



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNTIES WORKING GROUP  
AT West Midlands Bridge Club  
ON Wednesday 9 July 2014 @ 11.30am**

**Representatives:**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>
Western (DEV)	Dick Andrews	Eastern (SUF)	Peter Bushby	EBU General Mgr	Barry Capal
EBU Board	Jeremy Dhondy	EBU Board	Darren Evetts	Northern (YOR)	Lesley Millet
EBU Board	Ron Millet	EBU Board	Malcolm Oliver	Midlands (OXF)	Robert Procter
Northern (MER)	Paul Roberts	Metropolitan (BRB)	Anders Wallen	Midlands (GLO)	Alan Wearmoth
Eastern (ESX)	John Williams				

**Apologies:**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Name</b>
Western (HIW)	Andy Hughes		

**Chairman: Darren Evetts**

1) Welcome & Introductions

Darren welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the National Counties Working Group. To date all regions have met at least once, other than the Provincial Counties who have each been contacted by Darren. The Regional Meetings have been very productive, and the stage is set for unprecedented regional collaboration. Our task is to build on this and to take things forward to the benefit of the Union. Darren outlined that the purpose of this group is to bring together the outcomes of the Regional Meetings; to identify key areas of development, and to make recommendations to the Board.

2) Apologies: Andy Hughes

3) Terms of Reference

- a) It was clarified that the Annual Measurable Objectives for each County, in its various roles, were to be self setting, and that the County Working Group was intended to be there to offer support and guidance, if requested.
- b) It was agreed to recommend to the Board that in the sentence 'CWG regional representatives will explore each county's objectives.' the word 'explore' be changed to 'discuss', and that the sentence, 'These will include some or all of

the following:' be changed to, 'These are likely to include some or all of the following:'.

- c) It was felt that there needed to be a balance, in that the Terms of Reference exist to support Counties and to champion best practice, whilst also providing a framework for Counties to work towards fulfilling their members' needs to a minimum standard.

Agenda items 4 to 9 (Regional CWGs) points may be common, and may emerge from the discussion. Therefore, these points were taken as one.

#### 4) Regional County Working Groups

Draft discussion documents for a, b & c were circulated prior to this meeting.

Thank you to all for producing some excellent discussion documents.

##### a) Best Practice for County Associations - Discussion Document - John Williams

- i) There was much discussion on this document, and it was decided to feedback comments and ideas to John Williams via the County Forum.
- ii) This document could provide a framework for Counties and be a basis for Best Practice.

##### b) Getting More 40 to 60 Year Olds Playing Bridge - Discussion Document - Peter Bushby

- i) Online bridge is part of the future especially as people want to learn at a much faster pace. Some see face to face bridge teaching as old fashioned with 60 hours of learning spread over once a week sessions, too much.
- ii) Focusing on more 40-60 year olds could help with succession planning.
- iii) Feedback and comments to Peter Bushby via the County Forum.

##### c) Bridge Clubs Premises (1) - Discussion Document - Bernard Eddleston

- i) It was felt that this document had importance, and the group will come back to it at a later meeting.

##### d) It was agreed that a discussion group would be convened during Brighton to discuss points A and B and how to move them forward. Peter Bushby to co-ordinate.

##### e) There was a feeling that the EBU should limit access to its resources. The website makes resources available to everyone, and raises the question why then would unaffiliated clubs feel the need to affiliate? This was considered, and rejected, at the point when Universal Membership was introduced. There would be too many problems in policing such a policy.

##### f) Could we offer unaffiliated Clubs a trial affiliation period?

##### g) What can we do to make affiliation the more attractive option?

- h) Managing the relationships between experienced players and newcomers is a delicate one that is unique to bridge. If the first encounters for newcomers are bad, it can damage their perception of Clubs and competitions irrevocably. We need to encourage everyone to be tolerant of each other and to ensure that first encounters are good ones. Meet and greet newcomers, for example.
- i) It is important that CWGs do not end up as just talking shops. Sharing best practice, resources, knowledge and experiences are areas which should be championed by all CWGs. Reinventing the wheel should become a thing of the past.
- j) Yorkshire is keen to support other Counties. The template for their LearnBridgeYorkshire website is available to any interested County.
- k) Does online bridge detract players from playing at Clubs? The American experience suggests not.
- l) EBED (English Bridge Education and Development Charity) – What do we feel EBED could be focusing on? Feedback from Counties, through the Regional Groups, is important.
- m) The success of a County (and Club) is dependent on a small number of dedicated volunteers.
- n) What does the EBU do for the thousands of new players gained through Universal Membership? Focus on competitions and regulation is not necessarily of interest to the majority. English Bridge is offering a lot more in terms of content for all players.
- o) Are County Committees made up of only experienced bridge players? Good administrators need not be top bridge players. There is a need to encourage wider participation in bridge administration.
- p) Make use of social media to promote bridge to the wider population.
- q) A point of clarification was made in the Western Minutes regarding the cost of running a County Charity Simultaneous Pairs event which includes unaffiliated Clubs. Affiliated Clubs pay the Universal Membership Fee as usual (unless they claim the session as one of their exempt sessions). Whereas, unaffiliated Clubs do not pay UM fees, which effectively puts affiliated Clubs at a disadvantage. To redress this balance a surcharge of 50p per player is made on unaffiliated Clubs, which works out at approximately 12p per player more for playing at an unaffiliated Club. The question was raised as to whether Counties should be allowed to run promotional event(s) free from UM fees, remembering that we are all the EBU and too many exempted sessions may have an adverse financial impact.
- r) Nothing has been received from the Provincial Counties.

10) New Clubs/Members – Welcome Pack

- a) Aylesbury sends a welcome pack to all new Clubs and Members.
- b) The County Secretary is informed of newly affiliated Clubs – could the Chairman be included in this correspondence?
- c) Could the County's website address be included in letters to Members?
- d) Could the County's website address and County Chairman & Secretary's contact information be added to letters to new clubs?
- e) Ideally, a member of the County Executive should contact new clubs.

11) Awards System – Ron Millet

Counties do have some involvement in the nomination process. It was agreed that Regional Working Groups would encourage Counties to engage in the process, and give added coverage to the system.

12) National Approach to:

- a) U3A – No national organisation. (*Post meeting note – there is a national body - <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>*)
- b) Universities – Perhaps using our links with current juniors would yield a positive response.
- c) Schools – via EBED – Simon Barb. Work continuing with All Parliamentary Group.

13) AoB

- a) The Annual County Return (County contacts, etc) will in future include County Working Group Representative(s) (formerly County Club Representative). It may be more useful for Aylesbury to send this request out post each County's Annual General Meeting, to ensure the information is up to date. Darren expressed the importance of keeping Aylesbury informed of changes in officers.
- b) The County Online Forum has been live for some time. This is an ideal medium for fulfilling a number of our objectives, and we need to encourage Counties to begin contributing to it.

14) Feedback to Board

- b) These minutes will be reviewed by the Board.

15) Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in November/December. It was agreed that this meeting should explore in depth two or three topics to be agreed, one of which will be the EBU's policy on unaffiliated clubs (RM/LM agreed to prepare a paper for the next meeting).

DE will canvas the group for dates. The meeting will be held at West Midlands Bridge Club.