



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE C19 WORKING GROUP
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
via Zoom 11th December 2020**

Present: Gillian Fawcett (Vice Chairman) (GF) Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR) Rob Lawy (RL) Ron Millet (RM) Bev Purvis (BP) Patrick Shields (PS) Kiat Huang (KH) Adrian Darnell (AD) Ian Payn (Chairman) (GF)

1. Apologies for Absence

Jerry Cope

2. C19 Sub-Committee Meetings

It was noted that although the C19 Sub-Committee has not met formally since August, board members have continued to attend weekly meetings to ensure that conversations have been ongoing throughout the pandemic. This will continue for the foreseeable future. Actions agreed at this meeting will be tracked through the weekly meetings and Board Agreed Actions list.

3. Covid secure guidance

The EBU, and its affiliated clubs, have had to rely on government guidance which does not specifically relate to the playing of bridge, and we are keen to obtain further advice on how bridge can be made Covid secure.

We have had a meeting with the Sports and Recreational Alliance (SRA), who were unable to provide us with anything specific, but who did refer us to Sport England and to other organisations that might be in a similar position to us. Unfortunately, we have already been in contact with Sport England who were unwilling to engage with us because we are not a sport. It is very difficult to get specific advice without their involvement, so we have followed this up again.

GR has been in contact with a number of organisations such as those organising chess, bowls and board games, and will continue to progress this, with a view to making a joint representation if we can identify the correct government channel to use.

GR has also attempted contact with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for bridge, but has yet to receive a response. We are keen to engage in dialogue with the government and will continue to explore other avenues. GR will revert back to the SRA for assistance in this.

It was suggested that we might have more success by writing to our own MPs.

In the meantime, we will update our advice and provide a direct link to all C19 related information on our website. We are mindful of the demographics of our membership and

the impact that Coronavirus can have on vulnerable individuals. We do not recommend that F2F returns under the current tier restrictions, but we will keep that under review. Clubs are urged to carry out their own risk assessments and consider the government guidance for their area before returning to F2F bridge.

4. Online income

Increases in fees have had no impact on overall numbers, although there has been a move from BBO to RealBridge. Overall numbers are trending upwards.

We are investigating the VAT situation for BBO v RealBridge in case there are any implications for affiliated clubs.

5. Forthcoming EBU competitions

We reviewed the events that are scheduled for the first 3 months of 2021, and have provisionally agreed that the following events will be held online, on RealBridge:

Year End congress

Point a Board Teams (and we will try to encourage wider international participation)

Tollemache Final

Ranked Masters Pairs

Portland Pairs

Masters pairs - clubs to run them online with a minimal add on to UMS

National Pairs Heats - run in clubs, no add on to UMS

The Easter Festival will probably also be online, but even if F2F is possible we will run an online event side by side with it.

It was also agreed that for the National Pairs final we would allow anyone who qualified last year to play this year.

We will start planning for the Spring 4s to be online, though we hope it can be held F2F.

County Qualification events - counties can make their own decisions about how to organise these:

Reg Corwen - counties can have a qualifying event for this year, and can also send a pair that qualified last year if they wish.

Pachabo - teams can have up to 8 people, can have a new qualifying event or invite last year's qualifier.

The website will be updated to reflect what is happening and when.

For County green pointed events we will be flexible and if Counties did not run an event last year they can run an extra one this as long as they avoid clashes with other counties and EBU events.

6. Post Covid return

The EBU will consider whether some EBU events would be suitable to retain as online events, such as the Portland Pairs or Tollemache qualification. We will also consider running events as hybrid events – with some playing F2F and some online, and results merged if possible.

There are a number of options available to clubs who may want to return on a hybrid basis. Options such as using technology at the table while others do so at home, or having two sections, one online and one F2F or having a combination of players playing in the club and online in one section are all possible. Software is being developed that could assist, and we will start researching and collating information and advice for clubs as more solutions become available, and, if possible, we will also trial these with clubs.

The group felt that we should not be sending international teams to play in F2F events if we are not running F2F events ourselves, and certainly not if clubs are not able to reopen. The next major internationals planned to be F2F are the Europeans in June, so we are hoping that F2F can return safely before then.

7. Other support for members and clubs

We are aware that there is a large proportion of our membership that have not played bridge for several months, and we would like to support them and their clubs in returning to F2F when we are able. We are also aware that some players may have found that they prefer to play online, and we would want to ensure they continued to have access to online games. We also need to plan for attracting new players, via teachers or directly into clubs.

Our club liaison officer is the first point of contact for clubs needing assistance.

As a first step, to ensure that members know where online and offline bridge is being played, we will put an interactive map on the website showing which affiliated clubs are offering F2F and online games, which will be updated as clubs start to return to F2F.

In order to find out what support clubs might need, we will liaise with the Counties to start the process of engaging with clubs. We recognise that not all clubs will survive, and we need to ensure we can support those that need it, as well as the members of all clubs.

8. AOB

We agreed to carry forward AOB to our weekly meetings, the next of which is at 10am on Tuesday 15th December.