



NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNTY CHAIR'S MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM ON WEDNESDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023

1. Attendance EBU representatives

Board Members		Board Members			
Tony Russ	Patrick Shields	Gordon Rainsford	EBU Chief Executive	Sam Kelly	EBU Communications
Paul Gibbons	Abbey Smith	Lee Guy	EBED Chair	Jonathan Lillycrop	EBU Club Liaison Officer
Rob Lawy	Ian Sidgwick	Tim Anderson	EBU Membership Development		

County Attendance

County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Bedfordshire	Colin O'Hara	Hertfordshire	Paul Littlewood	Nottinghamshire	Mark Goddard
Berks and Bucks	Michael Green	Kent	David Powell	Somerset	Mike Letts
Cambs & Hunts	Roger Courtney	Lancashire	Andrew Petrie	Suffolk	Richard Evans
Cumbria	Christine Ward	Leicestershire	Anne Wright	Surrey	Tim Warren
Devon	Jacqui Munns	Lincolnshire	Mark Wardell	Sussex	Peter Clinch
Dorset	Mark Hooper	London	James Smith	Warwickshire	Myra Scott
Essex	John McCoy	Manchester	Irene Davies	Wiltshire	Lucy Cross
Gloucestershire	Ian Sidgwick	Merseyside/Cheshire	Christopher Raymond	Worcestershire	Eddy Blackburn
Hants & IOW	Mike Kinsey	Middlesex	Harish Patel	Yorkshire	David Guild
Herefordshire	Rob Wilkinson	North East	Sue Davies	Yorkshire	Nick Woolven

Apologies

Board Members					
Adrian Darnell		Ian Payn			
County	Name	County	Name	County	Name
Channel Islands	Hugh Bacon	Oxfordshire	Kathy Talbot		
Derbyshire	Alastair McCance	Warwickshire	Darren Evetts		

Absence – no apologies

Avon	David S Jones	Norfolk	Robert Smith	Staffs & Shrops	Pamela Booth-Jones
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Isle of Man	John Large	Northamptonshire	Chris Wormleighton	Westmoreland	John Ellwood
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2 Welcome and Introduction

Tony Russ (TR) opened the meeting and welcomed all County Chairs or their representatives, especially the new County Chairs.

Members were asked to add names and counties into their zoom profile and mute if not speaking to avoid unnecessary distractions.

3 Apologies

See above.

4 Need for more County Director Training - Anne Wright (AW) (Leicestershire)

AW called for more County Director Training courses. GR thanked AW for drawing the issue to attention confirmed that the County Director Training courses have been run by EBED recently. However, the EBU will re-take control of running the County Director Training courses as EBED have confirmed they do not have enough demand to run the courses. There are two parts to the course, the Advanced TD training course (which will continue to be run by EBED, with the next course taking place early in 2024) the weekend county course will be run by the EBU in the spring of 2024. Communications will be sent to all clubs and counties with plenty of notice. GR clarified that the number of courses has been hindered by covid in recent years but that we should be returning to more regularly run courses in 2024.

AW also asked if affiliated clubs could have the option of more than one free course every two years. GR confirmed that we would not be able to make a blanket change but that we may be able to accommodate individual situations. Counties may also have sufficient funds to support clubs with these expenses.

David Guild (DG) (Yorkshire) confirmed Yorkshire have recently run a second week TD course in Yorkshire for Yorkshire clubs, with 15 people present. He suggested looking at marketing and pricing of other courses.

5 Proposals from Competitions Working Group re 9 High Events- Paul Gibbons (PG) (Board)

PG talked through his paper that was sent prior to the meeting. The Competitions Working Group has put together a proposed calendar of 9-High and Jack-High events. The majority, over 90%, of the EBU membership fall into these categories.

NGS limited events are an opportunity for counties to be seen doing something for their members. These events became popular in Kent during the pandemic. Most members in the 9-High and Jack- High categories want to play at their clubs once or twice a week to socialise. The county games would not want to take away from this.

There are two groups of players to whom the NGS limited games appeal: newer players with aspirations to improve their NGS ratings; and longer standing members who want competitions outside their club but with their peers.

During the pandemic, Kent have been running 9-High events on BBO on behalf of the EBU in tandem with other national events, Easter, the Spring Bank Holiday and the Year End congresses. The success of these events led to them continuing. It is hoped that in 2024 there will be a 9-High BO Improvers Pairs run in conjunction with the Summer Meeting.

The NGS limited events are currently online only, and this is likely to continue. PG also found that Face-to-Face 9-high events were played a lot slower than club sessions and online sessions. It

was a very social event and was enjoyed by the people who did attend. People are unwilling to travel more than 30 minutes for 9-High events, therefore successful 9-high events are likely to be held online.

Cumbria have since started running stand-alone national Jack-High events on RealBridge for the last year. The Midlands County have run a regional RealBridge 9-High Swiss Pairs for the last few years. These events have been successful. The County Working Group would like to give more prominence to these county run NGS Limited Events. They are now advertised on the EBU website, with the aim of making the events more prominent and easier to find. The aim is to run one a month, run at weekends or bank holidays so that they do not take away players from regular club sessions.

PG encouraged a discussion about how different 9-high or similar events are run in different counties. PG also asked the counties if they thought there would be interest in running a 9-high Corwen competition, starting in September 2024, for an online final in Spring 2025.

Roger Courtney (PC) (Cams & Hunts) confirmed that the focus for the county is also on running 9-high and Jack-high events. They are also focusing on encouraging un-affiliated clubs to join events.

PG noted that a lot of people who play at unaffiliated clubs also play at affiliated clubs. He stated that for the 9-high Corwen, players would need to become EBU members.

Paul Littlewood (PL) (Herts) said that Herts are planning a face-to-face 7-high event. He was unsure if the numbers and interest would be generated for a national event, as it is a struggle to have 10 tables at a county event.

David Powell (DP) (Kent) asked if the 9-high event that is currently run every Saturday would be stopped for the new national events taking place. PG confirmed that the games are currently stopped once a month. The Cumbria games are held on a Sunday and therefore do not clash with the Saturday games. The Midlands games on RealBridge will be happening at the same time, but it is not thought that this will be a major clash due to the different platforms used (BBO & RealBridge). TR confirmed the national events should not be in competition with the county events.

Nick Woolven (NW) (Yorkshire) asked about the qualification for the proposed Corwen event, PG confirmed this was not yet set and may be subject to changes. NW also echoed previous sentiments that people are reluctant to travel more than 30 minutes for a face-to-face event.

TR asked for any further feedback on the proposals to be sent to PG who will then discuss this with the Competitions Working Group.

6. World Championship Junior Funding- Mike Kinsey (HIW)

MK stated that in the past two years, there have been a number of calls for funding for Junior International events. He asked if the EU could provide further funding for these events or for the Counties to provide funding for international events, with donations to the fund determined by the size of the county.

TR thanked all the counties that made donations for the Junior events. He also reminded everyone that Junior players are often entitled to half price entry to many events.

Patrick Shields (PS) gave some background for the current position of the EBU. He confirmed that, since Covid, the turnover for the EBU has dropped significantly. It is moving back but is still 75% of the turnover from pre-covid. The demand from the international events has not dropped, currently the funding from the EBU covers the entry fees, the cost of uniforms and the expenses of officials, but has been unable to cover the expenses of the players. This is why the EBU have been asking for more fundraising for junior events in recent years.

Tim Warren (TW) (Surrey) noted that counties may not be willing to support the proposal from MK if they do not have potential junior international players in their county.

Mark Goddard (MG) (Nottinghamshire) stated that he did not think the plan was viable as the current fund in the county are spent on county events.

PL agreed with TW and MG. He confirmed Hertfordshire would be more likely to support junior events if they had junior members playing internationally.

DG (Yorkshire) asked if the funding for EBED could be utilised for junior international events.

PS noted that Gloucestershire hosted a training event for the under-26 Women's Team last year, one day of this event was for local players to play with the squad. The squad were hosted by local members during their stay, this was a well-received event, and the club became more engaged with the international events.

MK responded to comments that without all counties funding the events, the funding falls to either the parents of the players or the counties with junior squad members. This will impede juniors in counties who are struggling for funds or whose parents are unable to support them.

Anne Wright (AW) (Leicestershire) noted that the county is struggling to keep the clubs that are running afloat. Since Covid four clubs have folded and more are struggling with table numbers. Therefore, all the focus in the county is on bringing in new students and players for the clubs. She commented that juniors are less likely to play club bridge, and this creates a divide between clubs and junior squad members. She suggested sponsorship would be a good way to raise funding.

PS stated the voluntary donations that have been received, together with sponsorship for the under-26 Women's team and crowd fundraising from the Under-26 team, there is enough funds to almost cover the expenses of the players in the current year.

Sue Davies (SD) asked if PS could confirm a total figure required for the funding. PS confirmed that funding for an international team varies from approx. £5,500 - £7,500. If the EBU increase UMS payments by 0.5p this will cover the expenses for one international team.

7. Best Practice for County Associations - Ian Sidgwick

The first draft of the Best Practice for County Associations document was circulated prior to the meeting. IS talked through the document. He confirmed that the document is advisory not mandatory. It is an updated and more concise version of a previous document from 2015. IS asked for input and comments from the counties. This document will be uploaded to the EBU and it is hoped that it will be useful for new and current county chairs.

Jaqui Munns (JM) (Devon) noted that the document shows the essential and desirable categories in the opposite colours and asked if this could be checked and changed. She also expressed concern over what would happen if a county could not complete the essential items.

8. Plans for a Festival of Bridge 2024 - Tony Russ

TR displayed a presentation of a plan for a Festival of Bridge to be held in September 2024. He will write to the counties after the meeting with details of the proposal and then also write to clubs inviting them to join. A follow up meeting will be held in November.

There was general support for the event.

John McCoy (McC) (Essex) expressed excitement for the idea and asked if there would be national press coverage of the event. TR cautioned that it is very difficult to raise national attention, this is planned to be a grass roots event, with lots of small events coming together to make a larger event.

Mike Letts (ML) (Somerset) praised the idea and asked for further information to get involved.

MG suggested that there should be a national event as well as local events. TR noted that he would not want this to overshadow local events.

JM agreed that this is a good idea and that partnering with Cancer Research UK will also help. She suggested local TV may be more interested than national media. She said that this will likely be a very good platform for clubs and counties to encourage new members.

TR confirmed he will send an editable version of the presentation to all for local use.

AW asked if the festival is successful, could it be held in June/July in future years rather than in September. This would enable people to sign up for clubs starting in September.

PL asked if we could host a similar event to the annual chess festival, where people can come along and have a go. This might not be so easy to arrange.

TR thanked everyone for their ideas and confirmed that the EBU would support at types of events.

9. AOB

DG asked PS to clarify the statement that UMS funding is currently at 75% of pre-covid levels. PS confirmed the 75% refers to all revenue streams, which covers competitions, not just UMS. PS stated that UMS payments are currently approx. 80% of pre-covid levels.

TR thanked everyone for their contributions and involvement, he hoped that everyone learned something from each other's experiences.

The meeting closed at 11.30am.

Appendix A - Meeting Chat:

00:17:22 Chris Raymond Mersey & Cheshire: Can we have as much notice as possible for the dates for the county TD courses

00:18:13 Gordon Rainsford EBU: As soon as we know, we'll let clubs and counties know

00:20:47 Anne Wright: could you give me Jonathan Lillycrap's e mail address please

00:21:14 Gordon Rainsford EBU: Jonathan@ebu.co.uk

00:21:40 Anne Wright: Thanks Gordon

00:34:17 Chris Ward - Cumbria: although Cumbria run the Jack High - there is very little take up from Cumbria - they come from outside.

00:39:18 Patrick Shields, Board: In Gloucestershire we do run some events allowing entries from Unaffiliated Clubs, but the Midlands cross-county games have all needed EBU membership

00:42:54 Paul Littlewood - Herts: How many tables do you get Paul for your 9-High Saturday events?

00:46:53 Eddy Blackburn, Worcs: Worcs made a £500 donation following the appeal from Abber

00:47:20 Eddy Blackburn, Worcs: Abbey

00:52:02 Roger Courtney: the

00:52:18 Anne Wright: hand up

00:53:24 Chris Raymond Mersey & Cheshire: I fully agree with all Mark's comments about the issue of funding juniors. My county would certainly not support this - this must be an EBU responsibility

00:53:30 Roger Courtney: The matter of funding junior internationals was raised at a recent Cambs & Hunts meeting and the general feeling was much as Mark indicated. Supporting individuals from the county is one thing but in general the feeling was support like this is a matter for the central EBU funds (from clubs).

00:55:27 Anne Wright: how do I put my hand up please?

00:55:51 Paul Littlewood - Herts: Bottom of screen...reactions tab

00:56:29 Irene Davies Manchester: Or top of the screen if u r on an iPad

00:56:43 Paul Littlewood - Herts: Click on it!

00:56:50 Anne Wright: thanks

00:57:08 Paul Littlewood - Herts: Reacted to "thanks" with 👍

00:57:46 Patrick Shields, Board: The EBU has some reserve funds for cases where a junior would have to drop out of the team for lack of ability to cover expenses

01:04:07 Chris Ward - Cumbria: This copy is different to the one sent with meeting invite?

01:06:46 Michael Green B&B: where is the document ?

01:07:19 Chris Ward - Cumbria: There was a link on the meeting invite

01:09:39 Sam Kelly - EBU Communications: If you did not receive the email with the link and agenda, please let me know

01:10:17 Chris Ward - Cumbria: Replying to "If you did not recei..."

But the copy on the email is different to the one shown today. which is correct?

01:12:44 Sam Kelly - EBU Communications: Replying to "If you did not recei..."

Thank you for letting me know. They should be the same, I will check with Tony and update the link following the meeting

01:14:06 Tim Warren. Surrey: It is slightly different, but as far as I'm aware, it's only the addition of one statement at the beginning

01:16:02 Sam Kelly - EBU Communications: Reacted to "It is slightly diffe..." with 👍

01:22:22 Paul Littlewood - Herts: Great idea, Tony!

01:23:15 James Smith: Have you thought of another Pro/Celebrity event?

01:23:27 Tim Warren. Surrey: Yes, great idea. Don't take lack of response for lack of interest

DRAFT