



**Minutes of meeting of the
National County Working Groups**

13th August 2019

1. Present

Graham Smith (GS), David Guild (DG), Gordon Rainsford (GR), Ron Millet (RM), Lesley Millet (LM), Tim Anderson (TA), Jonathan Lillycrop (LC), Tony Russ (TR), Nicky Bainbridge (NB), Patrick Shields (PS) and Sam Kelly (SK)

2. Apologies for absence

Patrick Shields apologies for arriving slightly late.

3. Successes and setbacks from each CWG

TR started off by saying that there was nothing happening in the South West as a whole, the only activity is in Somerset. They have heard nothing from Avon. The main problem is that the counties are so far apart geographically and they do not have the finances to attend meetings. They requested technical help in setting up a video conference such as Skype or Zoom. The EBU will be willing to help where needed.

Action: JL will attend sessions to talk through and facilitate video conferencing in Somerset and any other South West counties.

There was some discussion around the use of social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. and the role of technology in learning bridge. It was mentioned that Peter Stockdale previously wrote a guide on how to use Facebook.

Action: SK will update the social media education guide, including how to add and maintain a Facebook page and how to run a skype session.

LM talked about the issues of getting people to attend meetings in Yorkshire. The average number of attendees is 10 of 16. They have had no response from Lincolnshire so far, but there is a new County Chair for Lincolnshire that may mean positive changes. GR also mentioned a Lincolnshire member who is very active and may be a useful contact.

NB said the secret to good attendance is setting dates of future dates for the whole year, but noted that it is hard work.

There was discussion around the initiative in Yorkshire, e.g. Improvers Pairs and Technology Day with seminars and talks. These are tried to appeal to everyone and encourage attendance with a full day of interesting activities and a few lunch.

TR and NB confirmed that both of their respective counties had similar schemes to the technology day and both had worked well.

NB said the biggest success was meeting with other county chairs and sharing problems and solutions, it is very good to have a support network. PS concurred that having the group is itself an energizer to people.

Some of the setbacks discussed were difficulty in communications between the counties and the EBU, but that the County Working Groups help ease this.

There was discussion around how hard it is to contact people in other counties and receive a positive response. There was also acknowledgment that it is sometimes hard to identify setbacks, on the whole activity and reporting appear to be on the increase, although it is hard to deliver concrete change.

GR mentioned that it is often a good starting point to read the minutes from other county working parties, once they are published online.

There was discussion around TA's membership blog and the need for a log in process. TA confirmed this is an important step in establishing contact and creating a dialogue with club and county officials to gain feedback and promote the EBU.

4. Identification of joint working activities

TA gave a short presentation on the current progress of the membership campaign. Figures for June 2019 are up from June 2018 but down from June 2017, overall they are currently stable. Looking at club statistics of playing sessions, all of the 15% of clubs which grew their membership over two years hold more than one play session a week.

The Yorkshire model has worked well in Yorkshire and is now being considered in other counties. However, it is noted that this model can't be replicated everywhere and so other models are needed.

There is a ready take up of bridge, wherever it is taught. The issue is transferring students from learning to club sessions. There is also the issue that EBU affiliated clubs are seen as more competitive and less friendly than non-EBU affiliate clubs.

TA's proposal is for EBU Assured. This will be opt-in and have clubs on a searchable "find a club" list. This list will show facilities that the clubs provide e.g. a warm welcome, host system, teaching, refreshments. It is aimed to be an incentive for clubs to up their offering.

PS stated that his county was thinking of running a similar website but it would also include non-EBU affiliated clubs.

There was discussion around what the website parameters should be and how the information should be kept up to date. There were also raised concerns with smaller clubs struggling.

RM proposed the idea of having different levels in the scheme, with a proposed logo to change depending on the level of quality offering at each club (1, 2 or 3 ticks). The idea was not to make it too complicated or to discriminate against smaller clubs. Warm-welcomes and friendliness should be achievable for all clubs.

The requirements for each objective was discussed, how is teaching or hosting defined? If there is to be a stepped scheme, the gold standard should be a warm friendly welcome for members or new players.

Action: TA to put together a proposal document and send to the attendees of this meeting with a view to sending to clubs, once approved.

TA requested any feedback for the EBU Assured scheme to be sent to him, and requested the county working groups discuss the scheme with their clubs and report back any feedback.

5. Review of EBED successes, failures and future wants and needs

The discussion focused on what EBU clubs and counties want from EBED. There was also discussion around education of bridge, and whether EBED is the right body to implement this.

RM confirmed that at the last board meeting the issues between EBU and EBED were discussed.

The option of a national EBED directory of teachers was raised. There was some discussion about links to sites like LearnBridgeYorkshire and other regional county websites, rather than getting individual teachers to add their details to an EBED directory.

PS stated that there are three stages a bridge player goes through; learning, developing and playing. The boundaries of these need to be reflected in the education model. There needs to be an understanding of what is best done at national levels and what at local levels.

The change from EBUTA to EBED was discussed, with concern that there is no longer a Teacher's Association, and previous accreditations are no longer valid. Previously there was a separation between fully accredited teachers and non-accredited teachers, with fully accredited teachers receiving more leads for students or teaching opportunities. It was noted by GS that the establishing and passing on of leads should not be the scope of the national body either EBU or EBED.

In the previous iteration there was also no barrier of teaching materials used in classes and there seemed to be more output and communication from EBED to teachers. The subscriptions for teachers was increased from £20 to £25 with no warning or confirmation of the benefits of joining.

A request was made to go back to basics, the teachers are the front line and they need help.

PS stated that counties have an inherent duty to promote teachers whether or not they are affiliated or qualified.

There were suggestions that there must be a model based on teachers with no affiliation to a club, as well as those in schools and youth bridge. A job/class exchange was also proposed to give better communication between teachers and clubs.

The idea of a list of recommended teaching books, rather than a set list that must be used was welcomed. There is currently found a big gap in resources for the intermediate and higher level learning. Blended learning or online/electronic learning was discussed.

Action: It was recommended that the three areas of focus should be developing a teaching association, updating current materials/qualifications and updating website.

TD training was discussed, and whether TD should be completed by the EBU for all clubs, including those non-affiliated. GR noted that in other sports, joining the national body is the norm, this is also the case for bridge in other countries.

It was agreed that there should be clear agreements and KPI's in place that are tied in to any financial support given to EBED.

Any campaign strategy or marketing should be led by the EBU but implemented by the counties. To date local targeted campaigns have been shown to be far more effective than national campaigns.

6. Any other business

No other business

7. Future Meetings

Next Meeting: TBC January / February 2020

