



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EBU LIMITED
Via Zoom, Thursday 17th March 2022 at 1pm

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. Minutes and Approval from the meeting of 13th January 2022

a. Accuracy

IP asked that the previous minutes be updated to include that the Volunteer Policy was asked to be revisited.

b. Matters Arising

No matters arising. Minutes approved.

c. Decisions taken between meetings

The Volunteer Policy was discussed. GR is currently reviewing the policy and will present an updated version to the Board prior to the June Board meeting. As part of the volunteer policy, the safeguarding policy is also under review. GR suggested Kay Cater (KC) will look after the review dates for the policies and make GR aware for future reviews. GR noted that there is currently no safeguard officer, Karen Durrell (KD) has taken on responsibility for the administration part of the role. GR asked the Board for suggestions for a new safeguarding officer, it was agreed that this person is best not to be a staff member and they will require training.

The volunteer policy will be made available to counties and clubs for their information, and use if that suits them.

KP raised concerns that young people should be made aware of how to raise any safeguarding concerns they have. It was noted that for players in squads, they sign contracts and receive information in these contracts about safeguarding and how to proceed with any issues. The Board agreed that further action should be taken to ensure young players who are not squad members are made aware of how to proceed with any concerns. GR noted this will be an ongoing project but he will look to implement the first steps towards making this clearer for members.

The list of outstanding actions from previous meetings have all been complete.

3. Financial Matters

3.1 KP circulated her report prior to the meeting. She highlighted some of the positive aspects and negative aspects. It was noted that the accounts show a significant improvement from December. KP confirmed that there has been an improvement in the finances due to the recent competitions providing a net surplus to the budget, this includes the Year End and Seniors congresses which were both held online. There were no questions about the report.

3.2 KP circulated her 22/23 draft budget report to the Board prior to the meeting. She summarised the report. Covid has had a significant impact and caused large uncertainty to the way bridge is played and what the EBU can expect. There is likely to be lower income to the EBU across the board, with increasing costs in rates, energy and paper. However, this year the NBO subscriptions to the WBF and EBL are unusually low as they are based on the number of active players on 31st March 2021, which was significantly lower due to covid.

KP noted that the current budget with no alterations – which already cuts all grants to nil - leaves a deficit of £75k, which if left unchecked will eat into the current reserves. With having no reason to think the situation likely to improve KP laid out various options and recommendations for the Board.

Following a discussion, the Board decided that funding for junior international events would be cut. Entry fees and expenses for NPCs and chaperones would still be funded, but the remaining expenses will now need to be covered by the junior players or by funds that can be raised. A hardship fund will be set up for players who are unable to pay their own expenses.

The Board discussed upcoming and future competitions. It was agreed that the Easter Congresses may be cancelled in future unless they are made profitable. The Summer Congress at Eastbourne may also be cancelled if it is not profitable, and if repeating last year's format then this year 90 tables are needed to ensure this. The Board asked that these details be made explicit on the website and in any promotions. The Competitions Sub-Committee is also looking to make the events more tourist friendly. GR stated that if Eastbourne is cancelled, there may be an opportunity to hold two events at two different locations.

4. Chief Executive's Report

GR circulated his report (summarised in Appendix A) prior to the meeting. He noted that some items had been covered previously in the meeting but added the news that Competitions Administrator Charlie Bucknell (CB) has handed in his notice and will be leaving the EBU in June. This vacancy is currently being advertised.

5. EGM Matters Update

IP noted that the disciplinary laws are still being re-written and will need to be finalised before being put forward at the EGM. A much simpler set of proposals has been drafted by Steve Green (SG) for how to deal with these matters. This will create a whole new system which will aim to formalise and make the process simpler.

6. L&E Matters Update

The update from the L&E was covered in item 5 with the update of the disciplinary laws being re-written for the EGM.

7. EBED Update

AD gave an update from his meeting with EBED's Giorgio Provenza (GP) in which they discussed how the EBU and EBED can work together. AD noted that this was a very positive meeting, but that GP confirmed that EBED will hold responsibility for defining the way in which they proceed in supporting the EBU for certain projects. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed that it would be best to see how this new arrangement works in practice.

AD talked through the draft strategy document noting that we will need to set clear outlines for EBED about our expectations. The Education Working Group will meet again shortly to determine the next steps.

TR gave a brief update on progress with SmartBridge. He stated that the main lead for the project has now left EBED. GP is currently in process of recruiting a replacement. TR will have further constructive talks with GP about how the EBU can help finalise the project.

8. Fundraising

IP noted that fundraising had been discussed previously in the meeting. KP elaborated to say that there is currently no junior fundraising campaign, CF is also looking at implementing the option for people to donate to the EBU as part of a new "Friends of the EBU" initiative, this may also include legacies, sponsorship and giving pages as part of the website. KP cautioned that this is not currently top priority for the IT team so progress may be slightly slower.

It was agreed that any money raised to support people in full time education playing bridge, should go to EBED. RM suggested crowd funding options. IP stated this would likely have better success if implemented by the junior players.

9. Updates from Sub Committees

a. Counties Working Group

PS confirmed that there is little to update, he noted that the County representatives meeting at the end of February was a success.

b. Competitions Working Group

RL confirmed that since the last meeting, the Competitions Working Group has been reconstituted to include previous members of the Tournament Panel.

IP informed the Board that Peter Clinch (PC) (Chair of Sussex) is now also the Chair of the Tournament Directors Development Group.

c. Technology (IT) Working Group

CF shared a draft of the new Teacher & Club search facility currently in development.

GR stated that emails are now being sent to members celebrating their master point promotions. GW noted that a player has offered to re-design the certificates if we would like them to.

d. Technology Legal Executive Working Group

This group does not yet exist

e. Membership/Marketing Working Group

KP submitted a paper prior to the meeting. She confirmed that the marketing and promotional materials have now been printed and shipped to Aylesbury for distribution to counties, clubs and teachers. The aim is to notify club and county officials in the next few days. CF and SK have a meeting planned for Tuesday 22nd to update the Play Bridge page on the EBU website.

A new teachers directory and search function is being developed. There is a stipulation for teachers to be added to this directory they must agree to register their students with the EBU for at least one year. These students will be sent a welcome pack.

There have been some articles and social media posts, but still a lot more to do. CF confirmed that more people are engaging with the EBU blog and sending in content, and it would be nice for more people to like and share our social media content. KP confirmed that the Membership/Marketing Working Group has extended to include Sarah Miller who is a professional journalist, Pat Welsh (Kent), Ros Wolfarth (Eastbourne) and Graham Daniel (Somerset).

TR is planning to send an email to all counties to re-address the non-affiliated clubs offer.

Following the printing of the marketing materials, the next steps will be to engage other local organisations, such as libraries. This will need to be limited to how quickly we are able to respond to contacts.

10. Board Priorities

RM circulated a paper prior to the meeting. IP apologised that there is not time in this meeting to discuss the paper in detail but thanked RM for his insightful contributions. PS noted that the report naturally embeds into the EBU strategy.

11. EBU Strategy Review

PS set out an approach to the EBU strategy, separating out the short/medium term strategy from the long term. The Board agreed that this was the correct way forward. For the first part, a development of current activities will provide adequate progress in the next few months. For the second strand the next step is to find imaginative and forward thinking people from the counties and clubs to take that forward; this part of the strategy will take the rest of the year. There will be time dedicated to discussing strategy at the next Board meeting in June. The Board agreed that Tim Anderson (TA) should be asked if he is willing to attend one of the days at the strategy meeting in June.

12. County Chairs Meeting May 2022

TR confirmed that the next County Chairs meeting will be Chaired by Ian Sidgwick, with assistance from Pamela Booth-Jones. An agenda will be drafted by the end of April.

13. EBL/WBF Matters

IP confirmed that there was not much to report. The Board wished the three England teams' good luck at the upcoming World Bridge Team Championships in the Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and D'Orsi Bowl.

14. Any Other Business

None

Next Meeting:

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

Future Meetings:

Thursday 15th September (Zoom)

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

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

County Chairs: Thursday 26th May (via Zoom)

*Venue needs to be confirmed

Meeting closed at 16.05pm

Action Points

Action	Person Responsible	Status
Volunteer policy under review and safeguarding officer needed. Action plan to raise awareness of how people can raise safeguarding concerns	GR	Ongoing
Junior International funding to be cut and hardship fund created	IP and GR	Ongoing
Disciplinary Laws being rewritten to be reviewed at EGM		Ongoing
Education Working Group to discuss next steps for strategy	TR	Ongoing
SmartBridge project	TR & GP	Ongoing
Donate option for members	CF & TA	Complete
Marketing materials to be sent to counties and for clubs and teachers to be invited to order packs	CF	Complete
New teacher's directory in development	CF & TA	Ongoing
Email to counties regarding the non-affiliated clubs offer	TR	Complete
Strategy development next steps	PS	Ongoing

Appendix A

Chief Executive's board report for Mar 2022 – bullet points of topics covered

- Competitions
 - The Competitions sub-group of the board is in the process of amalgamating with the former Tournaments Committee.
 - The changes in ODGP licence fees and online permissions were explained at the county chairs' meeting last month with the reasons for them.
 - The Point-a-Board Congress on RealBridge in January ran smoothly but with limited numbers despite extra publicity and providing a couple of advance "taster" sessions with PaB scoring, including Zoom discussions with expert players.
 - The Masters Pairs and the National Pairs regional heats also had a very disappointing turnout.
 - We are running the Easter Congresses live (the Northern one being organised by Yorkshire), which will again include a 50% discount for less-experienced players (Regional Masters and below) playing in the Swiss Pairs. We are also including two 9-high events and Kent are running a 9-high online event on our behalf.
 - We are optimistic about the Spring Fours, which usually attracts a lot of the teams who are keen to be back to face-to-face bridge.
 - The Spring Bank Holiday Congress will be online again this year.
 - We are working on a campaign to ensure the Summer Meeting at least breaks even.
 - Our February congress in Malta was successful, albeit with small numbers including a few visitors from Poland. Transporting equipment is already harder than it was when we were in the EU. For future events we are trying to source equipment near the venues as much as possible to minimise the cost and inconvenience of freight.
 - The new river cruise in May/June is going ahead and bookings are continuing to come in.
- Staffing
 - Most staff are back working in the office.
 - Tim Anderson is now working four days a week combining the IT manager role with his Membership Development Officer role.
 - Charlie Bucknell will be leaving us in the Summer and we are looking for a new Tournaments Administrator.
 - Clare Burnage will be working an extra two days a week on competitions and internationals.
- Communications
 - A new webpage is planned for the membership drive, Play Bridge.
 - New promotional materials are also now available on the website under the club and county resources section.
 - Weekly emails are now be sent out to all members letting them know about upcoming competitions, alternated between Charlie and Sam.
 - New monthly emails are being sent to clubs about their members masterpoints and letting them know any club promotions, as well as pdf certificates sent to all promotions that don't qualify for a printed one.
 - The February issue of the magazine was sent with no known issues and work has started on the diary.
- Club Liaison
 - Jonathan, Tim & Gordon are working on streamlining the Transition course.
 - Some clubs are moving sessions back face-to-face yet again, but online bridge continues to be more attractive for many players.

- Tim & Jonathan are planning some Zoom Q&A sessions for clubs. The trial affiliation offer for clubs that have not been affiliated since 2010 has now been extended.
- Technology
 - We are engaged in modernising our IT provision to staff and board members/committee members with a move towards cloud computing. This is to achieve greater flexibility, easier collaboration, and to control cost. However, we are constrained by the requirements of our Sage accounting package, leading to us using Microsoft's Azure Virtual Desktop and a cloud-hosted Windows network which integrates with our Office 365 email accounts.
 - Improvements have been made to My EBU and Masterpoint reports now let members page through all the results, rather than being limited to the top 50 or 100 results in each category. We have also developed a "current" report which shows county Masterpoint rankings as at the end of the previous month.
 - New features in development include the ability to email members automatically with session results. We are also working on improved "find a club or teacher" pages.
 - A bridge calendar has been developed for easier discovery of EBU and county events. It is in test phase, but the initial implementation is very nearly complete and should go live soon.
 - Banks have been tightening up credit security for online payments with a feature called Secure Card Authentication (SCA). It is somewhat complex to support but Harry has been working on this.
 - We have a long to-do list which we manage and discuss at a weekly technical group meeting. Areas include bugs, feature requests, and long-term plans to make our IT more resilient and secure.

Gordon Rainsford Mar 2022