



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HELD ON TUESDAY 20TH MARCH 2007,
AT 5 OLD BAILEY, LONDON.**

Present:	Peter Stocken	(Chairman)
	Sally Bugden	(Vice-Chairman)
	John Neville	(Hon. Treasurer)
	Michael Hill	
	Graham Jepson	
	Philip Mason	
	Jeff Morris	
	Alan Nelson	
	Martin Pool	
	David Harris	(EBU Hon. Counsel) present for items 2 – 4.
	Barry Capal	(General Manager)
	Sandra Claridge	(Minute Taker)

1 Apology for absence

An apology was received from John Carter, whose absence was caused by illness.

2 Minutes of the meeting on 23rd January 2007

The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

2.1 Item 6 Membership Survey

Sally Bugden was pleased to report that approximately 5000 responses had now been received.

2.2 Item 2.2.3 Educational CD

Graham Jepson was still attempting to retrieve the Educational CD. The General Manager pointed out that the material is the property of the Union, and that it should be returned as a matter of priority.

2.3 Item 2.2.1 Trust Account

It was confirmed that the application form had now been completed, and would be submitted as soon as possible.

3 EBL & WBF MATTERS

The Chairman announced that Bill Pencharz, Vice-President of the Union and formerly President of the EBL, had asked the Board to nominate him for the EBL Executive, elections to which would take place in June. A proposal from the chair that the nomination be approved was carried, Alan Nelson voting against.

David Harris gave a full account of the present state of the EBL. There had been much criticism over the running of the EBL in recent years, particularly concerning its lax financial practices. Problems also existed between the EBL and WBF over the timing of their respective events. With regards to the forthcoming elections, Radek Kielbasinski of Poland had indicated his intention to stand for the Presidency against the current President Gianarrigo Rona. Radek had circulated a paper to all NBOs, outlining the changes he intended to make if elected.

The Treasurer said that many of the points made by Radek were cogent, and the EBU should seek assurance that significant improvements would be made to ensure that the EBL was more efficiently run. Alan Nelson felt that the EBU had, to an extent, contributed to the situation by not being more pro-active, and that a strong English representation on the Executive was vital. Generally, the Board felt that the EBU contributed a lot to the EBL, but got very little back in return.

The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and General Manager reported back on the EBL NBOs Seminar that they had attended in Rome the previous month. The presentations given by the successful federations on the initiatives they had taken to increase their membership was very useful; they were in the process of following up various aspects of these that would be useful to the EBU. They were concerned, however, that too much emphasis was being placed on the recruitment of young people, when membership growth – as demonstrated by those federations whose membership was increasing - depended upon targeting the 35+ age group. Apart from its main role in organizing European Championships, they felt that the EBL lacked any clear objectives on how it should be helping its member federations.

Alan Nelson said he would be attending the event in Turkey anyway and would be happy to be the Board's nominated representative. A decision as for whom he would be mandated to vote was left until nearer the time of the election.

The Chairman thanked David for his report.

3 LAWS & ETHICS MATTERS

3.1 Changes to the Bye-laws on disciplinary matters

Martin Pool outlined the L&E Committee's current practices in relation to complaints, and said that with the exception of situations involving either criminal or civil proceedings, the Committee felt confident in pursuing complaints, taking advice, as necessary, from David Harris. The Treasurer said that it would be unwise for the Board to surrender its rights to monitor the actions of the Committee, particularly if the Union's position was put under threat in any respect. The Chairman concurred, but agreed that intervention by the Board would only occur in this eventuality.

3.2 Introduction of Caution system

It was confirmed that a system of Cautions would be introduced. David Harris agreed to produce suitable wording for the Bye-laws.

3.3 Changes to regulations for Disciplinary Hearings

It was agreed that in line with current legislation, the L&E Committee's default position in regard to Hearings would be changed so that they would be public, rather than private, except in the case of members under the age of 18. David Harris confirmed that it would not be necessary to publish details of forthcoming Hearings, but that interested parties would be offered an "open" process.

Martin Pool said that the Disciplinary Panel had pointed out that the Committee's current procedures do not afford a defendant, who has pleaded guilty to an offence, the right to appear at the Hearing. It was agreed that the Bye-laws should be changed.

3.4 Changes to Conditions of Contest for EBU tournaments

It was agreed that Conditions of Contest for EBU tournaments would in future include a clause that should an offence during a tournament result in a member's suspension from the remainder of the event, the identity of the member **may** be published. Any such publication would follow an investigation by the L&E Committee in order to make certain that the suspension by the Director-in-Charge was appropriate.

David Harris agreed to produce the necessary wording to effect the Bye-law changes agreed in 3.2 and 3.3 above which will be put to a General Meeting in June. It was noted that incorporating the changes would facilitate production of a new model County Constitution.

The Chairman thanked David for the production of his very comprehensive Sentencing Guidelines.

4 COUNTY CONSTITUTIONS

David Harris reported that a number of Counties are currently reviewing their Constitutions, and that they had sought his advice. He stressed that all such Constitutions should be consistent and comply with the Union's Bye-laws, including changes agreed above, and that they must be approved by the Board.

Sally Bugden thanked David for his help in this area and also for helping Gerard Faulkner with the updated Club Constitutions.

5 FINANCIAL MATTERS

John Neville said that the Union was well ahead of budget for the current year, with a projected surplus of up to £80K looking possible. This had largely been achieved by a saving in salaries, the General Manager having succeeded in running the organization without replacing staff who had left. £30K budgeted for promotional materials had not been spent. Other cost areas, however, had been disappointing, most notably Masterpoints, though the final outcome might be more favourable.

He warned that the following year would be more challenging. Additional staff members were currently being recruited to enhance the Union's services in terms of communication and assistance to Clubs and in general move the Union forward, and the first year of Focus on Value would involve a certain level of financial commitment. After a brief discussion on specific aspects of the forecast for the current year and budget for 2007/8, he said that he was broadly content with the breakdown of the various cost centres, but was uncomfortable with the increasing figure for overheads.

The forecast for 2006/2007 and the budget for 2007/2008 were approved and would be circulated to the Shareholders during April.

Future predictions largely depended upon the implications of the proposals that MDAG (Membership Development Action Group) would be putting forward later in the year. Sally Bugden said that part of the MDAG proposals would include a combined Service Provision Strategy and Operations Strategy.

The Treasurer urged the Board not to underestimate the financial threats associated with additional projects. Whilst a 5-year plan was appropriate in relation to Capital Expenditure, this did not apply to other areas, with the exception of Internationals.

He thanked Gail Nancarrow for all the work she had undertaken so competently, with assistance from the Union's auditor Tony Parks, following the death of Brian Smith. Gail would be the Union's Accounts Manager with effect from 1st April.

The Chairman expressed the Board's gratitude also to John Neville and the Barry Capal for their contribution.

6 GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORTS

The General Manager reported as follows:

1. Annual staff salary increases had been agreed by the Officers.
2. The recent meeting of Membership Secretaries had gone very well. More work was being undertaken on information technology, and some counties were taking advantage of downloading system trials.
3. Results of the recent Membership Survey indicated some criticism of the outdated Masterpoint Scheme, predominantly from higher-ranked players. As a consequence National Rating System schemes run by European NBOs had been examined. It was clear that the scheme had been adopted as best practice overseas by countries where membership is increasing, and the Board agreed that proposals for the introduction of the scheme should be produced.
4. The Shareholders' On-line Forum had been available since the last Shareholders' Meeting, but as yet support was very limited.
5. There had been an encouraging response to the advertisement for a part-time Youth Officer, and an appointment would be made shortly.
6. The lesson plans for Focus on Value were being revised, and would be available in a printable format.
7. A part-time member of staff would be recruited to assist with EBUTA clerical work, which had fallen behind of late.
8. Negotiations were ongoing via the Company's Solicitors in regard to a claim for constructive dismissal.

9. There had been a very encouraging response to the advertisement for a Club Liaison Officer, but only two applications had been received for the post of Communications Officer.
10. A suggestion had been made that attendance at Shareholders' Meetings be extended, so that a wider audience could observe how the Union is run.
11. Discussions were in progress with Sally Bugden and Anna Gudge on website advertising.
12. The first draft rewrite of the Procedures Manual would be available for circulation to Board Members shortly.
13. A request from National Car Rental that details of their discounted no-cost option service to members be published to the membership, was approved.

7 CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

It was agreed that proposals to move to rolling elections for the Board of Directors would be presented to the Shareholders in June for consideration as a Special Resolution at the Annual General Meeting in October. Michael Hill offered to produce suitable wording.

8 CHARITIES

John Neville expressed the view that the current licensing policy for charity events was unsatisfactory. It was agreed that from 1st April licensing income from charity events would be aggregated and distributed to charities selected annually by the Board. Details of licensed charity tournaments and the revenue raised would be published on the EBU website.

9 COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1 Laws & Ethics Committee – 7th March 2007

Martin Pool said that the Committee had agreed to amend the extended Rule of 25, the change coming into force on 1st August.

The Board supported the Committee's stance in condemning abusive behaviour, and in line with Best Behaviour at Bridge, agreed that all members of the EBU, players, staff and TDs were entitled to be treated in a courteous manner.

7.2 Selection Committee

After a lengthy debate, a proposal by Graham Jepson, seconded by Philip Mason, that the Board feels that in the interests of English bridge and young women players currently under the age of 25, an Under-25 Girls' team should be offered the opportunity to compete in the 2007 European Under-25 Girls' Championship, and requests that the Selection Committee selects and arranges the training of a suitable team, was carried by 6 votes to 1, Martin Pool voting against, with two absentions.

Graham Jepson and Jeff Morris offered to be responsible for organizing the logistics of team training and preparation.

7.3 Editorial Board

Sally Bugden announced that Elena Jeronimidis had been appointed Editor of *English Bridge* with effect from the August issue, starting work at the end of May. A meeting was scheduled with Blue2 to discuss current arrangements. Nineteen pages of advertising had been sold for the April issue.

7.4 Bridge Great Britain

Philip Mason said that the main topic for the meeting on 24th April was likely to be the success of the 6-team format of the Camrose Trophy, and future arrangements. Jeff Morris asked that BGB consider a sixth team (possibly an Under 25 Girls' team), for the Junior Camrose.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Disciplinary Panel

The Chairman announced that Alan Oddie (Bedfordshire), Jackie Pye (Lancashire) and Kath Nelson (Manchester) had offered to serve on the Disciplinary Panel, and their offers were unanimously accepted.

8.2 Reports on Tournament Directors

Philip Mason offered his assistance with reports on Tournament Directors.

8.3 Directors' Liability Insurance

The General Manager agreed to investigate.

8.4 Best Behaviour at Bridge

Sally Bugden said an article on Best Behaviour at Bridge would be included in the June issue of *English Bridge*, and that a meeting would be held with Max Bavin, Mike Amos and Martin Pool to formulate a penalty structure, and guidelines for TDs.

8.5 Charities Act

Jeff Morris reported that he is meeting with the Chess Federation and a legal team in May to discuss the implications of the Charities Act on Mind Sports organizations, and the way in which they operate.

Jeff asked that notice of a petition organized by "Go" and published on the parliamentary website be drawn to the attention of the membership via the EBU website. The petition is a PR exercise designed to raise the profile of Mind Sports and to seek equal status with physical sports.

Closing the meeting the Chairman was joined by all present in thanking Baker Tilly for the provision of the meeting room, and the excellent refreshments.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 8th May, Aylesbury offices commencing at noon.