



Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 23rd March 2016
at Crossgates Community Centre

Present:

President: Judith Graham-Jones

Immediate Past President: Herbie Rowley

Vice Presidents:

Bob Alderdice WWBA

Geoff Evans EWBA

Marie Topp NWBA

Area delegates:

Beryl Warner, Tony Disley WWBA

Rita Lawrence, & Alan Screen: MWBA,

Simon Gottschalk, & Patrick Jourdain: EWBA,

Paddy Murphy, & Rod Sheard, NWBA

Jean Hand, NTO, Fiona Noyce, Treasurer Phil Bowers, Master Points and Membership Secretary. Neville Richards, CEO. Rita Lawrence was appointed Minute Secretary of the meeting.

The President welcomed everyone to what she hoped would be a productive meeting.

1. Management Committee Report.

The proceedings through the year have been somewhat disrupted by events beyond our control. The elected President and Chairman of the MC had to step down due to ill health. The immediate past President took up the position and subsequently the current President of the WBU and Chairman of the MC took over. Much of the work carried out by the MC and our CEO is difficult to quantify and we have wrestled with constitutional changes, membership proposals and the funding for international representation on an ongoing basis since the AGM. The lack of volunteers to take up positions not only in the MC but in Area Associations and affiliated clubs is of real concern.

We finally have an integrated website! There were teething problems with indexing the large amount of data available, and improvements to the site are ongoing. The Selectors have their own blog for notices and information and news from far and wide is a dedicated feature configured as a sub-domain.

Like other well known sites our website was recently compromised by Russian hackers but the security monitoring immediately produced an email alert as to the problem. Some hours later and at gone 3 am the site was cleaned and passed as all clear by Google. Some of our members using links still were shown an "attack site" warning. Those who set up new links experienced no further problems but it was frustrating to find that some failed to carry out this simple task.

Over 50,000 sites worldwide were compromised by this attack and sadly a considerable number were unable to continue functioning. Security on the site has been considerably hardened and "Wordfence" blocks the IP address of those using brute force attacks on user names and passwords.

The WBU database is on a different server, also well protected and happily intact. Our data is backed up on a daily basis to a remote server.

New teaching initiatives are flourishing and we now have our very first WBU teaching club in Cardiff. They have taken advantage of the WBU assistance for such ventures offered to newly formed clubs.

New large teaching groups now at Bridgend, Barry, Monmouth and Wrexham

and using the WBU material have received considerable support from our Education Officer.

The Scottish Bridge Union have sent us further Education material for us to adapt and use in Wales and this as you can appreciate is a very generous gesture by our Celtic friends.

A joint initiative with Keith Butler our Education and Club Liaison Officer had resulted in Acol crib sheets being made available with one for Mini Bridge to follow soon. The Acol sheet in tri-fold laminated form had been printed and was available to Clubs and Bridge teachers.

Schools in Cardiff, Brecon and Wrexham were now involved in the WBU Mini Bridge teaching scheme.

Competitions and Club nights are all experiencing declining numbers and as a matter of urgency we must consider ways to address this problem. The WBU is not alone in this and it is a worldwide problem. Social bridge clubs are flourishing and the need to promote the benefits obtained by joining a WBU affiliated Club are an ongoing task.

Our Master Point awards and Scales need updating particularly because they date from the "glory days" of competition when up to 100 tables were the norm. We have been researching scales used by other NBO and in particular Scotland. Updated master point awards for some competitions have already been introduced and we are hopeful that we can come up with a more useable set of tables of awards in the very near future.

A suggestion that we should introduce an equivalent to Pay to Play has generated much discussion and research. Data for P2P is already uploaded to our Master Point and Membership database by the scoring programs in use at Clubs. Software modifications would need to be made before such a scheme could be implemented should that be considered a proper course to take.

Pianola Club and Results management software had been demonstrated to the CEO, and Bridgewebs and other grading systems have been researched

You will know that the EBU has taken over the scoring programs used throughout Wales and authored by Jeff Smith as Pairs Scorer etc. They are altering the programs to suit their needs and now wish to license the product. The good news for Welsh users of Pairs Scorer is that their current program will continue to operate without problem and we can get technical support if needed.

The Competition Journal had been produced and is currently available on line and updated regularly, and is as a calendar for events and a reference document for rules and regulations.

The MC had been asked about the publication of ranking promotions. The MP Secretary confirmed that it took extensive work to produce the rankings from the master points and to calculate promotions on a regular basis would be even more onerous. The current masterpoint program does not have a facility to do this work automatically and it would cost substantial amount to commission it.

Carol Butler boldly accepted the position of Newsletter Editor and speedily produced the trial first edition. This was distributed and received mostly with enthusiasm, but also with criticism especially regarding a perceived imbalance of content. The Editor and MC have decided to address this lack of balance and solicited and received input from those who felt that there was too much emphasis on social bridge.

A member expressed concern that papers to be discussed were not received in advance of the meeting. The following issues generated discussion.

1. Selectors Reports were presented by Patrick Jourdain.

Three points were raised on behalf of the selectors.

- 1.1 Junior Team participation in Tromso. The selectors feel they were presented with a fait accompli as they had not selected the team invited to attend by the WBU Junior Co-ordinator. The Chairman of Selectors also asked that they be consulted in future and decide whether we should send a team at all if the standard was low. The Chair agreed this would be taken on board by

the Management Committee who thought that the Junior Co-ordinator was working as part of the selection team. The Chair also suggested that WBU Juniors should enter home events.

1.2 The selectors feared possibly an intention not to distinguish in the accounts between world funds and members funds. It was agreed this has now been resolved and would be carried through to the AGM.

1.3 The selectors believe they've got instructions from management for a 4 year budget which was set at the 2014 AGM. However the 2014 budget was set at zero and they understood that the 2016 budget has also been set at zero and it was feared this would lead to Wales being banned from entering the World event. It was agreed that the selectors had not asked for support and so they should send a report and could also ask to have a joint meeting. The Treasurer stated that The Management Committee were asked to consider the 2016 World Championship and as yet they had not made a decision as more information was needed from the selectors. The point was made that the selectors had not asked for any detail of what funding was available for World events. Patrick Jourdain would report back to the Selectors.

2 Website: Design, costs, maintenance discussed, suggestions for simplification were made.

3 Competition Journal. While some members expressed continuing regret at the absence of a paper Journal they were reminded that the information changes from time to time and is up-dated and available on the website; Club Secretaries could download and make available to their members

.4. Responding to criticisms aired at the last AGM the President reported that there had been much positive reaction to the first trial issue of the Newsletter that had not been issued for four years. Improved balance of content will be evident in the next issue that should be in May. Members of Council expressed their thanks to Carol Butler who had volunteered to be editor .5

The Management Committee was conscious of the urgency to develop a long term strategy; a working group will be set up to consider this matter.

6 The NTO reported that entries to competitions were down; this is not just a WBU problem it is world wide. Some were of the opinion that players who had

not achieved 50% in the qualifying competition should not be invited to play in the final. However this could result in too few tables in the final and it would not be wise to discourage entries. There was a query on the standard of venues. It was pointed out that hotels are expensive at the weekends. There had been complaints but no constructive solutions had been offered. Regrets were expressed that there was no longer a Tournament and Master Points Committee where the Area Tournament Organisers could meet to exchange information and perhaps suggest solutions to current problems. It was agreed that an ad hoc group could be established by the MC. The Welsh Cup was poorly supported and the reasons for this must be examined.

7 Treasurer's Report. FN reported on the difficulty of balancing master point funds and the struggle to meet all demands on a falling income. There is currently a £7000 deficit largely due to the loss of £10,000 p.a. previously derived from BGB. International competition costs had risen due to an increase in junior activity. The Treasurer reminded those present that £5000 given to the WBU by Peggy Bayer Trust was earmarked for teaching Juniors in full time education to play bridge.

It would be helpful if all Area fees were the same.

The issue of increasing the WBU subscription was discussed. Members must be fully apprised of the uses to which income is put. Agreed that a Management Committee sub-group would deal with this.

Council agreed to propose an increase in the membership fee by £1.00 in 2017 at the AGM. Because there had been no increase for many years the membership should be warned that such a pattern cannot continue and there is likely to be a year on year increase in the foreseeable future.

It was proposed by Patrick Jourdain, seconded by Bob Alderdice, and agreed nem.con to raise the master point charge by 5p per ticket. The raising of the membership subscription in 2017 to be put before the AGM.

The matter of universal membership was discussed at length. It was proposed by Beryl Warner and seconded by Patrick Jourdain that there be universal membership for all affiliated Clubs. Agreed by a majority vote. (MT, PM and RS voted against).

8 Master Points & Membership Secretary Phil Bowers presented a draft revised clause in the Constitution that would embrace such change. Those present

were invited to send comments to PB for further discussion at the next Management Committee on 12th April.

2. Determination of Honoraria for the forthcoming year Proposed by Bob Alderdice, seconded by Patrick Jourdain. Agreed nem con

Treasurer: £1500 NTO: £1000 Education Officer £750 Masterpoint & Membership Secretary to remain £2000. Chief Executive Officer Contractor's fee: £10.000

3. Council Members to advise Management Committee of matters of concern to Areas and Clubs

3.1 Some NWBA members dislike the website.. Discussion followed. It was pointed out that a sophisticated website with many features would involve engaging a professional web designer at some expense. It was agreed that website development be considered by the long term strategy sub group.

3.2 Masterpoint input. Teams of four results require manual input. The MP Secretary said it is possible to do so electronically if the correct system is used.

3.3. WBU Calendar. Absence regretted by some members. See item 1.3 above

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Date of the next Council meeting: 5th June 2016