

Minutes of the WBU 2025 AGM Meeting

Date: Sunday, June 1, 2025

Location: Hybrid Meeting (In-person at Llandudno Bridge Club and Online)

1. Welcome & Apologies

- The Chairperson welcomed attendees to the 2025 AGM.
- Apologies were received from Mike, Morag Claire, Maggie Pierce, David McAndrew, Bob Allardyce, and Adrian Thomas.

2. Investiture of President

- Andrea Knox was confirmed as President for the 2025-2026 term.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

- No queries raised.
- Approved and seconded.

4. Treasurer's Report – Jean Cuffley

Financial Overview (2024-2025 Fiscal Year)

Treasurer Jean Cuffley presented the financial summary of the Welsh Bridge Union for the past fiscal year, reporting an income of £76,996.44 and expenses of £65,782.41, resulting in a net profit of £10,214.03.

This marked a significant turning point, as it was the first year in six years that the WBU recorded a profit, primarily due to:

- a. membership fee adjustments and master point price increases increasing income;
- b. Dragon Pairs as a new income source and contributing significantly to income; and
- c. cost-cutting measures.

Income Breakdown

- Membership fees increased following rate adjustments (£15 → £20 per member).
- Master point fees raised from 25p → 40p per point, boosting revenue despite fewer submissions.
- Dragon Pairs competition.
- StepBridge licensing & external tournament income added revenue from English players participating in WBU-sanctioned events.

Expenses Breakdown

- International competitions recorded losses due to junior team funding and hosting obligations.

- Junior Camrose cost the WBU £5,570.78, contributing to the £6,866.20 loss in international competitions.
- Lady Milne event resulted in £1,599.99 in losses.
- It was noted that some years, the Internationals overlap with the Financial year which runs from April to March, so there are 2 events in one financial year.
- CEO administrative costs confirmed to be correctly categorised as Admin Costs in last year's accounts, following accountant review.

Discussion on Financial Viability

- Concerns raised regarding whether the profitability trend will continue long-term. The President confirmed that this would remain under close review to ensure the books balanced and the WBU remained viable financially.
- Acknowledgment of major cost-saving measures, including reducing expenditures.
- Future financial strategies discussed to maintain sustainable income.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

- Fiona Noyce appointed as Independent Examiner for 2025-2026.

5. President's Report

Andrea began her report by expressing gratitude to key individuals who have played critical roles in the Welsh Bridge Union (WBU) over the past year - Ceri for her administrative support, highlighting that this work extends far beyond what many members realise. She then thanked the Management Committee members—Jean, Alan, Paddy, Steve, and Mia for their dedication. Special recognition was given to Steve Webb (membership & master points), and Simon Gottschalk, who continues to oversee IT infrastructure with diligence along with Paul C, Sooz, Mark, Mel for their work with the juniors and Sophie A, Sophie C and Maggie for their work on junior training projects and Julian for his work on organising the Welsh and Cambria cups.

Outreach & Engagement with Clubs

Andrea highlighted her ongoing Knox Knocks Tour, aimed at visiting every affiliated bridge club in Wales. This project is self-funded and intended to foster stronger relationships, promote bridge, and ensure better communication.

There are 44 clubs and she has visited about half of those so far and is compiling a comprehensive club directory detailing locations, days, and times of play, to be released in the coming months.

Notable club visits included:

- Chepstow Archway – Hosted a pre-bridge dinner as part of their engagement approach.
- Monmouth & Swansea – Both clubs prepared large spreads for the visit.
- Pembroke – Recognized for outstanding catering, with tables transformed into dining spaces filled with homemade cakes.
- Penarth – Memorable for Andrea's lowest-scoring bridge board on the tour after an unfortunate doubled contract!

Initiatives for Different Player Groups

Andrea identified four key player categories and tailored initiatives accordingly:

- International players – Supported through WBU-sanctioned competitions.
- Tournament players – New competitive events introduced, including green-pointed tournaments.
- Club players seeking master points – Encouraged participation in structured tournaments.
- Casual club players – Introduction of Cake Club, a free informal bridge session for social players.

Newly Introduced Events

Andrea has introduced several new initiatives over the last year aimed at engaging players:

- Strictly Come Teaching – Relaxed beginner-friendly bridge event inspired by *Strictly Come Dancing*.
 - Players paired with experienced partners.
 - Glitterball trophies awarded to winners.
 - Participants encouraged to dress up, with prizes for best-dressed players.
- Cake Club – A free afternoon social bridge event, featuring:
 - A full partnership desk to accommodate solo players.
 - Relaxed 18-board format with 8-minute rounds to allow discussions.
 - Managed by Rachel Oliver, assisted by Andrea and Jenny Vaughan.
- Dragon Pairs – A green-pointed competition, run in partnership with Oliver Cowen, generating revenue for the WBU.
- LlanBrighton Congress – A major Welsh Congress held in Brighton.
 - Features top players, including Camrose and Teltscher Trophy winners.
 - AI-generated branding for promotional materials.
- Mini Bridge Events – Designed to introduce young players to bridge.
 - Grandchildren encouraged to attend sessions with family.
 - Led by Sophie Cunningham & Maggie Pierce.

Future Plans – Bridgesteddfod 2026

Andrea unveiled plans for a multi-event bridge festival, the Bridgesteddfod, scheduled for August 2026.

Events will include:

- National Teams & Pairs competitions.
- Casual & competitive tournaments.

- "18 Holes of Bridge" (golf-themed bridge tournament).
- Speedball *Pêl Cyflym* , featuring Welsh music, flags, fines and general fun!
- Dedicated partnership desks, ensuring inclusivity.

The festival will be structured like a bridge holiday, allowing players to participate for one day or several, while exploring the local area. The location is being finalized, but it will definitely be held in Wales.

Strategic Partnerships

Andrea detailed discussions with several organizations to strengthen WBU engagement:

- Women's Institute (WI) – Exploring potential bridge partnerships following WI's past collaboration with Welsh Bowls.
- U3A (University of the Third Age) – Advanced discussions about integrating bridge activities into U3A clubs.
- English, Scottish & Irish Bridge Unions – Strengthened cross-border relationships.
- University & College Initiatives – Plans to introduce bridge to teacher training programs.

Improving Communications

Andrea acknowledged challenges in getting WBU updates to all members.

She has introduced a club messenger system – 'Don't Shoot the Messenger', where designated contacts in each club disseminate WBU updates to ensure players are informed.

She encouraged members to join monthly focus group meetings or reach out via email to discuss ideas.

Closing Remarks

Andrea thanked members for their continued support and invited them to stay engaged with upcoming WBU initiatives.

6. Membership & Master Points Report

- Membership currently at 930, with pending club returns.
- Master point revenues have increased due to fee adjustments.

7. Any Other Business

Proposal: Funding for Non-Playing Captains (NPCs) in Home Internationals

- Motion by Gillie Clench for financial support of NPCs in Lady Milne and Camrose events.
- Letter of support from Maggie Pierce, outlining NPC responsibilities.

Vote Results:

- No funding: 1 vote.
- Partial funding at discretion of Management Committee: Majority approved.

- Full funding: Minimal support.

Approved - Partial funding at discretion of Management Committee

8. Elections

- Treasurer: Jean Cuffley (Approved).
- Master Points & Membership Secretary: Steve Webb (Approved).
- No nominations for National Tournament Organiser.

9. Closing Remarks

- Huge thanks expressed to Andrea for her work as President.
- Mid Wales congratulated for winning the Presidents Cup.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- Next AGM: Sunday, May 17, 2026.