



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2006,
AT 40 BERNARD STREET, LONDON.**

Present:	Denis Robson	(Chairman)
	Philip Mason	(Vice-Chairman)
	John Neville	(Hon. Treasurer)
	Sally Bugden	
	David Harris	
	Graham Jepson	
	Jeff Morris	
	Martin Pool	
	Barry Capal	(General Manager)
	Sandra Claridge	(Minute Taker)

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Carter and Alan Nelson.

2 Minutes of the meeting of 12th July 2006

2.1 Accuracy

2.1.1 *Item 8.1.* The second paragraph to read... “The General Manager said he was considering the potential of an existing member of staff to undertake communications, which would involve a small amount of investment in training and media aids.”

2.1.2 *Item 11.2.2.* The first sentence to read... “The Board noted with regret the resignation of Mel Starkings, with effect from 31st December 2006, due to pressure of work.”

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Item 2. Board Members’ Shareholding

It was confirmed that only Officers of the Company were excluded from being Shareholders.

2.2.2 Item 4.1.1 Trust Account

It was agreed that the Bank Account would be opened, and that progress would be made on the application for charitable status following the Annual General Meeting, incorporating the new Officers as Trustees.

2.2.3 Item 4.1.4 Educational DVD

The General Manager reported that despite a thorough search, nothing had been found. The Chairman agreed to contact Terry Collier to try to establish its whereabouts.

2.2.4 Youth Awards

Jeff Morris reported that the standard procedure for awards to young players established by John Pain in conjunction with the Squad Managers had lapsed. However, awards had recently been made, as follows:

- *Young Pair of the Year*
No awards having been made for Young Pair of the Year in 2004 and 2005, three awards were made to Nicola McDougall & Alex Morton, Tom & Ben Paske, and James Thrower & Tom Rainforth. These had been presented at the Brighton Summer Meeting.
- *Young Player of the Year* was awarded to Tom Dessain, and presented at the Brighton/Scarborough Summer Meetings.
- *The Alec Salisbury Award* for an adult who has made an outstanding contribution to the development of Youth Bridge by a school teacher was won by Judy Honickberg (Reading School).
- *The Tom Bradley Award*, in memory of the late Hon. Treasurer, for a non-school teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the development of Youth Bridge, was won by Cedric Cockroft of Harrogate. This award was presented at the Scarborough Congress.

It was agreed that to re-establish the process on a firm footing, further awards would be made in January 2007 by the Education Department, in conjunction with the Squad Managers and members of the Board with responsibility for Youth Matters, to reflect performance in 2006. Jeff suggested that these might be presented at the Young Bridge Challenge.

2.2.5 Item 10.8 Delegated Responsibilities

The General Manager said that he was now included as a Bank signatory, and that the various financial limits for signatories had been confirmed. Other delegated powers have not yet been advised.

2.2.6 Item 11.2.2 U20s Squad Manager

Graham Jepson reported that Michael Byrne had agreed to undertake the role of U20s Squad Manager for a 2-year trial period, commencing on 1st January 2007, assisted by Duncan Happer. This arrangement was approved by the Board. He also reported that a Contract had been produced which all members of the junior squads will be required to sign.

Graham Jepson expressed considerable concern about past alcohol problems involving young England teams. It was agreed that existing guidance notes in regard to an acceptable standard of behaviour would be updated, and all young players would be made fully aware of the consequences of contravening the regulations. In addition, Jeff Morris and Graham Jepson would produce a policy document detailing procedures for caution, and exclusion from the Squads. The Chairman said that it was imperative to ensure that the EBU could not be held responsible for any accident caused by drug or alcohol abuse by young people.

At a recent Loughborough training weekend for U20s, despite being well attended by helpers and parents, behavioural problems existed. Such situations are difficult to monitor, and more back-up for Squad Managers would be needed in future.

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It was also agreed that Youth Officers would liaise with Squad Managers to produce a list of potential Non-playing Captains for the U20s, for the benefit of the Selection Committee. The general feeling was that it was now necessary to appoint a married couple, or a male captain plus a female as chaperone for girl team members, and volunteers would be sought. Ability to ensure that the behaviour of young players representing their country was of the standard expected of them, was seen as the most important quality needed. It was noted that anyone, either on a volunteer or staff basis, working with young people or having access to a youth database, would have to be CRB checked, and this requirement would be incorporated into the EBU's Contract of Employment.

2.2.7 *Item 11.3.1 White Book*

Martin Pool said that printing of the White Book, with recent modifications, was planned for November at a cost of around £2.5K. It was agreed that the booklet would be provided free to panel TDs, and that it would otherwise be sold for £1.50 per copy, and available for collection at Shareholders' Meetings. The new VP scales would come into force on 1st November.

2.2.8 *Item 11.3.3 Disability Policy*

David Harris confirmed that in his opinion the Laws & Ethics Committee had done its very best to accommodate everyone, had more than adequately fulfilled the EBU's obligations under the Disability Act, and was under no obligation to seek further legal advice on the subject. Martin Pool said that the Committee will keep an open mind for the future, will reassess the situation in light of experience, and report to the Board, as necessary.

2.2.9 *Item 14.1 Bridge Ryder Cup*

Jeff Morris reported that the CBAI has generated considerable media interest in the Buffett Cup in Ireland. James Smith, the actor and Press Officer to the London Metropolitan Bridge Association, has agreed to act as the EBU liaison officer to the BBC, if an approach to Channel 5 bears any fruit.

2.2.10 *Item 8.2 Website Advertising*

Sally Bugden said that the new Blue2 advertising salesperson had attracted a significant amount of new copy, but his success could only be gauged on revenue retention. The offer of website advertising space had been publicized. Whilst it was noted that a device was available to upload onto a Digital Teletext site, the Board supported Sally's view that it was preferable to have an improved website and communication service for members.

3 FINANCIAL MATTERS

3.1 *Treasurer's Report for four months ended 31st July 2006*

John Neville reported that the first four months of the year had been broadly in line with expectation, and allowance had been made for our European Championships Ladies team's qualification for the Venice Cup.

3.2 *Proposed Membership Subscriptions for 2007/8*

The proposed increase of 50p effective from 1st April 2007 was approved. The Treasurer anticipated that this increase would be an annual feature unless the level of membership increased, or an improved method of subscription collection could be devised. It was confirmed that currently less than 50% of the membership pay by Direct Debit, and only 22 out of 39 counties renew direct.

David Harris said that the President of the WBF had been pushing for an increase in the rate of NBOs' subscriptions to the World Bridge Federation, currently US50 cents per member, for some time, and the WBF has now agreed small annual increments to achieve an increase to \$1 by 2010, which would have a significant impact on the EBU's finances. The EBU's annual subscriptions are currently £9K (WBF) and £14.5K (EBL).

4 MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP

4.1 Report on August Meeting

Philip Mason reported that Peter Kaufmann had sadly had to resign from the group, for personal reasons.

All three of the Union's standing Committees had now debated the Group's paper, with a sympathetic approach. The Tournament Committee is well aware that for some time it has been targeting too small a market, and there will be an ongoing agenda item to encourage a wider market to participate in EBU tournaments by the introduction of events to cater for lesser players.

Sally Bugden, David Graham and Val Lawson had expended a large amount of time and energy visiting a considerable number of bridge clubs, and more visits are planned in the near future. The programme of visits, which had been very successful as a PR exercise, would be ongoing in an effort to encourage non-affiliated clubs to affiliate. There had been minimal contact with Counties, and no approach as yet to the English Golf Union. At its meeting in October the Group would assimilate the information and feedback received.

Sally said that obvious trends had been identified, including in particular the negative impact of bad behaviour. Increased teacher feed-in was vital to halt the decline in membership, and it was hoped that this could be achieved by the new initiative embracing teaching, development and membership retention.

4.2 BFA Focus on Value

The Board discussed the paper produced by Sue Maxwell entitled 'Focus on Value', which had been supported wholeheartedly by the Membership Development Action Group at its recent meeting. It was conceded that a considerable amount of investment had been put into the *Bridge for All* scheme, which had not been as successful as had been hoped, and the Union now had to look for ways to adapt the Education Department to develop the Focus on Value ideas. Sue Maxwell had managed to convince her students of the value of investing in the scheme, retaining 90% of her EBU members, and with her agreed input, an improved teacher training programme could be put in place.

It was agreed that Sue would be requested to produce a numerical framework for potential new teachers, and in particular the likely cost of setting up a new club. Sally Bugden and Barry Capal stressed that for the membership to grow the EBU must focus its energies into a development scheme of partnership with the EBU by way of partner teachers and partner clubs. David Harris agreed that the formula had a great deal to recommend it, but it was equally important to have someone with sufficient motivation to carry it forward.

The Board expressed enthusiastic support for the project, subject to some refinement before producing concrete guidelines, and looked forward to further developing the concepts. It was agreed that the

introduction of the scheme would be publicized in the short term, and that details would be available before the start of the 2007/8 academic year.

5 TOURNAMENTS VENUE

The General Manager reported that with Max Bavin he had visited a hotel in Hinckley, Leicestershire, which offered playing facilities comparable with Kettering, 340 bedrooms, bars and restaurant, on an excellent motorway network. The function room cost was less than Kettering, and two firm bookings had been made for next season.

John Neville said that he and Barry had attended another meeting at Kettering at which it had become clear that though some improvements had been made, there was no prospect of a hotel within two years, and costs remain higher than other options. A meeting was planned with the Kettering management in the autumn to review the current situation, but there was general agreement that promises had not been kept, and that the bridge-playing public had already made up its mind. David Harris commented that it was important to provide variety in terms of venues. The EBU had not lost the desire for a National Bridge Centre, and good relations with existing venues should be maintained.

6 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman had nothing to add his circulated report.

7 GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The General Manager reported as follows:

7.1 Staffing & Aylesbury Headquarters

Air-conditioning had now been installed at the Aylesbury offices, the capital cost being spread over five years.

7.2 Cost Control

Current practices are being examined in regard to expenses, and reducing large mail-outs which it is envisaged will reduce the postage costs by around 20%. Recommendations for stricter and prescribed controls will be put to the Board at the next meeting.

7.3 Complimentary Congress entry

The General Manager said that he did not consider that providing free entry to the Summer Meeting, plus accommodation, for the Hon. Chairman of the EBL Seniors Committee, to be the best use of the members' money. David Harris pointed out that the midweek Seniors pairs and teams are part of the European Bridge League Seniors programme, and as a consequence an EBL representative is entitled to attend at the EBU's expense. Philip Mason said that in reality the only participants other than the EBL representative's team are EBU members, and the tournament is perceived by them as an EBU event. It was agreed that as from August 2008 the event will be redesignated as the EBU Summer Meeting Seniors.

7.4 Abusive Behaviour

There had been some abusive behaviour towards members of staff, following circulation of the annual Master Point listings, which contained the names of deceased members.

It was agreed that the office would be closed for a day to facilitate staff training for dealing with difficult customers, and that the following would be published on the EBU website:

‘ Best Behaviour for the Office

Members will be aware that we have recently implemented a new policy to remove bad behaviour at the bridge table, known as “Best Behaviour @ Bridge”. This has been done in order to strengthen control over the excesses of the small minority of our members who misbehave at the bridge table.

Similar considerations apply to communications to and from Aylesbury, whether by phone, letter or email. Sensibly worded complaints and even better constructive criticism will of course be investigated and dealt with as appropriate.

What are not acceptable are deliberately abusive statements directed either at the EBU or worse still one or more members of staff. Just as any staff found to be rude or unhelpful would be subject to disciplinary action, members should be aware that there are disciplinary routes available to the EBU in the event of serious or repetitive abuse of the nature described. Any such communications will be brought to the General Manager’s attention and may well also result in action on the subject matter being delayed.

It is disappointing for me to find it necessary to remind members of the value of politeness in all communications, but regrettably a number of off-key approaches in recent weeks have made it necessary.’

7.5 Information Technology

Website redesign is progressing and will be completed within a couple of months, key areas being improved presentation and a more modern style. Discussions have started on what will be necessary to centralize all membership records and associated financial transactions, with an implementation date of 1st April 2008. It was agreed that details will be circulated with the papers for the 2006 Annual General Meeting.

7.6 Education

An Aylesbury headquarters member of staff will assume responsibility for Youth Bridge, on a basis to be agreed, reporting direct to the General Manager.

7.7 Masterpoints

Work is progressing on a change to the Masterpoint year. Prior to the existing regulations being updated, all issues are being investigated, including a reported “scam” of a small number of members lapsing for two years, then rejoining in the third year to register their points.

7.8 EBU Scoring Program

Max Bavin and the General Manager had met with the author of Scorebridge, the market leader in scoring programs, and were considering adopting the program as standard to offer to clubs. It was confirmed that the system can maintain records and points earned by non-members.

7.9 Meeting with “ Mr Bridge ”

The General Manager said that his recent meeting with Mr Bridge had thrown up some interesting observations, particularly in regard to the EBU’s service to its members, and its publications.

8 COMMITTEE REPORTS

8.1 Editorial Board – 15th August 2006

Sally Bugden reported that questionnaires had been produced for the launch of the Membership Information Survey included with the December issue of English Bridge, which it was hoped would provide significantly improved membership details. As an incentive to encourage members to complete the survey, Bridge Overseas has offered a holiday prize voucher.

8.2 Tournament Committee – 13th September 2006

8.2.1 Philip Mason confirmed two changes of date for tournaments, as follows, which would be a change to those contained in the 2007 Diary:

2007 National Womens Teams : 7th/9th September at Hinckley
2008 “ “ “ 5th/7th September at Hinckley
(The first complete weekend in September is now the permanent date)

2007 Mens & Womens Pairs : 17th/18th February at Hinckley
(This date is for 2007 only)

8.2.2 Brighton Summer Meeting

Significant problems had been experienced at the Metropole Hotel in respect of the level of service, the condition of the toilets, and the temperature at the weekends. Despite a reduction in revenue of 10%, Brighton remained the most favoured resort for the Summer Meeting, but there appeared to be little prospect of finding an alternative venue that was affordable. Further investigations will be made, but in the meantime efforts will be made to find discounted hotel rooms for the benefit of players.

8.2.3 New Masterpoint Ranks

Two new Masterpoint ranks had been introduced, as follows, and would be included in the 2007 Ranked Masters Pairs:

Premier Grand Master : 1500 National Points.
Forty-seven members are currently in this category, and they can play in the Ranked Masters with anyone of lesser rank who features in the top 20 of the Gold Point ranking list at the date of qualification.
The Grand Masters Pairs will now be open to all Grand Masters and any player who features in the top 40 of the Gold Point ranking list at the date of qualification.

Premier Master : 10 National Points
Premier Masters will play in the lowest category, but will be permitted, if desired, to compete in the Regional Masters category if partnering a Regional Master.

It was noted that the above presented a publicity opportunity, and highlighted the need for a Communications Officer. A discussion on this subject followed.

8.2.4 Prize Vouchers

The possibility of discontinuing the current prize voucher scheme had been discussed, in favour of crediting the prize direct to the member towards further competition entry fees. The downside of the proposal appeared to be the loss of the write-off value, and it was agreed that the General Manager and the Treasurer would discuss the matter further before any decision was made.

8.2.5 Overseas Bridge Holiday

Three quotations have been received from holiday companies for the Overseas Congress in February 2008.

8.3 Laws & Ethics Committee – 6th September 2006

Martin Pool said that the first disciplinary hearing under the new Bye-laws, had taken place in July. The Committee had been criticized for the lengthy delay in arranging the hearing, and every effort would be made to improve procedures. The defendants had not taken advantage of the services of the pro bono adviser, which was unfortunate in that the procedures could have been truncated considerably, and in future the benefit and approachability aspects of the service would be highlighted.

In answer to a comment about publication of the identity of members who are disciplined under the terms of the Bye-laws, David Harris confirmed that justice is open, and should be in the public domain.

9 EBL & WBF MATTERS

David Harris reported that the 2006 European Championships in Warsaw had been very successful, extremely well organized, and profitable to the tune of 100K Euros, which would help to offset the substantial loss suffered in Tenerife. The EBL have a liability to pay a further 25K Euros unless another event is held in Tenerife before 2009, though it is expected that the Italian Bridge Federation will host an event, and underwrite this amount.

It had been unfortunate to note that the Lacoste garments traditionally worn by the tournament officials in Warsaw had been replaced with “fakes”, presumably as a cost-cutting exercise.

The EBL Open Championships will be in Antalya, Turkey, in 2007 and it is hoped that the tournament will generate income of 200K Euros. The 2008 European Championships are scheduled to be held in Pau, France.

David said that Steve Eginton had recommended to the Selection Committee at its July meeting that P-O Sundelin be appointed as assistant coach to the English Open team in Warsaw, but that the Committee had not approved the appointment. However, Mr Sundelin was present at the Championships assisting David Burn as the appointed coach, without the prior knowledge of John Williams, the English NPC.

As the English Open team finished 10th in the European Championships, an English team has qualified for the Champions Cup, and the Tournament Committee has agreed that the winners of the 2006 Crockfords Cup, Paul Gibbons, Richard Probst, Jon Cooke, John Cox and Alex Hydes, will be invited to represent England.

The General Manager said that he had received a letter from the President of the WBF asking for NBOs' assistance in implementing structural changes in the WBF. The next Executive Council Congress will be held at the 2008 World Team Olympiad, tentatively scheduled to be in Beijing, and it is hoped that the WBF will be in a position to subsidise junior teams to take part in the World Mind Sports Games (Intellympiad) being held alongside the Open and Womens events. The General Manager was asked to enquire whether financial assistance with flights and subsistence would also extend to Open and Womens teams.

The Board formally extended their congratulations to the English Womens Team on their Bronze Medal in Warsaw, and wished them every success in the Venice Cup in Beijing.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Jeff Morris said that Liverpool has been selected as the European City of Culture in 2008, and he believes that the English Chess Federation is planning to host an international tournament with European funding. He agreed to obtain further details of the arrangement, and report to the next meeting.

10.2 Jeff Morris, along with representatives from Chess and Go, has met with Sport England to explore recognition. Recognition is necessary for bridge to access the tax and rate benefits that Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) now enjoy. Application documents have been obtained which must be submitted by March 2007. The Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) and the Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, have encouraged this approach.

10.3 It was noted that in light of the Government's new regulations in regard to disciplinary procedures, a revised model County Constitution would need to be produced. Sandra Claridge agreed to undertake some research prior to the next meeting

Closing the meeting, Philip Mason paid tribute to the Chairman's 10 years' service to the Board, and in particular his periods as Vice-Chairman and Chairman. It had been an eventful time, and throughout he had conducted himself with dignity and humour. The Board joined Philip in wishing Denis all the very best in his retirement, and hoped he would take away with him the memory of a very pleasant and fruitful last Board Meeting.