



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN'S CONFERENCE
HELD AT IMPERIAL HOTEL, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON WC1
ON WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 2013**

1. Attendance EBU representatives

Board Members	Board Members	Karen Durrell	EBU Reception
Sally Bugden Chairman	Jerry Cope	Kay Carter	EBU Reception
Andrew Petrie Treasurer	Darren Evetts	John Pain	Secretary
Barry Capal General Manager	Michael Hill		
	Ian Payn		

County Attendance

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Avon	Andrew Urbanski	Herefordshire	Ben Britton	Staffs and Shrops	Geoff Davies
Bedfordshire	Michael Collins	Hertfordshire	Mike Minting	Suffolk	Jeff Orton
Berks & Bucks	Anders Wallen	Kent	Geoff Smith	Surrey	Mac Derwig
Cambs and Hunts	Chris Jagger	Lancashire	Jeff Smith	Sussex	Joy Mayall
Cornwall	Jenny Cant	Leicestershire	John Wilcox	Warwickshire	Mike Thorley
Derbyshire	Arnold Chandler	London	Guy Hart	Wiltshire	Colin Webb
Dorset	Ann Sharples	Merseyside and Cheshire	Paul Roberts	Worcestershire	Mike Willoughby
Essex	John Williams	North East	Ann Caygill	Yorkshire	Philip Mason
Gloucestershire	Alan Wearmouth	Oxfordshire	Sandra Nicholson		
Hants & IOW	Andy Hughes	Somerset	Michael Whittaker		

Apologies

Board Members	Jeremy Dhondy (Vice-Chairman)	Heather Dhondy	Ron Millet	Malcolm Oliver	
Channel Islands	Norman Le Cocq Robert Plumley	Isle of Man	John Large	Middlesex	Richard Hillman
Cumbria	John Maclachlan	Lincolnshire	Glynn Elwick	Norfolk	Peter Cotes
Devon	Howard Kent-Webster	Manchester	Bob Cooke	Westmorland	Peter Jeffreys

Absence – no apologies

Northamptonshire	Trevor Thrower	Nottinghamshire	Keith Rodgers	
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2 Introduction and Welcome

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

She said that this would be a very different meeting to previous County Chairman's conferences in that the aim was to discuss and bring forward ideas for consideration arising from the new EBU 5-year strategic plan outlined in the document *Bidding for the Future 2013 – 2018*.

She introduced the five group leaders, all chairmen of their respective counties – Ann Caygill (North East), Chris Jagger (Cambs and Hunts), Paul Roberts (Merseyside and Cheshire), Geoff Smith (Kent) and Mike Whittaker (Somerset) and thanked them in advance for leading the groups.

She mentioned that the Shareholders had already seen *Bidding for the Future* and she hoped discussions today would focus on Relations with Counties and Clubs hoping to establish a county led working group to increase the number of affiliated clubs and improve education provision and other appropriate services. She said that this meeting was taking the first steps to 'fleshing out the bones' of this initiative. She introduced Darren Evetts as the Board Member who would be driving this forward and Jerry Cope as the Board Member who would be leading today's discussions.

3 Introductory Plenary Session

Jerry Cope invited the delegates to brainstorm ideas as to a) What was going well and b) What was not going well. These lists represent the items raised:

What is going well?

- Inter-county competitions
- EBU Magazine
- Minibridge
- EBU website
- Hardware provision
- Systems around membership
- Daytime bridge participation is up
- County events well run (One Day Green Point events)
- NGS and Stratified events
- League management system
- Laws and Ethics and TDs
- Keeping county event costs down.

What is not going well?

- Competition entries for county and EBU events
- Resourcing education – patchy, smaller counties experiencing difficulty
- Ageing membership
- Significant number of clubs unaffiliated
- Failure to put over the EBU's membership message
- Communicating back to clubs
- Profile of bridge nationally (e.g. European Championships – no media coverage)
- Regional Club Committee
- Interest in bridge in universities and schools
- Where are those in the 45+ age groups
- Pay to Play fees
- Simultaneous Pairs participation and volume
- Lack of events such as the Golf Print and events for Bowling Clubs
- Gulf between social and duplicate bridge
- Communicating with and listening to clubs.

4 Group Sessions

The meeting now broke into the five groups for discussion:

Group Caygill:

Ann Caygill (North East), John Williams (Essex), Ben Britton (Herefordshire), Guy Hart (London), Ann Sharples (Dorset), Alan Wearmouth (Gloucs).

Group Jagger:

Chris Jagger (Cambs & Hunts), Philip Mason (Yorks), Michael Collins (Bedfordshire), Anders Wallen (Berks & Bucks), Andrew Urbanski (Avon)

Group Roberts

Paul Roberts (Merseyside & Cheshire), Sandra Nicholson (Oxford), Mac Derwig (Surrey), Geoff Davies (Staffs & Shrops), Colin Webb (Wilts)

Group Smith

Geoff Smith (Kent), Mike Minting (Herts), Andy Hughes (Hants & IOW), Mike Willoughby (Worcs), John Wilcox (Leics), Jeff Smith (Lancs)

Group Whittaker

Mike Whittaker (Somerset), Jeff Orton (Suffolk), Joy Mayall (Sussex), Mike Thorley (Warks), Jenny Cant (Cornwall), Arnold Chandler (Derbys)

5 Feedback from Group Sessions

Each group leader made a short presentation on the discussions within each group. The group discussions can be summarised as follows:

Value of the EBU

- Make a fresh approach to non-affiliated clubs by sending County Committee members to engage and play.
- Ensure there is a simple message that the membership will understand
- Identifying who does what at Aylesbury and in the Counties
- Selling the positive side of affiliating to non-affiliated clubs and those who dropped out.

County Satisfaction survey

- Several counties have successfully surveyed their membership through computer surveys. Returns vary from around 5% to something slightly better.

EBU Competitions

- Do more research through surveys

Club Regional Committees

- There was a general view that these were not working and many clubs were not interested in taking part. A new method of communicating with clubs should be developed via counties.

Communications between EBU, Counties and Clubs

- Strengthen EBU / County links
- Targeting non-affiliated clubs on a personal basis
- County constitutions generally focussed on the rights and contributions of individual members rather than clubs
- Incentivise participation e.g. charity events
- Human contact – county committee in clubs (also EBU personnel in clubs)
- Use clubs to stimulate county competitions
- Quick briefing documents from meetings rather than waiting for full minutes

- Individual Board Directors to liaise with Counties.

Education

- Target tennis / golf and bowls clubs – rich source of potential members
- Have more online training available
- Approaching University of the Third Age (U3A)
- Transition of non-duplicate players to duplicate bridge
- Importance of dedicated bridge centres
- Produce a model of how to introduce bridge into schools
- Stimulate teaching in the evening to the 30-55 age bracket
- Larger counties assisting small neighbouring counties with equipment
- Target 50+ age group with qualified teachers
- Funding a teacher through training and development.

6 Next Steps

Sally thanked all the groups for their input. She said she was delighted by the response. It was very clear that we had the same problems at the EBU and at County level and there were issues we could face together. She was sure that many members are unaware of the work that goes on at Board level and the Board had identified many of the issues raised during the meeting. She felt that working towards 'the value of the EBU' was of prime importance. From October she would be focussing on education where formation of the charity to oversee education would be taken forward.

She said that communication was a huge problem from minutes, strategy documents and English Bridge which many members were not aware of. A face-to-face approach was often more successful.

Darren Evetts will be working with the counties to oversee and move things forward hoping to be able to find solutions to the majority of issues over a period of one to two years; some areas, e.g. the message conveying the value of belonging to the EBU, should be progressed faster than that. Sally acknowledged that effective communications with clubs in a way they perceive as worthwhile needed to be addressed, and this too would be part of Darren's remit of work with the counties.

There was a short discussion on 'the worth of the EBU' and raising the profile amongst the general membership who were often unaware of the amount of work done at both national and county levels. There was agreement that unaffiliated clubs benefit from EBU initiatives (such as TD training) but do not contribute to these initiatives provided by the national body. The answer was to make non-affiliated clubs aware of the benefits of membership.

She again thanked the group leaders for their assistance with the day.

8 Any other business

Sally asked counties to be aware that the deadline for nominations for Dimmie Fleming award and the EBU Silver Award was approaching and urged counties to consider likely candidates by the end of July.

She advised counties that there was currently a 50% reduction for county adverts in English Bridge.

She asked counties to consider investigating their own archives. Kent, Manchester and Hertfordshire had already done some work in this area. She reminded the meeting that Jeremy Dhondy was especially keen on making sure that both national and county archives represented the full history of bridge in England.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm, with a vote of thanks from the floor.