



Minutes of the Northern Counties Working Group (NCWG)

At Chez Millet, Leeds at 11am on 28 October 2017

Present:

Jeff Morris (JeM) from Manchester, Nick Woolven (NW) from Yorkshire, Lesley Millet from Yorkshire, Richard Alcock (RA) from Merseyside & Cheshire, Paul Roberts (PR) from Merseyside & Cheshire, Jeff Smith (JS) from Lancashire, Nigel Durie (ND) from NEBA.

Invited Members:

Graham Smith (GS) – EBU Director, Ron Millet – EBU Director, Gordon Rainsford (GR) – EBU General Manager, David Guild (DG) - Yorkshire Regional Development Officer.

Agenda Items:

Lesley Millet chaired the meeting and welcomed the invited representatives of the EBU and members of the working party.

1. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the previous meeting on 3 May 2017 were approved without alteration.

In matters arising, the Oxford Bridge Festival was noted a success. The event did not break even but reached its objective to raise the profile of Bridge and attract new/lapsed bridge players. Bev Purvis has a post event report. **Action:** Gordon Rainsford (GR) to request Bev to send to LM.

There were no other outstanding matters arising from the previous meeting.

2. Apologies:

David Adelman from Manchester, Julian Merrill from Merseyside & Cheshire, Deirdre Fell from Lincolnshire, Trevor Ward from Cumbria, Liz Muir from NEBA, Mike Rothwell from Westmorland

3. Explanation of the EBU Task Force &

4. Feedback from the County Chairmen's Meeting of 5th July 2017 &

Graham Smith (GS) gave an overview of the developments that had occurred to date on the above two agenda items. GS emphasised that all recommendations were at the proposal stage and needed to be approved by the EBU Board prior to confirmation of actions.

Topics discussed at the Chairmen's meeting and considered by the EBU Task Force with recommendations for the EBU are:

EBU Structure:

The Counties' feedback is that there is a "them and us" relationship between central EBU (Aylesbury) and Counties/Clubs/Players that needs to be broken down. There are management control issues within the EBU that need improvement. EBED is also a candidate for organisational development and change of approach to their role.

The Regional Working Groups (RWG's) are an important method of improving the relationship between EBU central and Counties. The proposal is that the EBU will have more attendance at RWG meetings but that they will not operate at these meetings under an executive role, each RWG having its own appointed Chair and RWG internal structure. The EBU role being to listen, inform and to communicate back to centre RWG matters arising and opinions. To strengthen this EBU participation, at national meetings of the (now) five regions RWG's, the EBU attendance to include CEO's of EBU and EBED. At regional level one of representative from a Senior Manager/Director of the EBU or CEO of EBED to attend all meetings. Each Board member may take special responsibility for one RWG to assist relationship building.

Club Affiliations to the EBU:

The EBU now better recognise the issues promoting and preventing Club affiliation. Proposals are being put forward to the EBU to incentivise Club affiliation for all size of Club. These will include financial and marketing support incentives. A lower tier of EBU affiliation for small Clubs has been considered and rejected. The existing "single payment of £72" for smaller Clubs that play infrequently is likely to remain as an affiliation option. Clearer statement of the benefits of affiliation is to be communicated to all Clubs.

Player Recruitment and Development:

The need to bring in more players is a priority. Proposals to the Board include:

- i) The EBU to write and disseminate a "Clubs' sales development tool" within the next three months. This will include a Club health check audit form. This will also show how they can get from the EBU the help required from identified shortfalls.
- ii) All Counties to have their own Development Officer to be on the ground to deliver assistance.
- iii) Each RWG to set up its own IT User Group with technical assistance available to Clubs within the region.
The NCWG discussed ii) and iii) and raised the difficulty of finding the persons who have the skill set and time to man these services. Online Forums were discussed for improving communications. It was agreed that these do work when used for specific topics such as technical issues (eg sharing TD play problems) but are divisive and dominated by one or two individuals when used for general issues & rants.
Action: GR to look at whether online forums can assist for IT issues.
- iv) Beacon Clubs who exemplify best practice, with their agreement, to be identified and publicised as available to offer development assistance to other Clubs.
- v) Training for Club Officer roles to be offered by EBED. Also, TD and Teacher training to be continued and better incentivised.
- vi) The wider financial packages offered by the EBU to support Club development to be reviewed.
- vii) The database of bridge teachers to be improved and built up by EBED.

- viii) Methods of teaching bridge to younger players to be reviewed.
GR said that there is an app from India designed specifically for this purpose that can be seen by searching on “Bridge Kida”. JS said that David Adelman from Manchester has a tremendous amount of experience in teaching methods for younger players and has created his own teaching tool.
In follow up after the meeting, GS said that he will set a meeting up with David Adelman.
- ix) Fast Track Bridge has had a successful launch and is an important tool for recruiting the cohort of quick learners and will therefore be supported.
- x) The EBU magazine will continue with its recent “more articles for beginners and improvers” in addition to high level play coverage.

These proposals are to be submitted in detail and to be discussed by the EBU Board within the next few days.

5. Terms Of reference for the NCWG

GS said that the neither the Darren Evetts document nor the draft Midland Group document are definitive since the RWG purpose has been widened as outlined in the summary of proposals above. The TOR are to be re-drafted after EBU Board consideration of the relevant proposals as above. The NCWG then reserved its position awaiting sight of a new TOR draft.

GS and NW then prepared to exit the meeting. LM gave a vote of thanks for GS joining us and explaining the current situation. GR stayed on at the meeting.

6. EBU/YCBA Marketing Campaign Update

DG circulated a progress report on the six Clubs involved to date. In summary, community websites/Facebook pages are performing strongly but traditional print and distribution have not had good results. Wider involvement by Club members and “word of mouth” are major factors for campaign success. DG also circulated a schematic model showing the difficulty of introducing new players to established bridge player sessions.

GR noted that gaining press coverage for anything involving Bridge Play is extremely difficult. The EBU have had very limited success and then only for International successes. The “Bridge as a Sport” campaigns have generated some interest. A positive Vat ruling may be an opportunity for publicity. *(The initial ruling was overturned days later).*

A short general discussion on player development followed:

JS initiated a handicap system discussion. It was noted that at Club level this continues successfully in some Clubs.

This moved across to Flexibridge discussion. GR said that the EBU are considering a Tournament form of Flexibridge where different overlapping start times are used to give players the time option to explore the venue. This to be worked up for the Easter Congress next year.

Online bridge was then discussed. GR said that Funbridge, playing online with robots, is taking off and is at 100 people/day in England after two months from launch. The advantage is that you can play anytime and break off and re-start. Master points are given and the EBU receive 69c on the 2Euro play fee per day.

7. Fast Track Bridge Seminar – Leeds BC on Saturday 28 October

LM reported that preparations were going well for Sue Maxwell’s seminar and over 20 attendees were expected. Some from outside Yorkshire.

8. EBU Incentives For Clubs and Players

LM said that this topic had been covered within GS's presentation and it would be better to defer discussion until after Board confirmation of the details.

RA noted that there continue to be sub-regional networks of unaffiliated clubs that run their own interclub and local tournaments. GR was very interested and requested information.

Action: RA to send contacts for the Cheshire local network to GR.

9. AOB

LM expressed a vote of thanks for Gordon Rainsford for joining this meeting and remaining to its conclusion.

10. Next Meeting

11am Chez Millet on February 21st 2018.

Lesley Millet/David Guild

12th November 2017