



## Minutes of NCWG Online Meeting 20 May 2020

County Bridge Associations Present:

Yorkshire - Lesley Millet (Lesley) & David Guild (David); North East - Nigel Durie (Nigel) and Adrian Darnell (Adrian); Merseyside & Cheshire – Christopher Raymond (Chris) & Richard Alcock (Richard); Manchester County - Irene Davis (Irene) and Adam Wiseberg (Adam); Westmorland – Mike Rothwell (Mike); Lancashire – Jeff Smith; Lincolnshire - Kiyat Huang (Kiyat)

### Invited Members:

Ron Millet (Ron)– EBU Director, Gordon Rainsford (Gordon) – EBU Ceo , Tim Anderson (Tim) – EBU Membership Officer, Geoff Morris (Geoff) Retired member of Manchester CBA,

Apologies – Trevor Ward from Cumbria County BA

Lesley chaired the meeting and welcomed the members of the working party and invited members to this online meeting. Due to the urgency of the lockdown impact, previous minutes were suspended and the meeting concentrated on our online responses for continued bridge play. Lesley asked for by County updates:

**North East** - Adrian said that County specific activity has not yet commenced but some clubs have activated online bridge. Castle Morpeth jointly with Castle BC have daily pairs on BBO. Durham started their BBO Pairs League 3 weeks ago and are accepting EBU members of County outside of Durham Club. The Durham members have free play and outside members are charged back. The EBU acts as intermediary and pays BBO \$s and then charge back Durham BC each month for UMS and BBO. (This system is preferred by Durham members who do not want the complication of individually handling BBO \$s charging. (An alternative to charging up front and to be arranged via [jonathan@ebu.co.uk](mailto:jonathan@ebu.co.uk)). Further Durham have been running a 10 board pairs league for the past five weeks with four divisions. The UMS payment for the league is under discussion with Jonathan at the EBU.

Adrian said that Durham Club is in receipt of £10,000 as a small not-for-profit business under the Government covid impact deferral scheme and urged all other counties to communicate grant scheme this to their clubs. It is outlined in the latest Club Focus and [jonathan@ebu.co.uk](mailto:jonathan@ebu.co.uk) has details.

**Manchester County** – Irene said that Adam has taken the early initiatives for the County. They were able to secure TD hosting rights in March before BBO clamped down on this. Therefore, early starters for online competitions. Running three daytime competitions per week and moving to four (jack high). Also working up teams of 8 competition. Inviting all clubs, not just affiliated club

members. A County member can pair with a guest from outside the County but at least one of partnership has to be from Manchester County area. Also getting Lancs players. The TD's are offering free service. Jeff and Alex? are lead TD's and there are four other TD's. Averaging 20 tables/match. On BBO free service. Irene said that players are not missing Master Points/NGS as, at this time, this is predominantly social rather than competitive play. The Manchester County Committee are discussing making payment to EBU as no UMS is taken from players and forwarded. Both Ron and Gordon stated the importance of meeting UMS payment requirements in online play schemes.

**Manchester City Club** – (A very large club) - Geoff said that one online competition is run daily on the BBO system with charge through the MCC. There are 200 people signed up to online and master points/NGS are not awarded.

**Lancashire** – Jeff said that County has not started but three clubs are actively developing online play. Bolton, Preston and Southport co-operated and found BCL not adequate so opted for BBO free service. Run eight sessions per week with two restricted to EBU County and rest unrestricted, including non-affiliates. No masterpoints/NGS/UMS. Charge is £3 per match invoiced by clubs direct to entrants. Have run a charity match for hospice and will do more. Getting 20 to 25 tables per match.

**Merseyside/Cheshire** – Chris said that the County are presently polling nine clubs to see if they want County matches run. The County has yet to set up a BBO virtual club. Also clubs being asked re non-affiliates inclusion in online which is Chris' preferred option. Three clubs are well advanced with BBO, two at early stage with club co-operative approach and two clubs have not yet started. All active clubs are running BBO master points once members get familiar with the BBO system. The most active clubs are Deva and Chester. Deva is now on BBO \$s system.

**Cumbria/Westmorland** – Mike said that Kendal have three online free sessions per week in morning or afternoon. (Avoiding evenings due to BBO traffic load. Gordon said that may now not be a problem as recent BBO enhancement). Westmorland and Cumbria now run a pairs league of four divisions on BCL's casual play tables. No masterpoints/NGS/UMS is generated on these free sessions but the County has whether to go paid for under review.

**Lincolnshire**- Kiat said that the County is loosely structured with mainly small clubs and committees generally with low levels of online knowledge. Whilst club online friendlies are developing, it is proving difficult to have small clubs co-operate for online joint initiatives. A work in progress.

**Yorkshire** – Lesley said that seven clubs are engaged on BBO (of which four have established \$virtual BBO clubs) and five clubs have set up their online clubs on BCL. The County has released invitations for a 300 pairs maximum Swiss to run from 1<sup>st</sup> June to mid June. This will be on "BBO casual" at £5 per entrant with UMS forwarded post competition.

**UMS Charges** - Ron re-iterated the need to charge full UMS to avoid an EBU meltdown. The new rates being 40p and full payment for Counties (previously @ 50% rate).

A general discussion developed on the problem that members are wary of paying in \$'s on the BBO paid competition system. This affects preference for some clubs to go via the "free" competition route.

Jeff asked whether the EBU would consider an online only membership rate. Gordon said No.

Adam said that a lot of clubs are too small to go online and, even with full UMS mandatory, it is difficult to see that it will be enough income to sustain the EBU in present form. Gordon said that it is a moving picture and, whilst it is true that the EBU cannot be sustained by “online only” in the long time, full payments will defer this date.

David said that early Yorkshire clubs stats are showing that, where a club promotes their online club, at present between 20% to 30% of the members join. This must also reduce income and is not now the time to actively canvas non-affiliated clubs and their members to come into the EBU fold. Gordon said that there has been an upsurge of non-affiliates joining and it is very welcome.

Gordon said that the EBU has the Lockdown League but is not running online congresses at present and that the Counties are being asked to run their own competitions. The issue of blue and green pointing is under discussion. Gordon pointed to the recent Suffolk Webinar as an excellent information source for online play.

Jeff said that he was disappointed to have paid for entry to a recent EBU competition and found himself playing with a robot. Gordon said that if players do not have their own partners, some robot play is inevitable.

### **New Platforms for Online Play**

Lesley said that Pianola are developing a platform and that it is expected for release in July.

Tim demonstrated his own platform that is starting live test at Winchester BC in two weeks.

Kiat said that a lot is happening internationally on new bridge play platforms. A Dutch company has released a white label product that is under consideration by both the Dutch and Australian Bridge Federations. The main issue is that where commercial companies have solutions then we are within their hands re pricing etc. He is participating in an international Bridge Hackathon on 23 May where IT developers are going to give their time free of charge to create an open source online bridge solution within 24 hours. This has potential to totally shake up this industry.

### **EBU Forum For Clubs’ Guidance Post Covid**

David said that an EBU Forum page already exists for this topic but it is lightly populated, probably as early days. As clubs get nearer going back to their clubs, it is important that they share thoughts on safeguarding etc . The purpose of raising this today is so that clubs know of its existence.

Teaching via Online The discussion centred on this being too early for clubs to put much effort in development when we have more pressing actions. Lesley said that Leeds are bringing their teachers together for discussion. Adam said that he teaches four people online and thinks that it will be unwieldy if interactive beyond that number.

### **Youth Bridge**

Richard said that there is an excellent Bridge For Youth Roadmap produced but he is worried about sustainability and financial underpinning for junior bridge interventions. Gordon, whilst recognising that this is a totally valid concern, felt that this is now within EBED’s remit rather than the EBU and referred Richard to them for discussion.

Next Meeting: To be confirmed for approx. 3 to 4 weeks time

End

