

# Minutes OBA Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023 15:30 on Zoom,

## 1. Attended

Kathy Talbot, Peter Litchfield, Patricia Hones, Robert Procter, Malcolm Currie, Peter Finbow, Joan Bennett, Alan Wilson, Matthew Covill, Sandra Nicholson, Denis Talbot, Stephen Brown

Apologies

Charlie Bucknell, Adrian Lambe, Sandra Claridge

## 2. Matters arising from notes of last meeting: Budgets and budget-holders

Budget Holders individuals to hold budgets and manage them. This is a task for the management committee. e.g. Sandra checked the Wessex Payments. For the Congress, we must have a budget holder who would do the accounts.

The other budget holders are:

Promotions team.... Robert is budget holder.

Competitions.... Stephen

Youth / junior Joan budget holder. In early March 2024, Joan submit a spreadsheet

Education, Charlie but under Robert's group.

County Team -need a budget? There is always a possibility for unexpected payment.... County Capt needs to be aware of costs e.g. for the Tollemache and the Midland Counties League online. Also for any potential home matches played face-to-face.

Question from Alan: If county match is F2F, how do we pay travel fees. KT didn't think this arose, but we queried how to pay cost of home venue. She thinks for some time that players have funded their own travel.

ACTION –SB to notify cost of RealBridge cost for a match to Matthew.

ACTION: SB to send Sandra N RealBridge costs and EBU costs. Daytime costs and evening Wessex costs are different and a few matches may be F2F. David -Tarsky would know F2F matches for the Evening League, but the Daytime league has no submission. Sandra also needs to know cost of the Garden Cities entry.

The entry for the Pachabo is under competitions.

## 3. Officers' reports:

**Chair** - Kathy had little to report this time. She has been busy with the congress committee. Narrowing down options for date and venue. Competitions group has been running very efficiently. Thanks. See item later item on constitution.

**Treasurer** - Please look at detail and see expected surplus / loss. Expect less profit from duplimating and BBO Pairs league this year.

**Secretary** - Report mainly factual

**Promotions Group** Nothing significantly moved forward since AGM. But see item on "Bridge The Gap" later

## County Selection Committee

From Alan Wilson. Matthew & Alan need to discuss how the roles will pan out and who will share info with SB. 7 people on the selection committee, the largest it has been. Kathy would like to come. Alan will invite. Kathy would like some minutes, but Alan not fully able to do this since lots of selection and discussion by email. Teams have been picked for three Dawes matches. The teams have done well in the first two matches. But it is early days for the leagues. In Tollemache, the OBA team narrowly missed out for qualifying. They were in a qualifying position until near the end.

## County Teams

It would be nice to have a report. This needs sharing around. Ask Nick Smith to do a hand. Matthew to copy SB into result of match. Matthew urges caution. Getting people to commit and following through by sending a hand. Needs to be within a week of an event.

**Competitions Group** – SB convenes meetings, chief TD Patricia. Events are advertised by Stephen.

**ACTION** Sandra N to check whether all Wessex matches are fixed. Patricia had a couple outstanding for Wallingford v Wallingford matches. And possibly Wallingford v other clubs. Sandra has given extension in view of expected hospitalisation, to end of January.

Juniors - It's picking up again. England, Scotland and Ireland seem to be ahead of other countries coming out of Covid. There is still more to do. 50+ schools. The states only have 60 and they are so much bigger.

Some bridge is F2F, some online. People felt Generation Game a good idea. To start with 10 families is good. The first proper event is 17 Dec. Again Joan encouraged to send SB info for website. Ask Shireen to help with suitable picture.

### 4. Proposed changes to the OBA constitution: paper available

We saw paper from 2018. A proposal for amending the constitution. It was voted in at a previous AGM. But they were never actioned. Kathy will send round for us all to comment.

It is suggested that the word *duplicate* is removed from the constitution. Here to promote bridge not just duplicate bridge. We need to embrace everyone; it is a pyramid.

Sandra N's understanding as ex-shareholder is that the EBU had kept away from organizing bridge in general. Bridge generally includes gambling. If a gambling game, one has to be licensed. Also not wanting to cross anything the Portland Club does. We need to check that we are not going to lead into legal problems. Can we do this with the EBU?

**ACTION:** KT to write to the EBU.

Perhaps the Constitution could be changed to replace *Duplicate Bridge* with *Bridge (Duplicate and social)*.

Robert reported that Patrick Shields at the Midland Counties meeting notes that the EBU also said it would remove it and has not implemented this. Alan reported that in US, Bridge is seen as a gambling game.

## Bridging the Gap

Robert Procter spoke Bridging the gap, and has a way around problems raised.

**History** 20 years ago we started P2P and there were more clubs. Several clubs became unaffiliated but had members that also played and at clubs that were in affiliated. The aim of the EBU board has been to try to convert some of these clubs to be affiliated. Many reasons are given including etiquette, monitoring laws of game, disputes, assisting club. A document was sent out but not a single club affiliated because of it. There are a substantial number of unaffiliated clubs.

In 2013 there were a couple of projects. A working party with Robert Procter, Mike Willoughby & Malcolm Pryor.

- a) Unaffiliated clubs will not buy in to what we are currently selling
- b) The EBU should be the national body for all bridge
- c) If we want to set up a structure, we need to speak with them as to what they want, with a clean sheet. EBU should be talking to Mr Bridge, Andrew Robson etc This was passed unanimously by 9 county chairs. They might be worried about finance so a model was put forward. Not everyone felt that the financial package would work. BUT it is not just about finance. It about events like Café Bridge, Wessex league lower division etc. Last year Kathy, Robert & Mike Willoughby would put it forward again. Do we still agree what are we doing with these 3 points:

We believe that bridge is a game for everyone. It can satisfy people's competitive and social needs. Games of bridge can be organised to satisfy either of these needs separately or both together. When we say that we want the EBU to be the national body for all bridge players it is because we believe that it should serve social bridge players' needs just as much as competitive players' ones.

The EBU and counties are currently structured to support competitive bridge. Counties and clubs are restricted from offering much in the way of social bridge by the requirement for them to put events through the Universal Membership system thereby raising funds to finance the EBU.

We believe we could do more to raise the profile of the game and increase the number of people playing by reducing these restrictions. The knock-on benefit from this could be that some of those who start by playing social bridge would be more likely to move on to more competitive games if there was less of a barrier between the two forms of the game.

With these objectives in mind we are contemplating the following:

1. Lobbying the EBU for a change in its structure and focus via the MCWG
2. Moving the OBA's Promotion, Education and Social Team to a separate independent organisation aimed at all bridge players.
3. Inviting unaffiliated clubs to participate in the formation of such a new body on an equal footing. We would write to both our members and their members to invite them to be on a mailing list to advertise its activities.

This would be an organization outside the EBU. Not restricted by any rules by what affiliated clubs have to do and see how it goes. E.g OBA could try it, give it a go and perhaps other counties will see and then try. And then go back to the EBU... encourage to do it on a national basis.

The EBU should be writing a newsletter aimed at non-competitive players. Get leaflets into libraries and schools etc. Leaflets created by the EBU.... The teams has not yet discussed this. Robert telling us what they are thinking.

Q How many unaffiliated clubs are there in OBA? KT has a list of people she spoke to before Covid. Over 20 ? But a long time ago.

SN felt that it was a good idea, but problem is the unaffiliated clubs will still see this as EBU/OBA to take them over. We perhaps need a major figure from Affiliated clubs to get involved. Hopefully to take a lead. Need an unaffiliated club on the letter head. Us doing something for them.

AW asked what are we being asking to agree to. KT explained we were being asked to agree to the Promotion & Education Sub Team reaching out to and doing something with unaffiliated clubs.

KT feels it if the OBA had emails to be able to share café bridge events more widely, then this would be great for marketing. Will it need finance form the OBA?

RP Feels that we have a budget of £1000. To set up an organization.

MC asked what is the advantage for social players. Peter L is aware of unaffiliated clubs that have fallen by the wayside. We can help them to market events. Unaffiliated clubs, teachers and events. RP is hoping that Jonathan Davis and Charlie will get involved. The hope it that it will result in people coming through to play café bridge. Shireen runs events

called Happy Hour, Chicago bridge with 3+ tables. At end of round, the winners move in one direction, loser in another get A bottle of champagne moves to the player who made the last slam. This is going down well with social players.

Next step is to talk to the Promotion team. Then go to clubs with open sheet of paper.

Alan proposed that we go ahead with this idea. SN was in favour of the initiative, but said that we need to check the constitution viz that it is fine for us to spend money on this initiative. She checked 3.5.... which states to employ funds of the OBA for the best interest of Duplicate Bridge in Oxfordshire.

AW says that this is in the interest of Duplicate bridge. The committee agreed that the long term interests of Duplicate might be served but increasing the amount of social bridge played.

Agreed by group. RP warns that we may need a budget of £1000 or less or more. But RP has had an unspent budget for 3-5 years. One would hope it would be self financing.

JB check that some clubs may be across the border in B&B.

MC is the word duplicate important. KT to ask EBU. Chicago and Rubber is not duplicate.

We will look forward to hearing results of proposed meeting.

## **5. EBU AGM: do we mandate our shareholders?**

There is an EBU AGM coming up, and two people with radical views requesting to be elected as Chairman and vice chair. They have been canvassing. They have a good agenda for change. But we are not convinced they are the right people. Does the committee have a view? We may need to read everything and then vote. KT originally thought it was good to have change etc. cut costs in central office. ~~Sell the premises. A bit radical~~ BUT she is not sure they are the right people for the job. Adrian Darnell and Tony Russ have become chair and vice chair. If we vote with EBU's choice, we want to ensure we are not saying ~~are we saying~~ that we do not agree with their agenda. David Parry & Nicola Bainbridge, both of whom have issues with the EBU.

Alan as one of the shareholders, said can we mandate our shareholders, he thought that they were advised by the committee. There are counties that have mandated their shareholders. There is nothing either way in the constitution. The current shareholders are: Charlie, Joan (accepted by Kathy) and Alan Wilson.

RP there were some things that he likes, some not so sure about. Should a shareholder ask what the EBU nominees think of these ideas. Could we ask the EBU establishment what they think of this.

Tony Russ had consulted with some clubs. Wallingford suggested a cut UMS for F2F events but nothing has come of this.

JB feels that the EBU had 35,000 members 6 or 7 year ago before Covid. now only 26,000. They had 19 salaried staff, now 16. But the turnover has dropped by 25%. The EBU should exist for the benefit of bridge players.

As a committee, we would look at the proposals, decide what we agree with and put this to the EBU.

KT would like counties to have more power over EBU (rather than EBU power over counties)

MC would like to see all submissions. It would be good to compare with other National organisations.

We feel that perhaps the EBU need to be led by someone with marketing and business expertise.

DT Supports what MC has said. We need info on which to vote. Gather and send round.

The EBU may use the rule: Any questions must be submitted in advance by 21<sup>st</sup> Nov.

Note: There may be lots of people on the board, but the whole of the board are unpaid. SN noted the unpaid people do a lot of work.

**ACTION** KT proposes. KT to produce a document she's send round on ASAP, cannot be before Thursday, which summarises and we look at it and have a list of questions we ask by next Tuesday. KT to pull together what she knows.

6. AOB None

7. Dates of Future Meetings

Equivalent dates are: 26<sup>th</sup> March, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024, and 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (a week earlier since SB away 12<sup>th</sup> Nov)

**26th September 2024**

**Agreed.**

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