



Draft Minutes of the Northern Counties Working Group (NCWG)

At Chez Millet, Leeds at 11am on 15 January 2020

Present:

Lesley Millet (Lesley) from YCBA, Nigel Durie (Nigel) and Adrian Darnell (Adrian) from NEBA, 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, David Guild (David G)- Yorkshire RDO
Geoff Morris (Geoff) Retired member of Manchester CBA,
Mary Sharp (Mary) – EBED Trustee

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

1. Apologies

Michael Rothwell – Westmorland, Liz Muir – NEBA, Christopher Raymond from Merseyside & Cheshire, Jeff Smith from Lancashire CBA

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

2. Previous Meeting Minutes:

The August 2019 meeting minutes were discussed and approved with comments as follow:

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

b/f Aug 2019. **UM Letter to EBU** re proposed UM increase of 2p. Lesley said that she is disappointed that she has not received a formal EBU reply to our NCWP letter on this proposed increase with reference to EBED reserves. However, since the 2p increase has been reduced to 1p, we will let the matter drop. **Minute Closed**

b/f Feb 2018 - To Develop **Yorkshire Bridge Awareness Day 2019** concept. Delayed. **C/F Lesley**

b/f Feb 2018 – **Lincolnshire NCWP representative**. Lesley said that no candidate has surfaced to date. **C/F Lesley**

b/f Feb 2018 - **Lancaster new Affiliated Bridge Club Plan**. Deferred until Jeff Smith next attends NCWP – **C/F Jeff S**

b/f Aug 2019 **EBU News on Websites** Non-affiliates on Bridgewebs have the benefit of EBU updates information on their websites. Ron M confirmed that open access is EBU policy. **Minute closed**

b/f Feb 2018 Club. **EBU Affiliation Document** rewrite for club and individual benefits. This subject was again discussed at the NCWP and the consensus is that both club and individual templates are weak. David G said raised recent email correspondence re the weakening of the EBU offer and making suggestions for rewrite but that the issue is more one of strengthening the offer substance rather than just redrafting **C/F Ron to raise as EBU Board topic**

b/f Sep 2018 **EBU Promotion Article** – Abbey Walker have an EBU promotion article in preparation **C/F Jeff S**

b/f Oct 2017 **Regional Working Groups Terms of Reference**. Although original TOR was drafted, it was never agreed. No EBU appetite to redraft. Noted. **Minute Closed**

b/f Sep 2018 **County Stats** To write to Gordon for clarification on statistics availability for secondary/tertiary county affiliations **C/F David G.**

b/f Sep 2018 **EBED Junior Bridge co-operative working – 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.

Richard said that he has recently spoken with Giles Ip and, whilst Giles was personally very helpful, the Junior Bridge Schools materials supplied are very poor.

b/f March 2019 - **Commonwealth Bridge Championship** coming to Birmingham in “2019”. Geoff confirmed that this occurs in July & August 2022 so typo in minutes. **C/F Ron to raise as EBU Board topic. Geoff to get more info.**

b/f Aug 2019 **EBED Grant** All NCWP To communicate EBED teaching room grant availability to their county clubs. Ron said that no Northern applications have been received by him to date and requested to be kept in the loop re applications. He re-iterated the need for all clubs to be made aware of this EBED grant. A discussion followed re the purpose and scope of the grants. The parties concluded that the grant, up to £500, should be used exclusively for “bridge start up courses that are integrated into a student duplicate bridge progression plan”. Ron said that for EBU clubs this grant should be linked into the membership campaigns. Mary said that, as EBED is a charity, the grant cannot be limited exclusively to the EBU affiliated clubs but that the grants should always be in the context of a progressive club for furthering duplicate bridge. **C/F All to communicate to their County clubs.**

b/f Aug 2019 **Tim’s Blog** 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. **Minute Closed**

b/f March 2019 – **Club Sessions by County** Monthly play sessions analyses for April to be circulated for relevant county to each County Bridge Association **C/F Tim**

b/f Aug 2019 **Gambling Law** – 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. **C/F Richard to send correspondence to Ron for EBU clarification.**

b/f Aug 2019 **Transitioning from Class to Club** – Tim to circulate 8 week course detail of Camberley BC, Surrey for student transitioning and breaking down beginner silos **C/F Tim**

b/f Aug 2019 **Tournament Dates** Lesley said that no adverse feedback has been received re proposed competitions dates and they will now be firmed up **Minute Closed**

3. EBED Presentation

Lesley welcomed Mary from EBED to the NCWP and said that she hoped this was the first step in our positive relationship with close future liaison. Mary summarised her teacher educator background, as an EBED trustee for the last nine months and as the editorial leader of the EBED programme. This editorial programme outline is:

Bridge For All

The beginners' Red Book has been revised and is being reprinted with the new edition. The revisions include removing "discretionary hand evaluation bids", removing strong twos and having "weak jump overcalls" as standard.

The continuing bridge Green Book is now under editorial revision and EBED are asking all EBTA members to submit present edition typos, inconsistencies and editorial suggestions before the end of January.

The work on the third year BFA book has been shelved.

Mixed Media Materials

Mary summarised EBED's bridge development mission, including progressing the EBTA teachers' organisation and their major, two years editorial programme, to include video and other mixed media materials to offer a richer bridge student education experience, including online learning. This will include originated materials and will also link across to other organisations' copyright materials, including No Fear Bridge. Mary said that this may incur a usage charge on the students/teacher.

A brief discussion followed as to the extent that such charge can be absorbed into student course fees as usage is the determinant of success or failure of this major programme. The point was made that Northern bridge course fees are far lower than rich Southern counties and some teachers offer their services free of charge. The growing U3A involvement in bridge teacher exacerbates this free teaching development. Irene said that Manchester charge £7 per lesson, also Leeds and at Ilkley it is £6. Joan said Altringham charge £2 per lesson. Adrian said that the NE is particularly deprived and, where charged, £3 per lesson is norm.

David G said that the New Zealand Bridge Fed have a comprehensive suite of lesson plans, each with related Powerpoint presentation and video on their website Resources page. As NZ also use 4 card majors Acol, this means that a "no cost" alternative is currently available to UK students online. David further said that, if the NZ twang is unacceptable, if agreed, these can be re-voiced at reasonable cost and considerable time saving to launch.

Mary concluded by saying that fundraising is an important part of EBED's activity and that they are seeking an additional Trustee with experience of this activity that they can "bring to the table". The committee discussed this but were unable to immediately suggest a candidate.

Lesley thanked Mary for travelling to join us and for openly explaining EBED's intent which is very helpful. Mary stayed for the rest of the meeting to understand the workings of the NCWP.

4. Club Development Workshop

Lesley outlined Tim's proposal to have a one day learning event to help club's develop their membership and transition. The proposal to include presentations from a small, medium and large club explaining issues they encounter and how they overcome them. The NCWP discussion showed preferences as:

1. Prefer regional roadshow rather than one national central location for the event
2. The event may work best with County involvement to encourage non-performing clubs to participate. This may mean a more County level event with lower travelling or to run regional events.
3. Needs to be hands on with examples and advice rather than a forum approach as there will be key messages to get across.
4. Needs to involve EBED as a resource rather than an EBED plans presentation (eg grants).
5. Need small packs on how to market – just contacts, bullet points and where to find more info. (Later action for Tim).

Action: All Each County to consider preferred approach for event actions discussion at next NCWP meeting and to contact Tim re clarity on availability of resources. (Yorkshire may run this for 2020 in place of their November Technology Day event).

5. Mentorship UM Code – Code 12

This was briefly discussed. It was not well known but welcomed by the NCWP as a useful addition. **Action All** To alert clubs in their county to this new code

6. County Updates

i) Merseyside and Cheshire

Richard said that Frodsham BC, has disaffiliated but this has been due to exhaustion rather than negative EBU action (Club members are mainly in their 90's, 4 to 5 tables and they have given up inter-club competitions).

Liverpool BC, a privately owned, affiliated club is doing better.

Newer players are not participating in leagues or congresses and we need to persuade the teachers to encourage more participation by students.

They struggle to attract volunteers at County level. Where a tournament is organised by the county, it fares badly whereas club organised competitions attract far more entrants.

This comment sparked a debate on congresses performance:

Manchester Congress (by county) has performed very well this year with pairs (61 + 21 improvers) and teams (33 + 27 improvers). Irene sees the reasons being 1. Not green pointed so less expensive and so perhaps not attracting highest level players 2. Great marketing with wide publicity and a substantial personal emails campaign.

NEBA have seen their county congress uplifted this year and they attract entrants from Norway, Austria and Wales. Other county events are also up. (Ben Franks up from 14 to 31 pairs). They have successfully run a Beginners Event for up to grade 6 but it was gate-crashed by grades 7 to 10. They will police it closer next year but it shows a market for very low graded players competition if they get the publicity correct.

Lesley said that the results are mixed but generally Yorkshire experience is that subcontracting organisation to clubs for failing competitions can dramatically improve numbers eg Harrogate Rose Bowl has gone from 3 to 14 tables. (The County takes no money and may offer marketing guidance/support).

The Yorkshire Pairs run by the EBU are down this year and Blackpool Northern congress performed very badly (17 tables) whilst the EBU London events are performing well and West Midlands is improved.

Lesley said that the Yorkshire Tournaments Committee has moved to “early start/early finish” competition days to allow more time for socialising, particularly Saturday evenings, and has promoted friendly congresses including more “improver” events. Also moving to more stratified prize giving with 25% of income as prizes.

ii) **Manchester**

Irene reported a strong performance for the county. The competition numbers are all uplifted. Student numbers are also increased and most substantial clubs now have teaching. Cheadle and Bramhall clubs are not yet amalgamated (delayed) and neither are teaching at present. Also have increased social bridge sessions at Marple Bridge and Prestbury. They have had three clubs affiliate in the last two years including Ashton and Bessies-O-The-Barn. South Manchester has a lot of non-affiliates so lots of scope!

iii) **NEBA**

To date there has not been a request from any club for membership/marketing support although four clubs have low numbers Action: **Adrian** to chase up clubs re RDO future visit in support.

As previously reported, there are 24 clubs in the county and a substantial physical divide between North and South clubs. Whilst not all clubs teach, the county has moved to developing teaching hubs as the preferred approach.

Last meeting Adrian reported that he had successfully applied to the Northumberland Area Action Partnership on Social Inclusion for a £5,000 grant from the Older People's Isolation Fund. (This organisation is a Local Area Partnership and these are replicated across municipal authorities and may be advantageous to approach). Adrian reported that this grant has now been received by Durham BC. Ron requested a copy of the initial application to see the buttons pressed. Action: **Adrian** to send copy to David G for circulating to NCWP.

Adrian has had success in bringing the U3A more into bridge. The method has been to personally join the U3A at Durham as activity leader for bridge play and then to point them for teaching at Durham BC (paid teaching) as the U3A Teaching session. Thus breaking the ice at the bridge club. (This may be replicated in other locations!)

iv) **Lancashire**

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

4v) **Yorkshire**

The November 2019 Technology Day event in Leeds was successful. Numbers were static on the previous year and representatives included Manchester and Lincolnshire.

The first YCBA Technology Grant awards went smoothly and £8,000 has been distributed. It is likely that a second round of grants will be actioned in 2020.

Last meeting David G reported on running a "from scratch" accelerated teaching course campaign in Skipton from rented premises. David G said that although a fully integrated marketing programme had been actioned, the number of potential students at three was well below the break-even on the room rental and he has pulled the campaign. The marketing campaign included Facebook unique page boosted at £150, article in the local press linked across to Age UK, leaflets printed and distributed at transit and high visibility sights, poster placement at physical parish boards and retailers, digital placement at all city and villages community sites etc, support from local non-affiliated club. David said that this is a salutary reminder that it is difficult to drop in this activity cold and explains why bridge teachers usually start from an established bridge club or with small numbers from home. Word of mouth is very important and the applicant is also looking for accreditation through an established bridge organisation.

5 NCWP – Improvers Pairs

Although the 2019 NCWP Improvers Pairs did not run, there is possibility of running this new competition for 2020. **Action: Geoff** to decide whether to run for West Pennines.

AOB

1. Irene raised a safeguarding issue where an EBU member known to be on the sex offenders register requested to find other teammates for a congress. Although the issue went away, this was seen as a potential grooming activity as children were present at congress. Ron said for Irene to request Gordon to seek legal advice and then the EBU need to publish this as general guidance. **Action: Irene, Gordon**

Next Meeting To be arranged for either 20 May or 27 May 2020.