



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
Via Zoom, Thursday 13th January 2022 at 12:30pm

Present:

Ian Payn (IP) (Chair)	
Cathryn Fox (CF) (Vice Chair)	Ron Millet (RM)
Kay Preddy (KP) (Treasurer)	Tony Russ (TR)
Gordon Rainsford (Chief Executive) (GR)	Patrick Shields (PS)
Adrian Darnell (AD)	Gayle Webb (GW)
Rob Lawy (RL)	Sam Kelly (Minutes) (SK)

1. Apologies for Absence

None

2. Co-option of Board members for 2021/22; Role of Board members; Board Director Responsibilities

Patrick Shields (PS) and Gayle Webb (GW) were formally co-opted onto the board.

IP confirmed the Board's responsibilities as follows:

IP: Chair of the Board; Selection Committee; Laws & Ethics
CF: Vice-Chair of the Board; I.T.; Communications; Bridge Warehouse; Marketing
KP: Treasurer; Financial Strategy; Staff Development
AD: EBED; Education
RL: Competitions; Volunteers Support
RM: Membership Retention
TR: Counties
PS: County Working Groups; Internationals
GW: Clubs; New Membership Strategy

IP proposed a Legal Executive Working Group, to help with any legal matters arising, rather than having this role fall to one member of the Board. The Board agreed with this decision. IP and GR will discuss further actions.

IP noted a joint strategy between the EBU and EBED was needed. This will be led by AD, with assistance from EBU and EBED staff. IP confirmed he has already had initial talks with Lee Guy (LG) Chair of EBED and that he will discuss further meetings with Giorgio Provenza (GP) EBED Chief Executive Officer, tomorrow (14th January). Future meetings will include GP, TR and GW.

3. Minutes and Approval from the last meeting

a. Accuracy

IP asked for a minor change to the previous minutes, the actions section will be updated.

b. Matters Arising

No matters arising. Minutes approved.

c. Decisions taken between meetings

- AD to draft an Education Strategy with the focus on what the EBU needs to achieve through education, rather than on how education is managed
- The Board agreed to develop a list of teaching opportunities, and that for now this would include opportunities outside Affiliated Clubs
- The Board agreed that most Directors would take on responsibility for acting as a buddy to a County Association, and Directors would offer preferred counties to TR to co-ordinate this activity

4. Chief Executive's Report

GR circulated his report prior to the meeting. He highlighted some aspects of his report. A bullet-pointed copy of this report can be read in appendix A.

GR noted that currently competitions are being held online and decisions are ongoing for the months to come. The overseas congress is due to go ahead in Malta at the end of this month, however, at the time of the meeting a decision had not been made about the Tollemache Cup Final. GR confirmed that all qualifying teams for the Tollemache Cup Final have been contacted for their opinion and a decision will be made by the Competitions Working Group as soon as possible.

GR talked briefly about ongoing legal matters.

In relation to EBU staff, GR noted that Tim Anderson (TA) is now officially working more hours. GR also made the Board aware that he had been given some feedback from a member of staff that there was some confusion about the relationship between the Board and staff. IP asked for the Board to be mindful that the staff work for GR and that such requests for work, should be reasonable with GR approval. GR noted there is staff meeting following every Board meeting, to inform staff of all items from the meeting. IP suggested the June Board meeting be held face-to-face in Aylesbury to strengthen relationships between the Board and staff. This will be a two-day meeting, with an overnight stay. The second day will be a strategy meeting for the Board.

KP raised concerns about the quality of the new Transition Course. GR advised he will discuss this with Jonathan Lillycrop (JL).

There was also a question about a magazine issue that affected a number of people who did not receive the September or December issues of the magazine. It was agreed that SK will write a short section in the email notification to members informing them of the issue and advising them to contact the EBU if they did not receive their September or December copies.

5. Financial Matters

KP gave a brief report on the current financial matters. She stated that the management accounts show a reduction in the net surplus from the previous month of about £5K. The year-to-date surplus

being £15.8K compared to the budgeted surplus of £40.5K. KP reminded the Board that because the cost of Internationals is not consistent year-on-year, the EBU needs to retain surplus in years where there are no major international costs.

The Bridge Warehouse has picked up and that it is hoped this will continue. Membership is also above the anticipated figures for the year.

In Competitions, the net figures are similar to that budgeted, however the gross figures were lower than previous years. This is due to the majority of competitions still being played online.

RL asked about IT changes and how these changes will help in the longer term. CF talked about the new IT updates and moving providers and licencing changes. She noted that this will have a short-term cost but will save money overall. She noted that this is one area where TA has been very helpful.

GW asked why the English Bridge magazine is one of the larger expenses. IP noted that advertising revenue is currently down due to holiday companies facing so much uncertainty and that the cost of paper and postage is increasing. GR noted that the magazine is one of the most tangible and obvious benefits of EBU membership. IP agreed and stated that no changes will be made to the magazine in the current year.

6. Membership/Marketing Working Group

CF confirmed the marketing leaflets, postcards and other items are now all ready for printing. She asked for the Board approval to proceed. IP confirmed that any two officers can agree to spend up to £10k without the need for approval from the whole Board.

CF stated that the Marketing Working Group (MWG) have worked on the logistics for the white space and practicalities for printing. They will start with trial areas before expanding to the rest of the country. There will be a new page on the EBU website to compliment the paper campaign. They are working with TA on a strategy for My EBU to enable clubs and counties to update their own contacts and teachers.

TR talked about the affiliation offer. He noted that 11 clubs have so far taken up the offer. He has spoken to a large number of county chairs and cautioned that they paint a gloomy picture in that many have not promoted the offer to non-affiliated clubs. TR stated that there should be much more interaction between the Board and County Chairs. TR proposed that the EBU extend the affiliation offer. KP agreed that this was a good idea, but that agreement was needed on the exact proposal before launch and that it should be operationally feasible. GR stated he would discuss ideas with the staff involved. The Board agreed that each new club should be welcomed as a new club within the relevant page on the EBU website. GR will ensure that this is added retrospectively for all clubs that have joined since March 2020. It was further suggested that before the affiliation came to term the clubs should be contacted to discuss their views on the offer and remaining affiliated. The Board agreed to extend the offer if a workable operational model was available to support it. TR will agree with Jonathan Lillicrop how we ensure that new clubs feel welcomed and how we approach clubs when the affiliation offer approaches its term.

CF mentioned the County Chairs survey that was completed in 2020, she said this may be useful for TR and would provide him with the results.

TR stated that the majority of people volunteering at County level are pro-EBU and that the difficulties arise at club level. He stated that marketing and education initiatives will help. Many good unaffiliated clubs have good teaching programs.

KP noted that the MWG have created a list of organisations and types of organisations that might be contacted to market bridge. It is proposed that these are sometimes contacted by the EBU, sometimes by counties and sometimes by clubs. They include large countrywide organisations like the services or small local organisations like village halls. The notion is that the organisation is asked to promote the game by displaying a poster, a leaflet or on their website or directly with their personnel for instance when they retire.

7. Board Priorities

RM had provided his paper to the Board prior to the meeting. He highlighted some aspects of the paper and asked the Board for their opinion.

The top priorities for the paper were: Increasing the number of members; Balancing the books without putting strain on the membership, Education.

The details of the priorities were discussed. There was discussion over whether education is a subsidiary of the new members item, rather than its own stand-alone priority. IP asked for the document to be split into three categories; 1. Priorities for the EBU as a business; 2. Priorities for the EBU as an entity; 3. Priorities for the services that EBU provides to its members and counties.

IP asked RM to re-configure the list following the Boards input and send the new list to the rest of the Board within plenty of time for the next Board meeting in March.

8. L&E Matters

IP confirmed that at the AGM the shareholders decided the interim playing suspensions should no longer be used and as such the Byelaws are currently being re-written.

There has since been a request for interim playing suspensions to be reinstated under certain conditions. IP has asked that the Byelaws be written with three different possible options, these will be presented to shareholders and discussed at the EGM. The date for the EGM has not yet been confirmed.

IP also gave an update on the vacancies on the Laws & Ethics Committee. With a view to diversifying the committee, IP has asked several women if they would consider volunteering.

IP noted some changes to both the disciplinary panel and the prosecution panel. He stated that Joy Mayall (JM) the EBU pro-bono advisor has opted not to continue. This means that the EBU now needs to look for a new pro-bono advisor as a matter of urgency. IP proposed that if the number of L&E cases is due to increase then a panel of pro-bono advisors may be a better solution. IP also noted that the prosecution process is currently under review, with a view to simplifying procedures and implementing what we have learned to improve the whole process. The EBU is regarded as a market leader for L&E matters in Europe. IP stated there are no new cases currently, this means there will be no need for a pro-bono adviser for a few weeks, but the need to appoint one is still urgent.

A review of the Disciplinary Rules and their application in the recent past is underway, and we will review its outcome when completed.

9. EBU Strategy Review

PS talked about the different strands of activity as illustrated in the attached picture (see appendix B). He asked for thoughts from the Board.

PS noted that the strategy document currently published is now five years old and that it needs replacing. RL asked if we would talk through the strategy at the June strategy meeting. IP thought it best to have something robust in place before then. CF suggested a half-day workshop for ideas individually and as a group. It was agreed that a workshop would be a good idea. IP will send out the list of Board responsibilities and PS will follow up with potential dates for the workshop.

10. EGM Matters

This item was covered previously in the meeting.

11. EBED Matters

IP confirmed the current list of priorities as following: 1. EBU to help EBED with resources to accelerate and roll out the Smartbridge project. GW and TR will take the lead in this. 2. Implement a Joint Strategy between EBU and EBED. 3. Monetary arrangements to be discussed with EBED, potentially to be tied to income.

GW added that it would be beneficial to have a meeting with EBED. IP confirmed he will set up a meeting with GW, TR, Lee Guy (LG) (EBED Chair) and Giorgio Provenza (GP) (EBED CEO).

IP asked AD to redraft his previous proposal for the EBU's approach to education and re-send it to the Board.

12. Updates from Sub-Committees

a. County Working Group

PS noted that the County Working Groups work very well when the counties are engaged, but not when they are not engaged. He would like a meeting with County representatives to happen more frequently than once a year, but with additional meetings being led by the counties. He proposed the date of the first additional meeting to take place at the end of February. The Board agreed to this proposal. TR volunteered to ask the counties to take the lead and set the agenda for the next meeting. IP confirmed that proposals made during the additional meetings would not be binding.

GW asked if any actions were being taken from the chat thread at the AGM. SK will go through the chat and facilitate any actions required.

b. Competitions Working Group

RL explained that the Group were aware of the crossover between their role and some of the functions that had been previously undertaken by the Tournaments Panel which was now discontinued. RL explained that Tournament Panel members would be invited to attend the next

Working Group meeting. This would enable them to make a judgement about their future involvement.

RL explained that one of the roles of the group is to conduct a post competition review of each event. He explained that the strategy at the Year End Congress, to reduce the price of entry in order to increase numbers, had worked and that this initiative would continue into the future so a proper judgement could be made as to its efficacy. Though overall player numbers were down compared to previous years, income was up.

RL confirmed they are also looking at new kinds of events, for example a mixed knockout and revitalised simultaneous pairs sessions. Ideas for simultaneous pairs include a 9 high session or post game zoom session.

The new River Cruise will also take place this year. Numbers are currently relatively low, but it is hoped they will increase in the coming months and there will be additional promotion.

c. Technology (IT) Working Group

Details for the Technology (IT) Working Group have been previously covered in the CEO and Marketing Sections of the meeting.

13. BGB Representative 2022-23

The BGB representative for 2022-23 is IP

14. Any Other Business

None

Next Meeting:

EBU Board Meeting Thursday 17th March 2022 (via Zoom)

Future Meetings:

Wednesday & Thursday 15th/16th June (EBU Offices, Aylesbury)

Thursday 15th September (Zoom)

Wednesday 20th October (Zoom) (*AGM items*)

AGM: Wednesday 30th November (Imperial Hotel, London tbc*)

County Chairs: Thursday 26th May (Young Chelsea BC, tbc*)

*Venue needs to be confirmed

Meeting closed at 16.02pm

Action Points

Action	Person Responsible	Status
IP to provide list of Board responsibilities	IP	Complete
Legal Executive Working Group	IP and GR	Ongoing
EBU and EBED Joint Strategy	IP, GW and TR	Ongoing
Staff meeting following the Board meeting to inform staff of any decisions and actions	GR	Complete
GR to discuss quality of Transition Course with JL	GR and JL	Ongoing
SK to write a short section in the email notification to members informing them of the magazine issue from December and advising them to contact the EBU if they did not receive their December copy	SK	Complete
A list of clubs that have joined the EBU since March 2020 will be added as a news item on the EBU website	SK and JL	Complete
CF to provide TR with results of County Chairs survey	CF	Complete
Half-day workshop for strategy document	IP and PS to provide dates	Ongoing
IP will set up a meeting with GW, LG and GP	IP	Ongoing
AD to re-draft his proposal and re-send it to the Board	AD	Complete
TR to contact counties regarding a county meeting at the end of February	TR	Ongoing
Go through the AGM chat thread and facilitate any outstanding actions	SK	Complete
RM to re-work the list of Board priorities and send to the Board in plenty of time for the next Board meeting in March	RM	Ongoing

Appendix A

Chief Executive's report for the officers meeting of Jan 2022– bullet points of topics covered

- Most staff are working from home most of the time, but we did manage to hold the staff Christmas lunch as planned.
- We have just increased the price of our daily BBO games by 10% and numbers for them have been up since the introduction of “Plan B”.
- Our social games on RealBridge continue to run three times a day.
- Reports on legal and disciplinary matters were made.
- Competitions:
 - The Competitions sub-group of the board has met regularly, producing a future strategy and more immediate plans for specific events.
 - The group is intending to change its composition and become an Executive Working Group, but its proposed membership is still subject to discussion.
 - The Year End Congress ran smoothly and seems to have been enjoyed by those who were there. 20 players took advantage of the 50% discount for less-experienced players (Regional Masters and below) playing in the Swiss Pairs.
 - We have been publicising the Point-a-Board Congress and trying to encourage less-experienced teams to join. RealBridge have worked with us on this by providing a couple of “taster” sessions with PaB scoring, followed by Zoom discussions with expert players.
 - We are still planning to hold our February congress in Malta and the new river cruise in May/June.
- Staffing:
 - Tim Anderson has extended his hours with us and will work four days a week from now on, combining his Membership Development role with being the IT manager.
 - A few other staffing matters were reported.
- Communications
 - The blog on the new website is running well and in 2022 we will look to increase engagement with clubs and counties.
 - The Board have asked for more emails to be sent to promote competitions to lower ranked members.
 - The Club Management Focus has been discontinued. Instead, clubs and counties will receive a monthly update. This will be sent as an email and archives of all previous updates are available on the EBU website.
 - The digital version of the magazine is now hosted on MyeBook. All archive issues of the magazine have been moved to AWS.
 - Media coverage of duplicate bridge has increased slightly in the past year.
 - Most coverage in the national press has continued to be through the regular bridge columns, with the occasional additional article focusing on online play, the return to live bridge and the number of cheating cases.
- Club Liaison:
 - Some clubs restarted in July but it was a very gradual process and heading in to winter it has become harder to attract players back to face-to-face sessions particularly in the evenings. Due to Covid concerns and requirements to wear masks while playing, some clubs are moving sessions back online.
 - At the time of the annual report (9 November) 546 out of 625 affiliated clubs had submitted a session since 1 April 2020. Of those 546 clubs 200 were inactive throughout Covid but submitted a session since the relaxing of restrictions in July.
 - The EBU is currently offering a trial affiliation offer so clubs that have not been affiliated since 2010 can affiliate but pay nothing until September 2022. So far 11

clubs have signed up for trial affiliation offer of which one has already changed to full membership.

- Technology:

- The EBU web site has been upgraded to Drupal 9, without incident. A blog section has been added and we expect to continue improving it.
- My EBU has also been refined and improved by adding the ability to upload convention cards and adding a news banner to show news and alerts to those logging in to see their latest NGS ranking.
- A new bridge calendar is currently in beta and will go live in the first quarter of 2022.
- We have continued to work on migration from Entrust virtual desktops to a more open system based on Office 365.
- Staff are making increasing use of Microsoft Teams for collaboration.
- We still require a hosted Windows network for the integration between Sage accounts and our Workbooks CRM and this is being migrated to Microsoft Azure where we have more control and lower costs.
- We have implemented two-factor authentication in Office 365.
- Windows network in Aylesbury had been neglected in some respects. We have brought server maintenance up to date and are gradually improving the management of the PCs on the network.
- We have started code signing EBU applications like EBUScore and plan to continue improving this and other applications such as Hand Generator.

Gordon Rainsford

Jan 2022

Appendix B

Completion of the Mission

