

## **Chairman's Report to the Management Committee for the meeting on March 8 2017**

This will be a brief report, primarily because for much of the time since our last meeting I have either been under the weather or overseas or both! However, it's now back to work.

First, I would like to congratulate the county team on qualifying for the final of the Tollemache by winning their heat of the qualifier in fine style. This was the first time Oxfordshire has qualified for many years. Sadly the going against stronger opposition in the final was rather tougher, but nevertheless a good year for the county team.

As you know the Competitions Team has been considering what can replace county nights and have issued a short report on their deliberations for the March meeting. The main issue in my opinion is ensuring that players with aspiration to improve to county-representative level have opportunities to play both with and against those who have already achieved that level. County nights provided this opportunity. Some club nights do as well, but we need to have a system that identifies such players, helps them progress and ensures they get opportunity to represent the county when they are ready.

The Oxford Bridge Festival Team has been working hard on getting out publicity material. Entries are starting to arrive and we hope all members will spread the word far and wide, particularly among non-member bridge-playing friends. We have a meeting on February 28 when, among other things, we will be working on:

- more publicity material for club noticeboards
- a detailed programme
- schedule of things that need to be organised to make the festival a success

There will be a lot to do and the more help we have the better. While the festival itself is aiming to be primarily a social rather than a competitive event it does represent an opportunity for our leading players to "give something back" by volunteering their services in things like organising, directing, supervising play and teaching. If many people make a small voluntary contribution to the effort we can put on a great event at unmatched value. Clubs and county need to work together to obtain long-term benefits from the event.

I am grateful to Richard Sills and Colin Jones for organising and chairing a second Oxfordshire Club Chairs Conference early in January. The two main topics discussed were the festival and how clubs can eradicate behaviour that puts people off playing at our clubs. Both discussions were lively and moved our thinking forward.

I reported last time on the fact that Mike Willoughby and I had been delegated by the Midlands Counties Working Group to prepare a discussion paper on the operation of these county working groups, particularly on the relationship of the EBU with its volunteers. This has currently been shelved pending a review of the operation of such groups at the County Chairs Conference in July. I can confirm that Oxfordshire, Worcestershire and some other counties will be pushing hard for such working groups to have greater autonomy in the future in order to avoid some of the issues which have caused the Midlands Group such pain over the past couple of years.

Robert Procter 21 February 2017

# Best Practice for Oxfordshire County Bridge Association

## Summary

This document has been prepared by Kathy Talbot and John Slater as a guide to where we should focus our efforts to improve our aims and performance. It does not focus on where we do well.

### 1. Introduction and Aims

Since the draft advice on best practice was produced by the EBU (<http://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/official-documents/wip-best-practice-for-county-associations.pdf>), little progress has been made and it is still a draft. This paper attempts to identify areas where the OBA needs to make progress and to propose a set of actions in support of that progress.

The EBU focus on counties went with its decision to disband the National Club committee which could be viewed as an attempt to disintermediate counties. Instead an attempt to re-intermediate regions is underway. We are part of the Midlands RCWG.

The areas where OBA is probably lacking and in which we should work to improve are:

- Learning from others in a managed way (currently haphazard) 2
- Introducing job descriptors (underway) 3
- Training (some underway but more needed) 4
- Volunteers/turnover of officers (policy and implementation needed) 5
- Some aspects of Communication (others are good) 6
- Governance 7
- Indicators of Performance (PIs) and measurement and reporting against them (Lot of work needed) 10

### 2. Learning from others in a managed way (currently haphazard)

Although we do try to do this, it is currently haphazard. Individuals should be appointed to lead research into discreet areas, make recommendations and report back to the MC.

**Recommendation 1: A policy should be provided which requires each area to look at best practice elsewhere, consult regional officers and report annually on this. It could be bedded into the Job Descriptors.**

### 3. Introducing job descriptors

This is underway. We should define deadlines.

**Recommendation 2: The writing of job descriptions (JDs) should be completed by May 2017 and they should then be put on the website. They should be reviewed and updated annually by the post holder and changes made approved by the officers. Doing this should be part of the JD (RCR).**

### 4. Training

Currently none is given to most officers. We should liaise with the EBU's Regional Officer to further training. There is a matrix provided by the EBU

(<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/8084445/National%20CWG/Topic%20C%20-%20County%20Committee%20Skills.pdf>)

Training and education for playing bridge is however becoming better provided. It is still lacking in the areas of scoring and directing and some levels of bridge where the county should lead.

**Recommendation 3: We should review by the AGM the needs for training of officers and put in train any resultant deficiencies.**

#### 5. Volunteers/turnover of officers

Following the development of role descriptions we should identify skill experiences required; these should be documented on a matrix chart and matched to volunteers.

We should be active in the recruitment of volunteers ready to take over positions as they become vacant.

We should promote the ‘volunteer get a volunteer scheme’.

We should consider rewarding volunteers with free or reduced entry to Association events.

Two draft documents exist in support of this area:

A schedule identifying the main skills required of officers performing different roles—see above. A draft letter to existing volunteers to invite them to help find others - [click here](#).

**Recommendation 4: Responsibility for this area needs to be given to an officer, existing or new. It should become part of the relevant JD.**

#### 6. Transparency and Communications with Clubs and Members

We are doing well here. Specifically we meet all of the following:

Minutes of Association AGM’s and EGM’s published on County website.

Notices for open meetings published on County website.

Minutes of Association Executive/Management Committee meetings published on County website (with confidential items removed).

Publication of an online and/or paper newsletter on County bridge matters.

**Recommendation 5: Manage expectations in this area to ensure regularity.**

Ensure effective two-way communications between OBA and affiliated Clubs. The EBU suggests that this should be by:

1. An annual meeting between OBA representative(s) and invited Club Officials, with agenda items covering EBU, Association and Club raised matters. This may be two meetings: for Northern and Southern areas. (In hand but needs formalising – this is especially needed if we change the governance structure – see below)
2. Arranging for at least one Executive/Management Committee Officer to visit and play at a session at every affiliated Club at least once per year to either: meet the Club Committee, talk to Members collectively, or listen to any issues during play. This may be occurring through membership attendance but we should be recording it against a PI.
3. Encouraging Clubs, and their Members, to contact the County Association when needing help with resolving disciplinary or other rulings; finding teachers, or tournament directors, and other matters connected with running their Club. (This happens but we need to advertise it on the website or other documentation)
4. Allowing all affiliated Clubs space on the Association website to highlight their club details, and to promote special events or publish results (we currently encourage good links).
5. Maintaining a list of all unaffiliated Clubs, circles, groups, etc, and listing these on the Association website, together with giving them any advice that they might request
6. Keeping unaffiliated clubs informed of Association events, especially any designed to attract non-EBU Members
7. Targeted emails: particularly relevant for competitions. Others can take advantage of this approach ( here as elsewhere we need good email management)
8. Maintain an “Ideas” page on the website to monitor interest in new events and encourage feedback/suggestions. Actively canvass ideas

9. Run a regular satisfaction survey.

**Recommendation 6: Produce a document listing what we do in this area against each of the 9 ideas. Embed responsibility in JDs. Derive PIs.**

## 7. Governance

There is currently no way in which a member of the OBA can stand to be a member of the OBA MC other than as an officer. This is not considered good practice and relates to volunteering. Instead the clubs act as gatekeepers with representatives rather than volunteers put at the heart of OBA management. MC meetings are therefore often poorly attended. Oxon seems unusual here. A large part of the county has become semidetached from the operation of OBA. The Chairs' meetings have helped to ameliorate this in part.

1. OBA Governance is achieved by use of an appropriate Constitution – The Constitution should be reviewed regularly. A trawl of websites shows that nearly all counties operate a Management committee consisting of the Officers. Typically there will be as officers a Chair, Sec, Treasurer, Selection, Congress, Youth, Conduct, Events, CTD but others that appear included Discipline, Catering, Leagues, Vice chair (important for continuity), shareholders, Membership and club reps (max 4). Maybe we also need those with responsibility for the website, PIs etc. Our current Membership sec also seems important and worth retaining even though it is not widely present.
2. OBA must ensure that adequate Safeguarding Policies continue (the EBU Youth Care and Safety may be used as a model)
3. Association costs kept to a minimum by using modern communication and publishing methods; securing sponsorship for special events, the website or newsletter; and spreading the workload amongst all Executive/Management Committee Members, and others, where necessary
4. Organising relevant events should continue to be the responsibility of the Competitions Committee
5. We are good at selecting in certain competitions and finding subs. We are less good at transparent representative inter-County and National events. We need to cast a wider net and consider a more open approach to County selection
6. Continue working groups of 3-4 Committee Members and others to investigate topics, or issues, and charge them with suggesting remedies
7. Receive regular reports from Shareholders. Shareholders are representatives and, therefore, may normally vote according to their conscience
8. Raise the profile of bridge in the wider community by regular articles, for instance, in the local County press, and by publicising events on radio and TV. Consider appointing a PR officer
9. Maintain a confidential list of Members whom it is felt would have the right knowledge and experience to serve on the Executive/Management Committee
10. Ask these Members to assist in helping with specific activities, and get them involved in working groups or routine activities

**Recommendation 7: Serious consideration should be given to looking further at the governance models of other counties with a view to identifying why OBA is out of line with others. It should consider:**

- **More direct member involvement**
- **Maximum terms for officers/ greater turnover**
- **An officers-only meeting (possibly electronic) to manage the Association with clearly defined roles and/or a much smaller MC in terms of definition.**

- **Any changes resulting should be put to the AGM in June 2017**

**Recommendation 8: Consideration should also be given to:**

- **Executive/Management Committee to set itself targets with timescales and reporting on the measurement of its targets to the Clubs and Members**
- **Possible (recommended) targets to be set by County are outlined in Section 10**

## 8. Education

The OBA should give help to clubs with education, without actively offering a teaching programme. This may be in the form of a subsidy, help with finding teachers, finding good practice, or promotion. OBA should facilitate education to all levels. The OBA should continue to facilitate a Youth Education Programme.

OBA has recognised the need for both education and training. By supporting clubs we put some money back into the training function. After some period of neglect this is now focussing on:

- Juniors
- Learners

Nevertheless we should not neglect other aspects of training that allow us to function efficiently and advance performance against our key PIs.

The following also need regular training and updates.

- County officers and helpers
- Directors and scorers ( county and club)
- County players
- Club players

**Recommendation 9: Training needs putting in place in a planned fashion for all of the above.**

## 9. Best behaviour at Bridge

Continue to emphasise BB@B. Reminders at all levels.

**Recommendation 10: We should develop a best practice document for playing against newcomers/novices.** [Who should do this? Education team]

## 10. Measurement of County Performance

These Performance Indicators relate to growth in Membership, Clubs, students, financial, BBB, interaction with the community. By collecting and analysing data, we should be able to identify areas for improvement.

**Recommendation 11: We should allocate responsibilities so that we:**

**Maintain and store all records on the County website (restricted access to other than public documents)**

**Measure and plot numbers of members and record and plot satisfaction survey responses**

**Record NGS bands, anonymous**

**Monitor responses from Club representatives in Annual meetings to check progress**

**Monitor income and balance**

**Competitions: record instances of failure with a view to avoiding future process failure**

**Competitions: monitor numbers of members participating; monitor growth/decline by competition**

**Maintain an up to date list of volunteers**

**Maintain records of publication dates. Minutes, newsletters, web publication dates, announcements, [who will do this?]**

**Education: record clubs with education programmes and monitor number of learners. Where possible monitor learners entering full club sessions**  
**Monitor numbers of young players. Encourage clubs to provide details**  
**Record numbers of reported breaches of BB@B in county events**  
**Record progress of projects**  
**Identify and counter any threats to our operation**

## **OBA MC Mar 2017**

### **Report from Competitions committee**

- Events are still running largely at OBC as exodos date is still not completely determined. Liaison with Lisa Furnival is ongoing and helpful. Roke is cheaper but OBC is more convenient for many entrants, and more convenient for the caterer.
- The county pairs ran in Jan with a single event with 20 pairs. The top four that can play in the Corwen will represent OBA in the Corwen in due course.
- The Harwell cup will run on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Feb at Roke with 7 or 8 teams. The top 3 that can play in the Beck Cup will represent OBA in the Beck Cup on 23<sup>rd</sup> April.
- The original date for the final of the county pairs is no longer needed. We are looking at the possibility of running an event for the Oxford Times trophy instead.
- The county night WP finished its work. It has concluded that there is little possibility of a regular weekday county night continuing but there is interest in other events of a county training nature. A short report is attached.
- The MC has to decide whether to underwrite a single experiment in such events in March when Patrick Shields (Wales and Gloucestershire) is available to give a county level talk, open to all. This is no longer under the purview of the competitions committee as it has become education oriented.
- The remaining CC run event this year is the mixed pairs on 7<sup>th</sup> May although there will also be the congress in June and the festival in Sept. A payment link for the festival is on the website.

John Slater  
Feb 2017

## Short report on the future of county night

1. During 2015/6 numbers attending OBA county night at OBC dropped below the levels at which they were viable. This was especially so for the monthly pairs event which became non quorate on some occasions. There was some evidence that players were moving to Abingdon but this was by no means the only factor.
2. This triggered a decision following the implementation of a previous review, (which had recommended moving to 2 county nights each month and reviewing again if numbers did not reach 8 tables each night, essentially the breakeven point, to review again and discontinue. This happened in autumn 2016 and a final “celebration” was held of over 50 years of county night.
3. Nevertheless there were some that thought that a further review was necessary to see if something else could fill the place. This was conducted by Diana Nettleton and Emily Middleton with input from the competitions committee through John Slater.
4. They looked again at both demand and options on different nights and venues (OBC being no longer available).
5. It was noted that there was a requirement to cover costs in any replacement.
6. A number of Halls were approached with a concentration on those round Oxford with good parking available. While it is possible to cut costs over those previously charged by OBC there are usually problems of storing equipment and scoring facilities etc.
7. There are exceptions where some clubs (e.g. Central Yarnton, Wallingford and Menagerie) have equipment that might be available but there are some problems with all of these.
8. A survey was conducted of those likely to play. All the county squad were contacted as well as others.
9. In total, only 28 people said that they would consider coming to some events if it was possible (day of the week, venue etc).
10. This leads to an estimated turnout of about 4-5 tables with some fluctuation round that (people will not all come and the conflicts suggest this number).
11. This is not sufficient to consider reinstatement as the events seem bound to lose money.
12. However, there was some enthusiasm for events of a different type – county match feedback, master classes etc. These should be organised by the county selection team and captain.
13. To give this a start DN has approached Patrick Shields (Wales and Gloucestershire) about giving a small number of master classes for players of county standard. It is proposed to proceed with one of these in March 2017 with others if it be successful. A charge would be made for attendance. It is unlikely that it will cover the full cost until established. In a sense , after the trial, it is up to the county and selectors to run with this or not.

DN/EM/JBS

Feb 2017



## **Competitions actions for OBA.**

In the time since the report was written some further progress has been made and actions arisen. The Harwell cup ran with 6 teams and three will play in the beck Cup representing Oxon. There are 3 areas of action needed:

### 1. Oxford Times Trophy:

We would like to reinstate this. It would be run over a week with the same hands being played at Novice level at any clubs that wish in the training sessions. Vicky Flemming and Sandra Nicholson will lead. It is likely that 3 clubs will take part with possibilities for others. Someone will provide hands and a commentary. It should qualify for "Novice" EBU status (not because attendance is nun but because it will have no more than 10% having more than 500 points, to allow for hosts etc.) It will be scored as a single event (cheating is most unlikely with this group). No fees will be charged beyond the county P2P fee so the cost of the boards and the prize for the winner will largely fall to the county but it could be a good source of PR.

### 2. County Night:

The first of the Patrick Shields events on slam bidding at tournament/county level is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Those attending are being charged £8 to attend but this is a first and so there is a need to underwrite any shortfall (the costs will be about £200 - £220) as the event is an experiment. This activity will then need to move out of competitions to either the education group or county team group. It is run by Diana Nettleton and Emily Middleton.

### 3. County Pairs heats or otherwise:

8 clubs responded. One is in favour of reintroducing heats and was prepared to run one. Six were against including most large clubs and several indicated that they would not run one unless forced. One expressed the view that the club had only an interest in teams based scoring events and so would not run a heat but was strictly indifferent. Accordingly, given that only 20 pairs entered this year so the semi became the final, it is recommended not to try to reinstate heats. MC is asked to endorse these decisions/requests and decide on a home for county training.

jbs  
Feb 26 2017

# MARCH 2017 JUNIOR REPORT FOR OBA

## 1. OXFORD JUNIOR BC



The OJBC is thriving this term after a relatively quiet start to the academic year. A family of three sons, who had attended on a weekly basis since we started the club, were largely absent, in the autumn term, owing to their father's work in Europe and their Sunday visits to see him. We missed their lively presence and also their table money.

However, this prompted me to realise that the club was too dependent upon a small number of dedicated families and I decided to have a 'Free Taster Session' at the beginning of the Spring Term. Vista Print owed me a favour and printed 1500 publicity postcards, free of charge, and these were distributed to 16 local roads and also to interested parties and local bridge clubs. This publicity was consolidated with an advertisement in the parish magazine, which is delivered to 5000 local homes. On 28<sup>th</sup> January, fifteen people attended our taster session: a father and son, a mother and daughter, a mother and son, a family of four and five male children of varying sizes. We did not charge the existing pupils, who were on show, bidding and playing at the far end of the room. All attendees left, after tea and cakes, with a laminated sheet on "How To Play Mini-Bridge" and as many packs of cards as they needed.

As a direct result of this, ten of the attendees have returned and six are likely to attend on a regular basis. Three of this total are parents learning with their children and we have decided not to charge for the parent in this instance.

Huge thanks to our regular volunteers, who turn out on Sunday afternoons, on a regular basis, but also to Sandra Nicholson and Lis Long, not regulars, but who helped with the taster session and were run off their feet all afternoon!

Our November competition was attended by 28 children from around the county and beyond; once again, we opted for three sections: mini-bridge, novice bidders and experienced bidders.

Two of our regular volunteers, Anthony Harris and Clare Saunders, started a bridge club at local Summer Fields School last September, and are now able to bring their boarding pupils to the club, whenever the children are free and wishing to attend.

On 4<sup>th</sup> March three teams are entered for the Loughborough Schools Challenge: one team from the Dragon School and two teams, which are an assortment of Dragon pupils, Oxford Junior Bridge Club pupils and two pupils from the Wallingford Junior Club.

Peter Sherry, ably assisted by Sue Burge, Joan Baille and Ameena Ahmad, continues to run a successful bridge club at Headington Prep School and Mike Fletcher has just started a new club at Cokethorpe School. Both have more than two tables every week. We are sorry that the bridge club at Oxford Girls High has folded and that they are not sending a team to Loughborough this year.

Our young international player, Henry Rose, continues to attend on Sundays, when time permits. He will also be competing at Loughborough on 4<sup>th</sup> March, but playing for the Under 15 England Team.

Our biggest expense remains the hire of Summertown Church Hall at £33.00 per Sunday session but it is a wonderful, warm, central venue with good storage and ample free car parking. We were somewhat dismayed to learn that the EBU £30.00 per term, vouchers have been stopped, as that is how I have equipped the club and bought good prizes for competitions etc. Holly Kilpatrick

## **2. SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE**

As you know, the pattern is different in our area. We run bridge clubs in the primary schools of Crowmarsh, Goring, Marcham, Moulsoford, Kidmore End, Nettlebed, Sonning Common, and although a few schools have stopped their clubs, we have recently started at 2 schools in Henley (Sacred Heart and Badgemore) which both have 3-5 tables (weather dependant). I am also running a delightful group at Reading School on Wednesday afternoons. 3 of these are attending Michael Byrne's U20 training sessions, 1 is now partnering Mike Bennett in BP events, and the remaining 6, although very good players, are too committed to play outside school. We have covered splinters, frozen suits, UCB, end play and a lot of card combinations this term- I am exhausted. Whilst Reading School is in BRB, 3 of the boys are OBA residents. Their attendance, or lack of it, caused Keith Sadler a problem at Abingdon BP swiss, but they were with Michael Byrne at YC.

## **3. WESSEX WEEKEND AT CHELTENHAM**

The amazingly successful event on 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> September inspired us to run another on 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> April- the date given to us by the very helpful Cheltenham Ladies College. Attendance will be lower due to family holidays at that time of year, but we so have commitment (not money or forms!) from 9 accompanying adults, 20 boys and 12 girls together with 10 volunteer tutors. Bring your grandchildren- you will enjoy yourselves as will they. Flier attached- forms available.  
Joan Bennett 26<sup>th</sup> February 2017

## **STOP PRESS**

The Dragon team of Will Wauchope, Thomas Potter, Freddie Yu and Richmond Young came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Schools Cup beating the usual prestigious schools, the Perse, Haberdashers Aske, Manchester Grammar, Loughborough Grammar, RGS Malvern and managed to trounce Eton College in the playoff for 3<sup>rd</sup> place! They succumbed only to the winners, Westminster and the runners up, St. Paul's!

20 teams entered this year and our Junior Bridge Team of Zane Soonawalla, Jacob Potter, George and Elizabeth Cooper came 10<sup>th</sup> in the Harry Scully Trophy, a cup for teams from different schools.

Henry Rose's Under 16 second team came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Harry Scully Trophy, narrowly beaten by the Under 16 first team.

**A GREAT DAY FOR OXFORDSHIRE BRIDGE!**

## What is the role of the Chairman?

With responsibility to the Association's members, to lead the County's Management Committee in the achievement of the objectives of the Oxfordshire Bridge Association as it promotes duplicate bridge throughout Oxfordshire.

## Set the Values of the Association

We maintain values that underpin everything we do and are reflected in the day-to-day behaviour of our officers and teams:

To be good citizens whilst encouraging the promotion of bridge in schools and clubs

To encourage top class behaviour in the competitions we organise and the clubs we serve:

- Above all, competition teams and clubs are friendly and helpful
- Each player plays by the rules as they understand them
- We apply the vast body of the rules of bridge in an equitable and appropriate manner
- Every player will respect and abide by the decision of the evening's director even if they disagree with it
- There should never be any unpleasantness - discussion yes, argument never
- Teams and players should come to events confident that they are going to have a good time
- One's score should never be as important as behaving well

## Set the strategy and structure of the County's Management

- Develop the structure of the organisation and agree objectives with each officer on the committee
- Encourage regular review of the county's objectives and discussion as to how those objectives can be achieved, usually by delegation to the county's six management teams amongst which the county's detailed objectives are shared
- Motivate members to give their time to achieving the county's objectives either as officers or as members of the management teams
- Recruit and support team leaders in the achievement of management teams' objectives and monitor their effectiveness
- Recruit and support officers in the achievement of responsibilities delegated to them and monitor their effectiveness
- After appropriate consultation with fellow officers, take decisions on behalf of the county on any urgent issues that cannot be deferred until the next meeting, including being ready to take remedial action when officers or management teams are failing to achieve their short-term objectives
- Maintain a good relationship between county and its affiliated clubs

## Ensure responsible administration

- Work with the secretary to prepare agendas for committee meetings, Annual General Meetings and any special meetings
- Work with the Treasurer to ensure the accurate maintenance of financial accounts
- Take the chair in meetings

## Qualities and skills required

- Knowledge of the bridge scene in Oxfordshire
- Good communication and inter-personal skills
- Ability to motivate

#### Time commitment

- No fixed hours - probably the more the better