

Welsh Bridge Union AGM  
9<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 10.15am at Gwent Bridge Academy

**1. Apologies**

Martin Joseph, Steve Webb, Simon Richards

**2. Minutes of last Meeting**

Accepted

**3. Treasurers Report**

**WBU Accounts**

The Welsh Bridge Unions accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 were presented to the membership. The accounts have been distributed and are on the WBU website. There also are copies available today.

|                              |            |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Total income for the year:   | £34,558.15 |
| Total expenses for the year: | £51,257.55 |
| Deficit for the year:        | £16,699.40 |

With funds received during the year we supported all the Union's activities but made a considerable deficit on the Internationals and a small deficit on the International Trials. The deficit on the international events totalled £17,969.63 and the small deficit on the Trials £263.90.

To continue to fund events as we would wish, the WBU requires an income to support such activities and not to rely heavily on its reserves. Membership numbers are down and the raise to £15.00 per member this year will not cover our losses.

The expenditure which contributed to the deficits in the year is:

|                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| International entries and expenses | £25,067.63 (deficit of £17,969.63) |
| International Trials               | £2263.90 (deficit of £263.90)      |
| Honoraria                          | £17,749.92                         |

As always, the ability to generate income is dependent upon the membership and their continuing participation in all events, area and national.

Proposals to alleviate some of these deficits will be discussed later in the meeting.

Accounts - accepted.

**StepBridge Accounts**

Income stood at 11.8K. Expenses (Directors, WBU associate membership and server platform) about the same with £80 overall profit. This will be expanded on in the SB Report

#### **4. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner**

Fiona Noyce was nominated as the IFE for 23-24. Our thanks go to her.  
Approved.

#### **5. NTO Report**

Simon G presented his report to the membership. A special thanks was made to Tony Haworth with whom he regularly talks and meets occasionally in Porthcawl, to discuss how we can improve WBU events. Thanks were also made to everyone on the WBU committee and in the WBU areas has been helpful and supportive in what has been another difficult year for Welsh bridge. Another big thanks to West Wales area members who helped with the Champion of Champions and Club Teams of 8 and a special thanks to David Nicklin.

Simon has been resuming the project of emailing of all WBU members where we hold email addresses using the WBU membership database. These emails will give details of forthcoming WBU competitions.

We did not run national pairs or teams events in 2022. This was mainly due to lack of interest and a possible lack of promotion. We hope to resurrect these events in some form in 2024.

The Cambria and Welsh Cups 2022 were completed and masterpoints issued. Congratulations to the winning team. Both events were won by Paul Denning, Diane Kurbalija, Pat Shields & Dan McIntosh.

The 2023 Welsh and Cambria Cups events are progressing.

The 2023 Camrose Trials were held in October at The Commodore Hotel, Llandrindod Wells. This was, as ever, a thoroughly enjoyable and highly competitive event leading to the selection of our Camrose team.

The 2023 Camrose matches were held in Belfast & Dublin. The Welsh team of Julian Pottage, Tony Ratcliff, Tim Rees, John Salisbury, Gwynn Davis and Sue Ingham performed well and finished a not too distant second behind England.

The 2024 Camrose will be hosted by Wales & England and the team will be selected with the aid of results from the Premier League.

The 2023 Lady Milne Trials took place at the Commodore Hotel in Llandrindod Wells in January 2023. The team selected for the Lady Milne (hosted by Scotland in Perth) was Ceri Pierce & Mia Deschepper, Gilly Clench & Aida Aris, Jo Copping & Joan Marray.

We are taking soundings from prospective competitors in the 2024 Lady Milne Trials which will be held on January 20-21 2024 (probably) at Cardiff Bridge Club. The Lady Milne in 2024 will be hosted by Ireland.

Last year there were only 6 pairs interested in playing in The Teltscher Trophy trial, so those 6 pairs were selected. We are taking soundings on a possible trial on the weekend of 4-5th February 2024 at a South Wales venue. The 2024 Teltscher will be hosted by Scotland (17-19 May 2024).

Wales hosted this year's Teltscher in Newport. England won the event. Both Welsh teams were in contention for a high placed finish going into the last set. The Wales team took second place.

The 2023 Premier League will be held on 21-22 October & 4-5 November, 2023. We have 4 confirmed entries already so the event will definitely run and will be directed by Frank Coltman. The event will be used to aid selection of a team to represent Wales in the 2024 Camrose. The dates of the 2024 Premier League have been set for 19-20 October & 2-3 November 2024. We expect to run the PL again next year in South Wales.

The 2023 Club Teams of 8 (held at Tumble) went well and was won by Penarth Bridge Club.

The 2024 Club Team is booked in again at Tumble on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2024.

In the 2023 Champion of Champions 20 pairs fought it out in the depths of the Porthcawl Pavilion. Peter Milewski & Tim Dean representing Pembroke won. Next year's event is already booked! I propose that we increase the entry fee from £20 per pair to £30 per pair and offer a £100 prize to the winning club. The 2024 event will be held again in Porthcawl, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Due to increasing costs of venue hire and reducing numbers the annual East Wales Congress was held at Gwent Bridge Academy in February. The pairs (25) was won by Tony Haworth and Kevin Maddox. The teams (14) was won by Richard Plackett & Mia Deschepper, Patrick Shields & David McAndrew.

The 2022 Porthcawl Congress was held online and attracted 9 tables. The event was won by Stephan Lindfors and Ian Walsh. The 2023 event will probably be held online again. The mixed pairs event attracted 4.5 tables and was won by Aida Aris and Mark Roderick.

There were 16 tables at this year's Llandudno Congress in July. Well done to the winners, Paddy Murphy and Tracy Sherman.

Possible Future Events proposed :

1. National Pairs - to be held F2F.
2. National Club Teams - to be resurrected as an event similar to the Webber Cup.
3. Sim Pairs at Clubs - to be held F2F as a fund raiser for the WBU

The Future of our Congresses

You can see from the numbers attending our congresses (either F2F or online) that the current situation (less than 20 tables in any event) is unsustainable. But holiday bridge is thriving and there are a significant number of new retirees wanting to learn bridge. It's time for a complete rethink about the WBU's relationship with bridge players in Wales.

Margaret Lane to be invited to the next MC to advise as she has offered to help.

## **6. President's Report**

Gilly has copies of her newspapers for those who have not received them. Communication with members needs to improve - we can only communicate with about half at the moment as the Clubs collect email addresses from members, not the WBU.

Juniors remain a priority for the WBU - However Freshers fairs are very expensive, so we were limited to Pembroke last year. We need EVERYONE to try and get juniors involved. We have one new young player in Swansea and we need to ensure that they have partners available to play with them,

The Competition Journal will be revised this year. It is the main topic of discussion at the next Management Committee meeting.

Tony has suggested we hold national events in two areas simultaneously - North and South with duplicated hands to make it easier for people who do not wish to travel.

The Perry and Spickett only had one team entered for the Presidents Cup this year. Gilly had to rip up the rule book for this year as there was only 1 team entered and it is possible that it may be changed to a Club competition for future years.

It was noted that competition details should be sent out to the clubs by the NTO / Perry & Spickett organisers so that notices/posters may be put up on the wall well in advance to encourage people to enter.

Training is available for posters creation for any clubs who need it.

Finances are clearly a problem for the WBU and many suggestions have been reviewed by the MC over recent years. These have included :

- No CEO
- No International funding
- Reduce International hosting (but all NBOs in the same boat)
- More SIM pairs
- Increased master points prices
- Donations for playing in the GE league which is currently free. Suggest paying £10 per player towards this.
- A monthly Women's event is run online but has declined to between only 4 - 7 pairs from Wales and more women players are encouraged to enter this.

## **7. Master Points and Membership Report**

Steve Webb sent his apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting. He had provided a written report which was read out by Gilly:

The WBU is in serious financial trouble.

Following the Micawber principal: when expenditure exceeds income the result is misery. The WBU has cut expenditure to the bone. Anyone selected to represent their country must now make a substantial contribution and clubs can no longer ask for assistance in purchasing much needed equipment.

The main ways of increasing income are the raising of subscription fees and the charges for masterpoints.

The membership fee was recently increased to £15 (including £1), restoring it to pre-Covid levels. The outcry against this raise was quite bewildering. Any member of a club belonging to an official organisation must expect to contribute so that the future of that sport is preserved.

I realise that Bridge has always been a cheap sport at grass root level but a payment of £15 **per year** is miniscule.

At present the membership is 50% less than it was in 2017, so the remainder must pay more to try and balance the books.

I would support any increase in membership fees for 2024 to be determined by the Management Committee.

Another way to raise money, is to increase the cost of Masterpoint certificates which currently stand at 25p each.

For administrative reasons, this would have to take place at the end of the calendar year i.e., between Dec 2023 and Jan 2024.

Although full discussions are yet to take place, I would support a raise to 40p which at current projections would raise £3,000 in 2024.

All discussions regarding finance are heatedly debated at the Management Committee and include opinions of varying polarity but we all agree that without changes to the existing situation the future of the WBU is limited.

My apologies for not being in attendance at the AGM but I hope I have given you all something to think about.

## **8. StepBridge Report**

Tony Howarth presented his report to the membership.

The background to StepBridge is that Tony and Neville approached StepBridge (a Dutch enterprise) during covid and StepBridge provided the playing platform to the WBU free of charge for two years which in turn enabled players to play free of charge. Eventually this was reviewed and we now pay 5K per annum for the platform.

StepBridge UK was formed as an affiliated club of the WBU in 2022. 10% of the table money (currently £1) paid to play on Stepbridge raises £1,500 for the WBU for associate WBU membership. Several Clubs also operate on StepBridge.

From next year, master points are being issued and it is anticipated that this will generate another £700-£800 pa.

StepBridge runs four weekly sessions which are well attended and all members are encouraged to participate.

Thanks were made to the committee (Neville, Alan, Jean, Ceri, Derek).

Paddy Murphy stated that it was his view that it would be better to increase our rates each year by the rate of inflation. That way, we would increase our income in line with our outgoings and it would be better than one large raise.

## **9. Incoming President**

We do not have a new President for the coming year.

## **10. Nominations**

|           |                  |
|-----------|------------------|
| Treasurer | Jean Cufley      |
| MP&M      | Steve Webb       |
| NTO       | Simon Gottschalk |

## **10. Constitutional amendments and Motions**

### **a. Eligibility for Area events**

Amendment of rule 20.2 Eligibility for Area events

From

In representative matches between areas or parts of Wales, only persons of Welsh birth or Welsh parentage or who are domiciled in Wales shall be eligible to play.

To

In representative matches between areas or parts of Wales, only persons who are members of the WBU and an Area shall be eligible to play.

Also we should need update the competition journal to reflect this amendment.

This was discussed at length and it was agreed that players in the Perry and Spickett (and other area events) should be eligible by Welsh qualification (as per the Bridge Great Britain regulations) OR by domicile. Some discussion was held about the wording of the motion and it was agreed that it would be redrafted to reflect this (note - this was done and it was

circulated to all players in the Perry / Spickett / Presidents Cup event after lunch which is reflected in the above definition).

To be brought up at the next AGM for confirmation.

The exception to this rule would be the Presidents Cup, where players just need to be members of their club, the WBU and the area they are representing.

## **b. President**

Proposed Amendment of Constitution rule 8.2.2.1 President

From

President - who is elected at the Annual General Meeting and who will serve for one year, but shall be eligible for re-election for one further year at the next ensuing Annual General Meeting of the Union. The office of President shall be filled successively by a member of each Area Association in rotation. The rota would now continue ... East, West, North, Mid Wales.

To

President - who is elected at the Annual General Meeting and who will serve for one year, but shall be eligible for re-election for two further years at the next ensuing Annual General Meetings of the Union. The office of President shall be filled successively by a member of each Area Association in rotation. The rota continues as follows: East, West, North, Mid Wales.

Discussion was held as to whether the term of President should be extended in the constitution from 1 year. The majority was in favour of this change.

A further vote was held regarding the nature of the change :

No restriction on term - 15 votes

Term should be up to 3 years - 16 votes

Approved - Term may be up to 3 years.

## **c. International funding.**

Motion from the Management Committee:

Because of the crisis in WBU funding, the Management Committee recommend that players in the Camrose and Lady Milne will from January 2024, pay 50% of the BGB entry fee (the BGB entry fee for 2024 is currently £340) and will receive no travelling expenses. A hardship fund will be available if players experience difficulty with this.

This will not apply to NPCs.

This will not apply to the Juniors.

Note - the Teltscher is already 100% paid for by the players.

Discussion ensued. It was noted that if people are self funded it affects the NPC role as it becomes very difficult to leave people out for the majority of the time if they have paid for themselves.

Other NBO arrangements were reviewed - the EBU tend to have sponsors playing in their teams so funding is not so much of an issue.

There is no desire for the game to be open only for those who can afford it.  
Agreed to change the word 'entry fee' to 'package'.

This was voted on and carried with 10 abstentions.

Approved : International Funding will be reduced to 50% of the 'package cost' and no travel expenses (excluding NPCs and Juniors).

## **11. AOB**

a. It was proposed that Face to Face events should be run in two sections - North and South with duplicated boards.

Approved

b. Prize Money should be presented at events, and it should be considered that this be applied retrospectively.

Agreed - The MC will discuss further and this should be written into the Competition Journal when it is reviewed.

It was noted from the floor that many items discussed at the AGM which were items that should be matters for the MC. It was noted by the President that the WBU needs input from the members when making decisions which is why these issues had been raised today. However the MC Meetings would be opened up to all a few times a year so that views of the membership may be heard.

It was noted from the floor that the constitution can sometimes be a barrier to decision making and may need to be overhauled.

It was noted from the floor that online meetings do not work at all and it would be better off with two monthly meetings face to face.

Paddy Murphy thanked the outgoing President.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**



To be determined - but in line with the date of the Perry and Spickett which may be moved back to June.