



**Minutes from the Fourth Meeting of the EBU National Club Committee
Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London on Wednesday 15 May 2013, 1pm**

Present:

Sally Bugden (SB)	NCC Chairman and EBU Chairman
Barry Capal (BC)	EBU General Manager
Chris Harris (CDH)	Midlands Regional CC Chairman
Colin O'Hara (COH)	Eastern Regional CC Chairman
Andrew Petrie (AP)	EBU Treasurer
Jeremy Dhondy (JD)	EBU Vice-Chairman and Laws and Ethics Committee Chairman
Andrew Urbanski (AU)	EBU Club Liaison Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Malcolm Oliver and Dave Latcham Chairman of the South West Region.

Chairmen for North and South East Regions are currently vacant

2. Minutes of the last meeting

On behalf of the NCC, SB noted the committee's thanks to Val Gibson for chairing the NCC since November 2011.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 20 November 2012 were agreed as correct.

There were no matters arising.

Items were taken out of order to accommodate the presence of the Treasurer.

3. Regional County Club Committee and National Club Committee structure.

Due to resignations, there are currently no representatives for two regions of the NCC, the South East and North. There had been no meetings held for either region this spring and, unfortunately, no meeting held in the South West. There are still a number of counties without club representatives. The Officers of the Union expressed their concerns about the current structure. CDH and COH were asked for their input on the future of the NCC.

There was a lengthy discussion based on the universal membership subscription cost, increasing the volume of bridge players in clubs, communications and clubs understanding what it is precisely that the EBU does for them. SB stated that the EBU has two overriding objectives, to regulate and develop the game of bridge, providing security and continuity for our clubs and their members.

CDH stated that to create volume he needed good facilities, a friendly club and easy to understand regulations. He asked about "light touch" regulations for those clubs or sessions in clubs attended by newcomers as this would assist him in getting more players in to his club. JD stated that clubs must follow the Laws of Duplicate Bridge but they are sovereign in terms of what regulations they choose to follow. (See item 10)

The way in which the EBU can assist with the creation of increased volume is to help recruit and teach at club level and provide a framework for players to develop onwards to county and national level if they feel able to.

It was agreed that we must get the right communications to our clubs and their members as follows:

Individual members pay the universal membership subscription and the club collects it on behalf of the EBU.

The EBU provides service to clubs through the following:

Club Teacher Scheme

Club Tournament Directors training

Model Club Constitution

The security afforded by playing within a regulated framework

Extensive savings on club insurance and bridge playing equipment & stationery

Free directors' liability insurance

Master Points and the National Grading Scheme

Access to club assistance and services.

Further reasons for the difficulty in recruiting volunteers to undertake this important representational role are daytime meetings which are difficult for those who work to attend and travelling distances for attendees in the larger regions

There was a suggestion of having some support regionally, dealing with both counties and clubs and supporting development in this way.

The discussion concluded with SB agreeing to contact those counties who do not have a county club representative.

4. EBU Finances

Andrew Petrie gave a presentation about the EBU's finances, emphasising that the EBU is a not-for-profit organisation, so its entire income is spent on or invested in benefits for its members. He also stressed that all of the EBU's Directors and members of Committees are unpaid volunteers who derive no financial benefit from their posts.

The EBU has already achieved significant efficiency improvements. In 2004/5 there were 25 staff supporting around 28000 members (a ratio of 1:1120). There are now 20 staff (17.7 full time equivalent) supporting around 50000 members (1:2500). The Board believes the scope for further savings in this area is limited. Income is generated from membership subscriptions, including pay to play, the EBU shop and competitions. This income is used to finance English Bridge, Youth and Adult internationals, Education, Club services, the ranking systems - Master Points and National Grading

Scheme- and other membership services (including administrative costs). The document that was circulated is attached to these minutes.

5. Regional Club Committee Reports

The recent minutes of the two Regional Club Committee meetings which took place (Midlands and East) had been circulated before the meeting. The majority of issues were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

CDH mentioned a discussion about Blue Points being used for inter-county competitions. SB informed those present that the Tournament Committee will not undertake a review of the Blue Point Scheme until it has been in operation for a year. However she invited CDH to provide her with the information that the Midlands Regional Committee would like the TC to take in to account.

6. Club Liaison Officer's Report

AU reported that he since the last meeting he had visited clubs in Merseyside & Cheshire, Warwickshire, Norfolk and Nottinghamshire as well as Stroud BC, Trowbridge County Town BC and been invited to the opening of a new daytime bridge club in Wiltshire. A series of visits to South East clubs in the near future, as well as promoting all the services that the EBU can offer these clubs, his presentation will include the Brighton Lite Congress which is ideal for club players in this area.

AU also reported that 12 clubs had affiliated or re-affiliated since the previous NCC meeting and that several more clubs were in the process of deciding whether to affiliate. On the downside, 5 clubs had closed or disaffiliated due to falling table numbers.

SB reported that AU would be visiting at least 60 clubs this coming year, and identifying clubs and groups of clubs that require a club teacher training session. He will also be working with the EBU Shop to promote their products and services to clubs, highlighting the discounts available to clubs and the fact that the shop will try to match the best price found elsewhere.

7. Bidding for the Future 2013-2018

SB presented the EBU's new 5 year Strategy document to the meeting. The full text of this document can be found at:

<http://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/official-documents/bidding-for-the-future-2013-18.pdf>

Bidding for the Future will feature in the forthcoming June issue of English Bridge.

In the document the Board re-affirms its commitment to "ensure that the game of duplicate bridge in England continues to develop" whilst upholding the following values:

- To act always in the best interests of our membership
- To take pride in delivering quality and value for money
- To respect each other and celebrate diversity so that everyone can give of their best

The following nine areas have been identified for attention and their objectives are summarised below:

- **Governance and Charitable Status**
 - Continued development of good corporate governance to be transparent in all we do

- Launch a charity for education by April 2014
- Provide good communications, advice and support to all
- **Supporting Bridge and Securing the Future**
 - Generate a surplus to invest in all aspects of the game
 - Promote the benefits of playing duplicate
 - Develop and support internationals
- **Relationships with our counties and clubs**
 - Address key development areas with counties
 - In partnership with counties, grow the number of clubs we support
 - Extend our influence to attract players in non-affiliated clubs
 - Address the need for a low cost or free way for citizens with limited income to learn and play bridge
- **Education**
 - Continue to measure and develop Minibridge in schools
 - Continue to promote and develop learning to play the game to all
- **Tournaments and regulation**
 - Develop tournaments that appeal to all
 - Be the leading provider of online competitions in England
 - Ensure that our regulations are appropriate for the current game and easy to understand.
 - Provide engaging ways to ensure that new players understand the laws and regulations of bridge
- **International Teams**
 - Secure funding to develop and support the players in our international teams
 - Host one major international tournament
 - Support our fellow National Bridge Organisations to help the European Bridge League and World Bridge Federation in their efforts to become more effective and transparent.
- **Technology**
 - Use technology to enhance all our services including:
 - Communications
 - Tournaments
 - Accessibility
- **Our Employees**
 - Support and develop our workforce through appropriate employment packages, succession planning and accommodation.
- **Archives**
 - Collect and collate our history, making it accessible to all.

- Review, report and communicate our progress of this plan to our members and shareholders

SB also reported that she had created a document which measured the achievements against the objectives set out in Bidding for the Future 2008-13 and that this would be circulated with the shareholders minutes. A copy of that document is attached to these minutes.

8. Simultaneous Pairs

JD summarised the current offering of simultaneous pairs, asking that all clubs support those events that are run by the EBU and those run on behalf of England, Wales & Scotland i.e. the British Sims. It was recognised that there are many opportunities to take part in Simultaneous Pairs, five days a week in the morning, afternoon or evening (as long as a club only offered one session per day!) and that the first year of operation had gone very well. Clubs should not feel pressured by the number of events they should just enter those that they wish to. Sim Pairs offer clubs the opportunity to play a different type of event from normal club duplicates by competing against a large field across the country.

Feedback from CDH and COH suggested that where Sim Pairs events are being organised to finance specific causes - e.g. to raise funds for the new education charity, that this should be well publicised as it was felt this would generate more participants. This suggestion was well received by the meeting.

JD stated that EBU Sim Pairs events still cost only £2.50, 50p less than when they were run by ECATS two years ago. A review about prizes will be undertaken shortly to discuss having a series of financial awards rather than pens. Feedback from county club representatives is required.

9. EBU Bridge Shop

It was noted there are some 160 affiliated clubs (out of 610) which do not use the EBU Bridge shop. Clubs will be reminded that they are entitled to a 12% discount and that all surplus income from the shop is invested back into the game. Supporting the Bridge Shop supports the game in England. Individuals are also entitled to a 10% discount, 12% if they are EBUTA members.

Sue Humphris from the EBU Shop will shortly be contacting all clubs that do not currently use this service.

10. Orange Book Changes

A new 'Blue Book' will be released in the summer which will be half the size of the current Orange Book and will replace both this and the Tangerine Book. The re-naming to 'Blue Book' is simply to represent a 'clean break' from previous versions and thus ensure that everyone knows which the current Rule book is. The reduction in content reflects the removal of material which is mostly related to tournament directors which can be found elsewhere and the simplification of language. There are no major changes to alerting or announcing however some changes to announcing will be implemented to make this aspect more consistent e.g. announcing of short minor openings, 2NT opening strength and transfers opposite this opening. CDH raised concerns that announcing and alerting rules were very confusing for newcomers to the game. It was pointed out that clubs must abide by the laws of the game but do have the right to implement only those regulations which they wish to. This is not recommended practice however as it gives rise to problems for visitors and also for members visiting other clubs.

JD advised a simple way of remembering alerting of doubles:

Up to 3NT

- If they bid a suit naturally then double is take out else alert
- If they bid NT naturally then double is penalty else alert
- If they bid a suit artificially then double shows that suit else alert

Above 3NT

- Only alert a double of a suit which calls for something other than the suit. Only alert doubles of NT that call for a specific suit.

11. Any other business

SB raised the concept of a national awards programme for clubs and appealed for ideas e.g. award to the club which has recruited the most new members in one year, or the club which has done the most work in the local community.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13th November, 2013 at Baker Tilly's offices at 1pm.