

**WBU AGM**  
**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 11am by Zoom**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

25 members were present at the AGM making the meeting quorate.

1. **Apologies** – Marie Topp, Jill Francis, John Thomas, Keith Edwards

Alan opened the meeting as Chair of the Management Committee as we currently have no President.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting** – approved.

3. **Matters arising** – covered by the agenda

4. **Investiture of the new WBU President**

Andrea Knox, from the North Wales Area, was welcomed and formally appointed as President for 2024.

Andrea did an introduction to herself via a very entertaining PowerPoint presentation. Andrea is a solicitor, practising in commercial and insolvency law - which is relevant expertise regarding the WBU finances. One of her objectives will be looking to stabilise them.

She has 5 main aims which she outlined as follows:

- a. Modernise the WBU – Making the most of technology

Hybrid events will be a focus.

An accurate Member and Club database with regular updates will be put in place.

Connectivity – ensuring free training is available so that all members especially those with mobility issues can be helped to be connected to the online bridge community and included.

- b. What does the WBU do for me?

There will be different answers for different levels of players. It is difficult to answer that question at the moment for club players not interested in masterpoints. Andrea would like to address that and make club players the focus of the WBU. She is very keen to get volunteers and would like to see a monthly friendly / social Realbridge session, and have an informal partnership desk.

- c. Engaging with grass roots players

Andrea intends to visit every club in Wales to this end, and whilst doing so, collect accurate details for the club database. Cake will be involved. Please could people email her with their club details. A special mention was made to Norman Turner who

was most welcoming at recent mid-Wales club visits – an excellent example of a club ambassador.

The Women's bridge initiative has been running successfully and continues to grow, Congratulations to Mia for organising this on behalf of the WBU. Congratulations also to East Wales for recruiting junior players at Cardiff University Freshers Fair, providing lessons and supporting them at Cardiff Bridge Club.

d. Social congresses – Andrea would like to see more of these – aimed at all levels of players and fun!

e. Finances – identifying the WBU's functions and goals and aligning these to the WBU's finances: if the WBU loses money it must be for a good and planned reason.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's report was circulated and is on the website. Jean summarised it as follows:

Income	58K
Expenses	67K
Deficit	8K

The deficit was as a result mostly of international costs of 11K, but this includes the costs for the last accounting period as well, so is slightly skewed.

2.4K profit was made on national events this year (£400 last year).

Clarification of the CEO payments was requested (via email), as they are listed under administration costs in the accounts. Jean explained that an invoice is received monthly for provision of administrative services from Ceri via her company. It is paid monthly and is just under 12.5K pa. The CEO is not an employee of the WBU as this would involve pension, NI sick pay, holiday pay, employment law etc which the WBU does not want to have the burden of dealing with. Jean will list this expense under CEO rather than administration services next year if that helps.

## **5. StepBridge Accounts.**

The Stepbridge accounts were presented. They were circulated beforehand and are available on the website.

## **6. Appointment of Independent Examiner**

Fiona Noyce was appointed as independent examiner to sign off the WBU accounts (free of charge). We give her our thanks.

## **7. Management Committee Report**

Alan Screen presented the Management Committee report, in place of the usual President's report. He summarised it as follows:

To echo Andera earlier, the junior recruitment drive at Cardiff University by East Wales and Cardiff Bridge Club is to be congratulated.

The WBU made a loss of 8K in 23-34. The Management Committee has considered how to deal with this and after much discussion took the following steps:

An increase in Masterpoints and subscriptions

Reduction of funding for international players, apart from juniors

A question was asked regarding whether the reduction of international funding includes entry fees and Alan confirmed that yes it does. The entry fees for the coming year will be completely self-funded. The only costs the WBU will have, is when we host a home international event which is once a year.

Sophie Cunningham is setting up a crowd funding page to fund youth bridge with a target of 5K.

Financial actions have been essential – without this there would be no WBU left. Once the finances are stabilised and our annual income is reliable, the WBU can look to move forward.

The excellent newsletter, produced three times a year by Paul Lamford was congratulated. Our thanks go to him.

It was noted that the Management Committee met around ten times over the last year. A lot of talking and stretching of minds has been done.

## **8. National Tournament Organiser's Report**

Simon summarised his report and would like to thank everyone who played in the events and those who helped organise them.

National Events:

CAMBRIA CUP	Paul Denning, Diane Kurbalija Pat Shields, Dan Macintosh
WELSH CUP	Paul Denning, Diane Kurbalija Pat Shields, Dan Macintosh
PREMIER LEAGUE	Tim Rees & John Salisbury Tony Ratcliff & Julian Pottage Gary Jones & Paul Lamford
CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS	Peter Milewski & Tim Dean
TEAM OF EIGHT	Penarth
NATIONAL TEAMS	Tim Barsby & Steve Webb Glyn Meredith & Jennifer Wardell

NATIONAL MIXED PAIRS	Mike Best & Suzy Lawson
TELTSCHER TRIAL	Alan Stephenson & Peter Kaufmann
LADY MILNE TRIAL	Mia Deschepper & Ceri Pierce
PERRY	East Wales
SPICKETT	North Wales

Full results can be found on the WBU website.

Simon reported that he has tried to run a full calendar of events with mixed success. Teams have been more popular than pairs. There have been complaints about entry fees and prize money. He has tried to make the events as attractive as possible, but sadly some events have made a loss. (Note – competition profit has risen from £400 last year to almost £3K this year).

Numbers attending congresses are now very low. The current situation is that holiday bridge is thriving and it is time to rethink the WBUs relationship with bridge in Wales.

Simon is not standing for re-election as NTO this year. He felt that it was time to sign off as he is involved in many other activities – teaching – helping Cardiff bridge club etc. He will however carry on until a replacement has been found for which he was thanked.

Andrea thanked Simon for the enormous amount of work carried out.

It was noted that area congresses are not part of the NTO's role as they are organised by areas.

## **9. Masterpoints and Membership Report**

Steve Webb presented his report. Masterpoint income was increased in January to 40p per ticket, and should raise an extra 3K this year.

There are currently 963 members of the WBU but several clubs are still to submit their membership returns. Steve asked if everybody, especially direct members, check that their membership is paid as it is easy to forget.

Steve also reported that the WBU is looking for a way to allow clubs with less than 100% WBU membership to be able to affiliate to the WBU without issuing masterpoints. It will involve a change to the constitution. Anyone who needs more details was invited to get in touch. Details will be published once it has been discussed more thoroughly.

Steve is offering to provide background information to anyone who would like to know how the Masterpoint and Membership system works – please let Steve know by email.

Andrea requested that Steve provides that presentation to the Management Committee as well. Steve agreed - It would require around 40 minutes.

## **10. Stepbridge Report**

Ceri presented the Stepbridge report provided by Tony Howarth.

StepBridge – has been running for four years now. It was instigated during lockdown as a free platform for WBU (and other) members to play bridge. Tables numbers have decreased since then to about 30 tables a week for the four UK wide events held each week, plus two clubs Monty and Mid Glam who use it regularly. There is strong enthusiasm and loyalty for the StepBridge platform from the StepBridge members. Masterpoints are now issued in the StepBridge UK tournaments.

Finances deteriorated slightly as a result of the drop in numbers. StepBridge contributes £300 to the WBU Treasurer's honorarium and 10% of tables money which constitutes associate membership.

Table money was increased from £1 to £1.25 from 1<sup>st</sup> March. This should enable us to break even or make a small profit next year. StepBridge was set up as a not-for-profit organisation. Clubs can choose to charge whatever table money they wish.

The StepBridge Server license fee has been held by StepBridge International at 5K per annum, rather than the 10K that it should be. We are grateful to StepBridge UK for this continued reduction.

Thanks are given to the TDs and players. StepBridge get on average one new member every few weeks.

Tony would like to encourage players to use the web version rather than the app version.

Audio and video have not been implemented on the platform, as it is an all or nothing situation.

Tony would like to encourage all Welsh players to have a go on StepBridge.

Alan provided some background on StepBridge – which was free at the beginning – StepBridge started charging after covid was over. It has been distressing that many prominent people in the WBU don't play on StepBridge. They would be welcome to play in these events.

We have made a small loss this last year of around £700 – it is difficult to quantify as people pay in advance.

The 10% associate membership was introduced in order to enable the WBU to not have to change their legal status.

Alan noted that StepBridge can be used free of charge for private matches – with audio and video.

Paul commented that StepBridge is popular with two clubs although most play on BBO. He asked if there would there be any mileage in running events on BBO to provide additional revenue. It was noted that this was tried during and following lockdown on BBO but after a trial period it was stopped as there were only two tables participating.

Gilly noted that she ran a BBO event for few years and it started well with 16 tables but it dwindled and is no longer run. She didn't understand why it wasn't supported. There is an EBL women's event now on BBO.

It was pointed out that you need a critical mass of tables to attract more people to play and make events. Alan pointed out that there are ten tables at Mid Glam and seven at Monty – everyone would be welcome to join them. Send Alan an email to be added to the player list.

Maggie asked if the juniors are involved in any online sessions. Mia confirmed that they do set up their own matches and have an online training evening each week. Mia thinks it would be good to set up junior matches with the other Celtic nations.

Alan reiterated that any juniors would also be welcome at Monty Club. There is a wide variety of standards. Monty Tuesday and Mid Glam Online on Thursdays. Alan will send details of these clubs to Andrea for the club database.

## **11. Election of Officers**

The following officers were nominated and duly elected:

Treasurer – Jean Cufley

Master Points and Membership Secretary– Steve Webb

National Tournament Organiser – vacant

## **12. Constitutional Amendments**

### **Motion to suspend the council**

Gilly spoke about this motion – she originally raised it when she was President as the Council seemed to be irrelevant. However, she wanted to open up the Management Committee meetings to all members for discussion, questions and input from all members three or four times a year – the Management Committee alone is too small and is stagnant with the same people who have been doing it for years.

Consequently, she feels that the Council is a safety net. The WBU should be more inclusive. She felt that as immediate past president she has no role to play.

Neville commented that the Council exists in order to carry out checks and balances on the Management Committee and CEO.

Andrea felt that it should sit in the background should it be needed.

For 7

Against 8

Amendment not carried as two thirds majority required

### **Motion to amend eligibility**

Ceri explained the background to the amendment – so that members who move away can still represent the area. It is obviously up to the area whether they are selected. Simon R outlined that the amendment does not cover eligibility for events outside Wales such as the Western League, Tollemache etc. He would like to see further clarification as the amendment does not adequately cover this situation. For example, should someone who plays for the West in the Perry be permitted to play in the Western League for the East and in the Tolle for Avon!

There is no mechanism for players to change areas at present.

For 12

Against 3

Noted – only 19 people were still present and a two thirds majority is required to carry the motion.

Motion carried – but further consideration is needed to provide clarification as outlined by Simon above.

### **13. AOB**

Mia, as chair of EWBA has been asked to submit a paper which Andrea shared with the meeting and presented.

EWBA have suggested that four key functions of the WBU are run by working groups

Tournaments and Leagues

Training and Development

Internationals

Finance (including membership and masterpoints)

Andrea outlined the ideas – that there would be working groups to take on tasks within these groups and deliver things for bridge players

It was noted that the NTO should be an umbrella post with a team to help.

Andrea asked if a workgroup was the same as a committee.

David Smith was asked as the author of the paper for further clarification – he had in mind groups that do things and are not held back by committees. We need to think differently about getting volunteers – he would like to do things rather than sit on a committee and he would like to get things done more quickly.

Andrea agreed, but added that a steer is needed so that the groups do not act completely independently of each other and have compatible aims. Andrea asked who would be making up these groups? She was keen to know who would be volunteering, what skills they have and how they can best be accommodated.

Gilly suggested that maybe as there is no NTO now, that would be a good group to start with. Getting volunteers is difficult and need someone who is proactive. Gilly volunteered to find volunteers as she did not think that the Management Committee would necessarily be best placed to do this. She knew of half a dozen people who would take on some of these jobs. She also thought that there should be no honoraria if the jobs are shared out. Our prime aim must be to reduce our admin costs of 17.5K.

Mia – commented that the setup is already in existence – e.g. the NTO has support of the ATOs, who have the support of their members. However, it is not working at the moment as there have not been enough people to step up to help. It works in East Wales as people are friends and help each other.

Simon Richards queried the origin of the document - Gwynn Davis put it forward and David has amended it. It was discussed and endorsed by the EWBA committee.

Dave clarified that he did not want these ideas discussed at the AGM and felt that the chair of EWBA did not present it in a positive way. He also thinks he has a group of people who are willing to help.

Andrea disagreed about how it had been presented to her by the chair of EWBA and confirmed that it had been put across as very positive proposal to her by Mia, both here and in previous recent discussions with Mia and it is already on the agenda of the next Management Committee. She agreed that the NTO role may be a good place to start.

She also agreed that training and development is also very important. Cardiff is well set for classes but more is required across other parts of Wales.

It was noted that most of these working groups can already be implemented within our current structure - volunteers are needed to set up a project and then get on and do it with a steer from the Management Committee. All agreed that it is better to have a group working together rather than working alone.

David pointed out that having groups set up would allow people to see where they could fit it and would lead to more volunteers. Gilly was fully behind this initiative.



Alan noted that this is a very interesting and positive paper. Various comments made by Gilly though are incorrect – there have been plenty of new people on the Management Committee and it has not been the same old people for years. He also outlined that when the Management Committee was established this is essentially what was intended – with smaller working groups reporting to the Management Committee.

Paul C asked if we can co-opt people onto the Management Committee – the answer is yes, we can. Every committee can co-opt members as necessary. It will be discussed at the next Management Committee.

Andrea invited emails from the people who were interested on volunteering.

Sophie outlined the crowdfunding page that she is setting up to raise money for Youth Bridge with a target of 5K.

Andrea announced the dates of the focus groups – Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June at 7pm and Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June at 11am. The focus groups are a forum to air feedback – both negative and positive – and ideally with constructive ideas and offers of help.

Ceri will put it on the web and send it to the clubs and members. Andrea would like to hold one once a month. It was queried if the emails would reach ex-members – it was confirmed that it would, providing that they had not unsubscribed from the WBU mailing list. It was noted that it may be good if clubs also could be told that ex-members would be welcome.

#### **14. Date of next meeting**

To coincide with the Perry, Spickett and Presidents Cup as it attracts more people.