



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2006,  
AT 40 BERNARD STREET, LONDON.**

<b>Present:</b>	Denis Robson	(Chairman)
	Philip Mason	(Vice-Chairman)
	John Neville	(Hon. Treasurer)
	Sally Bugden	
	John Carter	
	Graham Jepson	
	Jeff Morris	
	Alan Nelson	
	Martin Pool	
	Steve Eginton	(Selection Committee Member, for Item 3)
	Tony Parks	(AD Parks & Co. Auditor, for Item 2)
	Barry Capal	(General Manager)
	Sandra Claridge	(Minute taker)

**1 APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from David Harris.

**2 DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2006.**

Presenting the accounts, Tony Parks highlighted the following:

- Brian Smith included as Company Secretary.
- The Shareholdings of Graham Jepson and Martin Pool to be confirmed.
- A statement of information to Auditors represented a new requirement for Directors to disclose any personal information such as the likelihood of fraud, bad debts etc. which could have a financial impact on the Company.
- The draft accounts had been audited in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing.
- The current market value of investments at £76,225 was a reduction on the previous year, but a high rate of interest was being generated.
- There was a gradual increase in stock levels, mostly accounted for by books. The Directors considered this to be an uncomfortably high percentage of turnover, and further investigations would be undertaken.
- Creditors, which included £87K in unredeemed vouchers, were slightly down on the previous year, and the total for deferred income represented subscriptions for the current year banked before 31<sup>st</sup> March.
- Officers' fees had been substantially reduced.
- Employee costs and pension contributions showed a significant decrease.

- The increase in net current assets had improved liquidity.
- The net profit for the year of £8,321 was more or less as expected.

Summarising, Tony Parks said that in 2005 he had highlighted various areas for improvement. He was pleased to note that the bank accounts were now in significantly better order with regular reconciliations being undertaken, and the Sales and Purchase Ledgers had been tidied up. Credit control systems had become more effective, and this was reflected in the reduction in trade debtors. A number of small items have been written off and as a consequence the current year had started with a clean set of figures, which would substantially improve controls. Without impacting on the accounts the old Miami balances had been removed, and all balances on members' accounts are now genuine. There were no inconsistencies in any of the accounting systems.

It was agreed that the Accounts be approved, subject to amendments to the Directors Report, and investigation of an apparent anomaly in the Competitions results. Tony Parks was thanked for his work on the accounts and presentation of them.

### **3 PLAN FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS**

Steve Eginton's Plan for International Competitiveness, an Executive Summary of it, and the EBU's 5-year financial plan for Internationals produced in conjunction with Max Bavin, had been circulated to the Board in advance, following discussion and approval of the proposals by the Selection Committee Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

Presenting his proposals, Steve expanded on the perceived importance of the success of our international teams, and its potential in terms of public profile. The key features of the Plan are the introduction of International Squads, an "academy" entrance level, the employment of permanent coaches and captains, closer involvement by selectors, and proper use of technology. Raising the interest of the membership at large and the media was clearly linked to success, but levels of communication also needed to be addressed.

The problems of the current system of selection appeared to be a lack of guaranteed continuity, particularly in terms of captains and coaches. A mass of information was available on the internet such as systems, player information and other data which was not being taken advantage of, and England was falling behind other European NBOs in regard to preparation. What was needed was at least one professional coach on a long-term basis supported by voluntary coaches, a squad system, and on-going practice sessions. The likely cost of an experienced coach for 80-100 days per year was estimated at around £10K, but such an appointment would significantly benefit players who aren't selected as winners of trials, who would gain valuable experience competing in e.g. trans-national events.

The method of implementing the scheme would be determined by a group of up to a dozen people who would assess how the dynamic of a squad system and academy would work, taking into account the remit to produce the best teams. The likely sizes of the squads were estimated to be 12+ pairs of Open, and 4 or 5 pairs of Ladies. Training opportunities for Seniors would also need to be addressed.

John Neville said that while the scheme clearly offered an improved method of organising England's international effort, the Union's expenditure has increased markedly over the last 10 years, and consideration must be given to how much the Board and Shareholders can justify. Current costs are in excess of £100K every year, and £150K every fourth year, for the benefit of a very small proportion of the membership, representing a considerable sum per member. He felt that other projects for the benefit of the membership as a whole were at least

as important: finances are limited, and he wouldn't support an increase in international spending. Max Bavin is responsible for producing budgets based on past precedent, and is accountable for performance against budget.

In response Steve Eginton said that if the Board approved the scheme it was up to them to set a budget which the organisers would have to work within, though approaches to potential sponsors had already been made. Sally Bugden stressed that approaches must be documented, and sponsor-seeking must be co-ordinated with others with sponsorship experience, and Alan Nelson as Chairman of the Sponsorship Committee. Jeff Morris said that it was unfortunate that there was currently no Government financial support for bridge coaching or participation in international events.

The Chairman said that while the Board broadly supported the scheme, the Selection Committee must reassess what savings could be made elsewhere from their existing £125K budget, in consultation with Max Bavin. In light of the reassessment, it might be necessary to make clear to players that to achieve the aims of the scheme the level of support currently provided might have to be reduced, unless substantial sponsorship was attracted. In any event the budget would be subject to ongoing monitoring by the Board.

Mr Eginton was thanked for his presentation.

#### **4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY**

The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

##### **4.1 *Matters arising***

###### *4.1.1 Trust Account*

The General Manager said that no progress had been made, either in opening a dedicated bank account, or in completing the application for Charitable status. He agreed to pursue the matter, and inform David Harris that assistance is provided by the Charity Commissioners in completing the application. John Neville confirmed that the £10K to be transferred to the Trust Account is included in the annual accounts. The Trust will have charitable status because it funds specifically youth activities. Other potential donors to EBU general or non-charitable funds should be informed that eligibility for inheritance tax relief is unlikely as the donation would not be deemed to be for charitable purposes.

###### *4.1.2 Open Meeting at Aylesbury*

The General Manager said that in his opinion it was not necessary to hold a Special General Meeting at Aylesbury for the benefit of the staff, given that they have an opportunity to meet the Board on an annual basis. John Carter did not concur with this view. The General Manager confirmed that he had assured the staff that a move to Kettering was now extremely unlikely.

It was agreed that the January 2007 Board Meeting would be held at the Aylesbury offices.

###### *4.1.3 Seniors Camrose*

Alan Nelson reported that the offer of sponsorship for a Seniors Camrose competition to be called the Teltscher Cup, had been increased to £5K p.a. for five years, and the Board recorded its gratitude to Bernard Teltscher.

The original proposal by Bridge Great Britain had been that the EBU be requested to run the competition annually, but in light of the increase in sponsorship both Wales and Scotland had expressed an interest in hosting it. It was agreed that England would organise the first event

at a venue to be approved by Bridge Great Britain, who would put forward proposals on format and a method of ensuring the participation of six teams including a sponsor's team.

#### 4.1.4. Educational DVD

The whereabouts of a DVD of a Minibrige Animation Project was still unknown. The General Manager agreed to make further investigations. If no progress was made the Chairman agreed to contact Terry Collier.

## 5 TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT TO 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2006

The Treasurer had little to add to his report, except to say that as the usual July Shareholders' Meeting had been cancelled, the Report and the Annual Accounts would be circulated to Shareholders as soon as one or two queries on the accounts had been resolved. In future every effort would be made to provide the information to Shareholders as soon as possible after the year-end. In general terms the year's results had been satisfactory, but there was still a need to be watchful.

Jeff Morris drew attention to a published increase in the cost of *BFA*, and an adverse web bulletin board comment written by Sue Maxwell. Disappointingly Sue had failed to appreciate that at its new level the *BFA* material still represented excellent value for money. Sue has been responsible for attracting over 100 EBU members in Aylesbury, and is introducing a similar scheme in Shrewsbury in 2007. She is now assisting with the development of an education initiative, and this will be considered by the Membership Development Action Group at its next meeting. John Neville said that details of the initiative, particularly in regard to additional funding, hadn't yet been approved, but reminded the Board that the current cost of *BFA* materials i.e. £25 was cheaper than eight years ago, and included a year's membership of the Union and a rebate to counties of £3. This information would be fully explained to teachers by John Pain.

The General Manager said that everything possible should be done to improve services to the lower level of the membership. It was encouraging to note that *BFA* numbers had picked up considerably of late.

The Board joined the Treasurer in expressing their gratitude to Max Bavin and Brian Smith for the smooth running of the office prior to the appointment of Barry Capal.

The Treasurer commended to the Board a scheme to encourage payment of subscriptions by Direct Debit, to come into force in April 2008. Subscription reminders in 2007 will trail an increase of £2.50 in April 2008, discounted by £2 to those participating in the Direct Debit Scheme. He further recommended that the cost of all Masterpoints should be increased as planned in April 2007, but that any subsequent increase should result in paper masterpoint certificates costing rather more than points issued electronically, to recognise the extra work involved. It was confirmed, in answer to a question from Sally Bugden, that the Union has in place a facility for recording points issued electronically for non-members, enabling any valid points to be credited when the decision to join the EBU is subsequently made. These recommendations were approved by the Board.

The Treasurer was thanked for his excellent report.

## 6 MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

Sally Bugden said that nineteen further visits to clubs were planned before the end of September, completing the target of 20 clubs. Barry Capal had been invited to attend the next MDAG meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> August, and reports on the meetings at clubs already visited would be

assessed at Aylesbury on a qualitative basis. The reaction from clubs had been positive, and clearly services for individual members would be popular. The General Manager said action must be taken quickly, and Shareholders encouraged to support the way forward.

John Carter said that making progress with counties was logistically more difficult, but a pilot meeting had been formulated, and the views of the Past President of the English Golf Union were being sought on the initiative from a golf club's point of view.

Suggestions had been put to the Selection, Laws & Ethics and Tournament Committees on ways that they might be able to offer assistance in recruiting members. As Chairmen of the L&E and Tournament Committees respectively, Martin Pool and Alan Nelson said that the matter would be discussed at their next meetings. Denis Robson said that the Selection Committee had discussed the paper and felt that some of the initiatives would be viable.

## **7 SCCBA CODE OF CONDUCT**

Max Bavin's comments on the SCCBA's Code of Conduct – Best Behaviour, were noted, and supported. Sally Bugden apologised for the layout of the planned article in the August issue of *English Bridge*, and agreed that on Max's advice some of the statements in the code would be removed.

## **8 MARKETING & PROMOTION**

### *8.1 Communication with members*

Sally Bugden confirmed that the terms and conditions on the EBU website in regard to the Privacy Policy are now correct. Members have been informed that they are in an "opt out" situation, rather than an "opt in". The website will be used to gather vital information to ensure that membership services become more effective. For this to be successful an incentive had been suggested e.g. a week's holiday for two people. The existing "Members" area of the website is accessible, with a facility to use an individual password.

The General Manager said he was considering the potential of an existing member of staff to undertake communications, which would involve a small amount of investment in training and media aids.

### *8.2 Website Advertising*

It was agreed that the EBU's advertising company would make all advertisers of licensed holidays in *English Bridge* aware of an additional facility for a small extra price available to them in having a link to the EBU website. It was agreed that the status quo be maintained in that there would be no endorsement by the EBU of any individual operator.

### *8.3 Interactive Publicity*

Jeff Morris suggested that attempts might be made to get a publicity facility with Teletext, similar to the service provided previously to Elena Jeronomidis on Channel 4. Barry Capal said that he would investigate the matter.

## **9 YOUNG PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

Correspondence from a member pointing out that the award system for young players appeared to have lapsed, was discussed. It was agreed that in future two awards would be made annually for the "most outstanding young player" and the "most improved young player", the first presentations being made in 2006. It was further agreed that a player may

only receive an award once. Graham Jepson and Jeff Morris would liaise with the Squad Managers to put forward recommendations for the current year.

## 10 GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

### 10.1 *Kettering*

Barry Capal reported that he had visited Kettering and found the playing conditions excellent, but otherwise disappointing, particularly in relation to opportunities for socialising. He and Max Bavin had been approached by Paramount Hotels, and a visit to their hotel in Hinckley was planned.

John Neville said that a planning application had now been made for a hotel, but in reality, despite a considerable amount of work having been done on the centre and a significant improvement in the quality of the catering, it was unlikely that the Union would return there for a third year, if the cost was higher than alternative venues. A review will be undertaken, however, at the end of this year to evaluate what has been achieved in the interim.

Alan Nelson reported that an increasing number of good reports had been received about the venue, but the social element remained an important issue. Philip Mason reminded Board members that alternative venues had to be reserved in sufficient time to get details into the diary. Jeff Morris raised the specific issue of the Garden Cities Trophy, about which the General Manager had received complaints from some Counties, and said that efforts should be made to support events being held in bridge clubs, where feasible.

While plans for moving the offices to Kettering had now been shelved, John Carter pointed out that the original brief to find a suitable National Bridge Centre had not changed.

### 10.2 *Staffing and Aylesbury headquarters*

The General Manager reported on his assessment of the staffing levels, capabilities, and the issues to be addressed for the future. In particular the question of EBU staff working for bridge operators was discussed, and it was agreed that in no case would this be at the Union's expense. It was conceded, however, that Max Bavin's position as Chief TD for the World Bridge Organisation was something for the Union to take pride in. An outsourcing agreement had been put in place for IT which was now operational. At a meeting with Anna Gudge, Barry had agreed that the website would be redesigned at a cost of around £1K, and was assured that the delays on the results service had been eliminated and would be enhanced by pictures of winners.

Barry Capal's initial impression of the Aylesbury offices was that the temperature in hot weather was unacceptable and some of the equipment may not accord with the requirements of the Health and Safety Act. Quotations would be obtained for rectifying these points. Alan Nelson expressed the opinion the layout of the offices was not ideal.

### 10.3 *Masterpoint System*

It was noted that the current system of counting masterpoints was not cost-effective, and a revision should be made of the procedures in relation to electronic transfers by clubs. Ideally a formal contract system with clubs should be introduced.

It was agreed that the present cut-off point for master-point prizes i.e. mid-July puts unreasonable pressure on the staff at a holiday time. An alternative date for the future will be determined, and notified to the membership in due course.

#### 10.4 *Membership Services*

Barry Capal drew the Board's attention to a medical healthcare insurance scheme already introduced into other membership organisations, which would provide EBU members with a 50% saving on similar schemes. John Neville said that he viewed financial services companies with some scepticism, and Alan Nelson was unhappy about an apparent endorsement of individual companies unless some concrete figures were available on the size of the organisations involved and take-up of the scheme.

#### 10.5 *Bridge Club Live*

The General Manager had recently met with the Managing Director of Bridge Club Live. They discussed a variety of aspects of the relationship between BCL and the EBU. Barry discussed with him the possibility of opening an EBU Minibridge room on his website, and received a potentially positive response. (Patrick Jourdain had reported that Minibridge had proved very successful in Wales, and might be introduced in the national curriculum). John Carter said that Minibridge had recently become part of the national curriculum in the Isle of Wight.

In addition, they discussed the possibility of using the BCL rating system in a wider application. Max Bavin had been asked to investigate the ratings system currently in use in Australia.

#### 10.6 *Education*

The Board approved Barry's recommendation that from a date to be agreed all new teachers linked and certified on the EBU website must be required to use *BFA*.

#### 10.7 *Meeting with Andrew Robson*

Barry said that a meeting with Andrew Robson had proved very promising in terms of addressing the lowest end of the bridge market, members or otherwise. It is hoped to set up a "novice" tour sometime in 2007.

#### 10.8 *Delegated Responsibilities*

It was agreed that the financial limits for signatories and the General Manager's delegated powers in terms of staff, would be confirmed.

The General Manager was thanked for his excellent report.

### **11 COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **11.1 *Tournament Committee***

Alan Nelson had nothing to report.

#### **11.2 *Selection Committee***

Denis Robson reported that at the Selection Committee meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July the Committee requested that the Board require future potential candidates for election to indicate any possible conflicts of interest. It was agreed that this would be included in "pen portraits".

##### **11.2.1 *Reappointment of Sports Psychologist***

The Board agreed that the Selection Committee could appoint a Sports Psychologist providing the cost was not in addition to their existing budget.

#### 11.2.2 U20s Squad Manager

The Board noted with regret the resignation of Mel Starkings with effect from 31st December 2006, due to pressure of work. Although the Selection Committee had preferred to advertise the vacancy, it was agreed that Graham Jepson and Jeff Morris would be responsible for recruiting a replacement, who would be engaged on a trial basis under their mentoring. Their recommendation for a Non-playing Captain for the U20s would be forwarded to the Selection Committee.

#### 11.2.3 Invitation from the Chinese CBA

The Chairman reported that an invitation had been received to send a Womens Team to a very prestigious 8-team tournament in Shanghai in October. The only substantial cost to the Union would be flights for seven people. In the event that the team won a major cash prize the cost of the flights, or 50% of the prize money would be repaid to the Union, whichever is the lesser. It was agreed that the invitation be accepted.

#### 11.2.4 Membership Development Action Group

The Selection Committee had agreed that it could not be a condition of selection that players make time available to visit clubs or local congresses. It was suggested, however, that the provision of bridge DVDs might aid membership development, as would a significant improvement in the results service, communication with members on topics such as the Direct Debit Scheme, BFA etc. and on a strategic basis with the media.

### 11.3 Laws & Ethics Committee

#### 11.3.1 White Book

Martin Pool reported that the index was currently being produced, and that it was hoped that the document would be printed in November. Once the cost was determined a decision would be made on whether the book would be sold, other than to Panel TDs who would receive a free copy.

#### 11.3.2 VP Scales for Swiss Pairs

Correspondence had been received on the calculation of percentages for Swiss Pairs events, and the production of the White Book was seen as an opportunity to vary the VP Scale.

#### 11.3.3 Hard of Hearing

Martin Pool said that concerns had been expressed about possible disadvantages to the hard of hearing in regard to the introduction of announcements. The Committee would ensure that it complied with the Disability Act, and included in the new White Book would be an instruction to Directors-in-Charge to make such changes that are necessary to deal with specific disabilities. In addition to announcements, it was available to players to make notes for the opposition. The Committee welcomed comments from players with disabilities so that appropriate assistance can be given. It was suggested that the Disability Policy be displayed on the website.

#### 11.3.4 Easy Guide to the Orange Book

It was noted that an A5 card would be included with the August issue of *English Bridge*. In addition, it was suggested that an editorial simplifying the changes even further, would be helpful.

#### **11.4 Editorial Board**

Sally Bugden said it was hoped that the new advertising representative at Blue2 would attract additional advertisers, who would also be offered space on the EBU website. Sally Bugden continued that the introduction of profiles of bridge players/celebrities would be pursued. Barry Capal suggested the introduction of more articles for intermediate players, and the Editorial Board had welcomed his suggestion.

#### **12 BRIDGE GREAT BRITAIN MATTERS**

John Neville had nothing to report, with the exception of pursuing the Seniors Camrose.

#### **13 EBL & WBF MATTERS**

David Harris would be attending the European Championships Warsaw, and the European Bridge League Meeting at the conclusion of the Championships.

#### **14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

##### *14.1 Bridge Ryder Cup*

It was suggested that James Smith, Press and Sponsorship Officer for the London CBA, be approached in an effort to generate publicity for the Buffett Cup, being played alongside the Ryder Cup in Ireland in September, in which Jason & Justin Hackett are included in the European Team. It was noted that Patrick Jourdain is in communication with Peter Kaufman in regard to TV coverage, and it was understood that the CBAI has invited Richard Caborn, the Minister for Sport, to attend the final banquet.

John Neville said that he was concerned about the costs implications in running the event, which it was assumed would fall on Wales in 2010, and England in 2018.

##### *14.2 Hall of Fame*

Sally Bugden reported that Paul Hackett had produced details and costings of the ACBL's Hall of Fame, and these were considered. In view of the fact that resources to fund other activities are currently fairly limited, it was agreed that the concept of a Hall of Fame would not be pursued for the time being.

##### *14.3 Central Council for Physical Recreation*

Jeff Morris reported that he attended the last meeting of the CCPR, at which Ian Peacock, head of the Sports Marketing Research Trust, had announced that the Trust would fund research projects for recognised sports, which included bridge.

**(THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT BOARD MEETING)**

The next Board Meeting will be held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September in London, commencing at 12.30 pm, at the McAlpine offices, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, 40 Bernard Street, London.

