



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
via Zoom Wednesday 9th June 2021

Present:

Ian Payn (IP)	Rob Lawy (RL)
Gillian Fawcett (Vice Chairman) (GF)	Ron Millet (RM)
Jerry Cope (JC)	Kay Preddy (KP)
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)	Patrick Shields (PS)
Adrian Darnell (AD)	Gayle Webb (GW)
Cathryn Fox (CF)	Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)
Anthony Golding (AG)	

1. Apologies for Absence

None

IP thanked everyone for attending.

2. Minutes and Approval from the last meeting

2.1 Accuracy

PS confirmed a minor correction of the previous minutes, a change of wording in the first paragraph of section 5.2. The boards position on the matter was clarified.

Minutes approved.

2.2 Matters Arising

None

2.3 Minutes from the County Chairs Meeting, accuracy

None, minutes approved.

2.4 Minutes from the County Chairs Meeting, matters arising

None

3. Financial Report (JC)

JC circulated his report prior to the meeting. He highlighted some aspects of the report and confirmed that the final accounts this year will not be finalised until August due to external circumstances, but should be ready for approval by the September Board meeting. Looking forward,

JC confirmed there are two early areas of shortfall for the budget from increased expenditure. These are; a relatively small increase in insurance costs, and a more substantial sum from fees due to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) and European Bridge League (EBL) not repeating last year's discount. He noted also that there were no budget savings from the fact of the World Bridge teams qualifying round being online this August. Due to this we have started the year at least £25k up on budget expenditure.

JC then highlighted the issue of income, specifically BBO and UMS, excluding competitions and Bridge Warehouse. He confirmed that in April and May, the figures were as budgeted 25% less than in the previous full year. He noted that UM and BBO income was expected to decrease again over the summer months but would need to increase again over the winter months to end the financial year as predicted.

JC stated the EBU needs to think carefully about generating income. He noted some positive news with the Bridge Warehouse showing a small uptick in sales in June, it is hoped that this will again increase in July and August.

Action: To start an income discussion going JC and CF would form a small sub-committee, possibly including in due course non-board members, to look at the options for generating income in addition to the current channels of UM, competitions, the warehouse etc.'

4. Chief Executive's Report (GR)

GR gave a brief update, following his written report. He confirmed there has been a continued decline in online bridge, particularly social bridge.

GR noted clubs are increasingly asking questions about re-opening. There is a strong sense of uncertainty from clubs and government around when and how re-opening will commence.

PS asked if a bullet pointed version of GR's report could be included in the minutes. GR agreed to trial this for this meeting. A summary of the Chief Executive's Report is provided in Appendix A.

5. Re-Start Meeting

PS gave an update prior to the re-start sub-committee meeting due on 15th June. He noted that the feedback from professional health advisors had very little to add to our current risk assessment procedures. The one addition they proposed was to include spot checks.

6. Tournament Development (RL)

RL provided a report prior to the meeting. He asked the Board for a formal endorsement of the proposal prior to it being put before the membership.

PS asked the Board to:

- confirm its comfort level with the set of Competition Principles circulated prior to the last board meeting (with a minor change to opening words in H)
- confirm its comfort level with the Competitions Background 1.01 paper submitted to the last Board meeting

RL explained that the Competitions Group needed more time prior to making further recommendations to the full Board. It was agreed that an informal submission would be made to the Board by the end of July.

It was noted that the submission would include a review of competition pricing, and a review of the controls on county-organised competitions which compete with club offerings, particularly those offering enhanced Master Points.

JC cautioned that the budget should be considered alongside any proposals. KP confirmed that the group have been putting together financial principals with the proposals. JC confirmed that an earlier version of these do already exist but will need updating, He will provide the details to KP.

7. EBU/EBED Relationship (AD)

AD circulated a report from EBED prior to the meeting. He confirmed that there was a meeting between EBU and EBED and highlighted some aspects of the meeting.

AD stated that the meeting had crystallised his view of EBED and what they want to achieve. He noted the differences in EBED and EBU's interests, with the EBU's main interest in new EBU members and EBED wanting to train more EBED teachers for general bridge teaching. AD proposed that considering this gap between the organisations, the EBU should focus on creating new members through our clubs. He stated the EBU should be responsible for encouraging new bridge teachers in EBU affiliated clubs and helping them find students who will then become club members.

PS shared a proposal that now is a good time to recruit people to the EBU games with face to face bridge.

GF stated that we should be focusing on the similarities between EBED and the EBU, we have more common ground than not. AD said we should still work with EBED, but also put more effort into creating more new EBU members via a student route ourselves. GF highlighted that EBED encourage teachers to join EBTA, through which their students gain free EBU membership. This has created a lot of new EBU members.

PS invited the Board to endorse and agreed to three basic strategy statements:

- Recruitment and retention of members is now a major priority. EBU and EBED objectives have very significant overlap, but that overlap does not adequately address our (EBU) recruitment objectives. We now know that EBED intend to maintain their current scope and scale of activity, and we must therefore take action to address all remaining gaps in our recruitment strategy, and with some urgency.
- Our success in generating more bridge players will depend on engaging the membership in this venture, and working collaboratively with County Associations, Clubs, EBED and other education providers – and this we shall do.
- A sub-committee of the Board is tasked to develop a staged plan for tackling recruitment, and to present costed options for stage 1 to the Board as soon as possible for their endorsement. Our target is that action is underway by September 2021.

The Board agreed to the above points.

8. Membership/Marketing (KP)

KP shared details of the Membership/Marketing proposal. She noted that GW has created an audit of all the available EBU tools. GW noted she was impressed with the scope of available tools on the EBU website, (to all clubs, whether affiliated or not), although a few areas need updating. It would also be a good idea to make members and clubs more aware of these tools.

KP stated that following the County survey and the subsequent presentation at the County Chairs meeting, there have been some limited responses. There will be a follow-up report sent to counties with further details of how they can get involved shortly.

CF has started working on a template library of articles for clubs and counties to use for local press. GW has case studies in Wiltshire and will expand this further afield.

CF confirmed that she has a long list of actions relating to social media, including an audit of current county social media platforms. It is hoped that counties will help generate content for social media blogs. This will maximise content without over-stretching current resources. SK is looking to set up a blog on the EBU website, with content provided by clubs and counties. CF asked for RM to share any materials he has relating to Yorkshire's successful campaigns. KP also asked if the toolkit from the Yorkshire teaching initiative could be provided, as agreed at the County Chairs meeting. RM confirmed he would action this.

GW has received a list of recently affiliated clubs and will provide the details to each county, asking the County Chairs to contact the newly affiliated clubs in their area.

Action: RM to share the toolkit from Yorkshire's teaching initiative and any other material from previous membership campaigns.

9. Internationals (GF)

GF stated that Alan Mould (AM) has now resigned as Chair of the Selection Committee. IP proposed Alan Wilson (AW), currently member of the L&E committee, as a new member for the Selection Committee. The Board approved this nomination.

a. European Championships

GF confirmed that it has now been decided by the EBL that the European Championships will not be held face to face. In their place there will be an online qualifier to be played at the end of August, for the World Teams Championships. The EBU have teams entering in all four categories.

A venue for the competition is needed. GR confirmed he is looking into a couple of possible venues and should have a decision shortly.

b. Sponsorship Policy

GF had circulated a proposed amendment to the sponsorship policy prior to the meeting. This was discussed and agreed.

PS asked who would now action the point from the previous meeting, (“put together a list of events that will be split into the fully funded, part funded and unfunded categories”) due to be completed by AM. GF confirmed she would complete this and send a list of events, split by fully funded, part funded and not funded, to the Board.

10. L&E/Disciplinary Matters (IP)

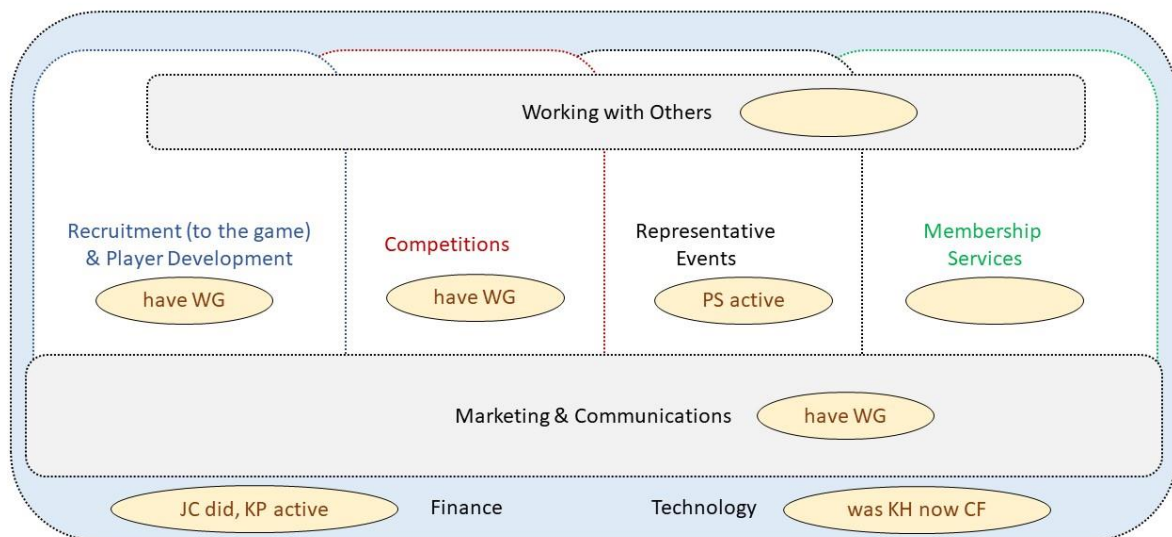
IP noted that a lot of disciplinary cases have recently come to fruition. He has since given the disciplinary panel 3 weeks off to avoid case fatigue. IP also confirmed that new disciplinary cases are decreasing. There are fortnightly meetings held to keep up to date.

KP asked how new cases are brought to the disciplinary committee. IP confirmed there are various ways, via a report from other members, statistical anomalies or NGS anomalies. IP will circulate to the Board a previous report that details the process.

IP also noted there has been some recent media coverage following the high amount of disciplinary cases. Most notably in the Sunday Times and Daily Telegraph. IP also had a radio interview.

11. EBU Strategy Update (PS)

PS gave a brief update to the EBU strategy report, sharing the current working picture, below:



PS noted there are three active working groups, and three still required. PS stated he will continue to pull each aspect of the strategy together.

RL & KP thanked PS for his focus and direction.

12. Award Nominations

a. Diamond Awards

IP asked for the Board to provide their nominations for a Diamond Award to be presented and discussed at the September Board meeting.

b. Tony Priday Award

IP asked for any Tony Priday award nominees to be brought and discussed at the September meeting.

c. Silver Award

N/A

d. Others (including Junior Awards)

Requests for nominations of the Young Player of the Year and Young Pair of the Year will be sent to the Selection Committee for Board approval.

Requests for Dimmie Fleming award nominations will be sent to the Counties.

KP suggested presenting awards for volunteers that have given a great service to their club or county during the pandemic. IP stated that this had previously been discussed and was not easy to judge. It was agreed that IP will thank volunteers as a whole in his address to the membership in the September issue of English Bridge.

13. Any Other Business (PS)

KP noted that the Bridge: A MindSport for All (BAMSA) online conference will take place from 28th June to 1st July 2021, with some Board members attending and participating. She suggested it would be helpful for all the Board to know what was discussed during the conference. It was agreed that PS will invite the organiser to provide the EBU with a summary of themes discussed.

Next Meeting:

Thursday 9th September 2021

Meeting closed at 16:20

Appendix A: Chief Executive's report for the board meeting of June 2021 –
bullet points of topics covered

- Lockdown
 - A very small number of clubs have run live games in a limited way
 - Other clubs are looking for information and advice about re-opening, but we need to wait for more clarity from the government first
- Online games
 - As expected, numbers in social games have declined significantly now that people can play such games in their homes
 - Numbers in our regular daily BBO games have also declined
- Technology report from Cath Fox
 - Includes detail of proposed new website calendar
 - Cost savings on Workbooks licence
 - Office 365 update and migration underway with cost savings
 - Test environment being created
 - Audit of internal network under way
 - Development projects:
 - System card uploads
 - Banner Link in My EBU
 - Website improvements to come:
 - Search Engine Optimisation
 - Search Facility
- Communications report from Sam Kelly
 - Website working smoothly, with plans to monitor it using Google Analytics
 - Working with Cath Fox to look at Drupal Taxonomy
 - Event Focus sent as usual, focussing on Virtual Summer Seaside Congress and return to live bridge at Eastbourne Summer Meeting
 - April English Bridge sent out without problem
 - Next issue online only, specifically targeted at less-experienced members
 - Final proofs of diary with the printers
 - Next Club Management Focus to be published in July
- Club liaison report from Jonathan Lillycrop
 - Increased queries from clubs about return of face-to-face bridge
 - 5 clubs returned to limited face-to-face play
 - Some others planning on returning on 21 June, others waiting until Autumn
 - Counties have been asked for help in monitoring and supporting inactive clubs
 - 15 clubs have closed or disaffiliated in the last year but we still have more clubs than before the first lockdown

- Staff and board members met with a small group of clubs and counties, chosen for their variety of size and location, and had useful discussions with them to discuss improving communications between the parties
- Legal and disciplinary matters
 - Detail of current cases
 - Recent coverage in the mainstream press and on TalkRadio
- Insurance
 - Legal cover for counties and clubs now sorted out, but at higher premiums due to Covid and due to legal challenges of disciplinary cases
- European online qualifier for world bridge championships
 - To be played online on RealBridge from central venue/s in each country with observers from nearby countries
- Competitions sub-group of the board
 - Has met several times
 - Working on strategy and plans for forthcoming events
 - Considering balance of online and face-to-face events for the future
- Staffing and office
 - Most staff still working at home but coming into the office as needed
 - A couple of staff still on part-time furlough
- Overseas events and venues for live national events
 - First for Bridge have arranged our Autumn Overseas Congress, to be held in Side, Turkey
 - They have also been arranging venues for our English competitions, once they are able to be held live

Gordon Rainsford June 2021