



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
at Aylesbury HQ, Wednesday 9th September 2021**

Present:

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Adrian Darnell (AD) & Ron Millet (RM)

IP formally welcomed GW, CF, KP and AD (in his absence) to the Board.

2. Minutes and Approval from the last meeting

a. Accuracy

PS noted that the minutes from March had a slight error. SK to correct.

b. Matters Arising

PS asked about the sub-committee meeting for membership and income. JC confirmed that there has been one meeting since the last Board meeting, and that a donations option has now been added to the Bridge Warehouse payment section. RL asked if there should also be an additional donations button when people enter for competitions. IP cautioned this may not be a good idea as competitions prices are already considered high. It would be best to leave donations for specific projects and fundraisers.

Minutes approved.

c. Decisions taken between meetings

IP confirmed the following decisions have been made by the Board since the last Board meeting:

- Two people have been refused EBU membership (Leiv Bornecrantz & John Reeves)
- There has been a change to the Young Player of the Year Award for 2021. For this year only, the award will be given for Outstanding Contributions to Bridge to Will Clennell
- A decision was made to fully support the England team should they decide not to play against the Italian team in the European Qualifier for the World Championships

3. Financial Report (JC)

a. Treasurers Report for July 2021

JC circulated his report prior to the meeting. He highlighted some aspects of the report, noting that the numbers are currently ahead of the budget, but cautioned that this is will not continue. He noted that it is highly likely we will end the year down from last year.

At headline level, the accounts, comparing with the previous year, show very starkly the enormous impact of Covid on our operations, with a 44% drop in turnover. We still however returned a surplus, ahead of budget, because of government grants totalling just over £111k and the enormous efforts of our staff, to whom we had given no general pay increase. The furlough scheme will stop at the end of September and increases the scale of task for next year's budget. The government announcement of an increase in National Insurance will increase costs next year by approx. £5k. There are also costs associated with upgrading our IT software of £5k.

JC and KP have a meeting scheduled for the end of September to discuss the scale of price increases from 1 April 2022. It will be a difficult task to generate a lot of income with the current commitment not to dip too much into the current reserves. Cost-cutting would continue but it was naturally becoming tougher to find new savings. There will inevitably be a need for a significant licence fee increase, particularly for online events, and a UMS increase. Forecasting remains very difficult.

CF asked JC to confirm who the debtors are. JC stated that these are generally for items in the budget that straddle the financial year end, for example the Easter Congress payments and some County UMS payments. He noted that VAT is also showing as a debt this year with the government allowing deferral to June due to Covid.

b. 2020/21 Financial Statements

JC noted that the numbers are broadly in line with the full-year accounts, except for furlough, which is treated as an offset in the management accounts, but as income in formal accounts.

c. Final Draft Managements Accounts for Year Ending 31st March 2021

JC asked for the Board to formally approve the Accounts, although noted that there may be a couple of non-material changes in wording to be made before the Accounts are presented at the AGM. The Board approved the Accounts.

d. Reserves Policy

JC confirmed we are still inside the limit of the agreed reserves. The Board confirmed they are happy to approve continuation of the current agreed reserves policy. It is likely that we will eat further into reserves next year.

4. Chief Executive's Report (GR)

GR circulated his report prior to the meeting. He highlighted a couple of points from his report before asking the board if they had any questions.

PS asked if there were any current court cases that the Board should be concerned about. GR stated that there is one ongoing court case, but at the initial stage last January, judgement was not found against the EBU.

IP noted that the Laws & Ethics case load was lightening up and that we are not expecting any new substantial legal cases.

5. AGM - Imperial Hotel

IP confirmed that the Imperial Hotel has been booked for the AGM due to take place on Tuesday 30th November. IP asked the Board for their thoughts on if the meeting should be held online or face-to-face. The Board gave a general consensus that it would be better held face-to-face, but that the shareholders should be consulted.

It was decided that IP will write to the shareholders to gain their input and the responses would inform the decision on holding the AGM in person or via Zoom.

KP asked when the agenda for the AGM is decided. IP confirmed that it is usually a standard agenda that can include additional items if necessary. AG noted that the next Board meeting is due on the 10th November, which may not give sufficient time to add any additional items to the AGM agenda. The Board decided that there would be an additional meeting held via Zoom on 20th October, to discuss the items for the AGM.

6. Approval of Members of Disciplinary and Prosecution Panels

The Board was happy to approve both the Disciplinary and Prosecution panels

7. Amendments to Disciplinary Rules (AG)

AG circulated a list of proposed amendments prior to the meeting, for Board confirmation that these should be presented at the AGM.

1. Proposed change to Byelaw 6. Consider an automatic ban on international selection. The Board confirmed a minimum of 10 years ban to international selection, to be extended by the Board if necessary.
2. Proposed change to Byelaw 2.1.5. Consider an extension to associated persons. The Board agreed to the proposed amendment.
3. Proposed change to the Caution procedure. The Board agreed that the currently available minimum sanctions are too tough. The proposed changes were agreed, with the additional of a time limit on cautions.
4. Proposed changes to asking for unanimity for disciplinary convictions. The Board decided that a majority vote is sufficient.
5. Proposed change to the definition of an Open Competition. The Board agreed that an Open Competition should include anything other than a private game run for members, e.g., any game of duplicate bridge run by a club/county that is open to guests.
6. Proposed change to the appeals criteria. The Board approved the proposed changes, with slight amendments, adding seeking consultation of an independent 3rd party before an appeal is formally refused.
7. Proposed change to Masterpoint/NGS Adjustments/cancellation of titles. The Board decided that this was not required at this stage.

8. Proposed change to communications. The default method of communication will be electronic, with paper letters being sent in exceptional circumstances.
9. Proposed change to the amount of the fine. It was agreed that the maximum fine would increase from £500 to £1,000.
10. Proposed change to the provision for conflict of the Chair. It was agreed that formal provisions should be added, with the process of delegation following other meetings.

8. Updates from Sum-Committees

a. Re-start

It was confirmed that the re-start committee has now been disbanded as no longer needed.

b. Comps Group (RL)

RL presented the proposals from the Competitions Sub-Committee. RL started by stating that the return to face-to-face bridge has not happened as previously envisioned by the sub-committee. The task to provide competitions, while maintaining a surplus and helping counties and members, is not an easy one.

RL proposed increasing the price of the daily online games. He noted that the price of EBU congresses also needed looking at as some events appear to be overpriced, e.g., the Autumn & Seniors congresses one day Swiss Teams. JC cautioned against decreasing prices if the increase in number was not sufficient to cover it. JC asked if counties could run more events. GR stated that it is often difficult to get the enthusiasm from counties to run events. It was decided that one or two events would be run at a discount rate as a test to see if more people enter.

Due to poor numbers, it was agreed that the Autumn Congress and Seniors Congress will be cancelled face-to-face and run online. The Seniors Congress will be moved to a mid-week time in December.

The Year End Congress was discussed. It was agreed that the congress will again be run online this year with a view to returning to face-to-face in London in 2022.

PS reminded the Board that Green Pointed events for counties are limited to two days a year, and we had agreed that at most one of these can be held online. GR confirmed that there will be some flexibility needed for the first year as some counties have already planned competitions.

A reduction in prize money was suggested and agreed. The Board also agreed that a reduction in the number of prizes was preferred to a reduction in level.

An increase in overseas events was proposed. GR suggested a River Cruise in May, run by Arena Travel/ First for Bridge, and it was agreed to pursue this.

The following changes were agreed:

Seniors Congress 2021 – to be moved online to a mid-week date in December. The event is to be heavily promoted.

Autumn Congress 2021 – event to be moved online, with the same date and timetable as last year. Price will be decreased on this event to test whether attendance level is price sensitive.

Year End Congress 2021 – event to be moved online, with a view to moving back to face-to-face in 2022.

c. IT Group

Details of the IT Sub-committee were covered in the Chief Executive Report.

d. EBED Sub-Committee

PS stated that the sub-committee was focused on recruitment and teaching.

He noted that teaching newcomers is a vital part of recruitment and there was uncertainty about the availability of teachers in clubs in late 2021. To resolve that, the committee emailed all affiliated clubs asking them to complete a survey. The response rate was about 30%, from it was found that a third of clubs do not have ready access to a teacher to whom to refer newcomers, and that half of clubs do not have access to Assisted Play sessions for newcomers.

EBED has embarked on preparing an online complete beginner's course in support of clubs with no teachers. The full 12 lesson course will be available to people online and teach the newcomers the absolute basics of bridge. The plan is that lessons will be followed by Assisted Play sessions, run by volunteers from the clubs. This should be much easier for clubs to implement, and this could nicely complement centrally provided lessons. Where clubs cannot generate student or helper numbers to make Assisted Play sessions viable, they - with help from their County Association - can band together to provide online or face-to-face Assisted Play sessions from which they will all benefit.

PS confirmed the initial pilot of four lessons should be available within a month. The project will need marketing and the support of the counties.

The board agreed that it was a good product, which will require volunteers from clubs and counties to execute.

CF asked what the process is for moving players from the 12 lessons into club play. PS stated that this was still to be worked through.

PS also highlighted the new transition course form EBED designed to teach existing bridge players what to expect in duplicate bridge. It was agreed that more counties should be aware of this and that further details will be added in the next county notification.

e. Membership/Marketing (KP, GW, CF)

KP shared details of the Membership/Marketing proposal.

The first proposal discussed was that of a new offer to Non-affiliated clubs. The Board agreed for the proposal to be launched soon. There will be no advertising discount for clubs during their first year.

The new EBU Leaflet was also discussed. The Board agreed that it was a positive start but needs some amendments before finalising.

9. Internationals (GF)

GF confirmed that there was little to update for the internationals event funding. The Junior teams received the highest percentage of the funding, with all major teams funded at least in part. It was confirmed that the funding policy is intended to be in place than for more than one year.

10. Awards

a. Dimmie Fleming Award Nominations

b. Tony Priday Award

The Board agreed that RealBridge should receive the Tony Priday award for their contributions to online bridge.

c. Silver Award

It was agreed that Robert Procter should receive a Silver Award

d. Outstanding Contributions to Youth Bridge

Included earlier in the meeting, point 2.c. William Clennell will receive the award for Outstanding Contributions to Youth Bridge. This award is, for 2021 only, a replacement of the Young Player of the Year Award.

e. EBED Awards – Alec Salisbury & Tom Bradley

The Board agreed with the recommendations from EBED for the Alec Salisbury and Tom Bradley awards.

11. EBL/WBF Matters

IP stated that there are no reductions in the payments due to the WBF/EBL in 2021.

IP noted he has written to the EBL to ask for clarification about teams entering the Championship Cup. He has not yet received a response. IP asked the Board for their opinion on pursuing a protest. Following a brief discussion, it was decided that the EBU would enter a team into the Championship Cup, with the caveat that the team would withdraw should other countries field teams that contain people who have had disciplinary hearings which had found against them within the last 10 years.

IP will confirm with other NBOs the EBU's position on the matter.

12. Any Other Business

None

Next Meeting:

Wednesday 20th October 2021

Meeting closed at 17:05

Action Points

Action	Person Responsible	Status
Add action log to minutes	SK	Complete
Update minutes from March meeting on website	SK	Complete
Update minutes from June meeting on EBU website following Board approval	SK	Complete
Provide a list of shareholders to IP	SK	Complete
Write to shareholders via email requesting their input on whether the AGM should be held in person or via Zoom		Complete
Co-ordinate the publication of future sanctioned members on the website with email notifications	SK and JD	Ongoing
Contact other European NBO's to confirm the EBU's position regarding entering a team for the Champions Cup	IP	Ongoing
Take photographs at the Junior Training weekend to be used in promotional materials	GR	Complete
Launch the new offer to non-affiliated clubs	JL and TA	Ongoing
Autumn Congress event to be moved online, with the same date and timetable as last year. Price will be decreased.	GR, SK & CB	Complete
Seniors Congress to be moved online to a mid-week date in December. The event is to be heavily promoted.	GR, SK & CB	Complete
Year End Congress 2021 – event to be moved online, with a view to moving back to face-to-face in 2022.	GR, SK & CB	Complete

Chief Executive's report for board meeting of Sep 2021 – bullet points of topics covered

- Some clubs have started running face-to-face games, though fewer than we might have anticipated.
- Attendance in our online games has continued to decline though perhaps by less than we might have expected at this stage.
- The Summer Meeting at Eastbourne can be considered a success despite the disappointing numbers and financial shortfall, by putting down a marker that live bridge is back and giving support and encouragement to others who wish to run live bridge. Nevertheless, we are deciding to run our remaining congresses this year online.
- The EBL Qualifier for the World Championships went well, both from our perspective and that of the EBL. The refusal of teams from all countries to play against the Italian team, containing convicted cheat Fulvio Fantoni, gained near-universal praise.
- The Competitions sub-group of the board has been working towards a future strategy. Part of this involves considering the roles of the EBU and counties in running events in the future.
- The National Handicap Pairs Championship is due to take place this month and clubs will be able to choose whether to run it live or online.
- Most staff are continuing to work in the office for at least a few days a week and a couple are still on partial furlough.
 - We are glad to have found a suitable replacement for the L&E secretary when Nick Doe left.
 - We are hoping to expand the IT staffing so that we can make positive advances in our IT provision, rather than just keeping up with the current position.
- Communications report from Sam Kelly:
 - Sam was at the Summer Meeting in Eastbourne for the entire time.
 - Event Focus emails continue to be sent monthly, promoting upcoming competitions, as well as extra promotional targeted emails for events.
 - The September issue of English Bridge will include a copy of the EBU diary for those that have opted in.
 - The online version of the magazine will be changing platforms, the new host will be My eBooks.
 - Sam and Cath Fox have created a new blog on the website, to focus on small local stories with content generated from clubs.
- Club Liaison report from Jonathan Lillycrop:
 - Two restart seminars were held for clubs, which well attended and well received.
 - The key topic was hybrid games, about which a presentation was given by Jonathan, along with instructions for combining scores if running a hybrid game with two sections.
 - Statistics show an increase in sessions being submitted using EBUScore and Scorebridge which is an indication of the return of face-to-face play.

- 460 out of 668 clubs and counties have submitted a duplicate session since 1 April 2020. Since 19 July (when government restrictions changed) over 70 clubs have submitted their first session in over a year.
- Technology group report from Cath Fox:
 - A two-day meeting was held at Aylesbury in July with all key members – Gail, Karen, Gordon, Jonathan (by Teams), Gayle (by Teams), Kay, Tim, Harry, Kiat and Cath.
 - An EBU Actions list was agreed in August.
 - The new Calendar developed by Cath is almost ready to go live.
 - System cards storage in My EBU will shortly be available.
 - The ability to buy or add a donation has been added to the shop.
 - Much effort has been put into rationalizing and streamlining our IT arrangements, which will in time produce financial savings.
- Overseas events and playing accommodation:
 - The 19/20 Crockfords final took place successfully in a new Stratford venue organised for us by First for Bridge (Arena Travel).
 - The planned Autumn Overseas Congress in Side, Turkey, has been postponed for a year.
 - Our Spring Overseas Congress will be in Malta.
 - There will be a new extra River Cruise Congress in the Netherlands in May.

Gordon Rainsford Sep 2021