



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HELD ON TUESDAY 11TH SEPTEMBER 2007 AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL,
LONDON.**

Present:	Peter Stocken	(Chairman)
	Sally Bugden	(Vice-Chairman)
	John Neville	(Hon. Treasurer)
	John Carter	
	Michael Hill	
	Graham Jepson	
	Philip Mason	
	Jeff Morris	
	Alan Nelson	
	Martin Pool	
	Barry Capal	(General Manager)
	Sandra Claridge	(Minute taker)

1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 10th JULY 2007

1.1 Accuracy

It was agreed that the following sentence be added to item 1.3 "Sally Bugden said that due to pressure of work on strategy matters, she had passed the Chairmanship of the TD Assessment Panel to Peter Stocken."

Subject to the inclusion of the above, the minutes were signed as an accurate record.

1.2 Matters Arising

1.2.1 Educational CD

Graham Jepson said that he had been told that the whereabouts of the CD was not known. It was agreed that the Chairman would write to Terry Collier requesting the return of any material in his possession belonging to the EBU, and pointing out that appropriate action would be taken by the EBU if such material was used by him without authorization.

1.2.2 Gaming Act

Jeff Morris confirmed that the Gaming Act, which it was envisaged would not impact on duplicate bridge clubs, was implemented on 1st September 2007.

1.2.3 Youth Committee

The Chairman reported that a meeting had been arranged, coordinated by the EBU Youth Officer, and that the two Squad Managers, the two members of the Board responsible for Youth Matters, and Clive Owen, had been invited to attend. The thrust of the meeting would be to formulate plans for the structure and responsibilities of the proposed committee for the Annual General Meeting.

The General Manager confirmed that, under Clause 15 of the Union's Articles of Association, the authority to appoint all standing committees is vested in the Board of Directors.

1.2.4 TD Assessment Panel

The Chairman said that the Panel, comprising himself, Sally Bugden, Heather Dhondy, and Martin Pool (subject to availability) was meeting shortly to determine its future role and responsibilities. Joy Mayall of Sussex had offered to join the panel, and this was gratefully accepted. Already agreed was that an extensive review would be undertaken over the next 18 months involving interviews with all panel TDs, which would take account of career objectives and advancement. Three panel TDs had been promoted following interviews undertaken at Brighton, and a further two Trainees had been made up to Congress "B" Directors on the recommendation of the Chief Tournament Director.

1.2.5 Pro-celebrity bridge

The Vice-Chairman had communicated the Board's support of the Pro-celebrity event to Simon Cocheme, who had indicated that he would try to pursue the matter without EBU funding. Graham Jepson mentioned that a member of the Walker Cup amateur golf team might be a useful contact for a Golf/Bridge event.

2 FINANCIAL MATTERS

John Neville confirmed that the Annual Accounts to 31st March 2007 together with the Treasurer's Report for the year, had been circulated to Shareholders and published on the EBU website.

Figures for the current year indicated a satisfactory start, with income broadly in line with budget, but expenditure below budget, particularly in the Overheads area. This had arisen largely because recruitment was undertaken later than provided for in the budget, and that the provision for overtime was over-generous. Masterpoint income represented an increase on budget, with the Shop and Competitions below budget, though there were expenditure savings in both areas. It was hoped that an overall loss for the year might now be avoided.

The General Manager pointed out that 3,600 membership reminders would shortly be dispatched at a cost of £1500, and that about half of these would not renew. Whilst the

Board expressed the view that members should not be entitled to more than three months' grace, it was conceded that to send 7,000-8,000 reminders in July would involve a likely administration cost of around £4K, though retention levels might improve. It was noted that if the Pay to Play strategy was adopted, substantial savings would be made in membership and administration costs.

It was recommended that next year's officers, together with the General Manager should be responsible for devising a method of communicating to the membership easily digestible facts and figures on the workings of the administration, highlighting savings, and ways in which membership services can be improved. This, it was hoped, would give members an insight into way the Union was run.

Proposed Membership Subscriptions for the year 2008/9

The Treasurer said that his recommendation for an additional 50 pence on the existing membership subscription was merely keeping pace with inflation. John Carter questioned the reason for a considerably higher rate for UK Direct members, which had been raised at the recent Strategy meetings. The Treasurer explained that for whatever reason, some members chose not to join or renew through their local county, and a mechanism was therefore put in place for direct membership. To encourage support of county associations the subscription was deliberately set significantly higher, which was reflected by the fact that the County portion was not included.

The Chairman was joined by the Board in thanking John for all the work he had undertaken as a Treasurer, and as a Board member for the last ten years.

3 PROCEDURES MANUAL

The General Manager requested comments on accuracy or suggested modifications by the end of September. A revised draft would then be re-circulated electronically and included on the agenda for the next meeting for final approval.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR TO 31ST MARCH

The Chairman's draft Report was tabled, and comments were requested.

5 GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The General Manager highlighted the following:

Staffing:

Youth Officer.

Mike Amos's knowledge of the junior game was proving invaluable, and his performance, skill level and contribution to the Junior Committee would be assessed over the coming months.

Communications Officer

After only six weeks' service Matt Betts was already making his mark in terms of establishing contacts with local press, and achieving much effective coverage therein. It was hoped that this would be extended to national coverage in due course. He had identified that photographs, rather than listed results, were more likely to be published, and this would be highlighted to clubs. In addition, he aimed to increase the profile of Masterpoint promotions.

Matt was currently engaged on getting air-time on TV with a "Countdown" approach to bridge involving club players, with amusing and expert commentary, which if possible would be done in collaboration with a bridge DVD and website coverage. The EBU had also submitted an application to appear on "The Professionals" version of University Challenge, the team comprising Barry Capal, Peter Stocken, David Burn and Ian Payn, with John Pyner as reserve.

Club Liaison Officer

Krys Kazmierczak had been visiting clubs nationwide establishing relationships, showing the public face of the EBU, and clarifying the strategy proposals. Feedback on the visits indicated that they were valuable, and much appreciated.

Junior Teach-in

The recent Junior Teach-in weekend in Leicestershire had been an enormous success with 103 young people participating, and an increase in the number of voluntary helpers. The Vice-Chairman said that Sussex devotes a percentage of its subscription income to supporting its junior members, and 16 Sussex children had attended the weekend at a cost of £2K, helpers receiving a small subsidy. It was agreed that the initiative should be highlighted by the Youth Officer to County Youth Officers, and feedback requested on what other counties are providing in terms of support. Graham Jepson said that Yorkshire also allocates an annual amount for youth, with additional funds being provided as necessary.

Really Easy Congress

The Congress held at the Brighton Summer Meeting and organized by Gill Pain and Matt had proved a great success, and another event was planned for April 2008. A web domain had been purchased for novices entitled www.reallyeasy.com.

Focus on Value

A very successful course had been held at Brighton, and while there was still a long way to go, fifty teachers had been trained and partner clubs were springing up. *BFA* student numbers were being maintained, but the level of support offered needed to be reviewed. Full details of the scheme were published on the Education page of the EBU website.

Sponsorship

There had been an approach from a potential sponsor, which would be pursued.

6 COMMITTEE REPORTS

6.1 Selection Committee Minutes of 24th July and 28th August

The Chairman said that a great deal of work had been undertaken by the Committee to produce strategy proposals for the future for the Board's consideration, and these were discussed at length. The current level of spending on international competitions was noted as £68K p.a. plus overheads and salaries. Max Bavin was responsible for producing annual budgets, based on experience, for allocation of funds to the various international events, and these had proved to be reasonably accurate.

Further funding in the region of £19K p.a. was requested for a squad system and on-going programme of coaching for all international teams, plus the services of a Sports Psychologist. The Board conceded that the suggested coaching scheme would undoubtedly prove beneficial in time, but further financial support would be difficult to justify to the membership at large. It was agreed, however, that the proposals for extending junior team development were highly desirable. In light of the opinions expressed during the recent consultation process, the Selection Committee would be asked to provide further proposals for defraying the cost of their recommendations by other means.

It was noted that a statement in the minutes relating to sponsor-seeking was inaccurate. It was confirmed that the Selection Committee may seek sponsorship to assist with funding international teams, subject to approval that the source was acceptable to the Board.

An NPC's claim for expenses in relation to training prior to the Junior European Championships was noted, and the Chairman agreed to come to an arrangement with him within the limits set by the Board.

6.2 Editorial Board Minutes of 7th August

Sally Bugden reported that arrangements between the new Editor of *English Bridge* and Blue2 were currently being reviewed.

6.3 Laws & Ethics Committee Matters

Martin Pool highlighted correspondence relating to an incident at a heat of the National Pairs, where a competitor had refused to sign a Tournament Director's report. There was general agreement that the whole episode was regrettable, that the Committee should review its procedures in this regard, and that problems of this nature would be highlighted during the TD assessment process. The hope was also expressed that players could be encouraged to be less confrontational.

Detailed results of an on-line survey were not yet available, but it was clear from the 750 or so responses, 93% of whom were club players, that the new announcements and

alerting procedure was supported. Problems still existed with the alerting of doubles, and the Committee would seek to improve its communication on this subject.

6.4 Tournament Committee matters

Alan Nelson reported that representations had been received from members opposed to the decision to terminate a second overseas congress. Offers of sponsorship had been received from two leading travel companies, and these would be discussed by the Committee on 12th September..

6.5 WBF/EBL Matters

The Vice-Chairman reiterated that the appalling level of communication by the European Bridge League, in relation to dates and venues for their competitions, posed a continuing problem in terms of clashes with national events, and urged that further representations be made to achieve significantly earlier notification.

7 STRATEGY PROPOSALS

The Board members who had attended the County consultation meetings reported on the extremely valuable discussions that had taken place. A paper produced for the meeting represented work in progress, giving a resumé of the comments, concerns, questions and practical ideas put forward. The value to the Board was the huge response it had received, and the fact that the proposals had got the entire country talking about grass-roots bridge. In addition, the meetings had provided a forum for Board members to listen to what Counties had to say in relation to their clubs' particular problems or concerns, which would assist in ensuring that the needs of the market were addressed by as simple a mechanism as possible.

All aspects of the paper were debated at length, and it was noted that universal membership was generally perceived as the way forward. The Board would therefore recommend to the Shareholders at the Annual General Meeting its preferred option of a Pay to Play strategy. A paper, revised in the light of the ideas and suggestions that have arisen from the consultation process, would be circulated to Shareholders prior to the Annual General Meeting. If the reaction was favourable, it was recommended that the new Board should extend its consultation process to clubs, so that the necessary information could be obtained in order to put forward a comprehensive and detailed report for discussion by the Shareholders in the Spring of 2008.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the first Board meeting following the Annual General Meeting was fixed for 23rd October 2007, venue and starting time to be confirmed. The General Manager said there would have to be a brief meeting after the AGM for the necessary legal procedures to be performed.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Gold Award

The Board decided unanimously to award Gerard Faulkner the English Bridge Union's Gold Award for his outstanding contribution both to the Union and to the game of Bridge over the last thirty years.

9.2 Mind Sports

Jeff Morris reported that the National Railway Museum in York had contacted the Mind Sports Association, offering the Museum as a venue for an open day on 13th April, with chess and bridge intended as the main attractions. The Chess Federation had agreed to put on an exhibition and a teaching forum, and the same facility had been offered to bridge, the organizers being particularly keen to stage a match for an U28 Chinese team. The event was likely to be very high profile with the Minister of Sport and local MPs invited. In addition, a local club had offered to host a no-cost Minibrige teaching session. It was agreed that Jeff and the Communications Officer should pursue the matter.

Also reported by Jeff Morris was that the Chess Federation was undertaking research into the benefits of Chess being included in the National Curriculum, and as a community service. The Vice-Chairman said that it was unfortunate that the EBU had no funds at present to follow suit, but that the results of Jeff's research into the beneficial effects of bridge should be publicized by the Communications Officer.