



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES WORKING GROUP

AT West Midlands Bridge Club

ON Monday 7 April 2014 @ 10.30am

Midlands Regional County Representatives:

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Derby	Arnold Chandler	Gloucestershire	Alan Wearmouth	Leicestershire	Dean Benton
Nottinghamshire	Graham Brindley	Oxfordshire	Robert Procter	Warwickshire	Mike Thorley
Warwickshire	Chris Harris	Worcestershire	David Thomas	Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby

Invited Members:

County	Name	Reason
EBU Board	Darren Evetts	

Apologies:

County	Name

Chairman: Robert Procter

1. Chairmen's Roles / Appointment of Secretary

Robert Procter summarised the Chairmen's roles and the rationale for both he and Alan Wearmouth being joint Chairmen of the Midlands CWG. In the absence of an appointed secretary, Robert asked Mike Thorley to take notes of the meeting; those for future meetings would be taken by other CWG representatives in rotation. David Thomas has volunteered to take notes at the next meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

No formal apologies have been received. There was no representative present from Staffordshire & Shropshire. It was reported that Robert Northage was unwell; our best wishes were expressed to Robert.

3. Matters Arising from Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous inaugural meeting are on the EBU website: these had been approved by e-mail. No specific matters arising were raised.

4. Summary of Progress of other CWG Regions

Darren gave a synopsis of progress to date. Four of the five mainland CWG regions have met: Midlands, Northern, Western and Eastern. The Metropolitan region has yet to convene. He hoped that a National CWG meeting would be held in the summer: he will circulate some possible dates, targeting July.

Darren's view of the regional meetings to date was that a number of focused, positive aims were emerging which could be discussed at the National CWG meeting. He had noted from the regional meetings that information from Aylesbury, in terms of dissemination at county level, appeared to vary considerably from County to County.

In conclusion, he was optimistic that the CWG forum would highlight development opportunities and propose possible solutions.

5. Use of the EBU Standard Constitution

Derbyshire were actively reviewing their constitution, in discussion with their member Clubs. Arnold Chandler asked for views from other Counties on several aspects of the EBU model, particularly relating to conduct and disciplinary procedures. The ensuing discussion among the attendees highlighted the importance of having a robust conduct/disciplinary procedure in place. Potential issues and problems that could be encountered should solicitor involvement occur (eg libel issues) were flagged: the EBU should be contacted *as soon as possible* in such circumstances.

The benefits of inviting Club representatives to County executive meetings (although they have no voting rights) were discussed, as well as sub-committee structure and budget devolution.

6. Unaffiliated Clubs/Boundaries between Affiliated & Unaffiliated Clubs/Universal Membership (P2P) Issues

Mike Willoughby reported on Worcestershire's experience in reviewing the structure of bridge playing across their County, ranging from the highly competitive players in affiliated Clubs to players in unaffiliated 'gentle' bridge clubs, golf clubs, tennis clubs, bowls clubs and the home.

Topics highlighted were:

Challenges

- Establishing and maintaining contact
- Value Proposition: what are the benefits for unaffiliated Clubs and players?

Actions

- Encourage recruitment to education and 'gentle' bridge initially
- County events to be more inclusive

Opportunities

- Known, unaffiliated Clubs may not represent the biggest opportunity. There is a pool of significant numbers of 'gentle' social bridge players, some of whom are capable of developing into competent competitive players. How to bring them under our umbrella is the key issue.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion on many of the issues highlighted, including:

- Cafe bridge sessions
- Universal membership (P2P) issues
- The need for an inclusive approach to gain support from both affiliated and unaffiliated Clubs and their members
- Promotional events to involve less experienced players

Robert Procter emphasised the Value Proposition issue highlighted by Mike. Andrew Petrie's summary of the 'measurement of success' criteria for the EBU may be very relevant to competitive players, but not those at the other end of the player spectrum. This issue should be raised at the National CWG meeting.

7. EBU Terms of Reference and Structure Document: Priorities

Robert Procter will email Midland CWG members to rate the importance of the 9 objectives listed on a scale of 1 to 5. The results would be presented to the National CWG.

8. Matters to be fed from CWG to EBU

These would be collated via the National CWG meeting.

9. Matters the EBU might wish to feed to Members via CWG Meetings

A number of points were highlighted for consideration:

- Ways of engaging all members, and players, at all levels
- Should there be a minimum service level for Counties?
- How is support resourced? Details of terminology, packaging and measurement of service level provision need careful consideration.

10. Any Other Business

- A bottom to top approach was essential for engaging members.
- Could league competitions be strengthened by having sessions in the afternoon rather than the evening?
- There should be more support for bridge education.

- The ethos of the County 3rd team was raised: is the County third team a means of introducing new players into inter-County competition, or is it simply the third best team the County can field? Is there a need for harmonisation across different Counties?
- The issue of County Match schedules was raised: what were the merits of single date sessions compared with the current monthly ones, since everyone was aware of constant calendar difficulties?

11. Date of Next Meeting

The provisional date for this is Monday 22 September 2014 at West Midlands Bridge Club, commencing at 10.30am.

Robert & Darren thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 12.45pm.