



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION
HELD AT KETTERING PARK HOTEL, KETTERING
ON TUESDAY 25 JANUARY 2005**

Present:	Denis Robson	(DR)	Chairman
	Tom J Bradley	(TB)	Treasurer
	Philip G Mason	(PM)	Vice Chairman
	Sally Bugden	(SB)	
	John Carter	(JC)	
	Chris Dixon	(CD)	
	Jeff K Morris	(JM)	
	John D Neville	(JN)	
	Terry Collier	(TC)	General Manager
	Clare Farthing	(CF)	Minute Taker

ACTION

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alan Nelson and David Harris.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 2 NOVEMBER 2004

2.1 Accuracy

It was noted that Jeff Morris had requested that Board minutes be available at Shareholder meetings which have had the benefit of having been reviewed by Board members.

The minutes were **approved**.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Constitutional Reform (2.2.1)

The Chairman confirmed that the English Bridge Union has become a single entity; the 'English Bridge Union Ltd'. This was a unanimous vote by Shareholders at the Extraordinary General Meeting on 12 January 2005.

2.2.2 Master Points Discussion Paper (4) & Ranking Proposal

The Vice Chairman confirmed that the Tournament Committee will form their own working party to discuss this proposal further and report back. The Vice Chairman suggested an article be written for the April edition of *English Bridge* to explain the implications and the way forward.

The Chairman asked the Board if it was worth pursuing the idea of a Ranking Proposal and the Board were unanimous in its worthiness. It was noted how disappointing Council's reaction had been, but it was felt perhaps it was inappropriate timing at the end of a very long meeting.

2.2.3 MiniBridge Development (7)

The General Manager advised that we are still awaiting news on the grant applied for by Richard Edwards Ltd. John Neville had heard from David Harris with regard to copyright, it was felt that there were no concerns, as long as we were aware of other people's publications.

2.2.4 Youth Development (2.2.4)

The Treasurer advised that Paul Bowyer and Alison Nicolson are working on the matter of the Women's Youth Team and the General Manager reported on progress. The Treasurer confirmed that correspondence was on-going with Mr Kambites.

2.2.5 Membership Development (5)

It was noted that a same address joint membership discount was not approved by the Officers, but that this matter needs to be explored further.

3. FINANCIAL MATTERS

3.1 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented his report and advised that whilst the overall budget for the year was for an £11k loss, recent figures indicated that this would be nearer £30k. Much of this is due to a further decline in our membership, which this year is now estimated to be some nine hundred fewer than last year. On the positive side Competitions are performing well and should exceed budget by £5k. General concern was expressed over the continuing decline in membership and whilst it was appreciated that many members have been lost due to problems associated with age, it was felt that more should be done to investigate the dissatisfaction issues.

December accounts were tabled at the meeting.

The budgeting process is underway and the Treasurer will present this at the next Board meeting.

Chris Dixon commented on the impact of Internationals on the budget and believed that sponsorship opportunities should be further explored. He would be willing to investigate further. The Board agreed that such sponsorship would be welcome, subject to approval of the impact that it would have and sufficient understanding of the sponsor's intentions. The Board agreed, should sponsorship be found to the staging of an exhibition match at the summer meeting, as team preparation for the Bermuda Bowl.

A request had been made of the Chairman to allow an Australian team free entry to Brighton. This was agreed, but unfortunately we cannot assist with accommodation costs.

The report was **noted**.

3.2 Accounts for 9 Months ended 31 December 2004

The accounts were **noted**.

4. NATIONAL BRIDGE CENTRE

Following a pre-Board visit to Kettering Leisure Village and a presentation there, the Board agreed that EBU should now enter into detailed negotiations seeking to develop a mutually satisfactory way forward. The Vice-Chairman suggested that the Chairman, Treasurer, General Manager and John Neville convene as a sub-committee, and this was agreed. It was also noted that professional advice/assistance would be required and it was agreed that the Officers would approve this, as required.

The Chairman reminded the Board of his position as a Director of Shire Hotels. This company was likely to oppose planning applications for the development of a hotel at Kettering Leisure Village. The Board understood and accepted Mr Robson's position.

5. PROPOSED CHAIRMANS' CONFERENCE

It was suggested that this conference is held on Tuesday 10 May at Kettering Leisure Village. The Board meeting would then be held the day after, at Kettering Park Hotel.

6. MARKETING GROUP – REPORT

Sally Bugden presented the results of a recent membership survey which was undertaken in Sussex and a Marketing Paper which arose from a meeting between Chris Dixon and herself.

The Board noted the results of the Sussex survey and in particular the conclusion, which states:

The core purpose of the research has resulted in a negative response to a reduced fee gathered by clubs. Therefore, to encourage players to take part in activities organised by the county and the EBU other policies need to be formulated to make the organisation accessible and welcoming to new players.

The Marketing Paper acknowledged that despite the publication of our Development Plan our membership is still in decline, therefore, it is important to assess the effectiveness of the service we provide against the requirements of potential members. The report identified a number of new services that could be introduced, for instance exclusive web based services and new county events and training opportunities in particular to attract new players. It should be policy to identify lapsed members as of 31st May, rather than 31st July, with all membership rights being immediately withdrawn.

The General Manager welcomed the report and felt it highlighted the need for considerable effort and finance in attracting the next generation of bridge players and EBU members.

It was agreed that would be discussed further at the next meeting.

6.1 Editorial Board – 7 December 2004

It was noted that an advertising income of £21k had been achieved. A competitor review to see how *English Bridge* compares and to promote our strengths has been requested.

7. BGB MATTERS

Nothing specific to report, with the next meeting being in March to review the Annual Accounts.

8. EBL AND WBF MATTERS

It was asked that information relating to the next European Junior Championship be obtained.

Chris Dixon made the Board aware that the Women's Team may be invited to play in the Venice Trophy at Estoril.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 The Chairman advised that we need to set up a Disciplinary Panel and asked that the Board advise him of any suggestions for consideration.

9.2 The Chairman advised that Doris Coltman from Merseyside CBA complained that she had been wrongly accused of stealing by a member of the Aylesbury Tournament Department who was officiating at a local tournament. The General Manager advised that he had written a letter of apology and instructed the member of staff to send a personal letter of apology. The Board noted this very unfortunate situation.

9.3 Chris Dixon asked if it had been clarified whether all members of Counties are members of the EBU. This would be investigated further.

9.4 We have now introduced measures for an IT disaster recovery plan and are documenting procedures.

9.5 The General Manager advised that an updated version of CASS was to have been released in August 2004 but this had not been achieved and there was no likelihood of this in the near future. Due to this, it was recommended that all future CASS development be ceased and that our effort be directed to specifying the interface for other scoring systems to automatically credit Master Points. It was considered that this is the best course of action to serve the needs of larger clubs, whilst the current version of CASS catered for the smaller clubs. This course of action was approved.

9.6 John Neville raised his concerns at the Orange Book article in the forthcoming edition of *English Bridge*. It is outside the scope of the average bridge player and could be a negative to attracting new membership.

9.7 The Chairman asked Sally Bugden if she would consider taking on Board responsibility for EBUTA, she agreed to consider this.

- 9.8** It was confirmed that the Chairman or the Vice Chairman of each County Association would be invited to attend the Chairmans' Conference at Kettering Leisure Village on Tuesday 10 May.
- 9.9** The Chairman proposed a further 10% reduction for Eden B.C. with regard to their Bridge Shop order in light of the recent flooding in Cumbria, and this was agreed.

*The next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 March 2005
in the Pitman Room, Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London.*

(All meetings commence at 12.30 p.m. unless otherwise indicated)