



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION
HELD AT KETTERING PARK HOTEL, KETTERING
ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2004**

Present:	Denis A Robson	Chairman
	Philip G Mason	Vice Chairman
	Tom J Bradley	Treasurer
	John Carter	
	David R Harris	
	David G Martin	
	Jeff K Morris	
	John D Neville	
	Peter Stocken	
	Terry Collier	General Manager
	Michele Attard	Office Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms Hamilton.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 4 NOVEMBER 2003

2.1 Accuracy

Amendments were made to:

2.2 *Constitutional Reform*, 2nd sentence should read:

“It was considered unnecessary to instruct Hammonds to draft the Bye-Law allowing Council to dissolve itself, and this would be drafted by Mr Harris.”

3.1 – The sentence should conclude as follows: *“.....and that there was also income from the BGB reserves of £10,000 which had been included.”*

With the above amendments, the Minutes were **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Inland Revenue – Status of TDs – Update (item 2.2.3)

The General Manager reported that he had been advised by the EBU Auditor, Tony Parks, that he had had positive discussions with the Inland Revenue on the subject of whether or not TDs are self-employed, and that a written response was now awaited.

The General Manager confirmed that the allowances would be reviewed on receipt of the letter from the Inland Revenue.

2.2.2 *Possible EBU Trust (item 2.2.2)*

Mr Harris **agreed** to review the documentation printed from the Charity Commission website, with a view to explaining what would be required to form an EBU Trust.

The General Manager reported that the money being received from Bill Fung was to be paid to the Educational Trust at the end of the month by a BACs transfer. The Treasurer confirmed that arrangements are in place to pay this directly to the EBU.

2.2.3 *Board Responsibilities (item 6)*

The following changes to the draft Board responsibilities were agreed:

Philip Mason	-	delete: <i>County and Club liaison</i>
	-	add: <i>Development Committee</i>
Tom Bradley	-	delete: <i>Computer Working Party</i>
	-	add: <i>Youth</i>
Jeff Morris	-	add: <i>Political matters (with Chairman)</i>

The General Manager reported that Counties had been advised that he was available to attend forthcoming County meetings in order to update Counties on the Development Plan, and provide an opportunity for Counties to ask questions etc. Twelve Counties have taken up the offer, and two meetings had already been attended. Mr Neville advised that this had been well received at the recent Berks & Bucks County meeting. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman **agreed** to cover County meetings for the north of England, where possible.

2.2.4 *White Book (item 13.3)*

The General Manager advised that notification had been received that the WBF is to implement legislative changes on 1 January 2006, and this would necessitate a re-write of the White Book. Because of this, it has been **agreed** that the White Book will not be published. It will, however, be copied at a cost of approx. £1,000 and circulated as directed by the Chief TD. It is also currently available on the EBU website and on the CASS CD sent in the posting after Christmas.

2.2.5 *“Ryder Cup” Event (item 2.2.1)*

Mr Morris asked for an update on the “Ryder Cup” event. The Chairman reported that Paul Hackett had had a conversation with the existing ACBL President and the President-elect, who were both in favour of such an event. Max Bavin has been asked to consider what format such an event should take. Discussion followed on the benefit of the event to English bridge, and if this was indeed an appropriate event for getting English sponsors involved, or whether it was something that, perhaps, the EBL should be involved in since the Ryder Cup itself is a European event. It was **agreed** that Mr Harris raises the matter with the president of the EBL, stating that the Americans are interested.

2.2.6 *Board event at Channel Trophy in Maastricht (item 13.2)*

Mr Neville advised that this invitation had proved valuable, and that the Dutch had gone to great lengths with their hospitality. However, he expressed concern that there was a desire for this to be an annual event, and there could be a considerable cost to it, perhaps in region of £1,000 for the hospitality side since travel and accommodation is borne by each country attending. Following discussion on the options for such an event, it was **agreed** by a vote of 6:2 for England to host the Board event alongside the next Channel Trophy, with the proviso that time is to be set aside for formal discussions on the future of this event. It was suggested that the Board event should run every three years in order for hosting of the event to cycle around the participating nations. The Chairman asked that £1,000 be put in the budget for this event.

2.2.6 *Personal Expenses, Allowances, Fees and Charges Review (item 3.4)*

The Treasurer advised that, following discussions with Max Bavin, there would be no increase to the In-charge Bonus for this year.

3. FINANCIAL MATTERS

3.1 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that results from the Bridge Shop were disappointing, as were Master Points. However, the latter had been affected by Colin Porch's protracted absence, during which some tasks had fallen behind. Membership is below budget, and is showing 1,000 members less than December 2002. Sales of *Bridge for All* units have been a little disappointing. Competitions are doing well. However, this may be due to the fact that the anticipated increase in accommodation costs has not yet materialised, but this may happen in the next year. There was an additional £6,000 expenditure in Internationals due to the invitation to the Junior Championships in August. The NBO budget includes the extra money from BGB. The Treasurer advised that interest in Sims Pairs might be declining since they were many such events in close proximity. Anna Gudge had recently held a charity Sims Pairs for Children in Need. There was discussion on the licensing of such events, and it was **agreed** that the General Manager would report back on this. It was noted that Overheads are doing well.

The report was **approved**.

The Treasurer advised that he had investigated the comment made at Council regarding non-payment for Master Points by clubs for some 18 months. He had had discussions with Brian Smith and it was felt that the situation was far from the grim picture painted at Council. At the end of the last Financial Year a review of the pattern of returns was undertaken, and this showed possible queries with five clubs. Each of these has now been resolved, and procedures are being tightened. The Treasurer felt that he could reassure Council at the next meeting.

Mr Martin advised that the L&E Committee would like the Board's permission to give retained appeal deposits to a charity at the end of each year. It was felt that this would stop frivolous appeals, particularly from the more experienced players. Mr Harris expressed concern regarding the amount involved and the message being given out. The Board did not accept the proposal.

3.2 Accounts for Nine Months ended 31 December 2003

The accounts were **noted**.

4. DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND COMMITTEE

The General Manager advised that four Topic Groups had been set up in support of the Development Plan, and had met to discuss Communications, Events, and Youth Bridge, with Ranking & Handicap System taking place on 30 January 2004. Two additional Topic Groups are to be set up to cover: 'How to get more students into clubs?' and 'What is meant by Beacon Clubs?'

Mr Martin asked that careful consideration be given as to the deliverables from these Topic Groups, to ensure they were realistic. The General Manager advised that feedback from these groups would be provided to the Development Committee for consideration, and then a detailed strategic program for implementing the agreed ideas in support of the Development Plan would be produced. It was felt crucial that all new events, services to members etc should always be linked back to the Development Plan, and that members should be kept informed of this.

In Ms Hamilton's absence, the General Manager reported that the Communications Topic Group had been very valuable. The meeting had been attended by Ms Hamilton, Anna Gudge (EBU Web Master), Jane Scarfe (EBU member volunteer), Mike Rowe (Blue2), Paul Still (EBU staff) and the General Manager. Ideas for consideration included: looking at a new image for the EBU,

including a new name; overhaul of *English Bridge* in terms of layout, design and content; make more use of electronic communications; and review the value of all other EBU publications, e.g. *The Ruffian*, *Accolade*, etc.

It was **agreed** that the report on the Communications Topic Group be carried forward to the next Board meeting, to enable Ms Hamilton to feedback on the session.

The Vice Chairman appraised the Board on the outcome of the Events Topic Group. The meeting had been attended by: Mr Carter, Addis Page (Beds & Bucks), Graham Jepson (Yorkshire), PoShing Lee (BridgeClubLive), Suzanne Gill (Norfolk), John Pain (Development Manager), Alison Nicolson (Development Officer), Max Bavin (Tournaments Manager) and the General Manager. Apologies had been received from Edward Kelly. The group considered events of a more social nature, such as the Ham House National Trust visit, the Ron Klinger Master Class tour and the recent bridge at the ballet event held in Milton Keynes. It was felt that more partnerships should be developed with organisations such as the National Trust and charities. Social bridge events could include theatre trips, stately homes, charity events, golf, skiing, gardening, cookery, etc. The Vice Chairman advised that Mr Jepson is keen to start the ball rolling in this regard, and is looking at a visit to Chatsworth House, followed by bridge at the Beauchief Hotel. The Vice Chairman concluded that the meeting had been very valuable, with some good ideas to consider.

The Vice Chairman advised that discussions were being had with Mr Klinger with a view to another tour in the autumn of 2004. It was felt that English talent should also be considered in this regard, and the General Manager was asked to provide a skeleton plan for Mr Stocken to discuss with Andrew Robson, in order to elicit whether Mr Robson had any interest in such a venture.

4.1 Youth Squad Committee

The Treasurer advised that, following the resignations of the Youth Squad Development team, the existing youth programme had been achieved with considerable assistance from various people, including by those who had resigned, who agreed to fulfil the tasks they had originally agreed to undertake.

A meeting had been held with Mel Starking and Paul Bowyer, who had been offered and accepted the role of Under-20s Squad Manager and Under-25s Squad Manager respectively. In recognition of the importance of these roles, the Treasurer advised that a small remuneration in the sum of £2,000 p.a. had been provided to each of the new Squad Managers. The primary task for the new Squad Managers currently is to provide good teams for the championships in Prague.

In light of the recent difficulties regarding the youth squad, it was agreed that the Treasurer had done an excellent job in putting it to rights. The Board therefore, approved the proposal tabled by the Treasurer in agenda paper 4.1:

- a. The Junior Squad Committee to be established as a sub-committee of the Board.
- b. Mr Tom Bradley (EBU Treasurer) to be appointed Chairman of the Junior Squad Committee.
- c. The appointment of Mr Mel Starking and Mr Paul Bowyer to represent the squads on the Selection Committee and to vote, in accordance with Bye-Law 25.2 and the period referred to in Bye-Law 27.

The Treasurer advised that he had investigated the behaviour matters raised previously and had found very little. He felt it better to draw a line under the past incidents and allow Mr Starking and Mr Bowyer to handle such matters in future. He thanked Aylesbury, in particular the General Manager, John Pain and Alison Nicolson, for doing a good job in a difficult situation.

Mr Morris asked for clarity on the position of the Regional Youth Officers. The General Manager advised that, at the last Youth Working Party, the RYO's had been stood down until a decision had been made regarding the structure of the Youth Committee. In light of the newly formed Youth Squad Committee, it was felt it was now appropriate to consider the role of the RYO's.

Mr Morris expressed concern regarding lack of continuity in the work that the RYO's undertake. The General Manager advised that the majority had continued to work even though they were not being paid. Mr Morris was asked to provide the General Manager with a list of youth matters which he felt were in jeopardy.

5. SINGLE ENTITY – Response from Council

The Chairman reported that Council had approved the amendment to the Bye-Laws allowing them to dissolve themselves, when required, and thanked Mr Stocken and the Vice Chairman for their work on this matter to date. Mr Stocken advised that work should now proceed with Hammonds to draft the memorandum and articles to be presented to the Council in June, and agreed that this would be closely monitored in terms of cost.

A short break was held during which the members of the Remunerations Committee (Mr Carter, Mr Martin and Mr Stocken) met to review the officers' fees.

The Remuneration Committee reported that there had not been an increase in officers' fees since 2001, and recommended that a 10% increase be allowed for in the forthcoming budget. The fees from 1 April 2004 would, therefore, be:

Chairman	£1,540
Vice Chairman	£770
Treasurer	£1,210
Committee Chairman	£140
(Selection, Tournament and L&E Committees)	

The proposal was **accepted**.

6. NATIONAL BRIDGE CENTRE - Update

The General Manager reported that the upper floor of the Kettering Leisure Village would provide 15,000 sq ft of space, which could provide a 100-table bridge room, office and storage space, additional smaller bridge rooms, and support service such as catering facilities. There was land adjacent to the facility with outline planning permission for a 100-bed hotel. The General Manager advised that there are three hotels in the vicinity of the Leisure Village.

There were three ways in which the EBU could be involved:

- a. As a weekend user of the space owned by Phoenix Leisure – block booking.
- b. The EBU to refurbish the upper floor, and then manage the space as a bridge environment during the weekend and conferences during the week.
- c. The EBU to refurbish the space and move the offices etc from Aylesbury.

It was recognised that in order to achieve full benefit from such a venture, the Aylesbury offices would need to be moved. It would be expensive to achieve Option 3, and a new company would need to be established with the EBU as an investor/shareholder. This would also offer an opportunity for sponsors, clubs and individuals to invest.

Concern was expressed regarding the realisation of funds for such a venture, and it was felt that a detailed business plan was required, showing which events could realistically be held at the NBC.

There was discussion regarding which events would be held at the NBC. Mr Mason reminded the Board that the Tournament Committee was finding it increasingly difficult to source venues for bridge events, as hotels preferred weddings and other such functions on weekends. The General Manager advised that the Kettering Bridge Club are about to spend over £100,000 on refurbishing their facilities, and may be encouraged to use the NBC during the week instead.

The Board reiterated their interest in a National Bridge Centre, and asked for more detailed costs.

7. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT (Confidential)

7.1 Smoking

Following complaints from staff, and forthcoming changes in national legislation, it was **agreed** that the offices in Aylesbury would become a non-smoking environment within three months. Consultation would be undertaken with those members of staff who smoke to ensure their welfare was also considered.

7.2 Staffing

The General Manager advised that implementing the Development Plan was having a detrimental impact on the amount of resource available. In light of the recent retirement of both Christine Duckworth and Chris Brown, it was **agreed** that the Treasurer and the General Manager would review the budget with a view to finding funds to employ someone to assist with the implementation of the Development Plan.

The General Manager advised that Gill Pain was recovering well from recent major surgery, and that Colin Porch had now returned after a protracted period of sickness.

7.3 Payments to County Associations

It was **agreed** that monthly cheques to Counties for membership fees would only be raised if the sum were in excess of £10.00.

8. YOUTH CARE AND SAFETY POLICY

Mr Harris advised that the draft policy was a comprehensive document. However, he raised concern about the impact of the policy and the matter of criminal record disclosure on many EBU members currently involved with young people. He agreed that the EBU must be seen to be “clean”, and that we cannot afford not to have such a policy.

The General Manager advised that the EBU disclosure procedure was working well, with very few complaints received. He would be asking Aylesbury staff to voluntarily go through disclosure.

9. OVERSEAS CONGRESS 2005 – PROPOSALS

Following consideration of the proposals received, it was **agreed** to proceed further with the Tunisia proposal put forward by Bridge Overseas.

10. IT PROJECTS

The General Manager advised that the Business Analysis Review undertaken at Aylesbury by Accounting Answers Ltd had been very successful. The Aylesbury managers recognised that, even though the new system could replicate 95% of the existing business practices, there was an opportunity to review some of these, making them more streamlined and efficient. They were, therefore, keen to progress with Accounting Answers Ltd.

Mr Martin reported that the client reference visit had been very valuable, with many lessons to be learnt from. He did, however, feel that the presented budget was insufficient, and recommended a budget allocation of £50,000 plus the appointment of a Project Manager. It was **agreed** to progress with Accounting Answers Ltd, and that a detailed implementation plan and firmer costings should be prepared for the next Board meeting.

11. ITEMS FROM JOHN CARTER

11.1 EBU Vouchers

It was **agreed** to carry this item over to the next Board meeting.

11.2 Bridgемate Terminals

A paper on Bridgемate Terminals (a tabletop wireless score recording and reporting mechanism) was presented by Mr Carter. The terminals were used by the Dutch in the recent Channel Trophy event.

Mr Carter felt that the Bridgемate Terminals would soon be employed as a commonplace piece of equipment at bridge events. He explained that the Bridgемate Terminal supplier was looking for a UK partner, and that this may be an opportunity for the EBU to consider. He was, however, uncertain as to the back-room requirement for the terminal, and it was agreed that this be investigated and pilot trials undertaken. It was noted that an English manufacturer was currently trialling such terminals at the South Bucks Bridge Club, and the General Manager was asked to investigate this.

Mr Morris asked if there was an update on the new duplimate machines which could read normal cards. The General Manager advised that Carte Mundi were currently testing machines from Australia and Singapore; and Jannersten had advised him that he would not be moving from his current system, but would reduce the cost of his cards if he needed to compete with these new machines.

12. COMMITTEE REPORTS

12.1 Editorial Board – 17 December 2003 (E-meeting)

The General Manager reported that there had been an electronic meeting of the Editorial Board in December, and that the report had been on the situation regarding the agreement with Blue2. He had advised the Editorial Board that an alternative supplier had been found, and that, following further discussions with Blue2, Blue2 had matched the proposal and agreed the terms of a new agreement with the EBU. The agreement is due to be signed next week. The General Manager was pleased to advise that advertising in *English Bridge* has been improving. The new agreement will see an opportunity for the EBU to share in the advertising profit on a 50:50 basis.

13. BGB MATTERS

Mr Neville tabled a report on BGB Matters, and advised that, following the recent discussion of Master Points at Council, concern had been raised with regards to any changes being made to the Master Point Scheme - in particular, the merits of extending the awards to the top half of the field.

He advised that the SBU continued to expound their different views on devolution, and would be making further representation.

The Vice Chairman indicated that there was an inaccuracy in item 1 (e): the Gold Cup entry fee was £13 per player, not £52 per team.

14. EBL AND WBF MATTERS

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter from the EBF President regarding the use of symmetrical cards produced by SIC. He was pleased to report that the EBU already purchased and used these cards.

14.1 Proposed Womens Under-25 European Championships

The Treasurer reported that the recommendation from the Squad Managers was that they would be unable to send a team this year, but they would not preclude sending a team in the future. Their recommendation was **accepted**, and the EBF would be advised accordingly.

14.2 Proposed Chef de Mission

Mr Harris explained that the position of Chef de Mission for the Malmo championships was an attempt to facilitate the smooth running of the event. The visit is geared towards the Captain of the team, but the EBU was not yet in a position to identify this person. He felt that the visit was desirable, but that a cost would be incurred. The Chairman advised that an email had been received from Max Bavin indicating that problems had been encountered in trying to find hotels in Malmo, and that, whilst this was an additional expense, he felt it appropriate that an early visit be made in order to assist with finding accommodation. Since the NPC had not yet been appointed, it was **agreed** to approach John Williams with a view to attending this visit.

15. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

The General Manager advised that there was nothing to report.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 It was requested that any expense claims etc be forwarded to Aylesbury in a timely manner, as the budget forecast was being undertaken.

16.2 Mr Morris tabled a paper on “Mind Sports and Government Recognition”. He asked for comments to be forwarded to him.

16.3 The Vice Chairman expressed concern that results were not being published on time on the website. The General Manager explained that there was a difficulty when TDs were responsible for providing the results. The Chairman asked that this matter be raised with the Tournament Committee.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 18 March 2004, 12.30 p.m., at 40 Bernard Street, London
