



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE C19 WORKING GROUP  
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED  
via Zoom 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

**Present:**

Gillian Fawcett (Vice Chairman) (GF)  
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)  
Rob Lawy (RL)  
Ron Millet (RM)

Bev Purvis (BP)  
Patrick Shields (PS)  
Graham Smith (GS)  
Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

None

**2. Brief update on EBU staff and deployment (GR)**

GF thanked everyone for joining. She then asked GR to give a brief staff update. GR confirmed that there are currently six staff on furlough. All other staff are working from home. Staff will be brought back as and when the need arises and expect to have more work in the short period upon return.

All events have been cancelled or postponed up until August. We are hopeful to start again with the first event being the Summer Meeting in August. The Seniors Summer Congress has been cancelled. GR has spoken to the venue in Eastbourne and there will be no cost if we need to cancel the Summer Meeting. He cautioned we need to be flexible due to the speed of current changes.

GS asked if it would be possible to request a discount for the venue at Eastbourne. GR said that the current terms we have are already favourable but that he would ask. He also noted that with the current contract we are only charged on the basis of the amount of space used.

**3. Communication recommendations (RM)**

RM accepted that there may be little point in creating an additional website in the current circumstances as the current site was dealing so well with the crisis, but reiterated that the EBU website needed to be updated. He also noted that we need to keep in contact with our members.

RM praised IP's statement and suggested that it should be made weekly. He also wanted to know if it could be kept at the top of the news feed. GR stated that it would be at the top when new, but would move down when new items were published so they weren't missed by members. There was a discussion around the news feed on the website. It was agreed that some items, including IP's statement should not drop below 3<sup>rd</sup> position. GR stated that it was a good position to be in, to have so many news articles vying for top position. He stated that he would work with SK to keep check of news items. It was agreed that IP would be asked to write new statements every week or so during the lockdown.

PS noted that the audience for the website is likely to be just 10% of the EBU membership, and we should make an effort to be attractive to the other 90%. GR will talk to Jonathan Lillycrop (JL) about emailing clubs. RM suggested also making phone calls to clubs. GF noted that this might not have much impact with the clubs being closed at present.

RM noted concern that some smaller clubs would not re-open after the lockdown. BP suggested that we could give them some more useful details, for example the tips mentioned in Tim Anderson (TA)'s blog, Zoom conferences and help getting online. GF said this was a good practical idea, we could help to encourage them. GR suggested that JL could run a Zoom session, but with the caveat that some may also have the same barrier to Zoom as to using online bridge. BP explained that she had run a Zoom session for her students and while chaotic, it was also very helpful. GF suggested that JL could contact a dozen clubs at a time and guide them through the basics.

PS noted that in Cheltenham they have set up a list of buddies people can contact with help for BridgeBase Online (BBO).

RM asked if there was a chat room function that could be utilised within the EBU website to cover BBO discussions. PS noted that there are a number of forums on the EBU website which could be extended to cover this.

RM also suggested having a facts page about online bridge on the EBU website. It was discussed whether the EBU could record a video guiding people through the basics of joining and playing an online game (as available from [berwickbridgeclub.co.uk/bbo](http://berwickbridgeclub.co.uk/bbo)); duplication is wasteful, so filling gaps should be the target. It was decided that GR would condense the current articles already present on the EBU site and create a simple page that people can follow, with links to others pages on the EBU or elsewhere. A pointer to this new page will be kept at the top of the website home page.

BP also suggested that the current article written by JL, while very comprehensive, could be broken down into smaller, less daunting chinks. GR advised he would talk to JL to amend.

#### **4. EBU online bridge during lockdown and beyond**

There was discussion around the benefit of online games to the EBU and the difference between BBO and Bridge Club Live (BCL). RM also asked if we could look into how much adverts on BBO cost, to encourage members currently playing on the free games to join the paid for EBU games. GR said he would look into this.

The favourable arrangement between the EBU and BCL was mentioned. RM asked if this deal could be re-negotiated but GR pointed that the current deal came with a lot of history.

The figures on income from BBO were discussed. GR confirmed it is difficult to get an accurate figure of the current income due to the different currencies used in RM's statistics. GR estimated that current income is £10k a quarter. This figure is more than it would have been prior to the lockdown. GR also noted that 20 tables is the minimum number required to break even for the EBU online games allowing for UMS and paying TDs. The average number of tables is currently 35. It was noted that this is also having an impact on income from clubs, which is currently virtually zero.

GF asked if there was a limit on the number of tables per Tournament Director (TD). GR stated for new and less experienced members it is 20 tables per TD, but for more experienced groups it might be 40 or 60 per TD.

RM said that four sessions a day with the above numbers yields a good income. He raised the question of how to keep people playing online following lockdown. GR noted that at present clubs do not have the ability on BBO to run their own sessions. GF stated this may be worth investigating going forward, as it may be beneficial for some clubs to run online sessions rather than paying to rent a physical space to play. GR said that BBO as currently very busy, given the current circumstance, but that once things calm down they may be more flexibility.

BP stated that TA has mentioned he is looking to set up his own online bridge playing website, she asked if this would be something the EBU could facilitate.

### **5. Supporting Clubs during the lockdown**

GF noted that we should concentrate on clear communication and making the experience of online bridge enjoyable for our members. We should be encouraging members to play EBU bridge games. We also need to stress that the online bridge is not a replacement for face to face bridge. GF stated that communications to clubs and details about our online games have been good so far. She asked if there was much more we could do, in a practical sense, during this time.

BP suggested that we could look into facilitating clubs setting up their own online games. GR said he would talk to TA and check the details of his current venture into setting up a new online bridge website. GF stated it would be good to get this new capability running asap rather than putting it through lots of beta testing.

### **6. Supporting Clubs to get people back to the table after lockdown**

GR suggested the main thing we should focus on is to let clubs know we are here to support them, both during and after the lockdown.

It was agreed that we should also publicise the current EBU forums and use these as a sounding board for clubs.

BP suggested an article for helping clubs to go cashless, this was a focus previously, and suggested bringing it back at this time. PS noted that although Cheltenham BC was using it regularly, the GCBA had checked and found it not cost effective for a weekly county game.

BP suggested holding a bridge week or open day, where clubs could encourage people to visit the club to learn social or mini bridge. She also suggested having a re-launch week with clubs providing taster sessions for 'experience club bridge' for those that already play socially or have been playing online. This could be linked to mental health week.

There was also the suggestion of holding a charity sim pairs event with NHS support in mind.

GF suggested the possibility of holding more blue or green pointed events, but others suggested this would make little difference to the attendance.

It was agreed that we should include clubs in the planning of events, and encourage them to use the club forums to express their views.

BP stated that teachers are critical during this time and that we need to work with them closely.

GR stated he would look at updating the details about online bridge on the EBU site, this could include links to other learning sites such as Mr Bridge.

RM suggested giving members that play a certain number of EBU games on BBO a voucher to play a game in an EBU club following the lockdown. It was agreed that this was an interesting idea that could be looked into further.

GF stated she would also speak to the trustees of EBED to discuss the possibility of offering free access to EBTA materials for 3 months to encourage people to join EBTA. It was noted that No Fear Bridge have extended their free offering and that other online teaching platforms are putting out lots of free materials during this time.

**Any Other Business**

RM asked if people could read the details he sent via email prior to the meeting and reply with any feedback.

Next Meeting: 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

FEBU