



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION
HELD AT 40 BERNARD STREET, LONDON
ON THURSDAY 18 MARCH 2004**

Present:	Denis A Robson	Chairman
	Philip G Mason	Vice Chairman
	Tom J Bradley	Treasurer
	John Carter	
	David G Martin	
	Jeff K Morris	
	John D Neville	
	Peter Stocken	
	Terry Collier	General Manager
	Michele Attard	Office Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr David Harris.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 29 JANUARY 2004

2.1 Accuracy

Amendments were made to:

2.2.5 “Ryder Cup” Event, 2nd sentence - “...conversation with the existing ACBL President....”

2.2.6 Board event at Channel Trophy in Utrecht, penultimate sentence – “It was suggested that the Board event should run every three years in order for hosting of the event to cycle around the participating nations.”

3.2 Accounts for Nine Months ended 31 December 2003 – “The Accounts were noted.”

2.1.1 The amendments to item 11.2, first paragraph, were accepted:

A paper on Bridgemate Terminals (a tabletop wireless score recording and reporting mechanism) was presented by Mr Carter. The terminals were used by the Dutch in the recent Channel Trophy event.

Mr Carter felt that the Bridgemate Terminals would soon be employed as a commonplace piece of equipment at bridge events. He explained that the Bridgemate Terminal supplier was looking for an UK partner, and that this may be an opportunity for the EBU to consider. He was, however, uncertain as to the back-room requirement for the terminal, and it was agreed that this be investigated and pilot trials undertaken. It was noted that an English manufacturer was currently trialling such terminals at the South Bucks Bridge Club, and the General Manager was asked to investigate this.

With the above amendments, the Minutes were **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 *Matters Arising*

2.2.1 *Inland Revenue – Status of TDs – Update (item 2.2.1)*

The General Manager tabled a copy of the letter received from the Inland Revenue advising that they now considered the status of the Tournament Directors as self-employed.

2.2.2 *Possible EBU Trust (item 2.2.2)*

Due to Mr Harris' absence, there was nothing further to report, and it was **agreed** that this issue is carried over to the next Board meeting.

The General Manager reported that the money had been received from Bill Fung.

2.2.3 *Ryder Cup Event (item 2.2.5)*

In light of Mr Harris' absence, it was **agreed** that this matter be carried over to the next Board meeting.

2.2.4 *Licensed Events (item 3.1)*

The General Manager advised that Anna Gudge had paid approximately £450 for the licensing of the recent Children In Need Sim Pairs. It was **agreed** that a review of licensing should be undertaken, and the General Manager agreed to produce a paper.

2.2.5 *Master Class Tours (item 4)*

The General Manager advised that two Master Class tours had been planned: the first with Andrew Robson from 14-18 September, concentrating mainly in the north of England; and Ron Klinger would be available from 1-20 October. In addition, a tour was being planned for Spring 2005 with the Hackett family, entitled "Tricks of the Trade". Clubs had been asked to express an interest in hosting a Master Class.

2.2.6 *Smoking (item 7.2)*

The General Manager reported that the staff had been informed that the building would be non-smoking by 1 May 2004, and that there was now a need to determine alternative arrangements for those members of staff who smoke.

2.2.7 *Payment to County Associations (item 7.3)*

The General Manager reported that the County Associations had been notified that only amounts in excess of £10.00 would be repaid to Counties in respect of the monthly reconciliation of membership fees. There had been no adverse comments received on this change. It had been confirmed that any outstanding amount would be paid to the County at year-end.

2.2.8 *Mind Sports Council (item 16.2)*

Mr Morris reported on a planned meeting with Keith Bradley, MP, in an attempt to get a meeting with Tessa Jowell.

Mr Stocken asked whether an approach had been made to the Shadow Ministers, and was advised that the General Manager had had a meeting with the Aylesbury MP, David Lidington, who was a Conservative, and who had pledged to assist with getting a discussion with Tessa Jowell.

2.2.9 *Results to Website (item 16.3)*

The Vice Chairman reported that the matter of ensuring results were published in a timely manner on the website had been raised at the Tournament Committee. The General Manager advised that a rota of staff who were willing to receive results from TDs and upload them to the website was to be put in place.

3. FINANCIAL MATTERS

3.1 Forecast, Budget and Five Year Plan

- a. The Treasurer clarified that the Board had overall responsibility for the budget, and that the tabled paper was for their consideration and approval.
- b. The Bridge Shop forecast was not too far off budget and a full year's results with new prices and membership discount was awaited. The budget allowed for the profit from the Really Easy series to move to the Bridge Shop profit centre, since the Shop undertakes the majority of work associated with the sale of the books. Mr Neville noted that future development costs on new books would need to be charged to the Bridge Shop.
- c. Similar to the Bridge Shop, a full year's results on the increased price of Master Points was awaited. The Budget, however, was based on this new price and, if need be, would be reviewed mid-year.
- d. The Treasurer advised that the figure reported to Council of 1,000 members down on last year was still valid, and that this would have a negative effect on next year's budget. The Vice Chairman warned that this loss of membership would have a knock-on effect on other areas of the business. The General Manager pointed out that an ageing bridge population was largely the cause of this. Mr Morris confirmed that this trend had also been noticed at club level, and it was extremely worrying. Mr Martin advised that the decrease in members in London was disproportionately large compared to other years. The General Manager felt that the proposal that 2005/06 be the year of membership (agenda item 9) was now more important than ever but something that should have been considered some years ago.
- e. The Treasurer advised that the budget for membership did not represent a growth in membership, but was a change in presentation. The 50 pence increase set last year would come into force this year, and had been allowed for in the budget. There had also been a suggestion that income from *BfA* be separated from the unit costs, and £25,000 of *BfA* membership had also been included.
- f. The Treasurer confirmed that it was time to review the cost of licence fees, including the licensing of charity events, and now awaited the General Manager's paper (item 2.2.4).
- g. The budget for *Bridge for All* includes the *BfA* unit fees and costs associated with the units, whilst the course fees and admin costs had been moved to Education. The salaries and associated costs for the group of people working on *BfA*, Education and the Development had been moved into a department now called Development, which was covered under Overheads.
- h. The line for On-line Bridge Club would not be included in future financial reports.
- i. Competitions have had a good year and there is a reliance on them to repeat that success. It is acknowledged that there is an element of risk in that assumption. Mr Martin asked why competitions was not included as a profit centre. The Treasurer advised that this was historical, and that it would require some detailed manipulation of the system to change it, which would be done for next year.
- j. The Chairman tabled a paper from the Selection Committee requesting an additional £9,000 to the proposed budget for team development. The Treasurer advised that Internationals was showing a heavy loss, and that the increase of £9,000 requested by the Selection Committee was not included in the figures tabled. As the paper did not specify how the additional money would be spent, it was felt inappropriate to increase the budget, it was agreed that the Chairman and Treasurer be empowered to approve additional spend on a project by project basis.

- k. The budget for Education takes account of items mentioned above, and derives some benefit from the retirement of Chris Brown and Christine Duckworth. Mr Neville expressed concern about Council's reaction to the large difference between the provisional budget for 2003/04 and the proposed budget for 2004/05, and that there was a need to show Council that Christine Duckworth's job was being done by others who were now represented in Overheads. It was **agreed** that the Treasurer produce a detailed explanation for presentation of the budget to Council.
- l. The Treasurer confirmed that the budget for NBO takes account of the 60:20:20 split of BGB funds as agreed in the recently signed agreement.
- m. Overheads takes account of changes explained earlier. The Treasurer advised that Brian Smith has been asked to pull out the costs etc associated with the Development Department and present them as a separate cost centre.
- n. The Treasurer felt that £11,000 loss, which is in keeping with the projections of the five-year plan, was just about acceptable, but that it was a disappointment that EBU funds could not yet be recharged.
- o. Mr Martin felt that there needed to be prioritisation of activities, and that various matters had not been taken into account within the proposed budget. He referred to the recent ranking meeting, which had been well received and at which it had been acknowledged that such a system would be key in increasing membership. He was surprised that only £2,000 had been put into the budget for system development, and that this should really be £15,000. The Treasurer advised that the £2,000 was for CASS development work. With regard to work on the proposed grading system, it would be our intention to capitalise this over several years.
- p. Mr Martin felt that the budget did not include sufficient funds to implement the new membership management system. Since the implementation of the new membership and event management software had a direct affect on the budget, the Chairman agreed to bring item 10.1 forward to this point.

10.1 Enterprise

- a. Mr Martin expressed concern that the proposal being tabled did not allow for sufficient project management costs for the implementation of the system. In light of the experience gleaned from the visit to the Royal Institute of Naval Architects, he also felt that insufficient consideration had been given to the duration of the implementation. Mrs Attard was asked to brief the Board on recent discussions with the supplier of the system, Accounting Answers Ltd. She reported that AA Ltd had advised that the programme for implementation of the RINA system had been impacted by several factors, namely major changes within RINA's management structure; the lack of client project management in the initial stages; several changes made by the client to the previously agreed specification of the system; the lack of client planning; and difficulties in the data transfer exercise due to the old RINA system being a bespoke DOS-based system.
- b. The General Manager stated that he felt confident that there was sufficient project management experience within the structure of the proposed Project Team. Mr Neville, however, expressed concerns regarding the project management skills of the team. Mr Martin felt that there was insufficient IT technical expertise, and recommended that an IT specialist be employed for a 6-month duration, in order to manage the implementation of Enterprise and the other IT-based projects being proposed, e.g. the development of a ranking system. The General Manager explained that we were buying an "off the shelf" system and therefore there was not the need to have a project team with in-depth IT skills. What was needed was sound project management to ensure that we kept to our plan rather than drifting. He was confident that the proposed team had these skills. Mr Carter suggested that an alternative to a client project manager would be to employ the supplier to manage the entire project – this was certainly the route that many companies, including IBM, were going down. Mr Neville suggested that the proposed team should produce a

detailed specification for the system, including a detailed implementation programme, showing the EBU's input and timescales. It was acknowledged that assistance would be required from AA Ltd and this would incur a cost

- c. The General Manager advised that the staff at Aylesbury were enthused about this project, and that it could be detrimental to postpone this any further

3.1 *Forecast, Budget and Five Year Plan (continued)*

Mr Morris asked whether it was felt that there was an opportunity to approach sponsors with regards to supporting the international teams? The General Manager advised that he was aware that there were sponsors who wanted to get involved on the youth side. He also reported that he had a meeting planned in Leeds to discuss sports psychology with a university contact. The person was currently working with the national shooting squad on the area of concentration and preparation for competition. He would report back on the outcome of the meeting. It was also agreed that Mr Morris could approach potential sponsors on behalf of the Board.

The forecast, budget and five year plan were **approved**.

3.2 *Personal Expenses, Allowances, Fees and Charges*

It was agreed that any rounding of figures should take account of the effect on % increase of rounding from previous years.

The Treasurer clarified that the increase in membership subscriptions had been 50p, and that there was no proposed increase in Master Point charges but this would be reviewed later in the year.

The paper was **approved**.

4. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

4.1 *Salary Review (Confidential Item)*

The proposal was **approved**.

5. DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND COMMITTEE

5.1 *Update*

- a. Four groups had met to date to explore the specific topics of Youth Development, Events, Communications and Ranking/Handicapping. Reports from the first two groups were presented at the last Board meeting. Further Topic Groups are being planned to discuss:

- Membership Development, Activities and Incentives
- EBUTA and Bridge Student Membership
- Beacon Clubs, Child Protection and Community Links

- b. The Regional Youth Officers had been invited to a meeting in Aylesbury on 23 March to discuss the way forward for youth development. The General Manager reported that three RYOs had now resigned and it looked as though the meeting would not be held. However, the Development Department and the Treasurer, in his capacity as Chairman of the Youth Squad Committee, would meet to discuss the way forward.

- c. With regards to Events, work is currently underway to plan a programme of some 50 individual events in support of the Development Plan, and in light of the success of the Bridge & Ballet event at Milton Keynes. These are: Bridge at Castle Howard, in association with Yorkshire County Association; Bridge & Carmen at Stoke; Bridge & High Society at Bromley, and Bridge & Annie at Milton Keynes. In addition, discussions had been held with the Events Manager at Woburn Abbey, and this would be a good opportunity for a safari trip and MiniBridge. Further discussions were being had with Blenheim Palace and Chatsworth on a similar theme. Mr Martin suggested

that more bridge events be family-friendly, perhaps with the provision of a crèche. The General Manager agreed to review this.

- d. Following the Ranking Topic Group, Mr Martin had produced a report on what activities would need to be considered in order to deliver an EBU Ranking System and services. Ms Hamilton asked what the effect on the Master Points system would be, and was advised that the systems would run alongside each other. The Vice Chairman felt that there was considerable enthusiasm amongst members for such a system, and it was **agreed** that an article be published in the June issue of *English Bridge* explaining that this was being investigated, and would be linked to CASS.

5.2 Report from County meetings

The General Manager reported that several meetings with County Associations had already been attended by himself or the Chairman, and they had been well received. The common issues raised by the Counties were: compulsory membership of the EBU for all EBU-affiliated club members; reform of Council; and development of closer relationships with Mr Bridge. The General Manager advised that he had recently met with Mr Bridge and was attempting to build better relationships.

5.3 Communications Topic Group - Report

Ms Hamilton reported that the Communications Topic Group had been valuable, and various matters had been raised. It had been suggested that consideration be given to a complete overhaul of *English Bridge* in an attempt to re-focus it. She did concede that it was very difficult to focus a magazine which served so many constituencies, but this should be looked into.

There followed some discussion regarding the possibility of getting *English Bridge* into the public domain via shop magazine racks. It was felt, however, that this could prove very difficult and not beneficial. It was **agreed** that the *English Bridge* should be suggested to Council as a topic for discussion.

6. SINGLE ENTITY – Draft Memorandum & Articles of Association, and Bye-Laws

A draft Articles of Association and Bye-Laws had been produced by Hammonds but still required fine-tuning prior to presentation to Council for final adoption. Mr Stocken confirmed that the documents were a re-cast of the existing Articles and Bye-Laws, but recommended that the titles of Chairman and Vice Chairman be changed to “President & Chairman” and “Deputy President/Chairman” respectively. This would overcome some of the political nuances of other governing bodies. The Board was asked to review the documents and forward their comments and suggested amendments by 1 April 2004 to Mr Stocken, who would consolidate them prior to discussion with Hammonds.

7. NATIONAL BRIDGE CENTRE - Update

- a. The General Manager presented a paper on the possibility of locating a National Bridge Centre in Kettering. He advised that he had recently met with Mr Jack Mizel, who was interested in the project and would be keen to know more about the possibility of an investment opportunity. Mr Mizel had agreed to raise the matter with others whom he felt would also be interested.
- b. It was noted that the figures in the report had been produced by Phoenix Leisure, the owners, and would, if the project progressed, need to be scrutinised professionally on behalf of the EBU. On the question regarding the level of activities which would be directed to the NBC, it was acknowledged that there is increasing difficulty in finding suitable venues for bridge events, and, therefore, the majority of events would be likely to be held in the NBC. If members were to return to the same venue time again, it was recognised that quality of facilities and services would be key. The General Manager reported that Phoenix Leisure had commenced on part of the refurbishment of the site, and had recently received planning permission for a theatre.
- c. It was felt that it is still too early in considerations for the matter to be raised in detail at Council, however, an outline of the project would be prepared for the next Council.

8. BRIDGE FOR ALL – The Future

- a. In light of Council's request to discuss *Bridge for All* at the next meeting, the General Manager had prepared a discussion document for the Board's consideration regarding the opportunity available to review the scheme and set sights for the future.
- b. Mr Stocken stated that in terms of a teaching aid, the scheme had been successful, however, *BfA* had been a failure in terms of being a membership generator, which had been the main reason for setting up the scheme.
- c. The General Manager suggested that the *BfA* scheme be relaunched as three separate products: first, a teaching programme; secondly, a membership programme, and third, publishing.

9. 2005/06 – THE YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP

The General Manager presented a proposal for having 2005/06 as the year of membership, in support of the Development Plan which sets the target of doubling membership within the five-year period of the Plan. He recommended that the membership form, which outlines the benefits of membership, be revised to include the increased range of membership benefits, including the various discounts now available, the wide ranging programme of county and national events programme, and the new social bridge programme. It was recognised that this would require a tremendous effort and considerable change not only to marketing and customer service functions, but the way we work with our colleagues in the County Associations and our affiliated clubs.

It was **agreed** that a paper should be presented to Council on this matter and the various marketing activities and partnership incentives associated with it.

10. IT PROJECTS

10.1 Brought forward to item 3.1 following sub paragraph q.

10.2 CASS – Update

The General Manager reported that clubs were being kept advised of progress with CASS by electronic newsletters. Two newsletters had already been sent to all clubs, the second one of which gave a timetable for the distribution of the next versions and what they would include. In addition, the newsletters and uploads are published on the website. This had proved popular with clubs as a method of keeping them informed, and, as at 1 March 2004, 250 clubs have expressed an interest in using CASS, and 25 clubs have already sent registration files in for validation. The helpdesk function provided for users was also proving very successful.

10.3 Bridgemate Terminals (item 11.2)

Further to Mr Carter's presentation of the Bridgemate Terminal (a wireless score recording system) at the last Board meeting, the General Manager has approached the manufacturer with a view to trialling the system, and determining what the back-room function is. It was noted that there was an opportunity to link the Terminal to CASS, but this would be investigated if the trial proved successful. The General Manager reported that he had been advised that Chess & Bridge were considering acting as suppliers for the Terminals, and would discuss the matter with them.

11. ASSISTING COUNTIES BY WAY OF EBU TOURNAMENT VOUCHERS

Mr Carter presented a paper outlining an idea for assisting Counties with prizes, which are primarily funded from their entry price, and to attract more County-only players into national tournaments. Concern was expressed regarding the cost of doing this, and it was suggested that this matter be raised at the Tournament Committee to see if it warranted further investigation.

12. COMMITTEE REPORTS

12.1 Editorial Board – 12 February 2004

Ms Hamilton presented the minutes of the Editorial Board of 12 February 2004. She draw attention to the recent Communications Topic Group at which it had been suggested that a redesign of *English Bridge* be considered.

12.1.1 Agreement with Blue2

The General Manager reported that the agreement had been signed, and was being returned to the EBU.

13. BGB MATTERS

Mr Neville reported that the BGB Agreement had now been signed, and copies provided to each of the NBOs concerned.

14. EBL AND WBF MATTERS

In light of Mr Harris' absence, there was nothing to report.

15. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The General Manager advised that there was nothing to report.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 The tabled Tournament Committee minutes of 24 February were noted.

16.2 Mr Stocken asked for clarification regarding EBU involvement in the forthcoming Lords vs. Commons Bridge match. It was confirmed that the EBU were managing the competition, but we had not been advised of the actual date until very late. Mr Stocken asked that the sponsors, Stephen Perry of London Export, be mentioned in any publicity.

16.3 Mr Morris asked if there was an update on getting MiniBridge onto Microsoft software. It was felt that this would prove expensive and difficult. However, the General Manager suggested that a bridge match challenge be sent from England to Microsoft.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12 May 2004, in Aylesbury
12.30 p.m. – Lunch with EBU staff
1.30 p.m. – meeting commences