



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the English Bridge Union Limited
held at the Royal National Hotel, London
on Wednesday 30th November 2022**

Present:

Ian Payn (IP)	Chair	Gordon Rainsford (GR)	Company Secretary
Kay Preddy (KP)	Treasurer	Sam Kelly (SK)	Minute taker
Adrian Darnell	Board Member	Jonathan Lillycrop (JL)	Club Liaison Officer
Rob Lawy (RL)	Board Member	Karen Durrell (KD)	Reception
Tony Russ	Board Member	Kay Carter (KC)	Reception
Patrick Shields (PS)	Board Member	Lee Guy (LG)	EBED Chair
Gayle Webb (GW)	Board Member	Giorgio Provenza (GP)	EBED Chief Executive
Paul Barden	Selection Committee		
David Burn	Laws & Ethics Committee		

Apologies:

None

	Shareholders		Proxy	Shareholders		Proxy	
	Present	Apologies		Present	Apologies		
Avon	-	-	-	Chris Duckworth James Smith			
Bedfordshire	Colin O'Hara		London				
Berks & Bucks	Daisy Dillon		Manchester	Alec Smalley	Jeff Morris Alan Mould Christopher Raymond Paul Roberts	Alec Smalley	
Cambs & Hunts	Peter Grice		Mersey/Cheshire			Alec Smalley Alec Smalley	
Channel Isles		Craig Honey					
Cornwall		Chris Bikerdike	Paul Littlewood	Middlesex	Lyn Fry	Peter Hasenson	Lyn Fry
Cumbria		Paul Davies	Paul Littlewood	Norfolk	Chris Mallon		
Derbyshire	-	-	-	Northampton	Trevor Thrower	-	-
				North East		Nigel Durie	Adrian Darnell
				Nottinghamshire	Julia Staniforth	Keith Spencer	Chris Frost
Devon	-	-	-	Oxfordshire	Alan Wilson	Sandra Claridge Sandra Nicholson	Alan Wilson Alan Wilson
				Somerset		Andy Ridgers Ceri Pierce	Norman Inniss Norman Inniss
Dorset		Michael Wiles		Staffs & Shrops		Paul Hackett	John Withers
Essex		John McCoy		Suffolk	-	-	-
Gloucs	Ian Sidgwick			Surrey	Trevor Hobson Shirley Pritchard Tim Warren		
Hants & IoW	-	-	-	Sussex		Peter Clinch Joy Mayall Dick Wheeler	
Hereford		Chris Chowney		Warwickshire	Myra Scott	Darren Evetts Colin Lang	Myra Scott Myra Scott
Hertfordshire	Paul Littlewood Alan Woof	Geoffrey Cordingley	Paul Littlewood	Westmorland		John Ellwood	Paul Littlewood
Isle of Man		Liz Kelly	Gordon Rainsford	Wiltshire	Andrew Parkes	Sue Phillips	Andrew Parkes
Kent	Paul Gibbons Norman Inniss	Stephen Brown	Norman Inniss	Worcestershire		Paul Hammond	
Lancashire	-	-	-	Yorkshire	David Guild Lesley Millet Nick Woolven	Pauline Stout	Ron Millet
Leicestershire	David Pollard	Dean Benton					
Lincolnshire	-	-	-				

Award Winners Present: Heather Dhondy, Derek marsh, Janet Marsh, Sati McKenzie, Bernard Kaye (and guests), Duncan Happer, Shireen Mohandes and Graham Hazel.

Ian Payn (IP), Chairman, opened the meeting by welcoming all those present and thanking them for attending. IP explained what format the meeting would take.

1. Apologies for absence

No further apologies.

2. Announcement of Awards

The following award winners were announced.

GOLD AWARD – given in recognition of a sustained and exceptional contribution to the Development, Administration and Management of all aspects of the game of Bridge

Jerry Cope

Jerry has been involved in service to Bridge for more than a decade. He was a Board member for ten years and treasurer for six of those years. As an Officer of the Board he gave much valuable advice and was willing to take on jobs from which others might have shied away. He was the second Chairman of EBED leading it to significant success. After his retirement from these posts, he continued to serve as a valuable member of the EBU Disciplinary Committee. In the light of this, the Board is delighted in awarding Jerry its Gold Award, the highest honour it can bestow.

Heather Dhondy

Heather has already received a Diamond Award in recognition of her playing skills. She has also been very active behind the scenes. A Board member for more than a decade, she has also chaired both the Selection Committee and the Laws and Ethics Committee, the latter coinciding with the onset of Covid, the take-up of online Bridge and the avalanche of cheating allegations that ensued. She also served as Chair of the Tournament Director's Development Group. In view of this incredibly wide-ranging contribution to English Bridge, we have no hesitation in presenting her with a Gold Award.

SILVER AWARD - given in recognition of long service and an outstanding contribution to the administration of the game of bridge.

Anthony Golding

Anthony served on the Board of the EBU for six years, and on the Section Committee as a Board representative. These bland facts do not do justice to his contribution to the Board during his tenure. Not only did he offer valuable legal advice when sought, but also he provided a calm and rational presence at meetings, and his clarity of thought often steered discussions back into the waters of sanity and practicality. In the light of this, the Board has decided to give him a Silver Award to note his contribution.

Ron Millet

Ron, for ten years, provided a valuable service to the membership of the EBU by his presence on the Board. Always concerned with membership and development, Ron was always ready to contribute to lively debate, and like most people who feel passionately about a subject, was happy to listen to the other side of an argument, and win or lose, there were no hard feelings. The longevity of Ron's tenure alone would deserve recognition, but we also remember the lively interest that he always took, and consequently we have the honour of bestowing a Silver Award on him.

BRONZE AWARD – given in recognition of specific and significant service to English bridge at national level.

Frances Hinden

Frances Hinden not only leads a busy professional life and spends a lot of time at the Bridge table, but also she has served on the Laws and Ethics Committee for 24 years, 11 of those years as Vice-Chair, always the power behind the throne. In that role she has combined an interest with the minutiae of the laws and a commitment to keeping the game straight. In the light of this singular contribution, we are making her one of the first two recipients of our new Bronze Award.

Sarah Bell

When Covid arrived and Bridge went online, the EBU was deluged with allegations of cheating, and was ill-equipped to deal with so many at one time. Evidence-gathering was crucial, and Sarah Bell stepped forward, and with a group of analysts formed the Online Ethics Investigation Group. The amount of work this group put in was phenomenal, literally thousands of hours, and Sarah was at the vanguard, bearing the brunt of it. A Bronze Award for such a massive contribution was really the least the Board could do by way of thanks.

TONY PRIDAY AWARD – given to “The Membership” for supporting the game, the EBU and each other during the COVID pandemic

DIMMIE FLEMING AWARD - Worked hard for bridge as volunteers in administration at county level, typically giving 10/15 years or more service:

Derek & Janet Marsh (Bedfordshire)

Derek & Janet have been stalwarts of Bedfordshire County bridge for many years. In his main role as Competitions Secretary, Derek developed a challenging and enjoyable calendar of events each year; organised directors, scorers, and helpers for each event; provided and maintained all county equipment from card tables to computers; and was instrumental in obtaining the splendid Wixams Lakeview Village Hall as a venue for all county events, with space for storing all equipment.

In her role as County Secretary, Janet organised and recorded Committee meetings and the AGM; looked after trophies, including engraving with winners’ names; and maintained communications with the EBU and clubs. Janet had served as County secretary on a number of occasions in the last 15 years.

In addition to the hard work devoted to their general duties, Janet and Derek made two massive contributions to Beds. County bridge:

Firstly, they ran the annual Charity Pairs Day, donating all the delicious food and wine, collecting donations of prizes, and running the event. Each event raised over £2000 for charity. Many new players were introduced to county bridge through this fun day.

Secondly, when Duplicate Bridge as we knew it stopped in March 2020, Bedfordshire County was in some disarray. All Bedfordshire clubs stopped playing in organised events bar the Bedford Bridge Club who had an opportunity to use free sessions on BBO. The County committee felt we needed to bring more clubs back on stream and started running Thursday evening sessions.

Carol Ritzen (Devon)

Carol Ritzen has been a passionate advocate for Bridge in the county for over 25 years. Soon after she learnt to play the game herself, she started giving back. A teacher by profession, she naturally gravitated towards teaching, but also contributed in many other areas, including committee work and the organisation of a huge number of successful Devon Bridge events.

She was chair of the North Section of the Devon Bridge Association for a number of years (around the year 2000), supporting the four affiliated clubs in the North and leading on the organisation of the section's county charity events.

She also spent two years as chair of the central Devon committee and later, spent approximately ten years on the education sub-committee, stepping down in June 2016. During her time on the subcommittee, she became an EBU-trained Bridge teacher, and went on to teach on courses for the EBU, the Devon Bridge Association, and residential courses across the country. As well as teaching Bridge players to be teachers, she also taught Bridge at all levels, from MiniBridge in schools to setting up the North Devon Bridge School.

She started helping with the organisation of the North Devon Congress 26 years ago, and took over at the helm in 2010. Since then, she has been the driving force of this hugely successful event, leading the organisational team and also TD'ing the entire weekend. This she has done without a break (apart from a well-earned rest in 2021 when the Congress went online) until her retirement this year.

Carol was at the forefront of introducing technology into North Devon; initially with laptop computer scoring and then from 2008 by providing duplimate boards with print outs of hands for the Sim Pairs and other events including in her teaching groups. From 2013 she was very involved with the introduction of Bridgemates into North Devon and for some years was one of very few people who were able to run events using Bridgemates in the district.

Throughout all this time, she has also been involved in the running of the Barnstaple Bridge Club spending more than 20 years on the committee.

Now that she has retired from running the Congress and has stepped down as chair of Barnstaple, the committee of the Devon Bridge Association feel that this would be an appropriate time to formally acknowledge her significant contribution to Bridge in Devon with an award.

Sati McKenzie (London)

Sati joined the London committee in the mid-1990s and helped in a variety of roles for many years, including a stint on the Tournament sub-committee. For 8 years from 2005 to 2013 she was the county Treasurer. She took a break in 2013 to focus on her passion for 19th century literature before rejoining the committee in 2019.

On her return, Sati immediately took on the role of Webmaster and successfully migrated the LMBA website to the Bridgewebs platform. She continues to maintain the site and is very efficient in responding to all requests for changes.

She is a dedicated committee member and her patience and good humour make her a very pleasant colleague. The committee is delighted to recommend her for a Dimmie Fleming award.

Bernard Kaye (Merseyside & Cheshire)

Bernard has been a member of the County Executive committee for the last 8 years including a period of four years when he was the Treasurer. Prior to joining Merseyside and Cheshire, Bernard worked in Bridge administration for over forty years.

While in the London area, he was Secretary of the London Banks Bridge Association and both the Chairman and Treasurer of the Tottenham League. After moving to the Northwest, Bernard was the Treasurer and Membership Secretary of the Manchester County Association.

He is currently Chairman/Co-ordinator of the Northern Bridge League. And was an EBU Shareholder for several years.

It is also worth mentioning that Bernard is an accredited EBTA teacher who has brought many beginners into the game.

Trevor Hobson (Surrey)

Trevor has been an indispensable member of the Surrey Committee for 15 years. In recent times, he has been Chairman from 2015-20 and President from 2020-22, and prior to this he had taken on various other roles, such as Leagues organiser.

He used his tenure as Chairman to drive significant change in the way Surrey operated, reshaping and refocussing the team, improving the marketing of events, and leading a complete redesign of the website. He has also used his IT skills to provide the team with management information (for instance, to enable targeted marketing), and to automate a number of our previously time-consuming manual processes, such as maintaining the Victor Ludorum. Though he stood down as President this year, he remains an extremely committed member of the team, continuing to contribute to the county's future direction. Indeed, his experience leads him to be consulted by other committee members on a variety of bridge topics.

He is an enthusiastic supporter of Surrey events, helping to produce fliers in advance, and on the day (when we used to hold them F2F) always the first to arrive and the last to leave, in order to assist with putting out the tables and chairs.

We strongly recommend Trevor for the 2022 Dimmie Fleming Award.

YOUNG PAIR AWARD 2021-22

Charlotte Bedford and Lucy Norman

The pair achieved numerous excellent results this year and were winners of a silver medal in the junior Europeans 2022. They finished second in the YC Ladies teams, which hosts a majority international senior field with some multiple world champions. They also won the 2021 online U26W Channel Trophy topping the butler. Finally, they were part of the best junior team in the 2022 Spring 4s.

YOUNG PLAYER AWARD 2021-22

Ewa Wiezcorek

Ewa gave a strong performance in the U26 team, and she also won the last Junior Camrose. Perhaps more importantly she achieved selection for the senior European ladies team in Madeira and was also reserve for the senior mixed team.

EBU/EBED Awards:

Alec Salisbury Award, is given in recognition of a schoolteacher who has made a significant contribution to Youth Bridge, and will be presented to:

Duncan Happer

Duncan has been involved in schools and junior bridge for over 25 years, as a player in the schools cup and as part of the junior squads playing in numerous internationals and now as a teacher. Since returning to Loughborough Grammar School in 2004 as a member of staff he has been the driving force behind the bridge club there and has been the host of the Youth Bridge Challenge throughout that time. He has run tournaments every lunchtime - five days a week.

More recently since the pandemic he has quickly got the bridge club thriving again, actively using the Junior Award Scheme and running multiple teams in the newly created Inter Schools League and Schools Cup as well as encouraging players to attend the Junior Teach In and join the Junior Squads. The numbers playing bridge at lunchtime is usually over 5 tables, except on Thursdays when Duncan has persuaded a local International player (BN) to come in and coach our team players.

Cunningly Duncan has grabbed every opportunity to widen the scope of bridge within the endowed schools – it has recently become a sixth form option in our extension programmes - Whist and minibridge are taught to our year 6s and our feeder school year 5s in curriculum time too.

Tom Bradley Award, is given for services to Education, this award recognizes those who have made a significant contribution to Youth Bridge, and will be presented to:

William Bourne

William has always recognised the importance of using every means to stimulate young minds in order to realise their full potential.

William's involvement in junior bridge grew as a supporting parent, in the Sussex Junior Bridge Festival in 2015/16, the Sussex Junior Bridge Camp (JBC) in 2016/17 and as a member of the Sussex contingent attending the EBU JTI in 2017. He felt that with closer co-operation between the south-east county bridge associations and a more concerted strategy to promote a programme of events, a similar, much higher, level of involvement might also be achieved for junior bridge.

Accordingly, William sought to become more closely involved in the planning of future Sussex junior events, particularly the preparations for the JBC in 2018. Changes in the composition of the SCCBA Management Committee at that time led to William volunteering to lead the JBC 2018 project team soon afterwards. His infectious enthusiasm and unflinching drive and determination gave the project an irresistible momentum, achieving significantly higher levels of attendance than previous similar events.

Alongside this major project success, William has also worked hard to establish much closer relationships with his counterparts in the Kent and Surrey bridge associations in pursuit of a programme of junior bridge events throughout each year, supported by an integrated approach to publicity and communications. Full achievement of the goal of the creation of a critical mass of junior players through a three counties strategy, delivering a comprehensive range of learning and playing opportunities was set back by the pandemic but the foundations laid were significant contributions to the national youth bridge initiatives now being pursued by EBED. It was William's introduction of EBED to Sussex youth chess that led to the introduction in 2021 of a national Grand Prix of 6 events for junior bridge. This proved popular and he continues to work closely with EBED in pursuit of a sustainable national programme of junior bridge opportunities.

2021 TONY PRIDAY AWARD (presented this year as the first live AGM since it was awarded) – given in recognition of the pivotal role it has played in the expansion of online bridge, to:

RealBridge

When the Covid-19 pandemic started and people were flooding onto the existing online bridge platforms, Graham Hazel and Shireen Mohandes recognised the shortcomings of what was then on offer and they used their extensive backgrounds in technology and gaming to provide something that not only addressed those shortcomings but also went far beyond most of our expectations, allowing us in the EBU to run our congresses in ways that are as close as possible to their live equivalents. In doing so they have also played a real role in helping people to play social bridge, often with those in different parts of the world, and in this way, they have helped them survive the worst effects of the pandemic.

This award is made in recognition of the pivotal role RealBridge has played in providing a really social aspect to online bridge as well as providing serious online bridge events with greatly improved security.

3. Minutes of the AGM 30th November 2021

3.1 Accuracy

Alan Wilson (AW) (Oxfordshire) noted that there were two instances of 14.2 and the latter should be amended to 14.3. He also asked for a sentence in section 14.2 to be clarified. There were no other matters of accuracy. The minutes were approved.

3.2 Matters Arising

There were no other matters arising.

4. Chair's Annual Report

The Chairs report was circulated prior to the meeting.

4.1 Marketing

IP noted that the Marketing Report was sent via email on Tuesday 29th November to all shareholders.

Ian Sidgwick (IS) (Gloucestershire) proposed that marketing should have more of a share of the finances. KP replied that 10k has been allocated to marketing, not all of it has yet been spent; the EBU was able to make use of a business grant from the Council which largely paid for the printing of marketing material. The marketing working group is looking to market the game in the best way possible; once an appropriate use of funds has been determined by the marketing sub-group, KP would expect the Board to look at such expenditure very sympathetically even if the spend has not been included in the budget.

Tim Warren (TW) (Surrey) supported the proposal of using the number of active members in future reports. He also thanked the marketing working group for the work on the Marketing packs, which were fantastic. He stated that unfortunately a marketing campaign in Surrey had fallen flat this year, even with a lot of active teachers in the county. He expressed support for more “big picture thinking” and funding to marketing.

Alan Woof (AW) (Herts) mentioned that member number could be misrepresentative due to miscounting from clubs. He noted that a lot of members started to play social bridge during lockdown and have not returned to club bridge. IP stated he was aware that a number of people have not returned to playing in clubs and it may take some years to get back to previous numbers of players.

Lesley Millet (LM) (Yorkshire) asked if the marketing strategy could address that more people are playing in the afternoons. IP replied that this may be difficult for clubs that do not own their own premises.

There was discussion around the numbers used in the Annual Report of The English Bridge Union (1 September 2021 - 31 August 2022), some shareholders called for the use of active members in future reporting rather than total members. Shareholders also expressed support for more funding to be given to marketing.

Ron Millet (RM) (Yorkshire) said while he welcomed the report, the number of new members reported as having been added as EBU members does not consider member attrition, and that a net figure may give a clearer picture. He also asked if more marketing resources could be given to counties. IP replied that the Marketing Packs were sent out earlier this year, this was the first step in the new marketing strategy. He noted that adding members was not always a net gain.

David Guild (DG) (Yorkshire) Asked if it feasible to use the number of active members in future reports, rather than total members.

Lee Guy (LG) (EBED Chair) added that the details in the Treasurer's Report give further details showing total membership. He noted that currently 16k people do not play regularly and a strategy should focus on these members.

Patrick Shields (PS) (EBU Board) stated that active versus non-active member numbers have always been relevant, with approximately 20% of members historically being non-active. AW confirmed that the number of non-active members has decreased in the last year, in 2021 approximately half of members were not playing regularly, this has been reduced to one third in 2022.

4.2 Education

Adrian Darnell (AD) (EBU Board) gave a presentation detailing the work of the Education Working Group (EWG). He stated that the EBU have ultimate responsibility for the health of the game in England. While the EBU can't facilitate play, we can assist clubs. He confirmed that teaching will not look uniform across the country, and not all areas have teachers or premises in which to teach. Covid has accelerated a change some bridge teaching being taught online. The EBU will hold future online sessions for clubs and counties similar to the successful seminars already held previously.

AD talked about the need for a plan to encourage students to join bridge clubs following their lessons. Clubs should be welcoming to new members. AD noted that duplicate bridge is the hardest form of the game to learn, clubs should therefore think about having assisted play or parallel play sessions for new members. Clubs should also think about ways to encourage social players to join. The EWG is creating an online community for bridge teachers to share practices and ideas. One size will not fit all, differences in geography etc will play a part. This will need the co-operation of all agencies, including EBU, EBED, clubs and counties. AD will publish a paper on the EBU website with further details in the New Year.

Following the Education Report, IP invited LG to present the EBED Report. LG briefly introduced himself and Giorgio Provenza (GP) (EBED CEO) and gave a short history of EBED. LG said EBED is building a national and consistent high-quality framework for teachers and youth bridge. He confirmed since EBED started they have taught 1,000 teachers, 500 Tournament Directors and sold a large quantity of Bridge for All (BfA) student Books. In 2023 EBED will look to improve the current education framework, undertake a review of the BfA books and online materials available for EBTA teachers. They will continue to run the weekly supervised play sessions, run three youth camps and a youth league system. A proposal to improve the online system will be available soon. LG confirmed that EBED want to continue to work with the EBU and asked for shareholders and members to contact LG with regards to any new ideas in relation to teaching in counties and clubs.

Colin O'Hara (CoH) (Bedfordshire) noted that there are a lot of unaffiliated clubs in his county, he would like the opportunity to invite these clubs to join the county. AD suggested appealing to the members of non-affiliated clubs rather than the organisers. PS also replied that counties are able to include promoting the game to non-affiliated clubs.

DG stated that Yorkshire will initiate a new teaching project at the beginning of the new year.

RM said that a lot of new players prefer the social aspects of the game and are uninterested in national competitions.

5. Directors Report and Accounts year ending 31st March 2022

KP circulated the report prior to the meeting. She noted that for the first time the EBU accounts, while having been prepared by Beacons (the Chartered Accountancy Company), have not been audited.

This is in accordance with the Board's proposal which was approved by shareholders. Only two counties expressed any concern about the proposal. Therefore, the Board went ahead with the assurance report and the Financial Statements were not audited.

The proposed approach of the assurance report is that the Board ask the auditor to look at all significant areas over a period of 5 years, but to look at each area in more depth than would be considered in an audit. KP stated that the EBU can adjust the scope each year to gain more comfort in the areas that are in scope of the assurance report, but the current proposal would be to not look at all areas every year. The cost is dependent on the scope of the assurance report, KP noted the initial cost of the assurance report would be less than an annual audit. This year the EBU will have spent £10k less than last year on auditor fees.

KP assured shareholders that they can insist on an audit if more than 10% of shareholders vote for one.

The scope of the assurance report for this year was: Fixed Assets and Depreciation, Bank Balances and Deposits. The report was completed on Tuesday 29th November (the day before the AGM) and did raise a few points for management consideration. The audits completed in the previous years raised very few areas of concern.

The Financial Statements have been signed by GR, KP and IP. KP invited questions relating to the report.

Paul Littlewood (PL) (Hertfordshire) asked about the seemingly large IT costs. GR confirmed that these are accurate and reflect the IT needs of the business. They are in large part composed of staff costs and software licences rather than computer hardware.

RM asked whether the forensic management cycle can be changed to four years from five, to reflect our own cycle. He also asked if shareholders would have oversight of the reports. IP replied that the assurance reports will be for the Board to read and take any action necessary.

DG said that while there is no legal requirement for an annual audit, this had previously been EBU practice. He asked if there could be independent scrutiny of the Assurance Report by having one or two shareholders being given access to it. IP replied that the Board would consider this proposal.

David Pollard (DP) (Leicestershire) asked if it was possible that in the past some points of details were not covered that could have been picked up in a review like the Assurance Report. KP replied that an audit looks at a range of matters but not in the depth that can be considered in an Assurance report.

LG asked about English Bridge, it currently has an advertising revenue of £30k, but costs a total of £131k. IP stated that the magazine has always cost more money to produce than the advertising revenue, it is not supposed to make a profit as it is a member benefit. It was agreed that with both the EBU diary and English Bridge there may be a time in future when they are no longer viable as printed products, but at present they will continue like this.

6. Treasurer's Report year to date

KP referred to the September 2022 management accounts and the associated Treasurer's report which was circulated to the AGM. She mentioned some highlights from the report: the EBU is performing slightly better than the budget, mainly driven by higher than anticipated UMS for six months from April to September 2022.

There were no questions relating to the report.

6.1 EBU Fees 2023-24

KP introduced and talked through her paper and proposal for the EBU fees in 2023/24, (see appendix A) and then invited comments and questions.

IS asked how what the net savings were from the reduction of the English Bridge magazines given that the reduction in the number of issues is the principal driver for the change in VAT rate. KP replied that the EBU will do this calculation and report that to the shareholders, and that in future the EBU will take account of the impact of VAT when making decisions about English Bridge.

LM asked if any increase in interest rates for savings accounts have been included when looking forward to 2022/23. KP confirmed that they had while noting that the deposits have different terms.

Peter Grice (PG) (Cambs & Hunts) stated that table money in many clubs has decreased in recent years due to online play and that clubs may have the headroom to absorb additional fees.

IS noted that of more significance to clubs will be an increase in heating bills.

Alan Woof (AW) (Hertfordshire) asked how much information was available for the UMS figures and if the detail can be split into active and non-active members. GR confirmed that the detail would be available but not to hand at the meeting.

Given that the fee proposal had assumed that the Competitions Proposal would be implemented, IP proposed that the meeting be given the opportunity to discuss the proposal. IP noted that he knew of one person who had a point of contention with it and in particular with respect to the OODGP events.

PL spoke and suggested amending the EBU's proposal so that the OODGP events be run by counties, with more than one county responsible for each event. He noted that the position in Hertfordshire was that funding from the one-day GP events is important and that both Cornwall and Cumbria are in similar situations. AW added that EBU competitions entries have dropped but prices have increased, leading to further decline in entries. He said that the county OODGP events are increasing in participation.

NI stated his disagreement with PL, if multiple counties take responsibility for OODGP events then the subsequent profit from the event will be minimal for each county. He said counties should not run national events; these should be run by the EBU.

DG asked if any online competitions will be run by affiliated clubs, commenting that two national events are due to be run for the EBU by Oliver Cowan. GR pointed out that these are not online events.

Lyn Fry (LF) (Middlesex) expressed her support for PL's suggestion. She noted that in Middlesex they saw similar problems with attracting people to play in Face-to-Face events. She said that there is a need to consider the income for counties, of which online GP events provide a significant amount.

Paul Gibbons (PGi) (Kent) stated that prior to Covid, each county determined the face-to-face entry fees for GP events, large counties made a significant profit from these events and subsequently were able to have low UMS fees. Counties should be focused on supporting players in their counties – running events for these players and supporting the clubs and players in their county. This will incentivise the counties to support clubs and grow player numbers in their county. Online events are national events and should be run by the EBU.

Shirley Pritchard (SP) (Surrey) agreed that online events are not local. In Surrey 75% of players are from outside the county. She added that organising a GP event is not easy to co-ordinate with multiple people from different counties.

RM asked if there would be help for smaller counties that are facing difficulties surviving. IP replied that assistance for these counties is part of the current proposal in that it is proposed that the counties' fees for entering EBU events for counties (Tollemache etc.) are halved.

GR agreed with the comments from SP, PGi and NI that online events are national and up to four counties running an event would not be easy. The idea proposed is aimed in part at narrowing the entry fee gap between GP events and other national events to encourage members to enter national events.

IP asked for a show of hands in agreement with the Competitions proposal. A majority of shareholders in attendance voted for the implementation of the Competitions proposal.

IP asked for a show of hands in favour of the proposed increase to UMS. The shareholders voted unanimously in favour of increasing UM to 44p; and increase of 2p. Therefore, there was no need for a formal vote including proxies.

RM noticed that the increases in fees other than UMS were lower than the increase in UMS. KP agreed that this was true, in large part because our accounting software requires that UMS be changed in whole number pence. It was also noted that the impact of increasing the prices to the same amount as UMS would be trivial.

7. Election of 2 Directors for the year 2022/2023

There were two nominations for two vacancies. Therefore, no election was required and PS and GW were elected for a three-year term of office expiring in 2025.

Following the resignation of Cath Fox, there was a vacancy for a new director. AW nominated AS, LF seconded the nomination. The appointment passed unanimously. AS was therefore elected to the Board for a two-year term, replacing CF.

It was agreed that GW will remain as the clubs' representative on the Board and there is still the possibility for up to three more board members to be appointed.

7.1 Election of Chair

There was one nomination for the position. Therefore, no election was required, and Ian Payn will continue his position as EBU Chair for another three-year term.

7.2 Election of Vice-Chair

The nomination of Cath Fox for Vice-Chair was withdrawn. The Vice-Chair will be decided by the Board after the AGM.

8. Appointment of Company Secretary

Gordon Rainsford was re-appointed as Company Secretary.

9. Election of 3 members to the Laws & Ethics Committee for the year 2022/23

There were three nominees for three positions. Therefore, no election was required, and Peter Grice, Jane Jensen and Tim Rees are elected for a three-year term of office expiring in 2025.

10. Election of 3 members to the Selection Committee for the year 2022/23

There were three nominees for three positions, the top two persons duly elected will serve for a three-year term of office expiring in 2025 and the third will serve for a two-year term expiring in 2024.

The votes were as follows:

Elected for a three-year term of office expiring in 2025: Paul Barden & Abbey Smith.

Elected for a two-year term expiring in 2024: Alan Wilson.

11. Laws & Ethics Updates - Disciplinary Rules

At the EGM earlier this year, a proposal was made for slight changes to the section concerning “inexperienced players” in the proposed change to the Bye-Laws. It was agreed that experienced players should refer to officers of a club rather than just any committee member, and for the section to apply only in alleged cheating cases. A vote at this AGM was held to confirm the change and it was passed with a majority in favour.

IP confirmed funds had been set aside for legal costs last year, with a couple of court cases and threatened litigation. This possibility needs to be prepared for, but thankfully none of these cases were ruled against the EBU, which puts us in a good position for any future cases. IP gave a lengthy presentation explaining the cheating cases and the potential consequences. IP emphasised how much stress, trauma and effort is involved for the Law & Ethics Committee.

12. Selection Committee – Structure of Junior Squad set up

Paul Barden (PB) gave an overview of the structure of the Junior Squads. For WBF and EBL events, there are the following categories: Under 16, Under 21, Under 26 women, Under 26 and Under 31. The EBU does not currently field teams for the Under 31 events.

Each team has a squad leader, coach, and non-playing captain, all are voluntary positions. Michael Byrne has recently been appointed squad leader for the Under 26 team, having previously been quad leader for the Under 21's.

PB gave his thanks to all the admin staff and volunteers who help with the junior squads.

There are two aims of the junior squads: to inspire the youth players and to coach them for international competitions. This includes online sessions and mentoring.

PB stated the Selection Committee is currently working to ensure a smoother transition for players moving between squads. Abbey Smith is the new safeguarding officer and will facilitate this project.

The funding for juniors has been greatly reduced, players are now asked to cover their own costs. However, there is a hardship fund for players if needed. PB thanked all the people that had generously donated to the junior bridge fund so far and requested shareholders think about donating and encourage their county members to do so as well.

In 2023 England will host the Peggy Bayer and Junior Camrose and in 2024 England will host the Channel Trophy.

LM suggested the Junior Squad investigate the prospect of crowd funding. PB said he will take this into consideration.

IS asked if donations were applicable for gift aid. PB confirmed only donations made to EBED are viable for gift aid as EBED is a registered charity.

13. EBED Report

The EBED report was presented following the Education report, item 4.2.

14. Minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors of EBU Ltd

- 14.1 13th January 2022**
- 14.2 17th March 2022**
- 14.3 15th June 2022**
- 14.4 15th September 2022**
- 14.5 20th October 2022 (draft)**

The meeting considered the minutes of these meetings. There were no questions. Minutes approved.

15. Minutes of the meetings of the Laws & Ethics Committee

- 15.1 3rd February 2022**
- 15.2 19th May 2022**
- 15.3 6th October 2022 (draft)**

The meeting considered the minutes of these meetings. There were no questions. Minutes approved.

16. Minutes of the meetings of the Selection Committee

- 16.1 22nd March 2022**
- 16.2 30th June 2022**
- 16.3 5th August 2022**
- 16.4 26th September 2021 (draft)**

The meeting considered the minutes of these meetings. There were no questions. Minutes approved.

17. Dates for 2023 AGM

IP advised that the 2023 AGM is set to be Wednesday 29th November, the venue is yet to be confirmed.

18. Any Other Notified Business

IP thanked the EBU Board, EBU staff and all EBU shareholders and members for attending.

Myra Scott (MS) (Warwickshire) stated that the face-to-face meeting had been very helpful and productive.

Additional Item

The draw took place for the prize winners in the Simultaneous Pairs competitions. 2 clubs were drawn from those which entered the EBED Sims and 6 from those entering the other sims. Each receives £200. The winning clubs were:

Club names	County
Pulborough Bridge Club	Sussex
Leverstock Green Bridge Club	Hertfordshire
Barrow Bridge Club	Cumbria
Duns Bridge Club	Scottish Borders
Bishop Auckland Bridge Club	North East
Clare Bridge Club	Suffolk
Harpenden Duplicate Bridge Club	Hertfordshire
Goring & Streatley Bridge Club	Berks & Bucks

All prize winners, including runners up, are listed on the website <https://www.ebu.co.uk/article/2021-sim-pairs-prize-winners-drawn>

Closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Shareholders for their attendance. The meeting closed at 16:30.

AGM: Fees to operate from 1 April 2023

(This paper, in line with our bye-laws asks for approval of the UMS price increase to operate from April 2023; as is our custom and practice, to give context to the UMS proposal, the paper also sets out the other price changes agreed by the Board.)

This is my first year for presenting a UMS pricing paper to the AGM. The proposed changes have been endorsed by the Board. I note however that it is difficult to forecast next year, and future years, with the impacts of COVID on playing numbers and playing choices still uncertain.

Usually there will be firm and reasonably accurate forecasts going forward by up to 4 years for our main cost and income lines, and then we would set down a way forward based on our two agreed policies:

- That we should show a small surplus over each 4-year cycle (4 years because that is the normal international cycle); and
- That price increases should be at or around RPI.

Last Year (21/22)

The Board agreed a deficit budget for last year, 21/22, of £19.8k. (Note that the COVID Government furlough ended in September 2021 and there was no reduction in our WBF/EBL affiliation fees for this year.) We did however finish with a surplus of £31.5k. The main reasons for this were:

- Cancellation of the World Junior Championships;
- Reduced costs as many competitions were switched from face-to-face to online; and
- Actual costs for Laws & Ethics were lower than budgeted.

Current Year (22/23)

The budget for 22/23 was set to return a deficit of £12k. With six months of actuals now known, we are slightly ahead of budget and an early forecast would suggest we could break even. Some points of note are that:

- Membership (UMS) is currently slightly ahead of our budget with higher-than-expected income in the last five months;
- There is a mixed picture in competitions; some face-to-face events (e.g. Eastbourne) did well, while others (e.g. Scarborough) did less well. The EBU's own daily BBO online games continue to hold up and the EBU tournaments run online are attracting sufficient numbers to be profitable, but entries for face-to-face tournaments are lower than pre-COVID;
- The Bridge Warehouse is picking up much as we forecast (which is less than pre-COVID); and
- Non-staff costs generally are increasing as inflation takes hold especially postage, energy and paper, whilst staff costs are in line with budget.

Next Year (23/24)

The competitions Proposal, which this meeting is considering, has been assumed to be in-place. While the impacts of increased income from OODGP (on-line one-day green-pointed) events is largely offset by the subsidies to entry fees for EBU county qualifying events and the decrease in licence fees, it has been impossible to arrive at a sensible forecast as to the effect of OODGP on online-only EBU National events when members are faced with a choice between the two - the relatively cheaper county organised OODGP or online-only EBU National events. We have therefore not attempted to do so when forecasting income from competitions with and without the new Proposal.

Also of significance for next year is the rate of VAT. The rate of VAT that is applied to subscriptions from members and clubs is a composite rate because some of the services are zero-rated. We have applied 10.89% in recent years based on a calculation a few years ago, April 2016. However, there has been a reduction in the components of member services that are not VATable – primarily the

reduction in costs for English Bridge. This has led to an increase in the composite rate from 10.89% to 12.5%.

This, in itself, would raise UMS by about 0.54p (or will reduce the amount the EBU receives by 0.54p). In addition, the increase in the VAT rate should be backdated. However, the backdated application of the revised rate will not affect next year's 'forecast' but will impact our reserves.

Other points to note in cost terms for 2023/24 are:

- We have increased some IT staffing (as we said we might do in this report last year);
- We have excluded the cost of an audit but included the costs of submitting financial returns and completing an assurance report;
- No changes are being made to the issues of English Bridge - four per year (+ one on-line);
- The costs for supporting internationals are much lower than might have been the case as we have failed to qualify for the World Championships next year. We have however reserved a modest sum in case a team is invited unexpectedly. In future years there will be Europeans and, we hope, World Championships;
- Inflation and especially large increases in costs of energy, paper and postage;
- Most other cost areas will be broadly as expected in 2022/23, with an assumed at least 3% uplift on average wage costs; and
- We have reserved an exceptional £10k to support struggling clubs that are not able to secure funds from elsewhere, for costs incurred to generate growth and the sustainability of the club.

In respect to income, significant points to note are:

- We are exploring the possibility of renting some of the space at the Aylesbury office; this might generate income which we have not included;
- We have assumed that the increases in UMS sessions that we have seen this year persist into next year;
- We have trimmed the competitions calendar so that fewer events will be run, and some of them will continue to be online, but we are also planning to add ten online one-day green-pointed Swiss events to the annual schedule;
- Simultaneous games will continue to drop in popularity; and
- The Bridge Warehouse will not return to pre-COVID volumes but will increase from last year

Prices

Given that 22/23 has an unusually low cost for supporting internationals, and there is more than usual uncertainty in some income and costs, I am proposing that we plan for a near break-even for 23/24.

The notes above explain the increase of the VAT rate and its impact on UMS (being 0.54p).

Based on all the above we can hold our UMS price to 44p, just a 2p or 4.5% increase i.e. reasonably below recent and expected inflation.

All this results in the following price list from April 2023 (previous year's fees are in brackets):

Universal Membership Subscription: £0.44 (£0.42)

Direct Membership UK: £34 (£33)

Direct Membership O/S: £44 (£43)

Club affiliation fee: £28 (£27)

Licensed Club and County Events: £2.40 (£2.32) per table

Licensed Charity Events (including multi-venue): £2.12 (£2.04) per table

Non-charity multi-venue simultaneous events: £6.60 (£6.40) per venue

Blue Point events: £3.04 (£2.96) per table

County online green-pointed events; £12.28 (£12.28) per table (no change but this is no longer relevant with the new competitions proposal)

County face-to-face green-pointed events; £8.44 (£8.32) per table

Beginner/improver events: £0.88 (£0.84) per table.

Annual licence for tour operators: £58 (£57)

Events run by non-affiliated organisations (e.g., holidays): £2.92 (£2.80) per table

NOTE: University Affiliation fees remain unchanged at £5;

Kay Preddy
Treasurer
November 2022

EBBU