

CBAI PROMOTION & DEVELOPMENT MEETING

Draft Minutes of Meeting, Saturday 17 November 2018 at 2:00 p.m.

In attendance: Lorraine Barry, Mary Breen, Paddy Bonner, Rita Cassidy, Denise Conlon, Willie Corby, Seamus Costello, Brideen Downes, Richard Elvin, Deirdre Fallon, Maura Foley, Niamh Gormally, Helen Holman, Emer Kee (Vice-President, CBAI), Brid Kemple, Jim Kennington, Norman Lacey (NIBU), Gordon Lessells, Jacques Lumbroso, Joe Moran (President Emeritus, CBAI), Jim Mullally (Hon Treasurer, CBAI), Damien Nee, Mairead Ni Oistin, Dermot O'Brien, Bernie O'Halloran, Maire O'Keeffe, Michael O'Loughlin, Peter O'Meara (President, CBAI), Ken Walsh, Terry Walsh and Paul Porteous (CE, CBAI),

Jim Mullally chaired the meeting, and Dermot O'Brien acted as Secretary.

1. Introduction:

CBAI President Peter O'Meara welcomed the delegates, and thanked them for attending. He set out briefly the objectives of the meeting, and a list of topics that he had prepared as an agenda. It was agreed to proceed through those agenda items in turn, and he encouraged everyone to make a contribution. Paul had compiled a record of suggestions sent to the CBAI in advance of the meeting, and contributed those, with attribution, as appropriate.

2. Development of Youth Bridge:

Norman Lacey outlined the current programme for junior bridge being run within NIBU, and quoted US scientific research that shows that students who play bridge do better in standardised academic tests than those who do not – he will leave his list of PR ideas with Jim Mullally.

Hold an Open Day for schoolchildren to play with their grandparents or parents.

Perhaps tie this in with an existing school that supports bridge.

Do something similar at club-level – “bring your child/grandchild to bridge”.

Achieve clarity on who is responsible for promoting youth bridge – feeling that IYBC concentrates on top-performing juniors rather than junior bridge generally.

Easier to deal en masse (via schools) than attract participants individually.

Establish bridge clubs in universities and third-level colleges, and deal with the issue currently preventing entry into international university competitions.

Use results/presentations for publicity and to get schools and parents bought in.

Publicise the activities of youth bridge players better

Use youth-friendly media for promotion – you-tube, videos, apps, etc.

Try to break the perception of bridge as an old person's game.

Link in with Foroige and/or the Community Games

Build a process for incorporating juniors not playing in school into clubs – could each region or major city have a youth-oriented club or section for this purpose.

Run a Schools League and get a sponsor.

Subsidise promising junior players to play in congresses etc.

Is generally low level of computerisation in local clubs a deterring factor to juniors?

Bridge a recognised skill for GAISCE awards, and Schools Evaluation Report on St. Vincent's Dundalk highlighted bridge as a significant positive factor.

3. Increase Membership at All Levels:

New clubs? Growing memberships within clubs? Recruiting unaffiliated clubs/players??

Beginners' classes within the clubs – needs a stream of accredited teachers.

Encourage newcomers and make sure they are welcomed – ethos from Ballinhassig: *“if you have nothing nice to say, say nothing at all”*.

Work with clubs on helping beginners cope with the transition from student-in-training to novice player – special mentoring section or period, including open discussion forums/review of hands, etc.

Find clubs for students of teachers not themselves associated with clubs.

If the same people win all the time, look at different prize schemes and/or handicap systems.

Noted that the over-65 age group is the fastest growing cohort in Ireland currently – we need to embrace the “silver student”.

Different strategies for “social” and “competitive” bridge needed?

Link up with local whist clubs.

Incentive scheme for regions by way of a part-rebate of affiliation fees for newly-affiliated members, provided an appropriate target is met.

Ageing population common to all jurisdictions – look overseas for solutions/ideas.

Reality TV/“operation transformation” idea – follow a group of adults and juniors as they learn bridge.

Pursue links with relevant research groups such as the Mercer Institute for Successful Ageing or the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing.

4. Social Media Presence:

CBAI social media presence currently dormant, but under review, and some developments planned.

Be aware that Facebook is falling rapidly out of favour with young people. Need to be sure we are backing the right platforms.

5. Government Recognition as a Recreational Activity:

Go after Sport Ireland again to look for funding?

Or ... recognise that ship has sailed and seek recognition as a socially useful recreational activity instead.

Get a petition to local/national representatives, signed by as many bridge players as possible

Note that an election is likely in the next year or two – prepare the petitioning groundwork accordingly.

Is appropriate body the Department of Rural & Community Affairs?

6. More Competition at Lower Grading Levels:

Intermediate sections at Congresses getting bigger.

Some Intermediates don't want to "play out" for fear of going up in grade, though the recent changes in the grading system have addressed that somewhat.

Need to support the "social-only" players too – they are the majority, and represent the bread-and-butter of the organisation.

7. Code of Conduct & Promoting Enjoyment:

Junior and Novice players report feeling intimidated by more experienced ones.

(Generally noted that expert players are less prone to this, and are more helpful.)

Players using advanced systems can lead to frustration on both sides.

Newcomers need help in understanding their rights and responsibilities.

Reference back to the Ballinhassig creed: *"if you have nothing nice to say, say nothing at all"*.

Make it a motto at local level within clubs?

8. Local Initiatives, Radio & Newspapers:

National promotion day to include some or all of the following activities.

Shopping Centre Bridge – get coffee shops onboard. Use Bridge+More technology.

Over 50's events.

Youth events, such as Zeminar.

Declan Doyle currently examining the possibility of a Café Bridge event (or a "Bridge Crawl").

Bridge marathon – aiming at recognition in Guinness Book of Records.

Feeling that many such initiatives work best if in aid of a charity. Charity can help with publicity and support.

Local newspapers always open for new ideas, provided there is some human interest element (i.e. not just a list of prizewinners).

Local libraries likewise always looking for new ideas, and will support them – especially at set activity periods such as Bealtaine (May activity month).

Run beginners' weeks in hotels – intensive "Learn Bridge in a Week" sessions – especially in January when hotels less busy and people focussing on new year's resolutions.

Agreed summer, probably late-July, best for a national promotion day – to encourage interest in bridge classes, which typically start mid-September. Use local resources – CDOs, clubs – to identify and source locations, and for local publicity.

9. Financial Reimbursement for Local Activities:

Structured financial reimbursement of expenses to defray costs incurred by members in their efforts to promote the game within a club or region.

10. 10-Year Plan:

CBAI needs a Public Relations Officer, or at least an agreed approach that is reviewed periodically.

Approach club secretaries re petition on the political agenda – do we need a “call to action” catchphrase?

Hold teachers’ seminars outside Dublin.

Do we need a venue of our own outside Dublin? Venues becoming increasingly prohibitive in cost terms; even hotels that have been supportive longer-term now running shy of bridge.

Look for funds under the North/South Fund for joint NIBU/CBAI ventures.

11. Next Steps:

Peter O’Meara thanked all attendees for their valuable contributions. Paul Porteous noted that in most of the areas discussed, clubs and regional committees had the most important role to play. While the national association could support them in objectives such as growing membership, ultimately clubs needed to be responsible for their own futures, by reaching out to the local community, using parish newsletters, developing teachers, running classes, managing the integration of new players into the clubs, etc.

It was agreed that a Strategy Committee be established to follow through on the promotion & marketing agenda, and the ideas discussed. Emer Kee agreed to chair this Committee, and Niamh Gormally, Jim Mullally, and Jacques Lumbroso agreed to participate. Other members can be co-opted if necessary.

The meeting closed at 4 p.m.

Dermot O’Brien