



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN'S CONFERENCE
HELD AT IMPERIAL HOTEL, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON WC1
ON WEDNESDAY 29TH JUNE 2011**

1. Attendance EBU representatives

Board Members		Board Members			
Sally Bugden	Chairman	Jeremy Dhondy		Karen Durrell	EBU Reception
Andrew Petrie	Vice Chairman	Graham Jepson		John Pain	Secretary
Michael Hill	Treasurer	Ian Payn			
Barry Capal	General Manager	Malcolm Oliver			

County Attendance

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Avon	Eric Page	Hants & IOW	Jeremy Baker	Northamptonshire	Trevor Thrower
Bedfordshire	David Gilling	Herefordshire	Ben Britton	North East	Ken Spragg
Berks and Bucks	Nigel Thompson	Hertfordshire	Bernard Eddleston	Nottinghamshire	Keith Rodgers
Cambs and Hunts	Chris Jagger	Kent	Geoff Smith	Oxfordshire	John Slater
Channel Islands	Mike Allen	Lancashire	Jeff Smith	Somerset	Michael Whittaker
Cornwall	Geoffrey Warren	Leicestershire	Robert Northage	Staffs and Shrops	Geoff Davies
Derbyshire	Malcolm Caporn	London	Roger Morton	Surrey	Mac Derwig Douglas Wright
Devon	Andrew Leslie	Manchester	Kevin Comrie	Warwickshire	Darren Evetts
Dorset	Tim Dunsby	Merseyside and Cheshire	Paul Roberts	Wiltshire	Colin Webb
Essex	John Williams	Middlesex	Peter Hasenson	Worcestershire	David Thomas
Gloucestershire	Jim Simons	Norfolk	Gerard Faulkner	Yorkshire	Philip Mason Lesley Millet Ron Millet

Apologies

Board Members					
Cumbria	John Maclachlan	Suffolk	Andrew Moore	Sussex	Eddie Williams
Westmorland	Peter Jeffreys				

Absence – no apologies

Isle of Man	John Large	Lincolnshire			
-------------	------------	--------------	--	--	--

2 Introduction and Welcome

Sally Bugden opened the meeting and welcomed all County Chairmen or their representatives.

She said it was with great sadness that she reported the news of the death of Michelle Brunner. She extended the sympathy of the Board to John Holland and the rest of Michelle's family. It was also announced that Philip Mason's wife Janet had passed away on the morning of the meeting and sympathy was extended to Philip and his family.

Sally stated that the County Chairman's conference was now to be a regular meeting each year, taking the place of one of the shareholders meetings. It was hoped to be able to discuss policy and share views with the Board and counties. There were some key issues to discuss today - development, education and succession planning as well as updating the County Chairmen on the new simultaneous pairs policy and charity registration.

3 County Education Report

Sally introduced Ian Payn who has been co opted onto the Board to oversee the Education development.

Ian introduced himself by saying he had not been part of the working group or been involved in the write up but he thanked all who had contributed. It was important that everyone at the meeting had a chance to express their views and all views were welcome even if impracticalities meant they were unlikely to be implemented. The impetus to move forward comes from within. We need to get more people playing. How? We need to get more people learning. How? Teachers need to be taught using a network of existing teachers.

He introduced contributions from Surrey and Yorkshire.

Surrey

Mac Derwig presented a report on the progress made in Surrey. A report by Douglas Wright from 2009 had preceded the EWG report but both had been used to move things forward. A first step to involve schools had seen 58 letters sent out with only three replies. He could not find any evidence that the University of Surrey had ever been approached to run bridge lessons.

The County had moved to create District Training Centres. Some were 'real' and others 'virtual'. A real centre had its own premises (e.g. Wimbledon) whereas a virtual centre was a collection of smaller clubs each contributing a part towards the whole (supervised play in one club, masterclass lessons in another etc). He said there was a need to identify students who would benefit from supervised play to progress to regular clubs and then to county level.

He talked about funding and estimated that to set up a real training centre would be of the order of £9000 with approximately 1/3 each coming from those who took part, the County and possibly the EBU. He recommended special events for Club Chairmen so they could meet and discuss the way forward (as well as playing bridge).

Yorkshire

Ron and Lesley Millet presented a report on the progress in Yorkshire.

He and Lesley observed that teaching is a tool within development to get more players. An age survey amongst Yorkshire members showed an aging population of players and the game was not sustainable without new students of all ages coming to play the game. Leeds Bridge Club had given a free hand to develop a programme for learners and, being 'comfortably off' had approved funding. Activities had included taster sessions in schools, magazines and posters, attendance at the University of Leeds fresher week. It was noted that more success had come from the private school sector than state schools.

Any surplus from the scheme was being ploughed back into improving the scheme. Activities included supervised play sessions, seminars for newer players, improvers held weekly session and monthly pay-to-play sessions, the Bradford league (3 new players + 1 experienced player). In

addition there is a Club Teacher Training course in Wetherby in early July which has been full for several weeks.

They outlined a new funding technique using the UnLtd Millennium Award (ULM). A £3000 grant had been awarded to support the project's aim to maintain and reinforce mental agility for those entering later life by means of Bridge as one of the premier Mind Sports.

There were some constraints on how the funding could be used. The YCBA had also contributed £3000 as well as a further £2000 for Youth Bridge.

The key to success of the project was flexibility with individual solutions. Grants are available but need to be targeted correctly for the proposal to be accepted. Those applying need to stretch and mould objectives to fit the application. Further funding from ULM of up to £18000 might be available if the project is successful.

The York Bridge Development Committee was planning to roll out the scheme across the whole of Yorkshire; a new website Learn Bridge Yorkshire was being developed; they were using bridge teachers (some who were not EBUTA qualified) and were organizing competitions for new players.

There had been two sponsors of the Yorkshire Congress who had showed interest in supporting the project and media support was being sort through local TV and Radio as well as advertising and posters. In summary it was a flexible approach – flexible to teachers and helpers.

The papers for this presentation are attached to these minutes. The website for UnLtd Millenium Fund is:

<http://www.unltd.org.uk/>

After the presentations a general discussion took place on education:

A question on costing revealed that Yorkshire's income was ote £50000 with £5000 being given in grants to the project and the youth scheme.

Douglas Wright had sympathy with Ben Britton, Chairman of Herefordshire who said it was more difficult for small counties but even a large county like Surrey had started small in a local area. It was desirable for clubs to work together where it was recognised that a single club could not do it all, but the Hertfordshire experience had been that clubs were very reluctant to talk to each other – however even here two of the independent clubs were now talking to each other.

Douglas Wright said that great progress has been made from a small start and that the learners in Surrey were playing in the Surrey Novice League. This has started with 29 teams but was now up to 37. They were encouraged to move on to the Intermediate League which had also seen an increase from 35 to 45 teams.

It was suggested there be a national approach. Sally said that there was already a national initiative – the Minibrige project through the Educational Trust and through the Parliamentary Bridge Group there was emphasis being placed on both the benefits of Minibrige to juniors and the benefits of bridge in the dementia debate.

Ian Payn concluded the discussion thanking the contributors. He observed from the Yorkshire age survey there was a great void between 18 and 40 years old and that those embarking on education initiatives needed to be aware that the effort to catch this age group often meant lower returns.

4 Succession Planning

Sally acknowledged the enormous amount of work done by volunteers at all levels of the game. At National level they contributed in many ways through the Board, the various standing committees and sub committees of the Board, with some individuals spending as much as 40 hours a week on voluntary work. She was concerned about where the next generation of volunteers would come from. It was acknowledged that the work load in getting Pay-to-play established and in the preparation of the charity status application was greater but then the work load may settle down. However, the EBU should always develop and part of this development is addressing change– we would otherwise stagnate, with no new people learning to play bridge with all the benefits that this can bring.. So we were expecting a great deal from the volunteers.

In Warwickshire there were a large number of volunteers but no-one obvious to take on further roles or responsibilities. In Berks and Bucks there were a limited number of volunteers but difficult to find the new generation. Other counties agreed. Ben Britton said he was only doing it because no-one else wanted to. He added that members do not appreciate how much work is undertaken by volunteers. The view from Derby was that, although he was only vice chairman, he had no idea the extent to which volunteers were used.

Again it all came down to communication and while it was recognised that much information came from Aylesbury quite a large amount never progressed or was not read – people only tended to read that which interested them.

It was observed that the Board had reduced in size from 10 elected to eight elected. Sally said that the Board now had the option to nominate additional members where a particular skill gap was identified.

It was observed that there was need to identify and recognise those who had given outstanding voluntary service. This in turn led to a reminder about the EBU Awards including the Dimmie Fleming and also the newly proposed Silver Award.

The discussion moved on to the best way to communicate with counties. An online forum was suggested. This had previously been tried without much success, because people failed either to know it was there or didn't realise a new thread had started. Alerts by email or text message might make things better. Darren Evetts offered to work with Aylesbury staff to try to give fresh impetus to the idea.

The discussion moved on to who was primarily responsible for receiving information within the county and this was linked to the attempt to define the role for Shareholders. It became apparent that counties viewed their shareholders in different ways (direct open elections, nominated committee members) and also the amount of feedback they were expected to give the county committee (none at all, full feedback reports). Counties also used the office of Chairman in different ways – some used it as an 'honour' (i.e. a figurehead) whilst others used it as a hard-working post doing almost everything. Some had a vice chairman, others did not. And there was the secretary. It was acknowledged that information often didn't go to the person most deserving to receive it.

One county chairman suggested that appropriate people should attend the meetings run by the EBU but if the bulk of the discussion was financial then it made more sense to send the Treasurer.

It was suggested that more use could be made of the facility on Bridge Webs websites to send news down from Aylesbury. Sally said that we already do that but perhaps more use could be made of it.

Sally was surprised to hear that some shareholders did not feed back to the County – there was a need to share information with the Chairman and Secretary and other members of the county committee as well as with the membership of the county as whole. The shareholders had statutory obligations defined in The Articles of Association of the EBU but any other changes could be put to a future meeting if that was felt to be desirable.

There was a suggestion to reduce their role to a statutory minimum and to communicate with county chairmen and secretaries. The discussion was concluded by inviting County Chairmen to submit their ideas as to the role of their county shareholders. Sally stressed that the Board of the EBU was not trying to dictate to counties – any change would come from the counties themselves.

5 Charity Status

Andrew Petrie outlined the current position. EBU representatives had met with senior members of the charities commission to discuss the EBU's application for charitable status.

A major achievement had been the success of Hitchin in obtaining charitable status. Hitchin had relied significantly on information provided to the Charity Commissioners (who had undertaken a survey of Mind Sports) by the EBU and in return this might make the EBU's application more likely to succeed.

It was now appropriate to make a full application with an implementation date of April 1st 2013 as a target, subject to no showstoppers appearing along the way. Enabling legislation would appear on shareholders agendas in the next 18 months as and when required.

6. Simultaneous Pairs

Jeremy Dhondy outlined the position. There is a large number of simultaneous pairs event each year run by the EBU, the EBU Education department, stratified and non stratified, WBF, EBL, Children in Need and BGB, but the vast majority of clubs members had no idea who was running each one. There had been a good service provided by ECats to do the scoring but there was a need to reduce costs and with suitable software a similar service could be provided in-house from Spring 2012 all EBU events would be scored in house. Other events run by ECats such as CIN would continue to be run by them. It was up to WBF and EBL who they used as their chosen provider. However the EBU had given notice to the Core Committee of BGB of its intention to withdraw from the current BGB Sims. A new event called the British Sim Pairs would replace the BGB Sims from April 2012.

There would be savings for the EBU and this would remove the need for any inflation linked increase in 2012 and also offer the possibility of a modest reduction in entry fee.

7. Disciplinary procedures at Club and County Level

Jeremy Dhondy thanked clubs and counties which had brought their disciplinary arrangements in line with EBU guidelines but said there were too many incidents where a club sought to ban a member without following proper procedure either because the club had no disciplinary rules or if they did then they did not implement them properly. Player members finding themselves in this position often contacted the L&E secretary for guidance. Quite often the guidance was 'go back to the club and ask them to deal with it properly' but occasionally, when the club procedure was exhausted the next step was to appeal to the County. Counties were advised of the need to have their own procedures in place and to be prepared to act when required to do so. Occasionally the club was unable to deal with it and the county was again the next stage. Ensuring clubs were aware of what the county could do was a good first step.

John Pain asked County Chairmen to consider nominations for the EBU Disciplinary Panel. Now the cap of 10 had been lifted the Chairman was seeking suitably qualified people to join the panel. It is a voluntary role and the panel perform a vital service for the membership.

8 Any other business

Graham Jepson raised the question of awards (e.g. Dimmie Fleming, Silver Award) and asked counties to consider possible recipients. In answer to a question it was confirmed that criteria for the awards would be emailed to all chairmen.

There was no other business.

Sally Bugden thanked all those who had made presentations and all those who had attended and made such vital contributions to the discussions.

The meeting closed at 3.55pm

Email resources:

Douglas Wright douglaswright@3countiesbridge.com

Ron Millet ronm@bridging-thegap.co.uk

Lesley Millet bridge-millet@talktalk.net