



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLANDS COUNTIES WORKING GROUP

at West Midlands Bridge Club
on Thursday 27th July 2017 at 10.30am

PRESENT:

Derbyshire	Jim Parker (JP)	Nottinghamshire	Clare Batten (CB)
Gloucestershire	Patrick Shields (PS)	Nottinghamshire	Graham Brindley (GB)
Gloucestershire	Jim Simons (JS)	Oxfordshire	Rob Proctor (RP)
Leicestershire	Dean Benton (DB)	Warwickshire	Myra Scott (MS)
Leicestershire	David Pollard (DP)	Worcestershire	David Thomas (DT)
Northamptonshire	Nicky Bainbridge (NB)		

CHAIR: Clare Batten

ITEM 1 : Apologies

1. Roger Mallinson (Derbyshire), Linda Curtis (Staffs & Shrops), Mike Thorley & Judith Currie (Warwickshire), Mike Willoughby (Worcestershire), Graham Smith (EBU Board).
2. We noted that this is our first meeting without Darren Evetts and we all agreed that Clare should send him a message of thanks for his efforts in creating and driving this group.

ITEM 2 : Minutes of Last Meeting (27 Apr 17)

3. CB reported agreement with Graham Smith that minutes would not go on the EBU website until agreed by the attendees at the next meeting; we agreed that every attempt to ensure they were correct would happen before that.
4. The accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting was accepted. One matter arising –
 - a. Para 9 action on how counties select Markham teams : was overtaken by events but highlighted the need to find a way to manage actions faster than the timetable of the next meeting. CB proposed, and we agreed, to put a specific date on all future actions. We agreed to report back at the next meeting on how Markham team selection is done.

ACTION 27jul17.0 : all counties to report at next meeting.

ITEM 3 : MIDLANDS Improvers Pairs

5. The new date has been agreed and will be Saturday 25th November, and the currently planned venues are Spondon (Derbyshire) and Solihull (Warwickshire). We discussed the target audience, noting that the bulk of the support in the past was local although some did come from neighbouring counties. JP reported that Derbyshire gave one or two free entries to clubs in the county; Derbyshire & Oxfordshire(?) reported that visiting clubs to advertise the event did help. We agreed the primary target was people who had not developed our practice of travelling to play bridge, and that we should consider "local" heats in as many counties as we can, the only restriction being that it remains economically viable.

ACTION 27jul17.1 : all counties to investigate possibility of running a heat, to report by end September 2017.

6. In terms of who may enter, we do not wish to stop anyone playing bridge but do not expect the quality of bridge to be attractive to experienced players. We agreed that the current/previous restrictions (limit on NGS, limit on master points, limit on time playing bridge) should be used only as guidelines, and flexibly. We can still restrict the award of the trophy to the best pair meeting the formal limits. We will need to confirm if this is so.
7. Darren has offered to handle the merging of the scores from different sites. Patrick volunteered to do the creation of the hands and the commentaries if required, but Darren has since confirmed that he is able and happy to do them again.

ITEM 4 : DATA FROM EBU

8. The core of the issue is that as IT systems at Aylesbury have changed, capabilities have come and gone, and many counties are frustrated when that happens. There was a suggestion that EBU-central was focusing only on their own needs, but it was pointed out that if 30+ counties and clubs to express their needs and preferences, the list for the IT support at Aylesbury becomes unmanageable. It was accepted that prioritisation of IT requirements will be a nightmare for the EBU; running an IT Users group had been raised before but would be very difficult. The meeting felt however that any increased transparency as to what was happening and what was planned would be a Good Thing all round. [Later discovery: there is no EBU Board member identified as responsible for the IT, so it presumably falls to the General Manager, now Gordon Rainsford]

ACTION 27jul17.2 : CB to raise the concern with Graham Smith, and to suggest a channel be created to allow inputs from all counties and clubs to the EBU IT agenda. At the meeting on 18 August.

ACTION 27jul17.3 : CB to raise with Graham Smith, when meeting on 18 August, the possibility of someone from EBU-central coming to talk to us about their IT plans.

9. The core frustration of Derbyshire in this respect is identifying people who are members of clubs in Derbyshire when their primary allegiance is to a different county. Also frustrating, but perhaps necessary, is only being able to receive a full refresh of the data, rather than (easily identified) changes since the last dump. It was suggested that Data Protection Act issues (General Data Protection Regulation from 2018) should not arise as the data is being used for the purpose of its original collection.

ITEM 5 : REMIT OF REGIONAL GROUPS

10. CB introduced this by pointing out the original TOR for RCWGs (dated 11mar15) and noted that any way forward will need to be agreed by all CWGs and not just by ourselves. We agreed that there are useful pointers in these TOR but that, unfortunately, they start from the premise that (perhaps exaggerating slightly) “the counties are the problem and need help”. CB read some points from an email from Mike Willoughby on this topic and will circulate the email after the meeting. Key points which came up in the discussion were

- a. The EBU and the Counties both share the remit to “promote bridge” and in doing so their efforts need to be coordinated to be effective. One key function of a CWG-like gathering is the alignment of those efforts.

- b. Some strands of “promote bridge” are best done at the National level (and so an EBU-central responsibility, eg work on the Laws, top level competition) while other aspects are best done locally (and so a County responsibility, eg support to less competitive bridge, access to teaching facilities). Some fall in the Regional layer and need to be handled by a group like this (eg inter-County league). We need to understand which activities belong at which level.
 - c. Promoting bridge includes supporting our members but also includes a responsibility to the non-bridge-playing population – to make them aware of the game and to ensure they have access to teaching. This means that EBED is a key part of that National layer and County<->EBU alignment must include County<->EBED alignment. Also, since so much of P2P income comes from the regular club duplicate player, it is important that their interests are higher in our priorities than they have been in the past.
 - d. The need for County<->County dialogue on issues of common concern is just as important for this group as the County<->EBU/EBED dialogue. For the latter, we should individually engage with whatever EBU Board members we know to improve that dialogue, as a good relationship there is vital.
 - e. The concept of “self-governing” was mentioned in MikeW’s email but the consensus was that, since the effect of this group comes through influence and not through authority (of which we have none) that governance should be light, and that what we were concerned about was maintaining some independence from the EBU, rather than being part of its structure. But we then corrected ourselves – after all we are the EBU – and it is this group’s independence from EBU-central that we wish to maintain.
11. We agreed that we should develop an improved set of Terms of Reference for the group, for consideration by all relevant parties, with a target of discussion at the next meeting of this group when Graham Smith will be present.

ACTION 27jul17.4 : MW+PS+RP to draft a new set of ToR, to circulate around this group by end August, with a final draft for discussion at the next MCWG meeting, with Graham Smith.

ITEM 6 : FEEDBACK FROM COUNTY CHAIRS’ MEETING

12. We noted that the Chairs’ meeting had requested we look at the output, and it had been circulated. We noted that while four groups at the Chairs’ meeting had prioritized issues, the outputs of the four groups had not been reconciled. We noted that the discussion at the Chairs’ meeting did not distinguish issues which should be tackled at the national level distinct from those which should be tackled at the County level (or at some other level).
13. JS noted that there was considerable diversity at the Chairs’ meeting in what different counties thought their mission was, but that here in the MCWG it felt more consistent. We decided it was worth our prioritizing the issues, but only with a clear focus, and with a view to these being action items at the next meeting.

ACTION 27jul17.5 : all counties to examine the list of issues and identify by the end of August the three issues they think are most suitable for getting attention by this Regional WG.

ACTION 27.jul17.6 : CB before the next meeting to identify the top three from these MCWG county submissions and inform the MCWG members as the agenda for the next meeting gets developed.

ITEM 7 : AOB

14. PS had put two items forward, but suggested that really we needed a standing item here on the agenda to discuss new developments. The ideal would be counties providing a report two weeks before a meeting highlighting what is new in their space, and this item being Matters Arising from those reports. The approach received murmurs of support, but did we decide we'd adopt this?
15. Youth Bridge : NB reported on the success at Stamford Bridge Club of which many details are available via the club web site. Highlights were
- a. The package on how to approach a school.
 - b. Liz Dale as a speaker and a provider of useful material.
 - c. The contribution made by parents and grandparents of kids at the schools concerned.
16. Youth Bridge : PS reported on a plan forming in Cheltenham to run a Saturday morning club with a focus on top end Junior School age, with a focus on mini-bridge rather than bridge, and with the declared intent to create a County Youth Team. Work continues on the package for marketing this concept through schools, and on the Safeguarding issues and other logistics of the sessions.
17. Youth Bridge : Oxfordshire and Warwickshire have a number of ongoing initiatives.
18. Suspicious of Cheating : JS reported that a case had arisen (and been investigated and dismissed) and the way the rumour mill rushed into action around this was undesirable. In order to avoid this in the future, but recognizing the need for people with suspicions to be able to unburden themselves of these, the GCBA is creating a "Recorder" process based on the ACBL approach. This allows for confidential reporting of anything lacking a better channel to a trusted party, who will take action if and when any pattern is observed. Action might be a quiet word, or it might be invocation of Disciplinary Processes. The County intends to offer this as a service to any clubs in the county. The GCBA has still to appoint the Recorder and check some Data Protection Act issues before going live. Other counties were very interested.

ACTION 27jul17.7 : JS to distribute a copy of the process description,
by end August.

19. Excluding people from events : and related is handling people who have a criminal record or are on the sex offenders' list : a request was made for any experience on this and there was a suggestion some might be obtained from Yorkshire or the Northern CWG. There are also issues to manage carefully about youngsters playing bridge and about vulnerable (elderly) adults.
20. New Laws : PS reported that he had done talks on the Laws 2017 changes to a number of clubs over the past month; it was interesting to see the number of TDs each club had (more than expected) and it was useful to have the County able to offer something of some value to the clubs. Nottinghamshire reported that they had had a seminar on the new Laws, but it had not been brilliant.
21. Facebook : PS reported that the GCBA now has a Facebook presence ([click here](#)).

ITEM 8 : Date of next meeting

22. We agreed on Friday 22nd September, with the 13th October as a backup in case Graham Smith cannot make the first choice. NB offered the use of premises at Rugby for the next meeting, and promised good coffee, so we all accepted the offer!

END OF MINUTES