



Draft Minutes of the Northern Counties Working Group (NCWG)

At Chez Millet, Leeds at 11am on 14 August 2019

Present:

Lesley Millet (Lesley) from YCBA, Nigel Durie and Adrian Darnell (Adrian) from NEBA, Christopher Raymond (Chris) and Richard Alcock (Richard) from Merseyside & Cheshire BA, Irene Davis (Irene) and Joan Lewis (Joan) from Manchester County BA

Invited Members:

Ron Millet (Ron)– EBU Director, Tim Anderson – EBU Membership Development Officer, David Guild (David G)- Yorkshire RDO.

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

1. Apologies

Michael Rothwell (Michael) – Westmorland, Liz Muir (Liz) – NEBA, , Paul Roberts (Paul) from Merseyside & Cheshire. David Adelman (David A) from Manchester, Jeff Smith (Jeff S) from Lancashire CBA,

Copies circulated to: Gordon Rainsford , Jonathan Lillycrop, Sam Kelly

2. Previous Meeting Minutes:

The March 2019 meeting minutes were approved.

Previous Actions from previous minutes not included as items on this meeting's Agenda:

As this August meeting had a full agenda, these were not discussed. Previous meeting actions to be progressed externally and written up at next meeting.

Stirling University Social Project - The EBU decided not to commit funds to the Stirling University "Keep Bridge Alive" campaign and social research. However, EBED have committed substantial funds in support and there is no direct influence from the EBU. **Minute Closed**

Yorkshire To Develop Bridge Awareness Day 2019 Concept. **C/F Lesley**

Need Committee Representative from Lincolnshire. **C/F Lesley**

Lancaster new Affiliated Bridge Club Plan – **C/F Jeff S**

Non-affiliates on Bridgewebs have the benefit of EBU updates information on their websites. Action **Ron M** to confirm EBU policy

Club Affiliation Document rewrite C/F from Feb 2018 **Ron to chase release date** (Tim may now take responsibility for authorship of this) Also Request for EBU Review of Affiliation Offer C/F awaiting rewrite document.

EBU Promotion Article – Abbey Walker have a promotion article in preparation **C/F Jeff S**

Regional Working Groups Terms of Reference C/F from October 2017 **Gordon R**

To write to Gordon for clarification on statistics availability for secondary/tertiary county affiliations **C/F David G.**

EBED Junior Bridge – **C/F Lesley to write to Donna** re NCWP willingness to work with EBED on a minibridge development project. Also, to alert EBED to the benefit of their approaching teacher training colleges to influence junior bridge in schools.

Commonwealth Bridge Championship coming to Birmingham in 2019 **C/F Ron** to confirm EBU are aware.

All NCWP To communicate EBED teaching room grant availability to their county clubs. Ron requested to be kept in the loop re applications. Action: **All NCWP**

County representatives to contact Tim for individual password access to closed part of this website and to assist in publicising the website at county level. Action: **All NCWP**

Monthly play sessions analyses for April to be circulated for relevant county to each County Bridge Association Action: **Tim**

3. EBU Membership Campaign

Tim updated the committee on progress to date. Confirming that the EBU will fund 50% of marketing costs for a formally agreed county campaign. Counties have different needs and levels of marketing resources. Flexibility of campaign is encouraged and the preferred format may or may not include a funded RDO. Tim said that, since the last meeting, Somerset and Norfolk are moving positively towards their own campaigns. Also, Tim reminded the committee of the teaching grant assistance from EBED as outlined last meeting, being 50% room hire up to £500 grant max.

Tim emphasised the importance of generally raising the level of awareness of the need for continual membership campaigns and the soft education of clubs to improve their structure and marketing skills. This is why Tim has an “informative blogs and resources” website available at <https://ebumemberdevelop.org.uk/index.php/contact/> The full availability of this website is via email request to Tim. *(As actioned to NCWP members at previous March meeting).*

Ageing is a problem common to clubs and tournaments. Tim then noted that a new EBU online forum has been set up to debate Tournaments. See

<https://www.ebu.co.uk/forum/categories/ebu-tournaments>

A discussion followed on the wider structure of clubs, counties and tournament committees. Both Manchester and NEBA have “improver” presence on their committees to ensure a broad range of representation beyond the established better players. Action: **All to consider**

4 County Updates

4i) Merseyside and Cheshire

After the false start with their own RDO, the County has decided to not to restart the EBU initiative for membership campaign pro tem.

Chris noted that there are eight affiliated clubs in the County but many more unaffiliated and the position is not improving. Liverpool BC is under new management and he will approach that club to look at initiatives including marketing campaigns.

Richard said that lots of bridge is taking place in unaffiliated clubs and some areas do not have an affiliated club within a reasonable radius. Teaching is present but there is a high loss of matured students into non-affiliates such as to golf clubs and U3A clubs.

The debate then widened into the inclusion policy adopted towards non-affiliates. Irene said that a good working relationship with non-affiliates is essential to break down barriers and that Manchester CBA include non-affiliates' details on the County website and invite these clubs to County congresses. Yorkshire, by contrast have no official liaison and do not include them on the County website. The debate expanded to discussion on the communications policy for U3A in each county.

The general consensus was that fear of both entering an affiliated club and transitioning from purely social play is an important part of why entrants/maturing students favour the "easy bridge club" option and is a major reason for adopting non-affiliate clubs with strong "friendly club" positioning.

Tim added that Camberley BC in Surrey run an eight weeks course on "Transitioning from class to formal duplicate play" with the aim of boosting student/lower grade player confidence and breaking down beginner session silos. This was well received by everyone and more course detail was requested. Action **Tim** to circulate info.

The transition debate moved on to schools' bridge which has very little entry into clubs. David said that, whilst schools bridge has a powerful PR element, the juniors' path seems to be more from school to junior congress but from there only a very low percentage move into senior play; albeit those that do are strong support for our elite adult teams. David also quoted David Adelman from a previous NCWP meeting who asked, "where are the many thousands that have been taught bridge at schools' level and are now at late career/retirement stage?" David said that there is a question mark on the Jesuit approach to "catch them early" for the future of the club game as there seems to be no evidence that schools bridge has any later club entry impact. Ron asked whether there was evidence that schools' players are moving into online bridge play? Action: **David** to request info availability from Gordon.

4ii) Manchester

Irene said that the membership push was showing through in a positive attitude by the County's clubs. Out of the eleven clubs, seven now have structured teaching courses, up from four clubs in the previous year.

The Didsbury festival presence was a success and the Manchester Club taster session together attracted 15 new members (9 by word of mouth, 3 by social media and 3 from enquiry at the festival). Irene strongly advocated social media and is strengthening Manchester's bridge social media presence. There is a wider need for club education on social media marketing.

The Manchester Airport invitation regarding bridge activities for retired people local to the airport and for retired airport workers is now confirmed. All agreed that having bridge presence at retirement fairs given by major employers is highly desirable with high potential. Adrian said that NEBA is already involved with major employers and has recently participated in a pre-retirement fair run by Northumberland Water.

4iii) **NEBA**

Adrian confirmed that the County has 21 affiliated clubs and further includes 10 non-affiliated clubs (out of the total 40 non-affiliates) on the county website and communications. Teaching is centred on the following clubs: Darlington, Durham, Brunton(Newcastle) and Morpeth. Some Clubs are showing strong growth, particularly Durham.

NEBA had invited David G to give a presentation on the rationale for starting membership campaigns at the June 2019 County Clubs meeting. To date there has been no request by clubs for campaign support Action **Adrian** to chase up clubs' progress.

Adrian has successfully applied to the Northumberland Area Action Partnership on Social Inclusion for a £5,000 grant from the Older People's Isolation Fund. All were very interested in this and requested that Adrian send details. Action: **Adrian** to send to David G for circulating.

4iv) **Lancashire**

Update C/F to next meeting as Jeff not present.

4v) **Yorkshire**

Yorkshire have their third annual technology day planned for Sunday 17 November at the Hilton Hotel in central Leeds (2 mins from railway station). Lesley said that we would be delighted if a small representation from each NCWP County could join us (Up to 5 persons). David G said that the programme is to be confirmed early September and will include an EBU Score clinic, a presentation by Bridge Plus company on their table dealers and by Pianola on using their system for advanced marketing purposes.

Action: **David G** to send finalised Technology Day programme to all NCWP committee.

David G said that the first YCBA Technology Grant round to clubs, using reserves surplus, has now been awarded to seven clubs. Details are not yet reported to the YCBA Board and so will be included at the next NCWP meeting. Action: **David G** to report next meeting.

A discussion ensued on the possibility of similar other county technology grants. Ron noted that Technology Grants are linked to Bridge Development and clubs receiving grant will be followed up.

David G said that he is exploring starting an affiliated bridge teaching centre in Skipton as this 15,000 persons market town has only U3A and a small unaffiliated club presence. This might be a test case.

5 **NCWP – Improvers Pairs**

This did not progress. Minute Closed

6 County Chairmen'' Meeting Report and Response

David G and Ron gave a summary of the mid-May Chairmen's Meeting in London.

The Treasurer's report highlights being:

- Competitions are making no profit only break-even
- The Warehouse has increased sales but margins are very slim
- The UM fees are now the mainstay of profitability.
- The Treasurer has pursued productivity gains and internal cost reductions over immediately previous years but now feels that he has exhausted this as a substantial area for gain.
- This year we are breaking even, supported through the charity-donated initiative banked surplus for the Junior Squad to China. (*Footnote: Is this legal Should it go back to EBED?*)
- There are substantial projects planned for the website and membership development.
- Over the next four years we are budgeting a loss of £100,000 if the UM fee remains fixed.
- One penny on the UM fee is worth £18,000 at EBU funds level.

The Treasurer went on to outline intended cost saving initiatives:

- Make diary opt in – saving £10k pa
- Take a stricter line on half UM tariffs – saving £10k to £20k – (this impacts social bridge)

The Treasurer then gave the stark option of sanctioning an above 1p increase to UM fee (probably to 2p increase for next year) or cutting back services. Possible cutbacks being such as:

Eliminate diary, eliminate equipment grant, reduce EBED donation, abolish certificates and pens for Masterpoint milestones, further reduce financial support for international teams.

The debate that followed concluded that the EBU is not in a strong position to significantly reduce members' services (disaffiliation impact) and an increase to UM is the more palatable of the two options. The situation to be confirmed at the next EBU Shareholders' Meeting.

The NCWP considered this verbal report together with the Accounts of the EBU and EBED. Richard commented that it is impossible to make a decision without detailed budgets being available. Ron said that these are provided shortly before the Shareholders' meeting. Lesley commented that the Treasurer consistently budgets a loss but the EBU have been in profit for the last five years.

The accounts of the charity EBED were found to be particularly interesting in that they show a £300,000 reserve which is planned to remain above £150,000 for the three year planning horizon. This is unusual for a charity.

The NCWP concluded that EBED is financially robust and drafted their response to the EBU in preparation for the Shareholders' Meeting:

“Given the healthy financial position of EBED, we believe that the EBU should reduce their planned annual contribution to EBED by at least the budgeted deficit amount of the EBU accounts rather than action the proposed increase to UM fees”.

Action: Lesley to present this response to EBU Chair and Gordon.

7. Learn Bridge Websites at County Level

Discussion and agreement on more county level websites to assist awareness of teaching courses.

The teacher situation is confusing as EBED have their own “early days” teacher and club directory that is at present poorly structured.

Tim presented his “EBU Assured” kitemark to give confidence of a warm welcome at affiliated clubs and to also show their services. This proposal will include a club directory and Tim is pushing that the home page of the EBU website is more laid out for the lay person seeking teaching or club information. The committee discussed the extent to which the kite mark should be layered to show extent of services but no conclusion was reached. All thought the kitemark a good idea to promote “club friendly action”.

AOB

Gambling – Richard said that in law, if a licensed premises charges more than £18 for entry then it is captured under gambling legislation and he has questioned this at EBU level without clarity. This may have impact on particularly congresses. Action **Richard** to send correspondence to Ron for EBU take up.

Next Meeting To be arranged at a date between 18 and 21 November 2019.