



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION LIMITED  
HELD AT THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, LONDON  
ON WEDNESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2007**

<b>Present:</b>	Peter Stocken Sally Bugden John Neville Barry Capal John Carter Mike Hill Graham Jepson Philip Mason Jeff Morris Alan Nelson Martin Pool Gerard Faulkner John Williams Elena Jeronimidis Tony Parks John Pain Matt Betts Karen Durrell	Chairman & Channel Islands Proxy Vice Chairman Treasurer General Manager Board Member & Hants & IOW Proxy Board Member Board Member, Yorkshire Shareholder & Derbyshire Proxy Board Member & Yorkshire Shareholder Board Member Board Member & Tournament Committee Chairman Board Member & Laws & Ethics Committee Chairman Vice President, Selection Committee Chairman & Norfolk Shareholder Vice President Editor Auditor Education/BFA Manager Communications Officer Reception
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<b>County</b>	<b>Shareholders: Present</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Proxy</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Shareholders: Present</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Proxy</b>
<b>Avon</b>		Mrs MA Harris	P Green	<b>Manchester</b>	JA Smith	B Kaye	JA Smith
<b>Bedfordshire</b>		RR Davis	R Chester			MJ Newman	JA Smith
<b>Berks &amp; Bucks</b>	RS Brock T Garrett Mrs M Hatch			<b>Mersey/Cheshire Middlesex</b>	KA Drane Mrs J Feldman PN Rosen	G Endicott	
<b>Cambs &amp; Hunts</b>		D Carmichael CN Jagger		<b>Norfolk</b>	R Amey JG Faulkner		
<b>Channel Islands</b>		Mrs P Panter	P Stocken	<b>North East</b>		MJ Baker	MG Oliver
<b>Cornwall</b>		J Booth					CF Owen
<b>Cumbria</b>		PR Ford	Mrs S Landy				I Spoors
<b>Derbyshire</b>		Mrs J Floutier	G Jepson	<b>Northants</b>		Mrs M Jones	T Thrower
<b>Devon</b>	T Treeby			<b>Notts</b>	EH Nunn	Mrs J Burgess	EH Nunn
<b>Dorset</b>				<b>Oxford</b>	Mrs A Claridge Mrs B Harris		
<b>Essex</b>	Mrs M Curtis I Moss			<b>Somerset</b>		Mrs S Stuttard	J Dilworth
<b>Gloucestershire</b>	Mrs P Pearce	Mrs M Gale	CR Barrable	<b>Staffs &amp; Shrops</b>	J Withers		
<b>Hants &amp; IoW</b>			J Carter A Jenkins	<b>Suffolk</b>	MR Carey PB Bentley MR Curtis		
<b>Herefordshire</b>	G Harrington R Underhill			<b>Surrey</b>	Mrs M Griffin H Marsen		
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	BN Eddleston	M Hancock MW Minting		<b>Sussex</b>	PJ Bates ER Buddery Miss JB Simpson		
<b>Isle of Man</b>	Dr EF Slatcher			<b>Warwicks</b>	C Lang J Pyner L Reece		
<b>Kent</b>	BR Crack JM Lewis						
<b>Lancashire</b>	J Brelsford AA Cordery			<b>Westmorland</b>			
<b>Leicestershire</b>	RH Northage J Wilcox			<b>Wiltshire</b>	P Green		
<b>Lincolnshire</b>				<b>Worcster</b>		Mrs JA Skelton	RJ Jephcott
<b>London</b>	S Cochemè Mrs C Duckworth JR Smith			<b>Yorkshire</b>	GW Jepson Mrs J Latham PG Mason IR Rodger	PD Hammond	DR Thomas

The following people were also present: Kay & John Batting, Tony Hatch, Sue Maxwell, Andrew Petrie and Pyers Pennant.

## **Apologies for absence**

See Page 1 for County information.

### **1 Announcement and presentation of Dimmie Fleming Awards**

The Chairman thanked all recipients for their invaluable contribution to the Union over a considerable number of years.

Certificates were presented as follows:

Margaret Hatch	Berks. & Bucks.
Kay Batting	Sussex

The Chairman announced that Peter Thompson (Gloucestershire) would be presented with his award at Tewkesbury Bridge Club, and Paul Hammond (Worcestershire) at the Malvern Congress. Colin Tuton (Northamptonshire) had already been presented with his award at the Bedford Congress.

### **2 Presentation of Gold Award to Gerard Faulkner**

The Chairman was delighted to announce that a Gold Award would be presented to Gerard Faulkner for his outstanding service to the Union over a period of almost 40 years, which included Chairman of the Union for 11 years, member of the Board for 27 years, Tournament Committee Chairman for 15 years, member of the Laws & Ethics Committee from the early 1970s, member of the Selection Committee for 26 years and its Chairman for 8 years, member and Vice-President of the BBL Council, delegate to the EBU Council for over 30 years and an extremely successful England and British NPC.

Previous recipients of the award were noted to be Tony Priday, Philip Broke, Louis Tarlo, Freddie Della-Porta, Margaret Curtis and Peter Stocken.

Presenting the award John Williams endorsed the Chairman's comments. Gerard expressed his thanks and said that he had very much enjoyed his "long innings".

### **3 Minutes of the AGM of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

### **4 Chairman's Annual Report for the year 2006/7**

This had been circulated in advance.

### **5 Hon. Treasurer's Annual Report for the year 2006/7**

The Treasurer confirmed that the accounts, prepared by Gail Nancarrow and Tony Parks, had been approved by the Board at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July and circulated together with a Treasurer's Report. The results for the year had been very satisfactory with the surplus of £76K significantly ahead of the original budget, largely due to savings in staff costs and favourable terms in respect of Post Office charges, particularly in relation to the savings on the postage cost of *English Bridge*.

Comments were made as follows:

- Peggy Griffin questioned whether staff recruitment at a time of change was the right way forward, and said that the Club Liaison Officer's visits to clubs were considered to be usurping counties' responsibility to look after their own members and clubs. In response the Chairman said that the aim of the visits, which for the most part had been much appreciated, was to identify where the Union's service to clubs could be improved, in consultation with county associations. The Chairman said that between 40 and 50 clubs had been visited since June, and he assured counties that as a courtesy they would be consulted before further visits were planned.

- Gerard Faulkner noted an increase of £11.5K in the cost of meetings, despite Shareholders' Meetings being reduced from 4 to 3. The Treasurer pointed out that there had been a considerable number of extra meetings to discuss the development strategy, travel costs had been higher, and there had been some late recording of expenses from the previous year.
- Gerard Faulkner said that the figure for Publicity and Marketing appeared to be low, and enquired whether this would increase in light of the appointment of a Communications Officer. The Treasurer said that the bulk of the figure in the accounts applied to promotional pens for Masterpoint ranks.
- Gerard Faulkner asked for clarification of credit card costs. The Treasurer replied that the figure in the accounts represented normal bank charges and the cost of taking tournament entries by credit card.

## **6 Directors Report and Accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

The accounts were formally approved. Tony Parks took the opportunity to thank the staff at Aylesbury, and in particular Gail Nancarrow, for their assistance with the audit, at what had been a stressful time.

## **7 Hon. Treasurer's Report to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2007**

Presenting his report, the Treasurer said that the Union was considerably ahead of budget at the present time, and in good financial order. Whilst it was difficult to ensure that the budget was released at the correct rate, it was expected that a loss would be avoided for the current year. Strong areas were staff costs below budget in the early part of the year and an increase in Masterpoints income, though the latter may be a transient feature.

John said that he had enjoyed his 10 years as a member of the Board and that he had been extremely fortunate to have such supportive colleagues, but that it was time for a change. He had overwhelmingly positive feelings about the bridge community and wished his successor well.

The Chairman was joined by the Shareholders in thanking John for his outstanding service.

## **8 Re-appointment of Auditors for the year 2007/8**

A proposal from the Chair that AD Parks & Co. be re-appointed, was carried nem con.

## **9 Re-appointment of Company Secretary for the year 2007/8**

A proposal from the Chair that Barry Capal be re-appointed, was carried nem con.

## **10 Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Directors of EBU Limited**

*10<sup>th</sup> July 2007*

### *10.1.1*

Richard Jephcott was pleased to note that the Board had decided not to implement a surcharge on members opting not to pay their subscription by direct debit.

### *10.1.2. Youth Committee*

The Chairman said the Board, supported by the Selection Committee, felt that there should be a Youth Committee responsible for all youth matters and that its composition would be based on the late Tom Bradley's principle, i.e. a Board member, the Squad Managers, a representative of the Selection Committee and one or two other people with specialist knowledge of youth matters and training.

The Chairman said that the tasks of the committee would be to promote bridge in schools and universities, formulate squads for training, select teams for all junior events; it would of course co-operate closely with the Selection Committee. The committee would have the flexibility to co-opt extra personnel for specific tasks as and when they were needed.

The appointment by the Board of a Youth Committee was approved by a large majority.

#### *10.1.3 Educational CD*

Jeff Morris explained that the project, with a cartoon aspect, had been devised as a valuable teaching aid for Minibridge. Efforts to retrieve the CD had so far proved unsuccessful, but a further lead would be investigated.

#### *10.1.4 University Challenge*

Gerard Faulkner was pleased to note that the Union might be involved in a “Professionals” version of University Challenge, but disappointed that rather than participants being sought from the membership via English Bridge, a possible team had been randomly appointed by the Board. The General Manager pointed out that the whole exercise had been time-driven, and because of the “professional” nature of the competition it was felt that our chances of selection would be higher if the team was chosen from those whose involvement in the game was in some way or another professional. A decision was expected in a week or so from the BBC as to whether the Union’s application to field a team had been successful.

#### *10.1.5 Junior Teach-in*

Gerard Faulkner said that he admired Sussex’s initiative in subsidising 16 children to attend the Junior Teach-in in Leicestershire, but felt that the cost of £125 per head might be prohibitive for other counties. Sally Bugden explained that this figure included travel costs.

#### *10.1.6. Selection Committee Matters*

Gerard Faulkner reported that the Selection Committee had recently presented a proposal to the Board for additional training and preparation of international teams to seek to achieve international success and keep pace with schemes adopted by other European countries, which would cost an additional £19K p.a. The Board’s response, while apparently quite favourable, was that further expenditure on Internationals could not be justified and that while it was accepted that a coaching programme would be of great benefit, funds must be raised from other sources. It was noted that current spending on Internationals totalled £68K per annum, plus overheads.

### **11 Election of Directors for the year 2007/8**

Eleven candidates had been duly nominated, and the outcome of the vote was as follows:

#### **Elected:**

Peter Stocken 65, Sally Bugden 63, Martin Pool 62, Michael Hill 61, Alan Nelson 59, Jeff Morris 57, John Carter 52, Graham Jepson 51, Malcolm Oliver 46, Philip Mason 43.

#### **Not elected:**

Andrew Petrie 42.

### **12 Election of Chairman for the year 2007/8**

Peter Stocken having been duly nominated was formally appointed for the year 2007/8.

### **13 Election of Vice-Chairman for the year 2007/8**

Sally Bugden having been duly nominated was formally appointed for the year 2007/8.

### **14 Election of Hon. Treasurer for the year 2007/8.**

Michael Hill having been duly nominated was formally appointed for the year 2007/8.

### **15 Election of four members to the Tournament Committee**

Four nominations had been received for four positions. Mrs Margaret Curtis was re-elected for a further three-year term of office expiring in 2010, Philip Mason and Andrew Petrie were elected for a three-year term of office expiring in 2010, and Addis Page was re-elected for a further two-year term office expiring in 2009.

## **16 Election of three members of the Laws & Ethics Committee**

Three nominations had been received for three positions. David Burn and David Martin were re-elected for a further three-year term of office expiring in 2010, and Frances Hinden was elected for a three-year term of office expiring in 2010.

## **17 Election of three members of the Selection Committee**

Three nominations had been received for three positions. Mrs Heather Dhondy and Paul Hackett were elected for a three-year term of office expiring in 2010, and at his request Gerard Faulkner was re-elected for a one-year term of office expiring in 2008.

## **18 Membership Subscriptions for the year 2008/9**

A proposal from the Chair that the recommendations of the Treasurer be approved en bloc as follows, was carried with 4 votes against:

Existing members	£17.00
New members:	
Joining between 1/4/08 and 31/10/08	£17.00
Joining between 1/11/08 and 28/2/09	£ 8.50
Direct members:	
UK	£26.00
Overseas	£28.00
EBUTA members:	
Existing or new members joining before 31/10/08	£14.00
Joining between 1/11/08 and 31/3/09	£ 7.00
Junior members:	
Over 17 and under 25 on 1/1/08	£ 5.00
Under 17 years old on 1/1/08	£ 2.00
Affiliations:	
Club (via County)	£20.50
Club (Direct)	£41.00
University	£ 5.00
Schools	£ 0.00

## **19 Minutes of the Shareholders Meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

Subject to the last sentence of the third paragraph of 4.1 on page 3 being amended to read..."The budget was conservative and the outcome could well be better than predicted." the minutes were signed as an accurate record.

### ***Matters arising***

#### ***Item 3***

The General Manager said that due to pressure of business the proposal for a rolling election for Board Members had been deferred.

#### ***Directors' Liability Insurance***

The General Manager will seek clarification on the status of Committee members in terms of Liability Insurance, and investigate the cost of extending the cover if appropriate.

## **20 Minutes of meetings of the Tournament Committee of 13<sup>th</sup> June and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

The minutes were presented by Alan Nelson.

### ***Bracketed Teams***

David Thomas questioned the introduction of bracketed events for the National Swiss Teams and Ranked Masters, which constituted a major change and on which counties had not been consulted. In his view the decline in numbers for certain competitions was a direct result of

the disastrous experiment with Kettering, and that it might have been preferable to allow time for confidence to be restored. Robert Northage concurred, and expressed the view that the Ranked Masters was not a popular choice for the trial, and would result in a further decline. He also felt that while a prize-room was appropriate for the traditional format of the Ranked Masters, the same did not apply in the case of bracketed events.

In response, Alan said that serious concerns had been expressed in committee in regard to declining numbers, and that it had been agreed to trial the initiative. It was the committee's role to lead strategy for tournaments and competitions and an exhaustive review was being undertaken of all events. If the period of trialling did not produce something positive, the Committee would re-examine the situation. Brian Crack reported that Kent's bracketed teams event had attracted a high proportion of players new to the tournament scene, and he hoped that the same could be achieved at a national event.

#### *Hospitality*

Alan Nelson said that in an attempt to generate a greater level of interest in tournament bridge, a small part of the revenue from tournaments would be used for hospitality purposes, e.g. during midweek at Brighton. Gerard Faulkner pointed out that this presented an ideal sponsorship opportunity.

#### *Strategy proposals*

Alan Nelson confirmed that robust strategy proposals would be produced for the Board once the six-month exhaustive review of all EBU tournaments had been undertaken.

#### *Publicity for KO competitions*

Gerard Faulkner expressed concern that notification to captains from previous years was inadequate, and confined to those on email. Alan Nelson agreed that publicity needed to be stepped up with fliers being put out in good time at every opportunity, but that postage costs were an issue.

#### *International match at Brighton*

Gerard Faulkner pointed out that there had been some confusion over the apportionment of costs for the match versus Norway, the Selection Committee believing that costs would be shared with the Tournament Committee on the basis that the match would enhance the Brighton Summer Meeting. As it turned out the match produced little or no interest, and he suggested that funds should not be wasted on a similar exercise in future.

#### *Overseas Congresses*

Alan Nelson explained that bridge events would be exclusively for those players that made use of the travel packages made available by the partner company in recognition of a subsidy received from the tour company. In addition, it was an unacceptable burden on the Aylesbury staff to be involved in private travel arrangements.

#### *Brighton Summer Meeting*

Chris Barrable pointed out that the arrangements for smokers at Brighton, imposed on the hotel by local residents, were unacceptable. Barry Capal said that any suggestions for an alternative venue would be welcomed.

The *Really Easy Congress* was noted to have been a great success, with 30 tables in the pairs event and 18 in the teams.

## **21 Minutes of the meeting of the Laws & Ethics Committee of 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

Presenting the minutes, Martin Pool reported that the results of a survey on attitudes to recent changes in the Orange Book regulations broadly indicated a preference for the status quo, and any recommendations for change would not come into force until 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008. It was noted that there was currently no consistency between England and adjoining Home Unions in terms of regulations, and that for the generality of the membership they were too complex. The Chairman said that the L&E was arranging a special meeting to examine its role, and that every effort would be made to seek to achieve simplification.

He announced that the revised Laws of Bridge had reached the final draft stage, and the likely implementation date for the EBU would be 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008.

## **22 Minutes of the meetings of the Selection Committee of 24<sup>th</sup> July & 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

Presenting the minutes, Gerard Faulkner highlighted the following:

### *Premier League*

The Selection Committee proposed to reintroduce the Premier League with effect from Autumn 2008, with Max Bavin determining the format. The League would be a tool for selection, and would be self-financing.

### *Mind Sports Games*

Gerard Faulkner reported that in finishing fourth in the 2007 Junior European Championships, England's U20s team would have qualified for the 2008 World Junior Championships. However, the WBF had been unable to find a host for the championships, and had decided instead to include a teams event for U28 players in the Mind Sports Games in Beijing, with accommodation and general overhead costs being met by the sponsoring organisation.

Jeff Morris said that he was appalled by the arbitrary decision to discontinue the World Junior Championships. Opportunities for juniors to compete at international level were restricted to a short period, and he asked that strong representations be made by the Board's representative to the WBF. In addition, there no plans by the EBL currently to organise the World Junior Pairs Championship and World Youth Camp which attract large numbers of young people, and England must do everything possible to support the event. Sandra Landy confirmed that the British Educational Trust have supported young players going to these events, and would continue to do so.

The Committee's paper entitled "Selection Committee Questions & Answers" had been circulated in advance, and was noted.

Retiring as its Chairman, Gerard Faulkner thanked the Shareholders for their attention and courtesy over the last two years.

## **23 Any other business**

### *Charitable Status*

The General Manager reported that discussions were taking place about the attainment of charitable status for the EBU, including the possible restructuring of the organisation so that it would conform to the Charities Act; a full progress report would be provided at the next meeting. In essence, it was likely that there would be 80% mandatory and 20% discretionary relief on Property Tax for business premises, and a possibility that tournament entry fees would not be subject to VAT. A model Constitution would be produced for Bridge clubs to enable them to apply for charitable status if they so wished, which would offer significant advantages. This would be unlikely, however, to apply to proprietary clubs that owned their own property. No indication had yet been given on the VAT implications of Pay to Play.

### *Scorebridge*

Concern was expressed by Surrey that while the EBU recommended the use of Scorebridge, it was under sole ownership. The General Manager said that EBU has made no binding arrangements with any supplier at this time. It is acknowledged that Scorebridge is the "market leader" and the owner of the product and the General Manager are well aware of the concept of Software Escrow, probably with the NCC in England.

## **24 Dates of Shareholders' Meetings for 2008**

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March** : Shareholders' Meeting - Imperial Hotel, London.

**Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June** : Extraordinary General Meeting – Imperial Hotel, London.

**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October** : Annual General Meeting – Imperial Hotel, London.

## 25 Strategic Proposal Discussion

Opening the debate, the Chairman said that the consultation process with meetings attended by MDAG members and representatives of every county association, had proved very useful, the spectrum of opinion expressed being very wide indeed. It was clear that everybody conceded that the status quo was not acceptable, and that without radical change the future looked bleak. To stem the decline, the Board's vision was to attain universal membership by April 2010. A straw poll on the concept of universal membership, in one form or another, received overwhelming support with only two votes against.

The Chairman invited each county to give a resumé of its views, which were as follows:

*[Chairman's note: in response to my request for amendments to the draft I sent out on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, I have included those from all the counties that replied: Avon, Wiltshire, Surrey, Cumbria, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Middlesex, the North-East, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, Suffolk and Warwickshire. I am assuming that all the other counties who were represented at the meeting were happy with what was minuted. Thanks very much for your help.]*

- Avon:* P2P was viewed as a form of Poll Tax, particularly in relation to non-members. It therefore needed very sensitive marketing.
- Bedfordshire:* The County was basically in favour, but would prefer an earlier start-date. Approval was given to the offer of a scoring system and website being optional. The ranking system would only be of interest to tournament and county players, so suggested an opt-out for club level.
- Berks. & Bucks:* Meeting held with all clubs. Some distrust of the EBU, but general appreciation of the consultation process. Proposed services to clubs would benefit new as opposed to existing clubs. Absence of a budget and "vision" of how to attract new members was regretted.
- Cumbria:* Visits to clubs by the Club Liaison Officer much appreciated. On a club vote Cumbria was against the scheme, but for the most part clubs were not interested in Masterpoints and felt that the emphasis was wrong. Some concern that the figures wouldn't add up. Business plan requested.
- Devon:* Devon has a number of small clubs with 70% non-EBU membership, who would need convincing. Revisions to the plan had helped, but it needed expert marketing.
- Essex:* A meeting held with 21 clubs, a third of which, with high proportion of non-members, would disaffiliate. Concern expressed about escalating costs and difficulties in attracting new members. In general, limited support and interest in alternative options.
- Gloucestershire:* 50/50 split. Half the clubs appreciate the need for a strong NBO. The other half perceive no obvious benefit to the bridge community, and these clubs would not affiliate unless the scheme was better marketed. The EBU needed to present itself more professionally.
- Hants. & IOW:* 53 clubs of which 35 responded. Original proposals were very unpopular in terms of cost, and viewed as "autocratic". Lack of business plan criticised, and if the EBU wanted to be revenue neutral it must spend more on revitalising clubs by putting less into international affairs and more into the teaching programme. The high cost of teaching materials was an issue. In general a lot of positive feedback, but the EBU mustn't force clubs to separate into social/competitive.
- Herefordshire:* 12 clubs indicating 50/50 support. The separation of clubs as exclusively social or competitive is unacceptable. The EBU must make itself relevant to players of all types and at all levels and must indicate how they propose to do this in the final version of the Proposals"
- Hertfordshire:* The initial proposals were not well received, and the new proposals must be presented a great deal better. If the overall strategy was to increase the membership, there must be more emphasis on teaching. Levy should be uniform.

<i>Isle of Man:</i>	5 affiliated clubs, mostly apathetic. The recruitment of younger members was very difficult. Split response.
<i>Kent:</i>	Very broadly in favour, though concerned with some of the original detail. Club support divided, with clubs having more EBU members in favour. Must convince clubs with non-members of the benefits of affiliation. County committees had a duty to help the EBU to sell the strategy.
<i>Lancashire:</i>	Original proposals should not have contained definite figures that magnified the cost to clubs. The strategy appeared to be being formed on the hoof as Lancashire met MDAG representatives at Manchester Bridge Club on 3 <sup>rd</sup> September and the reply to a question on leagues was “We don't know; there is a meeting to sort that out tomorrow.” Social clubs would disaffiliate, otherwise in favour.
<i>Leicestershire:</i>	The fear was that the EBU was about to pursue a high-risk strategy, transferring responsibility for its income away from individuals and into clubs. 35% of members are EBU members and those clubs with large number of non-members would disaffiliate. More money needed to be spent on education and development.
<i>London:</i>	Mildly in favour, and pleased with updated strategy. Weakness £170K migration cost. Needed better financial model and IT plan.
<i>Manchester:</i>	5 or 6 large clubs, the rest small with non-EBU members. The Committee was very enthusiastic, but in general clubs were not interested in the services offered, believing the strategy to be a revenue-seeking exercise, and the average players had no responsibility for the national effort.
<i>Middlesex:</i>	The County supported universal membership, but might have preferred two-tier membership. Consulted all 25 clubs including proprietary clubs, and more than half would disaffiliate.
<i>Norfolk:</i>	The new proposals had helped to convince people that universal membership was the way forward. Bridge was a cheap game and 40p extra should be acceptable, but the concept needed to be expertly sold.
<i>Northants:</i>	Varied reaction. Concern over social evenings and possible split.
<i>North-east:</i>	County committee very much in favour. However, consultation process indicated 2-1 against, larger clubs with higher EBU membership being in favour.  The County objected to the withdrawal of the £5 one-off membership fee on the grounds that those who had been receiving the benefits of the EBU for years at no cost would now be receiving preferential treatment. It was also concerned that the proposals were so poorly costed that without the £5 fee the EBU would have to raise the funds from somewhere else.
<i>Nottinghamshire:</i>	Perception is that the scheme shouldn't cost more. The EBU had to educate the membership.
<i>Oxfordshire:</i>	Bearing in mind that Oxfordshire had not yet been able to hold a meeting to discuss the proposals in detail, initial reaction was concern for the 20,000 members at the bottom of the pyramid. Imperative that the EBU met with counties and clubs to answer their worries.
<i>Somerset:</i>	50/50 split between competitive and social, and the EBU must not antagonise the social clubs. Members would be reluctant to disclose personal details.
<i>Staffs. &amp; Shrops:</i>	23 affiliated clubs. Initially there was a complete spectrum of reactions to the strategy proposals : the majority were not in favour, only one in favour. General acceptance of the principle of Universal Membership. Seventy percent of club players are not members of the EBU and several of the affiliated clubs do not award master points. All of the clubs had calculated that a P2P levy of 30p/43p per player per session would result in players and clubs paying more to the EBU compared to existing structure. This increased scepticism of the EBU's claim that the proposals were revenue neutral. The non-competitive player clubs do not want to pay more for their bridge when they see no tangible benefits being offered in return. The revised proposals were welcomed and members are beginning to believe that the EBU might be “listening” to their comments and suggestions. However unless the

- Strategy Proposals win the “hearts and minds” of the non-competitive club players, there will not be a sufficient large “critical mass” to enable P2P to succeed.
- Suffolk:* Committee very much in favour, and in general a fairly favourable reaction, but membership records at Aylesbury needed to be improved. 19 clubs with 17 likely to affiliate. Club discount for the *Bridge Shop* not realistic. Counties’ finance might be a problem.
- Surrey:* 76 clubs, mixed reaction. Original concerns answered and more now in favour, but inescapable conclusion that there will be casualties. If the scheme is successful what would it achieve? If revenue neutral and subscription and Masterpoint income currently failing, where would new income be generated? Lack of business plan.
- Sussex:* Committee broadly in favour. Apathetic response from clubs. Difficulty with social members. Would market new proposals and hoped to lead in a proactive way.
- Warwickshire:* Strategy divisive. Needed to attract new members. 25 clubs consulted – two-thirds attended a meeting and others sent written submissions. Reaction mostly negative. Positive reaction from individual members who feel that the status quo is not acceptable. Basically in favour of universal membership by levy as an alternative to P2P but with qualification and reservations. Concerned about finances, and, if revenue neutral, the level of EBU spending must be addressed.
- Wiltshire:* If the EBU had just being formed, this strategy might have been how to fund it. The transition would be difficult and needed expert marketing.
- Worcestershire:* In favour of universal membership and supported strategy statements and P2P, but would lose a number of clubs. Needed holistic approach to encourage new clubs to affiliate and retain existing clubs. Suggested three levels of P2P and three levels of affiliation, with the bottom level free. Needed excellent financial modelling, marketing and IT systems, and the EBU must not ignore the role of the county. Keep the proposals as simple as possible.
- Yorkshire:* 56 clubs. General feeling in favour provided revenue neutral and the EBU was financially transparent. Concerned with extra costs, and must convince the membership of value for money.

The Chairman thanked the counties for all their hard work. He said it was clear that there were considerable reservations about the proposals but he felt the general mood of the meeting was to move forward with them. The next step would be to provide more detail, and to come back in the Spring with a thorough appraisal of the scheme. Sally Bugden supported the Chairman’s comments. The way forward could not be gauged without consultation. Apart from the county meetings already held, it was now up to MDAG to consult with the clubs either direct, or via the counties, to gather the accurate information necessary to produce the final detailed financial plans, including the cost of IT systems, and the suggested transition process. To this end a final questionnaire would be produced, and clubs and counties would be asked how they wished their information-gathering to be handled. It was important to convince the bridge-playing public that the EBU had moved into a new era. Any ideas and suggestions on how to make the EBU more relevant to club players would be welcomed.

It was agreed that a revised document, based on all the information received from clubs, would be available by 1<sup>st</sup> May and published on the EBU website, together with costings and a business plan. The Shareholders’ meeting scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> March would be for normal business and an update on the club consultation process. The final decision on the proposed strategy would then be voted on at the Extraordinary General Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> June.

Philip Mason thanked all MDAG members for the immense amount of work they had undertaken. There was still a long way to go, mistakes had been made, but all comments would be taken on board so that the final document would hopefully encapsulate the wishes of all.