such actions.
17. DW highlighted the difference between EBED and EBU (although the two share the same premises and other facilities). EBED's mission is the promotion of bridge, education of bridge players, and research into the benefits of bridge. It provides a service for the population at large, and for all clubs, quite independently of their affiliation or not to the EBU.
18. We agreed to use the shared file system to make our ongoing activities visible to ourselves, and to other counties.

ITEM 6 : AOB & Date of next meeting

19. Agreed the 26th April as per item 3 above.

END OF MINUTES