

Minutes of MC 12 Nov 2020 @ 10am

Present: Marie Topp, Fiona Noyce, Jean Hand, Gareth Jones, Simon Gottschalk, Ceri Pierce, Neville Richards, Paddy Murphy, Alan Screen

1. Apologies – Steve Webb
2. Minutes of 29 Oct accepted. No matters arising.
3. Online Bridge

The Online bridge working party presented its findings and recommendations, which are summarised as follows:

Background

- WBU Membership has been suspended for the rest of the year due to Covid-19 as there is no way for Clubs to collect membership subs, leaving the WBU with only a very small amount of income and many clubs with none
- Covid necessitated a move to online bridge which generally has been very successful and is mainly run on BBO and Stepbridge. Currently, BBO charge players (about 3BBO\$ per game) and Stepbridge is free until further notice
- The WBU has been issuing free masterpoint for the Stepbridge Open Events
- Playing online bridge for free forever – is not financially sustainable
- The WBU needs support to cover the loss of membership subs for this last year and possibly for next year and clubs need income to cover their own costs
- Doing nothing is not an option – the WBU would cease to exist within a few years, especially if online bridge continues which many believe it will
- The proposal is to ask Clubs to charge for online bridge duplicates when players enter – effectively table-money - of which a proposed 50p/player will come back to the WBU. This will cover the cost of both membership and masterpoints
- Clubs can charge what they like as table-money, but it is expected it will cost players about £1 per game on Stepbridge and is currently about 3BBO\$ on BBO
- Players will automatically become a member of the WBU and get to play bridge, earn masterpoints and participate in Area/National events
- Clubs get income
- WBU gets income
- WBU can continue to do all the things that it does for Wales - support clubs, development of bridge, TD training, Online bridge training (for the uninitiated), bridge administration, support of the national teams, junior development etc

Proposal

- As an interim measure, the WBU will charge 50p (subject to calculations by Fiona and Steve) per person for playing in online bridge events that issue masterpoints. This charge will cover the cost masterpoints and WBU membership
- The charging mechanism may differ from platform to platform:
 - BBO – players pay the platform when they register for an event. BBO take a percentage and send the remainder to the WBU at the end of the month. The WBU takes 50p (subject to calculations) per player and sends the rest to the organising Club. Clubs can charge whatever they wish but it tends to be 3 BBO\$

- For StepBridge and Realbridge Clubs will charge their players to enter and then send the WBU 50p per head at the end of the month
- Aim is to have this in place by 1st Jan 2021
- This sum includes money for masterpoints so allows free upload of results to the WBU Server
- The system to be reviewed after 3 months

Actions

- Steve / Fiona to calculate how much the WBU should levy – 50p?
- Ceri to see if Stepbridge / Realbridge can collect players money on our behalf as BBO does (unlikely)
- Ceri to set up a group to consider implementation of a charging mechanism that clubs can use to charge players so they find it as painless as possible and to liaise with clubs
- Steve to consider implementation from a membership point of view – we may have a flurry of new members initially

The proposal had been considered at a Western Area meeting yesterday and was not opposed. However more information will be required regarding income modelling etc.

The proposal was also considered at the Area Treasurers meeting and on the whole, it was felt that members would support the WBU in its endeavours (NB the North was not present at the meeting).

The West has no means of collecting money from their members and a payment mechanism should be offered by the WBU to support clubs.

Simon was against a pay as you go system as described without being underpinned by an online bridge membership subscription.

It was agreed that this is an interim arrangement and will be reviewed after 3 months. The longer term outlook of online bridge is unknown, but it is expected that online is here to stay, for many reasons.

Stepbridge was discussed and the possibility of setting up a 'WBU Club' to replace the Stepbridge Open tournaments. It was acknowledged that some bridge clubs may not support this move and would continue to play for free, but it is hoped that they will support this move and in doing so continue playing with other WBU members.

Neville emphasised the need to involve clubs in the implementation of this proposal.

Proposed – the WBU adopts 'Pay as you Go' for online bridge as an interim measure for three months beginning in January 2021

Agreed after a vote - 5 for, 2 against, 1 abstention

4. Webgroup Report

The webmaster has resigned. Our thanks go to him for his work since he joined earlier this year.

Ceri proposed that Tony Haworth, who has already been doing the web updates for the last few months and has been instrumental in the re-structure and re-design of the site, be formally appointed as the new webmaster. **Agreed.**

The online Camrose trial payments were collected by the organisers using an online entry form and a P/L account will be sent by Simon to the WBU for an invoice to be raised.

It was agreed that all payments for such events would be paid directly to the WBU in future and the necessary account information will be provided for this to happen.

5. Selectors Report

The Camrose trials went well and the selectors are meeting tomorrow to select the teams. An Open and a WBU team will be selected. It was disappointing that kibitzing was not allowed during the event – this was due to Realbridge, being a new organisation, not having the facility ready in time. However, all hands – bidding and the play - are now available to view on the Realbridge kibitzing link. It was agreed that kibitzing for selectors was essential and it is fully expected that this will be available in the future.

Gilly Clench and Mel Thomas are involved with the Junior Camrose and the selectors will liaise with them to ensure everything is organised.

The Europeans – an Open team is committed to being sent to the Europeans due to be held in Madeira in June 2021. The Management Committee was asked to consider support for a 2nd team.

6. Masterpoints and Membership Report

No report this week.

7. Any Other Business

The honoraria for the webmaster was agreed.

A clash of dates between the Cambria final and the EWBA AGM and Arthur James Cup has been identified. This was due to a lack of effective communication and should now be rectified for the future.

8. Next meeting – 26th November at 10am.