



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
AT YOUNG CHELSEA BRIDGE CLUB, GOLDHAWK ROAD, LONDON, W12 8HA
ON WEDNESDAY 21ST MARCH 2018**

Present: Jeremy Dhondy (Chairman) (JD)
Ian Payn (Vice Chairman) (IP)
Jerry Cope (Treasurer) (JC)
Heather Dhondy (HD)
Gillian Fawcett (GF)
Bev Godfrey (BG)
Anthony Golding (AG)
Robert Lawy (RL)
Ron Millet (RM)
Graham Smith (GS)
Gordon Rainsford (General Manager) (GR)
Peter Stockdale (Minuting the meeting) (PS)

1. Welcome to new Board Members

JD welcomed GF and BG and thanked them for volunteering their services to the EBU. He confirmed the intention that BG would focus on matters relating to 'clubs', and that GF would address matters relating to 'international competitions' and 'sponsorship' – though IP would continue to handle the donations and sponsorship in relation to the Youth Teams' participation in the World Championships in China.

Update: JD has produced a document outlining each Director's primary role for the coming year, which has been made available on the website.

2. Apologies for Absence

None

3. Minutes of the meeting of 24th January 2018

3.1 Accuracy

The minutes were approved as accurate.

3.2 Matters arising

2.2/12 – JD reported that the posthumous Hall of Fame was now on the EBL website, and had included those who had played for Great Britain, as nominated by the EBU. He added that only the EBU and the Hungarian federation had yet submitted any content.

4 – the changes to the NGS would be made in the next few days. An announcement and explanation would be posted on the website. **Update:** These changes were made on 23rd March.

12 – JD reported that it was his understanding that the EBL were unlikely to reassign the medals from the European Championships in 2014 (or from other events from the period), and that positions were more likely to be noted as 'vacant'. The England team would likely therefore remain as bronze medallists.

4. Financial matters

4.1 Treasurer's Report & January Management Accounts

JC had circulated his report along with the January Management Accounts. He noted that, even at this stage, there was still some possible variability in the end of year figure, particularly due to the electrical works which were likely to be required at the Aylesbury office. He expected, however, that the year would end at around budget, and possibly on the right side of breaking even, which was a positive outcome.

He noted that the revenue from Universal Membership had been down at the start of 2018 – though that may have been due to the bad weather – and sales at the Bridge Warehouse had not risen for the first time since the rebranding – again possibly due to the bad weather. He noted, however, that there were always monthly fluctuations – often with no apparent cause – and only the final figures at the end of the year would reveal the true picture. He added that there may be an overhaul of Key Performance Indicators for 2018/19 to make it easier to analyse changes and track progress.

4.2 2018/19 Budget

JC explained that he had set a target of preparing a credible budget which generated a small surplus. He believed this had been achieved, but noted that it included more areas where underachievement, rather than overachievement, was likely. These included – the level of donations to support the Junior Teams; the entries to Sim Pairs competitions; the sales at the Bridge Warehouse. It also assumed no extra significant computing costs.

JD advised that the WBF had added a mixed teams event at the next World Championships, and that they were likely to introduce an U13s competition at future events. These changes may then be adopted by the EBL. This could result in an additional pressure being put on the budget of the Selection Committee, and decisions on funding would need to be made.

The Board agreed that it would appropriate to raise with the EBL the EBU's intention to keep a tight control on expenditure in the coming years, and advise that it would be looking to reduce its bill to the EBL in real terms over the next five years. An alternative would be to receive increased grants from the EBL in future to achieve a suitable balance. It was also agreed to be appropriate to express the hope that the EBL would seek to reduce the 'waste' within its own budget.

The budget was approved was approved by the Board.

5. General Manager's Report

GR gave an update on the Aylesbury staff, advising that Liz Goodchild had started as receptionist to replace Julie Murray, and Emma Gardiner had begun working with the Bridge Warehouse to fill the vacancy there.

GR gave further information on the electrical problems in Aylesbury referenced by JC in his report. The electrics in the building have given rise to concern and in some areas were unsafe, and the office had therefore closed for two days so they could be brought to a position where they were no longer a risk. Staff had worked at home during this period, with minimal disruption to services. It was still necessary, however, for there to be significant work undertaken on the electrics to ensure they meet modern standards and requirements. The cost and timescale for this was being established with potential contractors and GR would report to the Board on the matter as soon as he had the information.

GR reported that he had attended the EBL's NBO seminar in Belfast, and it had been worthwhile. Some of the issues which were raised would be/had been addressed elsewhere in the meeting.

GR advised that information on the General Data Protection Regulation had been circulated to clubs, and it would soon be given to members through the magazine and email, or if neither of those was possible then by post. He added that efforts by the staff, aided by officials at the clubs, had greatly improved the accuracy of the information on the database, and had halved the number of people needed to be contacted by post. It was noted that once the GDPR was in effect, and all parties had adopted the correct procedures, work would be done to establish a better system by which counties could receive members' information.

The new pack for new members was expected to be ready by the end of the month.

A short survey would be made available to all members to establish their feelings about membership of the EBU. This would give a current picture to keep in mind as efforts are made to improve services, and also a base line against which to judge whether improvements have been made in the next few years - the survey will be repeated in a few years' time to give a method of comparison. In order to establish the total number of bridge players in the country, in the coming weeks Ipsos Mori will include a question in one of their general surveys of the population.

GR reported that five clubs had recently affiliated, though some other clubs had opted not to do so – the decision by one club being particularly disappointing given the support that the EBU gave during a difficult time for the club. The good work by Club Liaison Officer, Bev Purvis, in encouraging these clubs to affiliate was noted.

It was agreed that the grants scheme would run again in 2018. It was agreed that there would be greater scrutiny of the applications – particularly in reference to the club's current finances.

GR reported that the Bridge Warehouse would be adopting the Shopify platform for its online shop in the coming weeks. It had been tested, and was believed to work well in most situations, however it would be necessary for the staff to use the old system to process some orders for a period of time – for example to enable affiliated clubs to receive 30 days credit as a benefit of affiliation. GR and some staff members had met with an IT company to try to resolve the problems relating to taking payments through Sage – though unfortunately the matter was still unresolved and needs further investigation to arrive at the best solution that is possible.

GR advised that the pricing structure for the Sim Pairs 'hosting service' had been improved so it was more appealing to counties and clubs. He added that the staff had discussed ways to make participation in the EBU Sims more appealing, and the possibility of changing the prize structure had been raised, with a contribution being made to charities of the winners' choosing, rather than cash prizes being awarded. This would be given further consideration, and participating clubs or members may be asked for their opinion. Any changes would not be made until the start of the 2019 competitions.

A simplified version of EBU Score was still being considered, and work was due to start soon.

GR gave a brief report on the County Working Group meetings in the North and Midlands which he had attended.

GR gave an update on the Summer Festival, the new Jack High competition at the Easter Festival, and the online games with Funbridge.

A 'Transgender Policy' had been published, and had been drawn to the attention of the EBL and WBF. Both organisations are yet to publish such a policy, and it was hoped that when they do it would be compatible with that published by the EBU.

He concluded by reporting that the Aylesbury staff had contributed to the junior fundraising efforts, and in total had donated around £100.

6. Strategy Document

JC had collated the responses from the counties on the Strategy Document. It was noted that there had been relatively few responses. Amongst the responses there was mostly satisfaction, but the Board noted some areas of concern which had been raised.

One concern had been the lack of 'concrete targets', and the absence of specific methodology in most instances. The Board agreed that the document was intended to outline strategic aims, rather than act as an operational plan. It was therefore agreed that a change of title – from 'Strategic Plan' to 'Strategic Aims' – may give a greater indication of this intent. Likewise it would be explained that regular shorter-term plans with clear objectives would be put in place, when appropriate, so as to facilitate the achieving of the aims.

Some counties had expressed a belief that the EBU should focus on 'bridge' rather than 'duplicate bridge'. The Board discussed this possible change in emphasis. It was noted that the EBU is the governing body for 'Duplicate Bridge', and not bridge in general – rubber bridge being governed by Laws set out by the Portland Club. The EBU's structure is based around 'duplicate bridge', with revenue received from Universal Membership Subscriptions for sessions of duplicate bridge played in affiliated clubs. A change which broadened the scope of the EBU would – without a significant change in the EBU's structure – mean that some of its finite resources would be spent on activities which provide no revenue for the organisation.

It was recognised, however, that some people equate 'duplicate bridge' with 'unfriendly, competitive bridge', and other forms of bridge with a more social, friendly game. To exclude such forms of bridge may dissuade some people from playing bridge in an EBU setting. This point was countered with two observations: that clubs are permitted to hold non-duplicate sessions, should they feel that this is a way to encourage people to play at their club, and possibly bring them in to duplicate games later, when they are ready; that the onus should be on changing the perception of duplicate games as being 'unfriendly' – and where necessary taking action to ensure they are not 'unfriendly' – rather than changing the games which the EBU oversees. It was also noted that rubber bridge still carries negative connotations as being a 'gambling game', and that it may be harmful to associate too strongly with it.

It was therefore agreed that there would be no change at present, but the concerns of those who feel that the tag of 'duplicate bridge' is off-putting to some people would be noted, and there would continue to be an emphasis on making 'duplicate bridge' more welcoming to all players.

Other input from the consultation was considered by the Board, and, based on this consideration, some further changes to the strategy document were suggested, and a final version was agreed. This would be made available in a printed form at the Shareholders' Meeting in May, and would be printed in the June issue of English Bridge. A short response to the counties' contribution to the consultation would be posted on the website, along with thanks for their participation. Prior to the circulation of the 2018-2023 strategy, the analysis of the 2013-2018 strategy would be published on the website. **Actions: JC, RM, JD, GR, PS**

7. Shop update

GS gave additional information on comments made during the Treasurer's and General Manager's reports. He advised that the manager of the Bridge Warehouse had been busy with the trial of Shopify, and the recruitment of the new staff member, so had spent less time than usual in this period trying to generate new business, which may explain why revenue had not increased. It was hoped that the introduction of Shopify would enable the Bridge Warehouse to have a presence on Amazon and eBay, which may increase revenue in future. He also advised that consideration was being given to sourcing some products directly from manufacturers in China, as this may reduce costs, though the difficulties of doing so were noted.

8. EBED update

JD reported that EBED would be holding interviews in June to appoint new Trustees.

The Board were pleased by the news that the Fast Track Bridge books had sold at a faster rate than had been expected. The initial print run had been small, so as to enable any necessary amendments to be made as soon as possible. Some necessary changes had been identified, and these would be included in the reprint which would take place in a few months' time.

JD reported that EBED were adopting the Really Easy series of books with a view to revamping and updating them. These updates would be done on a book-by-book basis when existing stock levels of each title meant it was appropriate. GR would negotiate with Donna Wright how profits from the sales of the books would be shared between the EBU and EBED.

RL had attended the meeting of the Education Advisory Group, and had emphasised the aspects of EBED's work which the EBU Board wished to be prioritised: the establishment of the teachers' database; improvements to the website; addressing its teaching training programme.

- Work had begun on compiling the database of teachers and teaching activity, starting with those who were EBTA members. It was hoped the first part of the database would be available by the end of May.
- A meeting has been planned to move forward improvements to the website.
- With regard to teacher training, it was discussed whether it should be necessary to be 'accredited' in order to deliver certain Bridge for All material – the Fast Track course being a possible example. This would protect EBED's intellectual property, and ensure a maintenance of goodwill as the student could be sure of a good quality course. It was recognised, however, that the primary aim is to get more people playing bridge, and that requires more people teaching bridge. Requiring such accreditation could create an obstacle to that happening. A more detailed consideration by EBED of the pros and cons would need to be considered before any such policy could be introduced.

9. Membership matters

9.1 Membership for students

JD reported that it had been noted that EBED's approach to granting EBU membership to new bridge students may be more restrictive than the EBU would choose. The reasons for this were recognised – as it encourages the use of their materials – however it was agreed that it would be optimal for the EBU to engage with all student players, irrespective of how they learn. It was recognised, however, that this would come at a cost – both directly as student members would receive membership benefits, and possibly indirectly as it may remove an incentive for a teacher to become an EBTA

member (being able to offer student membership of the EBU to their class is often seen as a key benefit of EBTA membership).

It was agreed that the membership project in Yorkshire could be used as a trial to see if offering membership to a wider number of students was ultimately beneficial. This would likely be known in around 18 months once students had joined, and then had the opportunity to renew for a second year of student membership, or had progressed to become full club members making Universal Membership Subscription payments. Until that time, a new policy would be adopted which was broader than the current arrangement, but still required the student to be joining via a Bridge for All course, or be learning with an EBTA member or at an affiliated club.

9.2 Membership project

RM had circulated an update on the Membership Project in Yorkshire, along with additional observations and proposals relating to membership on a national scale.

He noted that nationally there had been small, but significant, increases in members and the number of sessions played. Detailed information on the continuing performance of the Yorkshire clubs was also presented. Overall this had been a success in large part through the commitment of the those involved at club level. Further background work was now required to assess which elements of the various clubs' activities could be considered successful and usefully applied elsewhere.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to undertake further pilot schemes in different parts of the country. This would help identify the extent to which such schemes could be considered successful, and how they might be tailored to take in to account regional differences. These pilots would be the pre-cursor to determining the exact nature and structure of a national roll-out, which was fundamental to the EBU's strategy. RM reported that a county had made an approach to run a similar scheme in the county, and may therefore be a candidate for a further pilot scheme. RM would contact counties known to be interested, and he and JD would draft a letter to invite other counties to be involved.

It was recognised that as the YCBA and the clubs in Yorkshire involved in the project had contributed half of the cost of the scheme in the county, and the EBL had also contributed, funding is available in the 2018/19 EBU budget for further pilots. Any further pilots would, however, be done on a match-funding basis, and counties would be asked to submit a proposal. Only once the success of these pilots was known could consideration be given to funding a nationwide scheme. There was also provision within the budget for a Membership Development Officer to be employed to run the scheme if it were rolled out nationwide. It was recognised, however, that a larger scheme would require significant levels of coordination within the EBU staff, and the creation of a sizeable resource centre. Likewise, it would require people 'on the ground' in each area to ensure its success. RM reported that YCBA had employed its Regional Development Officer, David Guild, for a further year.

It was agreed that RM would put together a small sub-committee, including some of the Aylesbury staff, to move things forward.

9.3 Refusal of membership

Due to time constraints the discussion of this subject was deferred until the June meeting.

10. Education matters

This was addressed during item 8.

11. County Working Groups (CWGs)

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference approved at the previous meeting would be circulated to the CWGs.

GS reported that the South-West CWG may be starting activities in the near future. RL had agreed to help with this.

12. Selection matters

12.1 Olympiad funding

The Selection Committee had been asked by JC to make some financial savings in future years. GF explained that the committee had reluctantly identified support for teams participating in the World Olympiad (briefly called the World Bridge Games) as an area where cuts could be made. As the event is on a list of those for which it was stated that the EBU would provide funding, the Board would need to approve the Selection Committee's recommendation to remove funding for the event. This was approved. It was, however, recognised that as the next event would be in 2020 this would give sufficient time to seek to establish alternative funding models – possibly through sponsorship. A representative team may therefore still be supported, but the costs would not be covered from general funds.

12.2 Women's European Trials

IP apprised the Board of the events relating to the Women's European Trial, and how they had been handled by the Selection Committee. He emphasised that JD and GF – who are both members of the Selection Committee but had a declared interest – had not been involved in any discussions or votes. The Board were satisfied that the matter had been dealt with in an appropriate manner, and therefore it need not raise anything with the Selection Committee. Likewise, the Board had not received any official complaint about the handling of the issue, and therefore did not believe it was necessary to seek any further information from the committee beyond that which it would usually receive following the committee's regular meetings.

The Board knew of a number of online discussions which were taking place regarding the matter. It was aware that some people believed the decision of the Selection Committee was incorrect, and recognised an individual member's right to argue an alternative position and to criticise the decision which had been made. It was concerned, however, by some of the abusive comments made about those involved in making the decision – comments which did not address the facts of the case, but instead questioned the character of those involved. The Board believed it appropriate to bring these concerns to the attention of the Laws & Ethics Committee, and that committee would be asked to consider whether any action should be taken against those making such comments.

The Board agreed that the Selection Committee should be asked to consider whether the Conditions of Contest need to be updated to more clearly define how to deal with situations such as the one which arose.

13. Tournament Director Development Group update

HD gave the Board an overview of the work of the Tournament Director Development Group.

She explained that the videos on the EBU website to help TDs with commonly occurring situations were now out of date following the changes to the Laws of Bridge in 2017. The EBL had suggested

they collaborate with the EBU, and the videos would be produced as part of a joint project, with the costs shared. The videos could then be sold to other NBOs, with the NBO in question paying the additional costs of having the video subtitled in their language. The proceeds of these sales would be shared. The Board approved the project and agreed a budget for the production of the videos.

14. Shareholders Meeting – May 2018

A proposed agenda had been circulated. It was agreed that an update on the Membership Project should be included.

It was noted the agenda for the meeting was quite brief. The Board proposed that the Shareholders be asked whether they believed two meetings each year (including the AGM) was necessary.

15. EBL/WBF matters

All relevant matters had been discussed at other times during the meeting.

16. Any other business

There was no other further business raised.