



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLAND COUNTIES WORKING GROUP

AT West Midlands Bridge Club

ON Monday 22 September 2014 @ 10.30am

Midlands Regional County Representatives:

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Gloucestershire	Alan Wearmouth	Leicestershire	Dean Benton	Northants	Nicky Bainbridge
Nottinghamshire	Graham Brindley	Staffs+Shrops	John Withers	Worcestershire	David Thomas
Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby				

Invited Members:

County	Name	Reason
EBU Board	Darren Evetts	

Apologies:

County	Name	County	Name
Oxfordshire	Rob Proctor	Warwickshire	Mike Thorley

Chairman: Alan Wearmouth

1. Apologies for Absence and Attendance

The Chairman welcomed Nicky Bainbridge from Northants who had moved from the East Group to the MCWG. Apologies had been received from Rob Proctor and Mike Thorley, while Darren announced that Judith Currie would be joining the group representing Warwickshire in place of Chris Harris who had resigned.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous and the inaugural meeting are on the EBU website: these had been approved by e-mail. No specific matters arising were raised. It was noted that the minutes of the National Group were also available there.

3. The Midland Counties League

Many counties raised concerns about the operation of the league. The current system is in need of refreshing. Lincolnshire dropped out of the league at a fairly late stage and this gives us the opportunity to look at the whole structure of the league including its management, its timing and number of weekends. Because of Robert Northage's ill health several historic matters needed clearing up including master points and finances.

It was agreed that the item should be formally discussed at the next MCWG meeting with Robert Northage and county league secretaries invited to attend. It was suggested that the meeting would be facilitated by some e-mail exchanges in advance to organise the thoughts of the MCWG representatives.

4. National County Working Party Meeting

Darren chaired the first meeting held in July with Alan and Rob present. The meeting had centred on three papers from the East Group with full minutes on the EBU website:

- Best practice for County Associations
- Buying Bridge Club Premises
- Getting more 40-60 year olds to play bridge

There was lots of discussion on these papers but it was felt that some topics that could have been discussed were not raised. As a group we were invited to nominate items for discussion at the next meeting-see item 5.

5. Hot Topics for the next NWP Meeting.

Members were asked to raise possible topics for this meeting.

Gloucestershire

Alan said that they were interested in the composition and working of county committees. What do we do and how should we do it? We needed to look at the structure from the role of chairman to the structure of sub-committees. It was important to look at the length of terms of office and to get new blood onto the committees.

Worcestershire

Mike said that he had failed to obtain from the EBU any real idea of what their value proposition to counties, clubs and members really was. Why should non affiliated clubs deal with the EBU? He

pointed out that bridge has social and mental health benefits and these need communicating to the world at large. But what should the EBU do and what should counties do?

Mike agreed to write a discussion paper on the value proposition topic.

Northants

Nicky highlighted the problems that had arisen between Scorebridge and the EBU which was symptomatic of the problems that can arise with IT developments. As activities get more computerised there is a need to manage the integration between clubs and EBU systems. Clubs are interested in deliverables, but it is important to understand how the EBU IT strategy is developed and what it is. Where do counties fit in? Need to look at the possibility of creating an IT user group with the objective of helping clubs/counties get the best out of bridge computer systems. She agreed to write a paper on this matter for possible submission to the EBU board

Her second item was that of communication strategy. She felt that the EBU were not responsive enough to many communications to them. Some formal channel of acknowledgement was needed.

A communication strategy working both ways is necessary.

Staffs and Shrops

John said they were interested in how you develop a strategy to bring people into bridge and help them develop. This is likely to have a social orientation but people can develop several ways from there. Need to stimulate interest, organise training and progression as necessary

Nottinghamshire

Similar views to Staffs were aired. The age profile of members is worrying as it is in many counties. More teaching is needed to bring new players into the game.

Leicestershire

Two main areas were highlighted both of which were close to previous discussion. First was the need to get more people playing regularly. Secondly was the need for a proper framework for the roles of the county committee. What should the chairman do, how should he do it and importantly how much effort should he be expected to put in.

Warwickshire

In the absence of a rep Darren spoke for the county. He too stressed that the structure was important while noting the committee were all volunteers. The structure of membership had changed since 2010 with a large number of more social players picked up by universal membership.

What can the county do to help these members? Recreational bridge as well as tournament bridge must be catered for.

Hot Topics

It was clear that a number of common themes were running through different counties ideas for topics for discussion at the NWG. The following list was arrived at with the suggestion that the first three were 'Hot Topics' for discussion at the meeting and the last two could be dealt with via Darren.

- 1) Composition and structure of county/club organisations. This to include role descriptions and suggestions for best practice.
- 2) What should be the EBU value proposition for all our stakeholders? What is their usefulness to existing members and what is there for them to offer to unaffiliated clubs. (Mike Willoughby paper)
- 3) Progression strategy for bridge players at all levels, both members and non-members.
- 4) A communication strategy between the EBU and members and members and the EBU.
- 5) There is also a need for culture change within the EBU, although it is acknowledged that this is a longer term objective..

Other Matters

The meeting was closed without discussion of any other matters at 12.50pm as the set end time had expired. The date of next meeting in about 3 months subject to holiday period was to be decided by Alan.

David Thomas
Worcestershire CBA