



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLANDS COUNTIES WORKING GROUP

AT West Midlands Bridge Club
ON Thursday 19th May 2016 @ 10.30am

PRESENT:

Derbyshire	Arnold Chandler (AC)
Derbyshire	Jim Parker (JP)
Gloucestershire	David Simons (DS)
Oxfordshire	Robert Procter (RP)
Leicestershire	Dean Benton (DB)
Nottinghamshire	Clare Batten (CB)
Staffs & Shrops	Linda Curtis (LC)
Warwickshire	Mike Thorley (MT) – Chair
Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby (MW)
EBU Board (Warks)	Darren Evetts (DE)
Minutes (Warks)	Edward Legg (EL)

1. Apologies

Were received from Graham Brindley (GB), Nottinghamshire, and Jim Simons (JS), Gloucestershire

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting had been approved by e-mail.

3. Matters Arising

Nothing that does not appear elsewhere.

4. Resignation of Nicky Bainbridge

The resignation of Nicky Bainbridge was discussed and, as Nicky had placed the matter in the public domain, the circumstances were clarified.

Although the group had very limited information with regard to the process that had been followed, it was agreed that it was a sad and unfortunate situation, and the majority of members expressed a wish to see Nicky return as a member of the group. DE said he would give this consideration.

All agreed that the Midland Counties Working Group has proved to be a very successful and productive group and that, therefore, the Nicky Bainbridge matter should be consigned to history and the group should focus on continuing to build on the excellent progress that it has already achieved.

5. Future of the Working Groups

Although less successful elsewhere in the country due, perhaps, to geographical or resourcing issues, it was noted that the North and the Midland County Working Groups were vibrant and productive. DE felt it was necessary to foster this success. DE will give an update at the next meeting. **Action DE**

It was agreed that collating each member's view on what they found useful and positive about the Working Group would be useful. Members were asked to send their comments to MT. **Action All**

There was a discussion as to what the EBU and Counties were doing to address the needs of the many new members we gained through Universal Membership. It was commented that central EBU should provide the support to Counties so that Counties could engage with those members. It was recognised that most members just wanted a venue for social bridge. MW felt they often do not articulate their wants eg some were excited about such items as hand copies and Cafe Bridge which were unfamiliar to them. RP mentioned a successful charity event organised at Stowe School by Abbey Smith and Ian Mitchell. DE to find out more. **Action DE**

6. Election of Chair

Arnold Chandler agreed to Chair the group from the next meeting, and was duly elected. Dean Benton agreed to represent the group, along with Arnold, on the National Group.

7. Midlands Improvers Pairs – Sunday 3 July 2016

Heats are scheduled at Spondon (Derbyshire), Cheltenham (Gloucestershire), and WMBC (Warwickshire). It was noted that another event in Cheltenham may affect the turnout for this event. It was agreed that it was too early to tell and even a small number of tables at each venue would be a positive starting point. DE will be co-ordinating the hands, commentary, and scoring, and requires the names and email addresses for the TD etc at each venue. The EBU have supplied two trophies for the overall winners. **Action CB/DE**

8. Event Scheduling & Harmonisation

There are nine County Championship Pairs finals throughout the Midlands Region, which leads to nine individual dates being tied up in the calendar. It was agreed that to all settle on a single date would not work, as whilst some Counties run closed events, some run open events and attract players from neighbouring Counties. On that basis it was suggested to try to settle on 2 or 3 dates for the 2017-18 season. Members were asked to submit their proposed 2017-18 Championship Pairs date to MW, who will collate and attempt harmonisation. **Action MW/All**

9. AOB

a) **National Grading Scheme.** There was discussion about diffusion and on how the NGS is perceived by higher ranked players (ie there is a reluctance to play with lower, or unranked, players, in some areas due to the negative effect on the NGS grade of the higher ranked player). No one really understood the statistical working of the scheme, so CB was asked to prepare a paper for the next meeting. The following points were raised and noted:

- i) The purpose of the NGS is to reflect a player's current performance, whilst MasterPoints reflect a player's lifetime achievement.
- ii) As the NGS exemption facility exists for an individual pair to be excluded for a session, could consideration be given for a Club/County to exclude the whole of an annual Pro-Am event?

b) **Bridge as a Sport – Appeal**

DE suggested that Counties and Clubs might like to prepare something to publish on the back of the media coverage that will be generated when the appeal is heard later this year (possibly November time), to advertise taster sessions, or beginners classes, etc. Having something prepared with no fixed date might yield some positive results.

c) **Minutes** - MT thanked EL for taking the minutes.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- a. Thursday 22 September, 10.30am @ WMBC.
- b. EL agreed to take the minutes.

The meeting closed at 12.35pm

EL/MT May 2016