



Nottinghamshire Contract Bridge Association



NCBA Clubs' Conference 6 March 2020

The Clubs' Conference was held at Ramsdale Golf Club. This was a very constructive meeting exploring the issues facing Bridge in Nottinghamshire. We developed a list of actions for clubs and for NCBA to undertake. However little action has taken place subsequently because Covid-19 impacted the following week! We could never have guessed! It is unfortunate and seems very strange now that we did not discuss Covid-19 and its impact on Bridge at all. It could have been a useful exploration of how we could keep Bridge alive and develop capacity in the online arena. But it was just before the storm broke. Our actions focussed on 'old style' F2F bridge and our challenge is to identify what we can take forward in virtual clubs and progress for when we can return to F2F bridge.

Attendees: Tony Garland (Newark) Tony Ward, David Dunford (Nottingham) Elizabeth Dunford (W Bridgford) Mo Logan, Diane Sharrock (Phoenix) Keith Abel (Retford) Michael Gyles, Bob Laughton (S Mansfield & Blidworth) Jane Holdrick, Val Hill (Mansfield Mechanics) David Dunford (Notts) Steve Fordham (Woodborough) Steve Crawford, Len Jackson (E Bridgford), Jeremy Webb, Martin Mellor (Keyworth)

Sue Wright, Chris Frost, Toni Smith, Keith Spencer (NCBA)

Having welcomed everyone to the conference, Toni outlined the programme for the day beginning with the objectives of Nottinghamshire Contract Bridge Association (NCBA)

- to promote and further Bridge in Nottinghamshire,
- to organise competitions in the County and
- to participate in matches with other Counties

5 workstreams had been identified for the committee:

- Advertising and Publicity
- Effective Communications
- Training and Development
- NCBA Internal review
- Events and County competitions

The objectives of the Clubs' Conference was to:

- To improve awareness of NCBA and our aims
- To celebrate Club successes
- To support and build links with Clubs and facilitate cross-club dialogue generating peer support
- To build 2-way communication within Nottinghamshire and externally with EBU/other Counties etc.
- To promote County and Club events
- To build on action points/issues raised from the last conference and jointly identify new concerns/solutions
- To raise awareness of EBU and what each can do for each other

Actions identified from previous Clubs' Conferences

2017 Conference

- Multicentre events;
- To4
- Social daytime bridge
- Club reps;

- County vacancies;
- Safeguarding;
- Promotion/advertising;
- Training priorities;
- Communication

2019 Conference

- Safeguarding,
- Increasing numbers via classes and cross-club support,
- Social and daytime bridge
- Social TO4 league
- Declining numbers at Clubs and closure of drives
- The isolated elite.
- County performance.
- Succession planning.
- Low numbers for Priday Cup.
- Low numbers for Notts Green Point events.

2020 Key Issues for Nottinghamshire Bridge

NCBA

- County performance and attendance at NCBA organised events. How do we improve standard of bridge in Nottinghamshire and is it necessary?
- Should we put on events for all levels?
- Should the events be rotated around the County?
- What do clubs want/need?
- NCBA needs Volunteers

Clubs

- Mini survey feedback

Sue Wright reported that there had been a good response to the survey and thanked clubs for submitting the information requested. She presented the findings and the results of the survey are presented at the end of this report (Appendix 1)

Discussion groups

Two focus group discussions considered the following issues and identify a number of key actions

- A. Bridge in Nottinghamshire is declining in standard as well as in numbers. One of the reasons for this is the lack of good manners and best behaviour in clubs.
- B. The numbers attending County and Club organised events is declining. This is mainly due to the lack of effective communication between EBU, NCBA and Clubs.

These needed to be measurable, practical, owned and timely actions. Groups were asked to identify

1. the most important - unanimously agreed - 2 per table
2. Individually 2 per club to take away and action
3. 2 most important actions per table for the County committee to take away and action

There was considerable discussion and various ideas forthcoming from the three tables, the main themes being resurrection of Club rep, safeguarding, improve communications and advertising, TD training, developing aspirational players, increase interest in competitions.

The complete list of points discussed are included as Appendix 2 and will be circulated to all clubs

Toni went on to give **NCBA Update**

July 2020 Festival Proposal was outlined and opened for discussion. Delegates asked whether this was of interest and we asked for offers of help, ideas and media support

Notts Green Point Team Pairs at Spondon
County-wide Sim Pairs- club based
TD training and peer support at NCB
Afternoon Improvers Sims and developmental booklet club based
Masterclass
Clubs Open Day
Open Day
Derbyshire Mixed Pairs at Spondon –
Priday Cup

There was a suggestion to hold a daytime drive whereby improvers play with a mentor/experienced person. This got a positive feedback from the other clubs.

Promotion of Forthcoming Events

Clubs were asked to take fliers for the following events and to promote within the Club membership by advertising on Club websites, displaying on Club noticeboards and announcing at Bridge sessions.

- Teams of 4 (To4)
- Teams of 8 (To8)
- Priday Cup

Transparency: Midlands Counties working group and NCBA committee meetings to be made available on the NCBA website

NCBA AGM

Notice given for the AGM – 20 May 2020

NCBA Calendar of Events – suggested that there is a paper copy of the events calendar that members can carry with them/put in diary as well as all events being on the NCBA website. Clubs are encouraged to enter NCBA events on their club websites.

Actions for NCBA

The Priday Cup

This pairs event has been re-badged following positive and constructive feedback from all EBU clubs at the County's Clubs' Conference. It is aimed at NGS grades 9 and below, in other words, progressing beginners up to average club players. It is hard to describe but we want the competition to be for those players who are less experienced in competitions as a way to provide a friendly competitive environment to develop their interest in the Event programme. As such this will be a Level 2* event which excludes complicated conventions.

There will be a trophy and cash prize for the top pair, and separately there will be a monetary prize for the club that has nominated the top qualifying club pair.

We are aiming for this to be one of the flagship competitions of the County events calendar.

What would Clubs like NCBA to do to support them?

Throughout the day there were a number of themes that came out

- Organise teaching for more advanced team players to raise the standard of the top end.
- Advertise bridge and put on the county website information about lessons
- Purchase promotional items that will promote bridge to wider audience and encourage aspiration of members e.g. Pens (advertising Masterpoint ranks & NCBA), tote bags, – NCBA to pump prime the purchase in bulk for clubs to then buy smaller quantities for use in clubs (cost neutral)
- Support players who have been to lessons by putting on sessions to plug the gap.
- Financial support
- Safeguarding and on-line course – juniors and elderly
- Play with an expert
- Provide an 'idiot's guide' to explain NGS, Swiss Pairs, Sims, Green/Blue/Master points etc.

Actions for Clubs

A number of themes emerged from the clubs

Safeguarding

Appoint a safeguarding officer for the Club and introduce a 'safeguarding' item on the agenda for future committee meetings, recognising that we have vulnerable adults in the club

Communication

Appoint a NCBA liaison officer who will receive communication, including the newsletter, from NCBA

Personal communication

Advertising

First aid and emergency contacts

Promoting County Events

Members were thanked for attending and feeding in Clubs' views and asked to feed back to their committees and members the discussions and actions agreed at the Conference.

Members were asked to support NCBA and keep in touch using the Generic e mail address:

nottscba@gmail.com

A plea to continue to share best practice & ideas so that we can continue to Promote Bridge for All in Nottinghamshire

Following the success of the conference attendees looked forward to the conference in 2021.

Appendix 1

NCBA Club mini survey (February 2020) – presented at Clubs' Conference

- On a scale of 1-10(good) how 'vibrant' is your club? Range 5-9 (majority 8)
- On a scale of 1-10(good) how 'progressive' is your club? Range 6-9 (majority 7)
- How has your membership changed in the last 5 years? Decreasing (2) Same (2) Increasing (6)

Teaching

- Teaching for beginners at your club? YES✓✓✓✓/NO✓/SNOTTY ✓✓
- Would you like help setting up some beginner sessions? YES✓
- Improver sessions at your club? YES✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓/NO✓
- Occasional improver topic to be delivered at your venue? YES✓/NO/MAYBE ✓

Tournament Directors

- Do you have sufficient qualified Tournament Directors? YES✓✓✓✓✓✓/NO✓✓✓
- TD training?
 - Full 4 sessions delivered by EBU leading to the qualification of EBU TD - ✓
 - A day session for unqualified TD's on how to run a club session and the key Rules. ✓✓(rules not movements)
 - There is the annual TD peer support group scheduled for July mid-week. How many of your club's TDs (qualified or not) would like to attend? ✓0, 0,?,?,??, 1, 2

Communication

- Does your club pass on the NCBA newsletter to its membership? YES✓✓✓✓✓✓/NO✓✓✓
Not sure what is method of communication; by e mail, verbally
- Advertise the Nottinghamshire competitions in your club?
Members e mail circulation ✓✓✓✓✓; Website ✓✓,
Announcements at club sessions ✓✓✓✓✓ Club noticeboard ✓✓
Word of mouth ✓ Club newsletter ✓
- How many of your club members attend county wide competitions/national competitions?
Countywide: Not known, v few, a few, some, 2, 4, ?, 4, 6, 12-15,
National: Not known,0, 2,2,?, 6, 6-8
- Are you aware that NCBA runs friendly competitions with local Counties aimed at giving improving players experience of County level Bridge on the way to joining the County squad?
YES ✓✓✓✓✓✓✓/NO✓✓✓

Safeguarding

- Do you have a Safeguarding/Youth Officer in your club? YES✓✓✓✓✓✓/NO ✓✓✓
- Do you have a Safeguarding policy? YES✓✓✓✓✓✓/NO ✓✓[✓]

Information to share & suggestions as to how NCBA may be able to assist clubs

- How are clubs addressing falling membership?
- Offering morning/afternoon Improver sessions
- Teaching initiative SNOTTY (others should consider similar venture)
- Sharing premises with non-affiliated club – players now play with us
- Good relationships with non-affiliated club
- Waive collection of NCBA share of EBU P2P revenue
- SIMS pairs events are popular & attract good turnouts
- Success by compliance with EBU Best Practice, but friendly/non-judgemental/supportive atmosphere
- Cash prizes for County competitions
- Financial support for specific capital equipment (Annual grant?)
- Non-affiliated to affiliated success

Appendix 2

Feedback from the Focus group discussions

TABLE 1

1. Good manners- partners that fight is poor as well as aggression to opponents.
2. Players need confidence to raise issues with TD's.
3. Reputation is key- once a club gets a bad reputation it is hard to shift
4. No sense that performance is declining yet County TD pointed out at the higher level Notts generally trails behind other counties in most events.... Is it something we've got used to and don't see..?
5. Get numbers up – junior schools- play 3 hands? improver classes; master classes- what subject and different venues rotating basis.

TABLE 2

6. Bridge is competitive game- but can still be social- e.g. tea break
7. The culture is club centric with insufficient seeing how they fit in the wider picture so reduced aspirations? Some people want to be a big fish in a small pond so don't like the experienced players joining in- is there evidence these people only play to cream the master points?? Do we care??
8. Need a nominated club rep to research websites and print off to improve information
9. GDPR- use a new membership form template so members share their email address with club and NCBA as too many (approx.300) aren't on the NCBA mailing list
10. Competitions- increase numbers by:
 - a) Better notification- posters not just email/internet- older populations - older people been there and done it so may not want to enter events..
 - b) Better advance notification- the calendar idea is good especially paper based for clubs to distribute
 - c) Different communication for different events? Eg club heats and handicaps
 - d) Too many boards so late afternoon start and late finish driving in the dark is unattractive- look at start times
 - e) Build a competitive approach by acknowledging small progressions using certificates or pens or any printed item which also helps promote Bridge in general- NCBA to buy in bulk and sell to clubs?
 - f) Explain NGS to clubs etc- it's the individual, the teacher, the club and NCBA responsibility to do this. Not just NCBA. Ditto blue point etc
 - g) Increase interest in competitions if personal development and confidence improves- masterclasses at least 4 times year in different venues and check terminology doesn't put people off e.g. masterclass. The perception of self-worth is interesting. Buying in trainers (example of £25 per head) is expensive.
 - h) Offer small cash prizes
 - i) Get rid of/tackle the legacy of bad behaviour- this needs everyone to dispel the myth
 - j) Use the active communication methods to get interest, e.g. the hand on the shoulder
 - k) Offer a host system
 - l) Get more volunteers to run these time-consuming events

TABLE 3

1. Need to resurrect the Club Rep idea in each Club.
2. Distribute fliers in clubs
3. Not good communications from EBU
4. Daytime bridge
5. Bridge is too cheap but resistance to putting the table fees up
6. SIMS pairs like last July is good event
7. What about intermediate SIMS pairs?
8. U3A contact?
9. Where does the P2P money go? Is it a toss-up between county professionals going to events vs bridge in schools and universities?
10. We don't know who the top players are- need a profile?
11. Increasing numbers at clubs- stop for tea and a chat?
12. Advertise locally- club responsibility
13. SNOTTY is successful and can share information and resources

Appendix 3

NCBA Clubs' Conference - ACTION PLANNING

Club	Club Action 1	Club Action 2	NCBA Action
Newark	Safeguarding up to date	Hold a library promotion event	Effective communications and the 'pen' celebration idea
Retford	Safeguarding and first aid	Promote county events	Communicate personally
E Bridgford	Advertise events in club and café bridge. Can share a director's crib sheet	Get into Schools- contact Mo	Lobby EBU re pens and certificates. Check all terminology so not off putting
W Bridgford	Safeguarding	Better active communications (personal)	Director training both for qualified and non-qualified people
Nottingham	Create a syllabus and process to get beginners through to club level including drives to suit	Active communications	Training for TDs
Keyworth	First aid	NGS profile all drives to support people get the right level	Training for TDs – 2 types CPD for QTDs An in-house day (similar to EBU session 1) for the NQTDs
Woodborough	Safeguarding	Emergency contact details	Invitation events to celebrate our volunteers Masterclasses in different venues and on different days
Mansfield Mechanics	NCBA Rep and improved active communication in the club	Sort out the emails so NCBA has a current list	7NT roll of honour Buy pens and other promotional items in bulk Masterclass at Mansfield
South Mansfield & Blidworth	Look to form a relationship with other affiliated clubs in the area. Visit a SNOTTY event to get a feel for how they've achieved success in the south of the county.	Appoint a NCBA liaison officer Actively pursue the possibility of club support for, in particular, TO4 and TO8 and County competitions. Consider which individuals might be quietly 'encouraged'.	Resurrect club rep
Phoenix	Keep up with TD meetings, Accident book	Active communications	Frequent communication of accounts of NCBA on website – review the funding for NCBA