



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MIDLANDS COUNTIES WORKING GROUP

at Dunchurch Village hall

on Wednesday 7th November 2018 at 11.00am

PRESENT:

EBU Board	Ian Payn (IP)	Nottinghamshire	Clare Batten (CB)
EBU Board	Graham Smith (GS)	Northamptonshire	Nicky Bainbridge (NB)
EBU Mship Dev Off	Tim Anderson (TA)		Kathy Talbot (KT)
Bedfordshire	Colin O'Hara (CO)	Oxfordshire{	Rob Proctor (RP)
Gloucestershire	Patrick Shields (PS)	Staffs & Shrops	Pamela Booth-Jones (PB)
	David Pollard (DP)	Worcestershire	Dave Thomas (DT)
Leicestershire{	Dean Benton (DB)	Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby (MW)
Lincolnshire	Reg Loosley (RL)		

CHAIR: Nicky Bainbridge

ITEM 1 : Welcome & Apologies

NB reported that Mr Bridge had been forced to call off, but had still sponsored the lunch for the group today. Jim Parker (Derbyshire) was not able to attend. The non-Midlands counties present were welcomed, and NB reported that a number of others had shown interest but could not make it (and indeed one more was expected but delivered apologies mid-meeting).

ITEM 2 : Minutes of Last Meeting (10 Sep 18)

1. The minutes were approved, and PS will arrange their publication. The Chair skimmed through the content and action items from which the following emerged -
 - a. On the question of value obtained from EBED activities : there was a positive consensus that the materials created by EBED were appreciated, and that TD training courses had also been well received. There remained disquiet that the membership of the Teachers Association did not include any quality criteria, and there was doubt expressed (and endorsed) about the value of the Teachers' Training Course. The discussion also brought out that
 - i. Where clubs had training in-house rather than it being delivered separately, there was a much better effect on the numbers joining bridge clubs afterwards. Whether this matters depends whether the main purpose is spreading the game, or building the membership.

- ii. Paying teachers is common, and makes it much easier to remove/stop teachers whose services are not that which is desired (whether that be in content or in delivery).
- b. On the Strategic Aims of the EBU, there was nothing to report, but GS took note of the need for moving forward into plans. The MCWG agreed to put a question to the AGM along the following lines
 - How can the Counties help EBU Management develop the necessary plans to deliver against the Strategic Aims ?
 - c. On the computer scoring of the Midlands Counties League, CB reported on a third approach provided by James Vickers, for which positive support in EBUScoreTeams might be forthcoming. [LATER : CB passed a copy of the documentation on that to PS, who has produced a summary of the options as Appendix 1 to these minutes]. Some counties commented that the movement within the Hammond/Vickers options had proved too complicated for them; PS said that the movement cards used recently by Worcestershire seem to have overcome that. MW will investigate whether these, or more documentation on the movement, can be made available.
 - d. On the Safeguarding question : CB reported that Notts had adopted the Worcestershire Policy and had circulated the Stanford Club Policy to their clubs. In response to a question about any possible EBU role, it was suggested that such questions should be captured in the adopted policy, and that if there was an impasse to obtaining a solution then the Local Authority advisor on Safeguarding was the person to whom to go.

ITEM 3 : Success / Value from the MCWG

2. For the benefit of newcomers, PS was asked to recap on the value we had seen in the MCWG. He identified three strands of activity – local, regional and national – and commented that the assessment of each needed input from different players. It was noted that the size of the group worked well, having enough inputs put small enough that all could find a slot in which to contribute.
 - a. On the local front (helping counties help themselves) : the sharing of ideas and experiences not only improved what each county could do, but the discussion of it was a serious energiser for all the counties concerned. Of particular interest was the different approaches to engaging with unaffiliated clubs (some open, some limited, some using interactions with affiliated clubs as teasers to the unaffiliated).
 - b. On the Regional front (joint ventures) : there have been only a few examples; the Midlands Counties League on which all is working well, and the Midlands Improvers Pairs which tended towards a local competition but had an economy of scale using one set of hand commentaries for all, and now seems to have fallen by the wayside.
 - c. On the national front : our inputs to the EBU management have been more thoughtful, (but EBU-central have yet to pronounce on the value of that).

It was agreed the prime MCWG benefit came in local matters.

ITEM 4 : State of Play for other Regional CWGs

3. GS reported that no other groups had been formed yet but that three groups had plans for meetings before the EBU AGM (at the same venue) and that the EBU was supporting these. GS emphasised that the intention was for these groups to discover for themselves what would work for them. The MCWG was invited to support these sessions and CB, NB and PS volunteered.
4. It was noted that groups of counties would benefit from talking amongst themselves however small the group, and that there was no reason to restrict discussions to five groups covering the country.

ITEM 5 : The EBU AGM Agenda

5. NB talked us through the items on the EBU AGM agenda, as was recently distributed to all shareholders. The following items were commented upon -
 - a. Minutes of last AGM : IP asked how those who had been present would assess the reaction to Ron Millet's presentation on the Membership Campaign. It was suggested that the audience would have preferred fewer details but that the message was necessary.
 - b. Special & General Resolutions : IP explained that the change in title was intended to reflect the Board intention for a different role for Gordon Rainsford, which would help relieve the workload on some board members.
 - c. Change to Number of Shareholder's Meetings : the consensus was that two meetings a year was the right level, but that the procedural matters should be confined to the AGM and the other session be devoted to matters of substance. A clear strategy for the use of the non-AGM meeting needs to be declared.
 - d. Chairman's Report : IP reported that there is a change of leadership at EBED and that it was moving forward from a necessary focus on a robust framework, and we should expect a new emphasis in the future.
 - e. EBU Fees : the amount of any change has not yet been declared, but if it is a 1p change then there will be little objection. On the use of the money, the pie chart now available was deemed helpful. The amount paid to the EBL & WBF was noted, and IP explained how difficult it is to control the extravagance of the EBL and WBF management, but that with a new EBL lead in place there were prospects of improvement. While recent fund raising (led by IP) had been very successful, funding which out of so many international teams (there are 8 categories), and how to raise extra funds, remained a difficult issue.

ITEM 6 : The EBU Membership Project

6. TA reported that he had been in post as EBU Membership Development Officer (2 days/wk) since the start of September, working with Bev Purvis & Peter Stockdale, and reporting to Gordon Rainsford. He made the following points
 - a. The appointment was necessary because of the age demographic (average age of EBU member being in low seventies) and because the members we lose often tend to be players who play multiple times a week. The changing age demographic, because older learners learn more slowly than youngsters, means that the proportion of top players is diminishing.

- b. The job was to enable increased club membership using the learning from the Yorkshire project, at which nearly all of the clubs involved saw an increase in membership. The scheme is being adopted by a Manchester/Merseyside&Cheshire cooperative, and a second area is due to start in January (and a third is in the pipeline).
- c. The offering includes shared costs, use of a website for advertising and blogging (access to this by those outside campaigns is under discussion at the moment), and templates for leaflets. The costs are generally low (eg £100 for Facebook, volunteers delivering leaflets etc) and the shared funding is there to ensure commitment rather than because of any financial burden.
- d. It was noted that bigger clubs were better placed for the resources needed for a campaign, but it was smaller clubs that were more likely to be in a desperate place. The role of County Associations is not to run or finance campaigns, but to help clubs in their county to get together and to engage with the EBU on running campaigns.

7. The following points were made in the discussion which followed –

- a. When an industry is shrinking the natural instinct is for consolidation, so we must not treat it as a given that all bridge clubs must survive as independent entities. At the same time, local access to bridge games is increasingly important for an ageing population.
- b. We must look also to learn from the failures which happened in the Yorkshire project, TA undertook to check what those lessons might be.
- c. The Membership Campaign is an excellent topic for any meeting counties organise with Club Chairs.
- d. The competition bridge clubs face these days is with other leisure activities, and our emphasis must be on the overall experience and not just on the mechanics of playing cards. PS mentioned the American model where refreshments are always readily available at bridge games and the cost is included in the price.

8. Various counties reported their experiences in driving up membership

- a. South Nottinghamshire has seen a group of 4 clubs pull together to work on membership and that has been successful.
- b. Bedfordshire is looking to make bridge a regular activity on offer to the inhabitants of a new retirement village being built in the county.
- c. Northants reported an example where the club folded because there was nobody comfortably able to run the relevant scoring technology. KT reported that in Oxfordshire they were identifying learners early who had the aptitude to direct and were involving them early in learning how to.

Nottinghamshire asked that TA come and visit them.

ITEM 7 : County Green Point Events

9. NB noted three themes in recent discussions about GP events

- a. Those in the West of the country were surviving well, while those further East were struggling. Positive marketing efforts seems to be part of the equation.

- b. The cost of these events are seen as high. Following useful advice from Gordon Rainsford, Nottinghamshire is looking to trim costs and to whether (cheaper) Blue Point events might be more popular. It was noted that giving out cash prizes was a decision for the event organisers (although when asked, EBU does have a recommendation of returning 20% of the take).
- c. Scheduling of these events is proving an issue; some counties are unhappy at the constraints put on chosen dates. It would be helpful for there to be more information and greater clarity about the basis of such limitations, supplied when constraints are declared.

10. It was suggested that we take care to ensure that some recent GP cancellations are not the start of a pattern.

[GS had to depart before the above item finished]

ITEM 9 : Bridge Teachers

11. NB had prepared a proposal to drive up the quality and quantity of the bridge teaching available in this country (which can be read [here](#)). Two key aspects of it are

- a. Specifying what we see is necessary in the way of improvements - a set of goals to be achieved by this effort, and
- b. Offering the bundle of work to candidate service providers, and selecting for the work the one most likely to deliver it.

12. The following points were made in the ensuing discussion

- a. As EBED regroups and the EBU-EBED relationship resettles, this might be opportune.
- b. The delivery and teaching skills are a problem for potential teachers more often than an understanding of the course material.
- c. Attracting independent teachers into bridge clubs is a key issue; many are now paid although some do the work voluntarily. Ensuring that the follow through generates club membership often depends on the relationship of the club and the teacher. Where the teacher runs a separate, unaffiliated club, this can cut across our intents. Clubs need to attract teachers and not fight them.
- d. The EBU allows for (encourages) registration of learners, and sessions they play can be loaded and recorded without a UMS charge.
- e. Oxfordshire have produced a roadmap (actually in the ski-slope map style) showing how people progress. [Later thought : worth sharing?]
- f. The NoFearBridge website is a great source of material.
- g. RL reported that he runs bridge sessions in a number of local grammar schools, and these have been successful in generating interest in the parents and grand-parents of the pupils.

13. It was agreed that the proposal had a lot of merit, but we had not had enough time to study it fully, and would come back to it at the next meeting.

ITEM 10 : AOB & Date of next meeting

14. The meeting concluded at 1510 with no extra business.

15. The next meeting is scheduled for the morning of Wednesday 13th February 2019. The draft 2019 timetable is attached as Appendix 2.

END OF MINUTES

SCORING THE MIDLANDS COUNTIES LEAGUE MATCHES

There are three (really two) arrangements in current use for electronic recording of travellers for these matches.

TEAMS SCORER from Paul Hammond :

- The implementation uses EBUTeamsScorer and is based on two parallel sections, each with six teams playing a head-to-head match (and imps scoring). The movement, to allow the usual pattern of boards play (Porter starts with 9-16, others start with 1-8, etc) is a bespoke teams movement that must be added to the TSUserMovements.txt file.
- The two sections will each need a set of Bridgemates numbered 1-6 plus their section name (eg A1-A6,B1-B6). Once the two sections have been defined in EBUTeamScorer, they need to be combined into a single event ("merge sections") and the scoring method needs to be set to "Team of 8 Crossimp". In the Names section of the combined event, the number of players in a team needs to be set to 8 players.
- The Dawes match will be tables 1&2 of each section, Porter tables 3&4, and Markham tables 5&6. The visitors sit, and the home players move around in any agreed pattern. In order to obtain individual rather than team scores, the (home, moving) team lineup needs to be entered manually (after the event) into the Seating Lineup screens. You need to be sure at this point of how the pairs actually moved.
- For the upload to Bridgewebs, you need to use the XML format to get a sensible display.

TEAMS SCORER from James Vickers :

- This is exactly the same scheme as the above, but suggests using the ability to create a bespoke movement, rather than just to import one (as a text file) which has been prepared offline.

PAIRS SCORER from Patrick Shields :

- This implementation aims simply to create travellers and a Butler-imps (could be cross-imps) scoring for the interest of the participants. It leaves the question of totalling the team score, and the agreement of that, to the players and the team captains.
- It is done through a bespoke 12-table movement (Bridgemates A1..A12) which replicates the standard pattern for moving pairs which was in use before we switched to Tollemache-style cross-imps scoring. The visiting teams sits and the initial move for the home team is swapping seats with another pair.
- There is no need to enter lineups beyond the initial entry of the pair names. It is therefore less work, but it doesn't check the team score for you.

Apologies to thee authors named above is this representation of the possibilities misleads in any way – just tell me what should be said and it will be fixed.

DRAFT MCWG SCHEDULE FOR 2019

EBU Board Meeting 23rd January***MCWG Meeting Wed 13th February 11.00-14.00***

1. Review AGM
2. Review Task List
3. EBU Strategic Aims
4. Agree Meeting and Work Plan for 2019

EBU Board Meeting 20th March***MCWG Meeting Wed 17th April 11.00-14.00***

1. Prepare for Chairmen's Meeting
2. Share progress on topics

Thursday 15th May EBU Chairmen's Meeting***EBU Board Meeting 12th June******MCWG Meeting Fri 28th June 11.00-14.00***

1. Share progress on topics

EBU Board Meeting 11th September***MCWG Meeting Wed 16th October 11.00-14.00******EBU Board Meeting 30th October******Wednesday 6th? November EBU Annual General Meeting Papers Due******MCWG Extended Meeting Wed 13th November (DSVH Main Hall 11.00-15.00s)***

1. All day 11.00-15.00
2. Invite all counties and other active RCWGs to present to participate
3. Discuss upcoming EGM AGM
4. MCWG present progress, issues etc

16th-26th Nov County Committees discuss input/voting to EBU AGM***Wednesday 27th November EBU Annual General Meeting******EBU Board Meeting 30th November***