



**NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN'S CONFERENCE
HELD AT IMPERIAL HOTEL, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON WC1
ON WEDNESDAY 2 JULY 2014**

1. Attendance EBU representatives

| Board Members | | Board Members | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|------------|---------------|
| Jeremy Dhondy | Chairman | Jerry Cope | | Kay Carter | EBU Reception |
| Ian Payn | Vice Chairman | Darren Evetts | | John Pain | Secretary |
| Andrew Petrie | Treasurer | Anthony Golding | | | |
| Barry Capal | General Manager | Malcolm Oliver | | | |

County Attendance

| County | Name | County | Name | County | Name |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Berks & Bucks | Anders Wallen | Hertfordshire | Bernard Eddleston | North East | Val Gibson |
| Cambs and Hunts | Chris Jagger | Kent | Geoff Smith | Oxfordshire | Robert Procter |
| Cumbria | Trevor Ward | Lancashire | John Brearley | Staffs and Shrops | Linda Curtis |
| Derbyshire | Arnold Chandler | Leicestershire | Dean Benton | Surrey | Mac Derwig |
| Devon | Mike Hamon | London | Roger Morton | Sussex | Andy Ryder |
| Dorset | Tim Dunsby | Manchester | Bob Cooke | Warwickshire | Mike Thorley |
| Essex | John Williams | Merseyside and Cheshire | Richard Alcock | Wiltshire | Roger Karn |
| Gloucestershire | David Simons | Middlesex | Richard Hillman | Worcestershire | Mike Willoughby |
| Herefordshire | Roy Milnes | Northamptonshire | Mike Keogh | Yorkshire | Philip Mason |
| | | | | | |

Apologies

| Board Members | Heather Dhondy | Rob Lawy | Ron Millet | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Avon | Andrew Urbanski | Hants & IOW | Andy Hughes | Nottinghamshire | Keith Rodgers |
| Bedfordshire | Michael Collins | Isle of Man | John Large | Somerset | Gina Howard |
| Channel Islands | Norman Le Cocq Robert Plumley | Lincolnshire | Guy Grainger | Suffolk | Jeff Orton |
| Cornwall | Mike Booth | Norfolk | Peter Cotes | Westmorland | John Ellwood |
| | | | | | |

Absence – no apologies

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2 Introduction and Welcome

The EBU Chairman Jeremy Dhondy opened the meeting and welcomed all delegates. He began by congratulating the teams had just returned from Croatia with a Gold Medal in the Seniors, Silver Medal in the Ladies and Bronze Medal in the Open. All three teams now qualified to play in Chennai in October 2015. There was a round of applause.

JD next moved on to various administrative matters:

a) ScoreBridge and other scoring programs

The current dispute between Stephen Bligh and the EBU was of concern to clubs and counties. He said that before universal membership began there were a number of scoring programs in use although ScoreBridge was probably the most popular. An interface (USEBIO) allowed data to be transferred from the scoring program to the EBU. It was now time to move matters forward by allowing some team games to count towards NGS and to provide other information such as Butler or Cross IMPs scores. But in order to do that a new version of USEBIO+ was required to list teams pairings (rather than just names) and to list scores at all tables in various player combinations. It would also allow greater interaction with Pianola, which clubs were beginning to use more and more. The EBU wrote to all software providers in January 2013 and again in March 2014 to advise them of the proposed change and how they might want to change their software. ScoreBridge announced, but not until May 2014, they would not be changing to the new format.

Some clubs and counties already use Teams Scorer for teams and ScoreBridge for pairs, so it had been suggested that where clubs and/or counties needed the new facility they use Teams Scorer for any teams events.

Mike Willoughby asked if a list of questions could be submitted to JD. He was concerned about future resilience of the software. JD acknowledged that in a lot of cases the scoring programs were one-man bands. He was happy to take a list of questions.

Mike Keogh asked which scorer was most widely used in clubs. ScoreBridge was almost certainly the market leader in clubs but Pairs Scorer / Teams Scorer etc were often used in counties where more complex tournaments were run.

It was acknowledged that a schism between the EBU and ScoreBridge is not a desirable outcome.

However, it was reiterated that where a club uses ScoreBridge and has no desire to add teams events to be graded using NGS that NO CHANGE WAS NECESSARY.

John Williams said that this had turned into aggro against the EBU for requiring the change. The General Manager said that the EBU had worked with ScoreBridge at the time of the introduction of Universal Membership and the author had been remunerated for his assistance at the time. However times change and for NGS to develop, improvements with Pianola display, the fixing of bugs and future developments the file format needs to be updated.

Andrew Petrie said he was astonished that anyone could think that software would not change over time.

b) August EB

August EB will be last in its current format. Feedback from members indicated that the printed format was what the majority required and, while some had taken to the new online format, it was not the correct time to do away with the printed version. However, it was expensive to post in its current format so from October it will be smaller but have more pages. He acknowledged that

sounded bizarre but under the current post office costings it would mean a saving of between £20K and £25K a year.

c) *County Simultaneous Pairs*

JD said that a number of counties ran their own Simultaneous Pairs events and possibly used ECATS scoring. He said that the EBU's own simultaneous pairs program could be used if counties wished and it would be at a competitive price. Some counties invited unaffiliated clubs to participate. This was not a bar to using the EBU scoring system. Counties were invited to contact Aylesbury for details.

d) *County Management Focus*

JD wondered whether there was any call for an online newsletter in the style of the Club Management Focus, but aimed at Counties and County Chairmen.

Val Gibson said that while it was good idea it was all a question of timing. For example saving the current ScoreBridge issue for a County Management Focus would not have worked and hot topics needed more direct action.

e) *Incentive to advertise*

Counties used to advertise their county congress and one-day events in *English Bridge* but fewer counties did so now as they believed it was expensive. JD said that counties were offered a 50% reduction on advertising space. So, for example a ¼-page ad would be £182.25 instead of £364.50. Full details are available from the EBU office.

f) *English Bridge Education & Development (EBED)*

JD said that the new charity now had its own website, which was still under development and the September simultaneous pairs event would specifically be a fund raiser for the charity.

Val Gibson said she thought EBED was a bad name and that the acronym should be lost. It was also not clear what the lines between EBU and EBED were – it appeared very complicated. For example shouldn't the discussion on education officers be under EBED's remit. Andrew Petrie pointed out that the EBU articles of association had not been changed, so the EBU was still in control of all matters.

3 Discussion Groups

Following a general introduction from JD, the meeting now broke into four groups for discussion. The topics for the four groups were:

Syndicate A: The future of standing committees

Syndicate B: Proposed actions for counties and also EBU/EBED to get more clubs to affiliate

Syndicate C: Administrative Regionalisation as a solution to the shortage of suitable volunteers at County level

Syndicate D: EBU Governance – how to improve/increase the involvement of individual members

Details of each topic is included in Appendix A

4 Feedback from Group Sessions

Group A: Standing Committees

Trevor Ward (Cum), Philip Mason (Yor), Roger Morton (Lon), Tim Dunsby (Dor), Geoff Smith (Ken), Bernard Eddleston (Hrt) – spokesman

- Need for all 3 standing committees

County Chairman's Conference – July 2nd 2014

- People reluctant to stand if not 'known'. Danger of able people missing out knowing they **won't** get elected. So a mix of elected and nominated (as with the Board).
- Committees are large so may need to look at size and 'hangers on'.
- More work should be done by email
- Shareholders and County Chairman's meeting – it was suggested the April Shareholders could be replaced with some other format.
- Working parties drawn up from nominations of people from all levels.
- Possible new standing committee aimed at the needs of newer members.
- The EBED model of recruiting trustees through open advert had brought in some good names.

Group B: Actions for Counties

Mike Thorley (War), Bob Cooke (Man), Richard Hillman (Mid), Mike Hamon (Dev), Richard Alcock (M&C), John Williams (Esx), Mike Willoughby (Wor), Linda Carter (Sta) – spokesman

- EBU must communicate to counties benefit through TDs, magazines, L&E (disincentive), 6 month free might be a possibility to encourage new clubs to affiliate. Free training to non-affiliated clubs
- Explain in simple terms how EBU money is used. Ordinary club members perceive too much is spent on national teams. Good spin needed. Ordinary club members regard counties in good esteem (local), but not the EBU (remote).
- County support for non-affiliated clubs to help bring them back on board
- Put EBU and Counties in a positive light
- What can the EBU do for me? If the EBU can get the message correct, the counties will help to sell it.

Group C: Regionalisation

Roger Karn (Wil), Roy Milnes (Hrf), David Simons (Glo), Michael Keogh (Nhm), Rob Proctor (Oxf), Andy Ryder (Sus) – spokesman

- 50% of counties in the group had problems with volunteer recruitment
- No desire to extend to regions
- It worked well where neighbouring counties talked to each other informally and through County Working Group.
- 2 counties next to each could share resources in, say, a joint County Youth Officer.
- Why do we need a parallel structure of county chairmen, shareholders.
- Different ways in which shareholders are elected, chosen, emerge.
- A bulletin board – might be regional or national
- You tend to trust those nearest to you – club, county, EBU. It gets worse the farther you go.
- Reducing shareholders meetings would make communication harder
- EBED concerned about lack of Youth and Education officers. How to get more.
- Difficult to get into schools due to more checks
- Have a paid regional development officer – ½ paid by EBU, ½ paid by counties
- Look at the old structure of North West, Southern Counties
- Danger of living in an EBU postcode lottery. Some counties very good, others pretty bad.

Group D: Governance

Dean Benton (Lei), Anders Wallen (B&B), Mac Derwig (Sur), Val Gibson (NE), John Brearley (Lan), Arnold Chandler (Der), Chris Jagger (CAH) – spokesman

- Regional meetings liked – practical, sharing ideas etc
- County chairman's meeting good
- Perception that too much is EBU led and not county led
- Forum of ideas
- How to get more individual involvement? Do we want it? More democracy? Most members not interested in what the EBU generally does.
- Pick individuals who can help
- Too many meetings and lack of consistency and joined up approach
- More email distribution for ideas
- Some counties are not large enough to do things on their own; larger counties who are have made progress
- At the top level a CEO to oversee – too much was run by committees.

5 County Working Group

Darren Evetts will be coordinating the national County Working Group next week. He said it was most important to communicate with EBU. The CWG would be looking at cross collaboration and possibly sharing resources. They would be feeding information to reps to pass back. He was keen to develop resources. He also hoped that EBU might be able to take the lead in approaching schools to raise the profile of bridge.

6 Plenary

JD asked whether the County Chairman's conference was worth continuing, move it to every other year, how to place it alongside the CWG, should both stay.

The general consensus was to retain the annual County Chairman's conference and to place it in a suitable spot near to the CWG meeting.

Other points raised:

- Having 3 structures Shareholders, County Chairmen and now CWG looked too much. What would the decision making process be?
All bodies are advisory and report to the Board who make the decisions.
- The county chairman's conference was the only opportunity to meet and be part of the decision making process.
- All working groups should have a start and an end
- All the county chairmen had been elected democratically by OMOV; the Board is elected by shareholders
- Several 1st time shareholders said they had enjoyed the meeting and had learnt a lot.
- Geoff Smith (Kent) said that his county had used the 'buy one get one free' offers for TD training to train about 20 new club TDs. They had provided the funds for the other members to allow all their club TDs to be trained at no personal cost. Herts had done the same thing for their teachers.
- All education training should be directed towards middle age; youth was too long a term objective and largely not fruitful.

JD confirmed the meeting would take place again next year.

7 Any other business

a) Record keeping

JD said that some counties had done some very good work in producing a county archive. He mentioned Kent as a good example. He urged all counties to take steps to keep an archive. He was also hoping to commission some research with a view to writing a history of the EBU.

b) EBU logo

He said that a vital part of communication was to make county websites more obviously linked to the EBU. Counties could download the EBU logo from Peter Stockdale to include on their websites.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.15pm.

Appendix A

County Chairmen's Meeting – Syndicate Briefing Notes

Syndicate A

Topic: *The future of Standing Committees*. The bullet points below represent some concerns and suggestions from the Board.

Format

You have 45 mins to come to a conclusion and prepare a single page of flip chart for feedback. EBU Board members in your group are available to provide info, answer questions etc. Please nominate a spokesperson (not a Board member) who we suggest also 'chairs' the discussion. You should aim to give your feedback in 10 mins.

General issues

- Little competition for places on the SC's
- Good candidates put off by the election methodology. We did very well for candidates for EBED using an appointment process - self-nomination, interview and selection.
- Do shareholders know the suitability of applicants for the role?
- Cost - £50+ per person per meeting + room hire + lunch
- Is it sound governance? - very unusual structure to elect a Board of Directors **and** the sub-committees of that Board (is it in fact unique?). In built possibility of conflict between Board and SC (avoided generally by sensible behaviour by both parties)

Specific issues

Tournament Committee

- Difficult to find any responsibilities that are not also in the CTD's job description – we are spending members' money twice for the same job
- Only about 3000 to 4000 members out of 50000+ affected by the TC

Selection Committee

- Not immediately obvious why we need so many people to select teams
- Very cumbersome when speedy decision making is required
- Difficult to find suitable volunteers who are perceived to have no self interest

Some Questions to stimulate discussion

- Should we abolish the Tournament Committee? - This would need a change to the EBU Constitution.
- Should we replace it with a small sub-committee, considering issues mainly by e-mail when requested by CTD?
- Should we make the Selection Committee smaller?
- Should we appoint a proportion of Standing Committee members?
- What other ideas would improve the situation?

Syndicate B

Topic: *Proposed Actions for Counties and also EBU/EBED to get more clubs to affiliate.*

The bullet points below detail some issues you may want to consider.

Format

You have 45 mins to come to a conclusion and prepare a single page of flip chart for feedback. EBU Board members in your group are available to provide info, answer questions etc. Please nominate a spokesperson (not a Board member please) who we suggest also 'chairs' the discussion. You should aim to give your feedback in 10 mins.

- Should EBU offer services to non- affiliated clubs (in return for a fee)? If so which?
- Which EBU services are the Crown Jewels – only available to EBU affiliated clubs?
- If we did this, how do you avoid diluting EBU membership so that affiliated clubs say 'we might as well not affiliate' or "they've given away the benefits of membership"?
- In the light of your recommendations, how should Counties & the EBU encourage non-affiliated clubs to join. 2 specific actions for Counties and 2 for the EBU.

Syndicate C

Topic: Administrative Regionalisation as a solution to the shortage of suitable volunteers at County level. The bullet points below detail some issues you may want to consider.

Format

You have 45 mins to come to a conclusion and prepare a single page of flip chart for feedback. EBU Board members in your group are available to provide info, answer questions etc. Please nominate a spokesperson (not a Board member please) who we suggest also 'chairs' the discussion. You should aim to give your feedback in 10 mins.

- What roles and responsibilities could be successfully carried out regionally?
- What roles and responsibilities must remain with Counties?
- How might the Finances of a Regional administrative structure work?
- Carry out a brief SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis on the idea and present it back to the plenary session

Syndicate D

Topic: *EBU Governance – how to improve/increase the involvement of individual members.*

The bullet points below detail some issues you may want to consider.

Format

You have 45 mins to come to a conclusion and prepare a single page of flip chart for feedback. EBU Board members in your group are available to provide info, answer questions etc. Please nominate a spokesperson (not a Board member please) who we suggest also 'chairs' the discussion. You should aim to give your feedback in 10 mins.

- At the inception of Universal Membership we discussed and rejected the idea of one member one vote for AGM's and similar. Is it now time to enable individual members to be more involved?
- Which of these ideas would improve individual member participation
 - a) OMOV at County level to elect Shareholders
 - b) 1 or 2 EBU Directors to be elected by online voting by individual members
 - c) More frequent online club surveys
 - d) More frequent online individual member surveys
 - e) Other – please suggest other ideas
- If some of the above was done only online for obvious cost benefits, would this be worth the cost of some members feeling disenfranchised? What proportion would this be do you think?
- Please propose 2 specific and achievable actions for Counties and 2 for the EBU.