



Draft Minutes of the Northern Counties Working Group (NCWG)

At Chez Millet, Leeds at 11am on 6 March 2019

Present:

Lesley Millet (Lesley) from Yorkshire, Jeff Morris (Jeff M) from Manchester, Jeff Smith (Jeff S) from Lancashire, Adrian Darnell (Adrian) from NEBA, Chris Raymond (Chris) from M&CBA, Irene Davis (Irene) from Manchester

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. Lesley welcomed Chris Raymond to his new role as Chair of Merseyside & Cheshire County Association.

1. Apologies

Michael Rothwell (Michael) – Westmorland, Liz Muir (Liz) – NEBA, , Nigel Durie (Nigel), Richard Alcock (Richard) from Merseyside & Cheshire from NEBA, Paul Roberts (Paul) from Merseyside & Cheshire. David Adelman (David A) from Manchester

Copies circulated to: Gordon Rainsford (Gordon), Bev Purvis (Bev P), Sam Kelly

2. Previous Meeting Minutes:

The September 2018 meeting minutes were approved.

Previous Actions from June minutes not included as items on September Agenda:

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 date of release (Tim may now take responsibility for authorship of this)

- **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 C/F Gordon R

Data Management – Counties Information Secondary member status confounds accuracy of the county members statistics. David G said that EBU advice was that it is not possible to have access to secondary member information unless the member has “opted in” to provide this detail to the secondary county. **C/F David G to write to Gordon for clarification.**

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.

Loneliness Avoidance Campaign – Ron’s action to contact the minister responsible for loneliness avoidance has been scuppered by resignation of the minister, Tracey Crouch, and this recent ministerial role collapse by government **Minute Closed**

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

Apart from minutes above, there were no other outstanding matters arising from the previous meeting.

3. EBU Membership Development Sub Committee

Ron said that the sub committee has influenced EBED to now introduce a small clubs grant, where in rented premises, up to £500 maximum, to assist such clubs to rent a teaching room. Ron emphasised the need for the clubs to show a “growth through teaching rationale” and to identify their financial need on such project. Ron circulated the grant application form and guidance notes. **Action: All NCWP to communicate grant to their county clubs. Ron requested to be kept in the loop re applications.**

The discussion widened to the pressure points on clubs’ play. All agreed the decline in “very competitive play” in clubs and the growth of social bridge sessions. This translates into reduction in evening sessions and increased popularity of day time bridge. Irene gave the example of Bramwell BC who are now getting 17 tables at their daytime social bridge. Lesley noted that increased bridge involvement by U3A is a result David G said “guided play” is going through the roof.. Adrian said that Durham BC have brought in more “supervisors” for guided play. Lesley said that Leeds Chicago sessions are very active. The discussion moved to the need for making bridge clubs more social, enforcing Best Behaviour and overcoming resistance to “lower ability” standards in some sessions. Such cultural change takes time and effort. Tim said that he has written a recent blog on “making clubs friendly”.

The discussion moved to social media. David G said that Facebook local marketing cannot be beaten for cost effectiveness and ease of use. Lesley said that Leeds BC have a very active Facebook with good traffic. Manchester BC have a Facebook page with little impact. MEBA and Merseyside have no social media presence.

Ron said that the need for the national recruitment campaign is fully recognised by the EBU and the budget has been flexed to strengthen the resources available. As part of this expansion, Tim will have an assistant in the North of England to be “on the ground”. This role will be taken by David G, under EBU responsibility, and this will be separate from his present Yorkshire role.

There is presently a vacancy in the committee.

4 EBU Membership Development Officer

Lesley invited Tim to overview his role and his thoughts on Clubs membership growth.

Tim summarised the national demographic trends in membership, being 4% decline in total membership and ageing beyond 70 years player average, this projecting to a ten year cliff edge unless positive action is taken now.

One of the key factors is that people need confidence when visiting an EBU club that they will be welcomed whatever their standard and this acceptance of mixed standard of play also needs to be evident within the club membership.

Tim said that where possible his approach will be to follow the Yorkshire pilot model of County contracting to membership support with RDO but this needs flexibility as not appropriate to all counties. An example is the South Notts initiative where smaller clubs have formed a group to recruit and teach bridge. Also support needs to be available to any size of club.

Some counties have already either committed or are showing strong interest in the recruitment campaign. These counties are located in the South of England to date. Leatherhead have a live campaign and Somerset have appointed an RDO.

Tim's separate website to assist clubs' development is now running and this includes a weekly blog by Tim focusing on guides and how to overcome bridge club management and development problems. The website also has a resources centre via Dropbox to assist clubs' media outreach **Action: 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.** The EBU are to offer more coverage of this website in English Bridge Mag.

Tim's recent development of player sessions statistics has greatly improved visibility of those clubs that are in growth or decline. All committee were interested in receiving these club stats for their county. **Action Tim to circulate sessions analyses in April 2019.**

5 County Updates

5i) Merseyside and Cheshire

Sara Miles has recently resigned as RDO for Manchester and Merseyside & Cheshire. Sara will not be replaced short term. This has left a vacuum. Richard Alcock has prepared a feedback report from Club chairs on thoughts for future action and Lesley circulated this paper to the NCWP. This paper brought out the lack of resources and cultural change issues facing the clubs.

Chris said that the county has recognised the need to parachute people in to assist ailing clubs and that there is a shortage of teachers in the county.

5ii) Manchester

Jeff M said that Sara struggled because of reluctance to directly intervene and the issue is lack of change confidence by clubs. They have recently had a Membership Working Group For Change and a bid for a "loneliness prevention" local grant. Both have been unsuccessful and taken up time. The county is now focusing on organising teaching for clubs, some on a joint clubs' teaching arrangement.

Three of the nine affiliated clubs have teaching. There are though, a number of private teachers who lean towards unaffiliated clubs.

Manchester Airport have recently approached the county for assistance in having bridge activities for local retired people to the airport and for retired airport workers.

5iii) NEBA

Ron and Leslie visited St, Georges centre in September 2018 to understand the NE. Adrian confirmed that the county has a North South split and that this needs to be addressed in any approach.

He said that there is considerable development in the county including an interclub novice league and speed bridge events.

Adrian commented that state schools struggle to include minibridge in the curriculum and junior bridge will be increasingly an elitist activity of private schools.

Durham University has an active bridge club and this has resulted in new members transitioning to Durham BC.

Adrian said that NEBA have written to unaffiliated clubs re including Club contacts on county website. Some 20 of 40 unaffiliated clubs have agreed to inclusion. This opened a discussion on inclusion of unaffiliated clubs on county websites and relationships with unaffiliated clubs. (Both Merseyside & Cheshire and Manchester said that they include unaffiliated clubs on the county website and include in mailings. Also, unaffiliated clubs participate in Merseyside & Cheshire in working groups).

Action: Adrian to arrange visit by David G, possibly in May 2019.

5iv) Lancashire

Jeff S said that there is a lot of teaching in the county and they have decided not to participate in the contracted membership campaign at present. There are 11 affiliated clubs, some 1450 members, and no clubs are under threat. Poulton BC have recently affiliated.

They organised last year a successful club pairs competition with a final at Preston that involves both affiliated and unaffiliated clubs to break down barriers and this will be expanded this year.

5v) Yorkshire

Lesley outlined a recent Training day for Yorkshire clubs that included an update on Pianola and app based mobile data capture for such as café bridge. David G said that Olicana BC has two Bridge-Plus units on free loan and this technology transforms a bridge club. Jeff M said that the NW could consider a similar club technology event.

Action: David G to send out a technology note to NCWP committee.

David G said that the YCBA have built up a reserve and have decided to release a substantial part of this to member clubs for bridge club development. The YCBA have recently released a match-funded a grant for new technology introduction for YCBA clubs.

6 NCWP – Improvers Pairs

Lesley requested counties' interest in participation for an Improvers Sims pairs. Jeff M suggested Manchester as a finals' venue. The other finals venue to be York. Date of final suggested as June 12. **Action Lesley to confirm arrangements via email.**

7 EBED – Stirling University

The committee discussed the recent crowdfunding initiative entitled "Keep Bridge Alive" from Prof Samantha Punch. The committee identified ambiguity. **Action Ron to confirm the EBU stance.** (A clarification has since been released by Ron stating that the EBU will not donate).

Jeff again raised the need to approach Teacher training colleges for minibridge in schools. Adrian noted that this is now a minority channel for teacher development. Action: Lesley to suggest EBED ask for suggestions for contacting Teachers' Training Colleges at their |June Bridge Teachers Congress.

Jeff M to follow up with David Adelman as to his progress with EBED. **Action Jeff M**

8 Class to Club Conversion

The committee discussed the low transition rate from teaching to club and low member participation in tournaments. No solutions were offered and this will be further considered in later NCWP meetings.

AOB

Branding There are opportunities to widen the reach of bridge beyond the existing bridge player family. These include the Gamers Convention at the NEC in June. **Action: David G to write to Gordon re the need for more activity to widen the bridge brand.**

Next Meeting: 11am Wednesday June 26 2019 at Chez Millet.

End