

Notes of YCBA Away Day 19th February 2025 at Weetwood Hall, Leeds.

Present: David Guild (DG), Nick Woolven (NW), Lesley Millet (LM), Ron Millet (RM), Pauline Stout (PS), Mark Dunkley (MD), Ruth Kerr (RK), Stephen Cordingley (SC), Robin Jepson (RJ), Alan Broskill (AB), Jim Edwards (JE), Stuart Davies (SD), Michael Jackson (MJ).

Session 1 Performance Overview

Brief updates were given on the following

- Clubs & County Performance Stats - DG

Yorkshire' membership of about 3,500 is 7.0% of the EBU total but the number of tables played is slightly lower at 6.8%, attributable to Yorkshire having less online bridge than the average.

- County Finances – LM, DG

LM forecasted that owing to cost pressures the income from congresses is likely to drop to break even point in the near future.

The recent YCBA tables and other assets held at York was accurate.

- Grants – DG

Grants are now being made for clubs' accessibility in addition to the previous categories of equipment and teaching. In response to a query DG said that all the accessibility grants are 50:50 match funding.

- Tournaments – NW
- Leagues/County wins – MJ, AB, NW

Yorkshire wins in the President's Cup and the Northern Bridge League reflect the selectors' success, compared with other counties, in retaining support from the strongest players for the county teams.

- Diversity – RK

The recently formed Diversity Inclusion and Equality Committee has been working with clubs to provide better information about accessibility for players at Yorkshire League Matches. A diversity policy has been drafted and constitutional changes promoted which if adopted at the next AGM will provide a mechanism for complaints about failings by the YCBA as an organisation as opposed to misconduct by members. A diversity page has been added to the YCBA website.

- Development – MD, LM

Tournament director courses have been arranged in the north and south of the county. Work with schools is ongoing but largely dependent on the support of bridge-playing teachers to promote interest among the students.

- Teaching – DG

Low success re involving non-affiliate clubs in YCBA teaching initiatives. Now looking to strengthen U3A relationships.

Session 2 – Breakout

Three groups (each with host) considered the following topics

1. How do we make the YCBA more relevant to our members? Over 500 members are Pianola unsubscribed and one third of our emails are unopened. **SC**
2. What actions to take when we have high potential areas that have either no club, or a grossly underperforming club, is present? **MD**
3. How do we see the YCBA Competitions role going forward? **PS**

Summary of group findings and brief open discussion

Topic 1 How do we make the YCBA more relevant to our members? Over 500 members are Pianola unsubscribed and one third of our emails are unopened. Host SC

We need to improve the reach of our YCBA emails urgently. We need to correct the EBU/YCBA membership database clear errors in email addresses. Provision of an email address should be a condition of membership, assuming that the prospective member has an email. Also, we need to clear out non-active members from events mailing. **Action SC and DG** to improve data accuracy.

Consideration should be given to county awards for club stalwarts, the equivalent of the national Dimmie Fleming award. **Action:** to be a **Board topic** at next meeting

Give better publicity for the benefits of EBU and county affiliation -range of competitions, availability of grants and teaching materials. Also, the YCBA do not “blow our own trumpet” enough – to do more **Action: MD**

The YCBA to become more personable with members. Welcome pack for new members and “promotion congrats on new ranking” letters. **Action MD**

Produce statistics on website hits so we have a better idea of how effective the website is for publicising the county. **Action: JE**

Learn from successes of clubs such as Halifax and Keighley that have expanded their membership and participation. **Action: Development Committee**

Topic 2 What actions to take when we have high potential areas that have either no club, or a grossly underperforming club, is present? Host MD

Attempts to work with U3A bridge groups tend to be rebuffed owing to fears that the county’s main interest is to poach their members. There are non-affiliated clubs in the under-represented areas but typically they are not interested in joining as they don’t see what benefits the EBU would bring to their members.

No clear solution was identified for filling geographical gaps in bridge coverage.

Topic 3 How do we see the YCBA Competitions role going forward? Host PS

More events fragmentation envisaged; more social events, more 6-high and black pointed events. High cost of F2F vs Real Bridge and major successes of low level online events by other counties (eg Kent at 46 tables entry fee £2.50) may mean we need more low level online events **Action: Tournaments Committee.**

Events terminology to be softened eg “Bridge Weekend” rather than “Congress” badging.

A number of suggestions were put forward for enhancing participation in competitions including more ranked and handicapped events. Better publicity such as posting flyers on club notice boards and club websites. An effective way of attracting and retaining players, particularly those who are newcomers or lower ranked, is for the organisers to take a personal interest by chatting with the players. **Action:** more event marketing needed by **Tournament Committee**

All were agreed that it is desirable for Yorkshire to have a representative on the EBU Competitions Working Group, given that YCBA hosts three national events staged in Yorkshire. No-one on the Tournament Committee has expressed an interest in this role, but DG agreed to put his name forward. It was noted that Alan Hayward, formerly a Yorkshire player but now based in London, is a member of the EBU's Competitions Working Group. **Action NW** to contact AH with a view to recruiting his support for the Yorkshire interest.

Lunch at Woodlands Restaurant in Hotel

Session 3 YCBA Succession and Board Structure

To conform with the principles of diversity, inclusion and equality, unfilled YCBA administrator positions should be advertised, both Board and non-Board, though it was accepted that personal approaches and recommendations may be needed to fill positions when advertising has produced no response.

SD will be retiring as Tournament Director after the Great Northern Swiss Pairs though he will continue to duplicate boards for county events until 2026. We need to recruit more event co-ordinator assistants to assist marketing and entries co-ordination and to anticipate Stuart's retirement. **Action: Board** To flag at next AGM and then to advertise

The other county directors at present are Barrie Partridge, Jim Edwards and James Carpenter. JE is to be promoted from County Director to Congress Director. The options for filling the gap left by SD's retirement are to use directors from other counties for the EBU events hosted by YCBA and YCBA's own events. It was agreed that recruitment of one or more additional county directors is desirable, and one potential candidate was identified, Daryl Kayes. **Action: NW** to ask DK if he is interested (and HB). If not, then..... **Action:**

Board ,we will advertise the post with a view to recruiting an experienced club TD who would like to take a step up.

LM is at present Treasurer and one of the principal Congress organisers and would like to lighten her workload. It was agreed that it is desirable to split the Treasurer's job description into Treasurer, the senior position, and a new assistant post of Bookkeeper.

Action: Board to advertise post AGM.

Also, the role of Assistant Events Manager needs to be broken out. This role, reporting to Treasurer, includes selection of venues, liaising with the venue and managing the bridge event hospitality. **Action: Board** to advertise post AGM.

An automated payment system for events may cut down some of the administration load.

Action: LM and RM to revisit the feasibility of this approach

Dani Hyman has decided not to continue as Secretary from the next AGM and RJ will stand in with the preparations for the AGM. There was some discussion of the Secretary role reverting to that carried out by Julia Staniforth as de facto general manager of YCBA, but the Chairs are content to continue with the admin tasks they have picked up while DH has been Secretary, and each committee has appointed its own committee secretary for minute-taking, preparation of agendas and other admin. So, the Secretary job description is to be restricted to committee secretary for the Management Board plus the principal point of contact for the EBU, clubs and members communicating with YCBA. **Action: DG** to revise Secretary Job Description, agree with Board and then to advertise.

Terms of Office - it was agreed it is desirable for the upper limit to be placed on the number of years (5) that the principal officers may remain in post and the constitution is to be amended accordingly (action RM & RJ). The period in office to commence on the date the constitutional amendment takes effect but introduction to be staggered to permit a manageable initial change of tenure. **Action: Board** to produce a plan and announce at next AGM.

Date of next Management Board meeting - Wednesday 21st May at 4.30 pm.

End