



MINUTES

Meeting	EBED Trustee Meeting	
Date & Time	3rd December 2020 from 12.40 to 17.30	
Location	Via Zoom	
Attendees	Andy Margetts – Chair (AM) Terry Hewett – Trustee (TH) Mary Sharp – Trustee (MS) Douglas Wright – Trustee (DBBW)	Gillian Fawcett – Trustee (GF) Mike Hill – Trustee & Treasurer (MH) Dom Wilson – Trustee (DoW) Giorgio Provenza – CEO (GP)
	1 – Housekeeping 2 – Finance 3 – Operational Issues 4 – Strategic Planning 5 – Next Meeting 6 – Any Other Business • Note – minutes not necessarily in actual order of discussion	

1 – HOUSEKEEPING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No apologies for absence The minutes from the September board meeting were reviewed and approved. Updates on open issues were as follows: 	
A074	Deferred due to C-19, project to be reassessed by GP in due course in context of planned Transition Group project
A075	Communication now completed but implementation planning deferred (meeting next week)
A084	Deferred until after Fund Raising consultation exercise (see item 2C) completed
A085	To be addressed in this meeting (see item 2B)
A088	Redundancy consultation completed and appropriate action taken
A089	To be addressed in this meeting (see item 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted that the publication of EBED board minutes on the website (delayed following the redundancy of an EBU staff member) was once again up to date. AM suggested EBED also considers publishing minutes of any sub-committee meetings on the website. It was agreed to do for the new EBS Committee and for the YAG going forwards. It was agreed that minutes going forward should be published being mindful of any Data Protection issues in regard to any 3rd party named in any minutes. Under the review of potential conflicts, MS reminded the committee of the on-line bridge club run by her husband which AM did not consider a potential issue for this meeting. 	



2 – FINANCE

A – Management Accounts (MH) - Document B

- MH tabled the management accounts (Document B) for the period 6 months to the end of September 2020. There were no matters arising from the document and it was confirmed that the financial position of the charity was slightly better than feared given the coronavirus pandemic.
- It was noted that the total marginal spend on the English Bridge School (EBS) to date (including external costs and staff overtime but excluding normal staff costs) amounted to approximately £15k at present although there are still authoring costs to incur on finishing the year one and writing the year two course.

B – Potential financial Effects of C-19 on reserves up to March 2022 – Documents C (i) & (ii)

- Now that the country has settled into operating in a Covid world and following the staff restructuring, AM had requested that the finance team, Chief executive and Treasurer produce an updated set of projections for the rest of the current financial year and then extend it for a further 12 months without assuming the world returns to normal i.e. that the currently prevailing trading conditions persist. The exercise was designed so the trustees could reach a conclusion on EBED's ability to continue operations as a going concern from a statutory financial reporting standpoint and similarly to be able to conclude that the charity continues to satisfy the requirement of the Charity Commission not to have to file a Serious Incident Report as a result of the changes in its financial position.
- The documents were reviewed and it was noted that, without any improvement in the underlying trading patterns and without additional EBU donations, it is projected that, by the end of 2021/22, reserves will have fallen to £160k. Although this is just above half of the level at the start of the current financial year, the trustees considered this as evidence that EBED can continue its operations for in excess of 12 months. The actual outcome would be expected to be better than this if a successful vaccination programme allows the current government-imposed restrictions to be relaxed.
- The situation will continue to be monitored and, a further forecasting exercise will be undertaken should trading conditions deteriorate materially.
- The final audited accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020 are nearly ready. There have been no material changes to the draft accounts as a result of the audit. It is anticipated that the final accounts and the trustees report are to be filed with the Charity Commission by the end of January (subsequently confirmed) and these will be circulated to the trustees for approval once finalised.

C – Fundraising (AM) & (GP)

- At MS's suggestion, AM has contacted Judy Niner a consultant with Development Partners (fundraising specialists) to investigate and consider additional fundraising opportunities for EBED. AM and MH had spent an hour briefing her on EBED's structure and sources of income and separately GP had also met Judy for an initial discussion. All three reported that they had been impressed by Judy's approach. The principal areas for consideration identified were: (i) whether EBED was likely to be able to attract significant external funding from new sources; (ii) whether the scale of such funding would justify or be outweighed by the costs (in human resource and financial terms) of securing it; and (iii) whether funds could realistically be raised for general charitable purposes or whether they would have to be tied to specific projects or to "youth bridge". Given the seriousness of these points, it was proposed that the charity commission a quick feasibility review into the possibilities as a first step, rather than an in-depth study. It was reported that Judy has endorsed this approach and suggested she researched our situation, considered possible funding sources, chaired a conference call with all trustees to learn more about the charity and then wrote a report to advise us of her considered views.
- MS was enthusiastic to explore the fund-raising options but raised concern as to whether any personal donations would be required from the trustees in order to encourage 3rd party donations, a situation she had encountered before. In addition, concerns were expressed about the likely level of staff or trustee time that might be necessary actively to pursue the initiative at a time when staff numbers had had to be pared



back. DBBW echoed MS's concerns on personal donations citing the membership of MPPC as an example but wondered whether Judy might be able to introduce high-net-worth individuals. GF agreed that it was correct to get a professional opinion on outside donations but suggested we should be considering further negotiations with EBU to increase current donations. TH questioned whether we should be looking for donations for specific or general purposes and how much the charity should be looking to raise.

- MS would prefer the charity raised new funds to allow it to become less dependent on its trading activities to generate income so it could reduce the cost to end users of our materials and training. In contrast, DBBW suggested that EBED could become a self-sustaining training business so that there was no need to raise funds but accepted that this would put EBED in conflict with the bridge teachers it is currently supporting, a strategic direction that was not part of the charity's current plans. MH pointed out that, prior to Covid, the charity had adequate reserves and had underspent on its project plans which might make general fund-raising difficult to attract.
- The board considered Development Partners' fee proposal of £1,200 and agreed to commission the work and proceed with the suggestion of the conference call on Thursday, 10 December 2020.

3 – OPERATIONAL ISSUES

A – CEO Report & Questions from Trustees (GP) – Document D

- GP updated the board on the staff restructuring noted in Document D and the extension of the furlough scheme (now only affecting one employee) to April.
- Following advice taken when GP was hired as CEO, the charity will move away from the old-style fixed-term employment contracts for any future new hires (none currently planned) and for any existing staff members being re-hired at the end of their current fixed terms.
- It was confirmed that EBS now has 24 paying members and more can be expected following the completion of the recent additional (G-suite) training seminars for teaching (there has been good feedback in respect of these courses). Following receipt of additional funding, work on the year two course has commenced in parallel with the efforts to complete the first-year programme. Year two lessons are currently being prepared with Lorna Watson (working on the first eight lessons) and India Leeming (working on lessons 9 to 14). LW is authoring on the same consultancy basis as other authors as the work cannot be accommodated within her normal EBED contracted hours. GP has now assumed the role of editor. DBBW questioned what sales were expected after Christmas in respect of take up of EBS and the books. The position is unsure whether people will work exclusively on EBS or the books or a hybrid of both; the latter is perhaps the most expected course. At the moment, it seems that teachers are more comfortable teaching their existing students rather than starting new beginners on an online platform. GP was sympathetic to this issue. Now a Covid vaccine is imminent, it appears that many teachers and students are now waiting to return to F2F teaching rather than starting online courses.
- The reprint of the Yellow (Fast Track) book which has now been completed (delayed by a printer's error) but, unfortunately, the book could not be re-branded with the EBS logo due on this occasion so it has retained its original branding.
- Table numbers for the EBS relaxed games have increased steadily and they now attract up to 18 tables.
- It is hoped to run a club teacher training course F2F in May. If there is sufficient interest it may be possible to run a further online club teacher training course in January or March but, given the need for extensive staff support to run them, regardless of who the main presenter is, they would be run in-house. The F2F course anticipated for May would revert to the old model of being conducted by outside teacher educators but will need to be amended to include some online learning content to reflect the importance of online learning even post-Covid. MS queried why the CTT course has been cut to one and half days rather than the original two days, as there is too much content to be covered for one and half days. GP reported that, unfortunately, in an online environment most people can only manage one and half days. An additional half day will be offered to the student teachers to cover the elements of the course necessary for F2F teaching once this resumes.



- DBBW requested an update on the EBED discussion with Shark Bridge. GP advised these had not yet progressed further. There are not yet enough teachers using the EBS platform to provide GP with any bargaining power to negotiate a preferential rate for teachers. TH asked whether there would be non-EBS teachers interested in using Shark bridge and whether we could bolster the numbers that way. GP acknowledged that this could be the case but, as with non-EBTA teachers, unfortunately, there is no way of knowing how many of these teachers there are.
- TH pointed out that online teachers have students from all over the country (and even overseas) and suggested we might support them and the classroom to clubroom initiative by helping such teachers find clubs that are local to their students.
- It was raised as to whether EBED should be providing information to all clubs on the online games and F2F games being offered by various clubs. This would support teachers in getting their students playing in a duplicate environment. GF confirmed that the current opinion in the EBU is that post Covid clubs will be resuming F2F sessions but retaining online sessions as well. It was not clear how EBED would provide such information and maybe preferable for the local clubs to liaise with the counties to advertise their online session on the counties' websites. It was also suggested that the charity considers using congresses to encourage novice players to experience duplicate.
- There have been only a handful of adverse comments received concerning in the increased fees for EBTA members and as many from those who are more understanding.

B – EBS Advisory Board Update (MS)

MS is intending to arrange the first meeting of the new EBS Committee in the new year. The committee will comprise Lorna Watson, Jacks Morcombe, GP, Julia Davison, Barbara Gibbs and Sue Johnson with a couple of other still to be confirmed. One of our Teacher Educators, Susanne Gill, who is using EBS, has prepared an article which appears in the EBU magazine outlining the virtues of EBS for teachers.

C – Youth Bridge (TH)

- The next meeting is scheduled for 8th December and TH will consider whether to hold meetings more frequently in future than has been the case hitherto.
- It is intended to run the school cup online.
- TH, GP and AM met recently with the MPCC, who, notwithstanding the loss of the Youth Officer, remain supportive and confirmed they will still make their next planned donation and reaffirmed their commitment to developing a lasting relationship with EBED, for which we are very grateful. It was jointly agreed with them that EBED would investigate new ways to teach bridge to youngsters in an effort to stimulate interest as the current approach might be considered unattractive to the modern generation.
- In that regard, GP has been investigating the game 'Hool' designed by a bridge enthusiast and educationalist based in India, Amaresh Despande. GP is very impressed by the game which is available in a board format or online app and GP highlighted some of its advantages. It teaches shape as well as points and other inferences necessary to develop good bridge skills and lays the ground well for those wanting to progress to bridge at a later stage. It is easy to learn and it would not be necessary for a bridge teacher to teach the children the game in schools. It could be introduced as a game in a games club within a school and GP views it as an exciting opportunity for children.
- DBBW expressed concern that 'Hool' has very little supporting material for the teachers whilst plenty has been already developed for mini-bridge. The issue is not necessarily that mini-bridge is boring but how it is taught by the teachers. DBBW has recently conducted a bridge taster session in a school introducing 80 children to bridge by playing mini-bridge. The sessions were very well received.
- For those trustees who have had no experience of 'Hool' GP and TH will be demonstrating the game on 10th December 2020. DBBW confirmed he would be happy to trial 'Hool' in a school environment.



D – Report from EBU Annual General Meeting – GP & AM

- The meeting was last week and AM and GP reported on their speeches and AM showed the slides he had presented on how EBED had been affected by Covid and the associated reduced level of EBU funding.

E – Research Update (DoW)

- Covid 19 is inevitably having an impact on the two research programmes.

(i) Stirling

- DoW assured the board that the Stirling project is coping well with the covid-19 problems and that the project remains on track albeit that Stirling has issued a blanket C-19 research student extension of three months so Kevin Judge’s PhD completion is now scheduled for December 2021. There are no new financial implications for EBED in this. The next interim report is scheduled for May 2021.
- He reported that C-19 has made a big difference to normal patterns of activity in terms of playing, learning and exploring Bridge this year, especially perhaps in the 55-75 age group (crucial for recruiting and boosting Bridge playing) where people may be precipitated into early and accelerated consideration of the transition from employment to leisure. This may make it difficult to apply the research outcomes into future contexts.
- Furthermore, the difficulty in accessing Scottish schools in particular during C-19 restrictions has limited the research methodology, so KJ is delighted to have received the help of EBED in filling some of the participant gaps with English interviewees arranged by Jacks Morcombe.
- DoW highlighted that small sample numbers (always the case with such qualitative methodologies) will yield rich interpretive material though with limited generalisability and counselled that EBED should therefore be cautious in our expectations as to how we might be able to leverage research outcomes in lobbying for political or financial support.
- DoW reported a change to KJ’s supervisory team (one out, two in) has increased the collective expertise in the areas of intergenerational learning and the importance of leisure activity to quality of life amongst older people.

(ii) Imperial

- The research at Imperial College has had similar problems and has had trouble finding people to meet the criteria but it is considered that the result will still be statistically sufficient.
- The meeting was then joined by Caroline Small (formerly an EBED trustee) and the PhD student Nicholas Lao-Kaim from Imperial college who gave a very interesting slide presentation on the early results emerging from the research project to date.
- They explained the selection criteria for participants and how they were matched in pairs comprising one bridge player and one control. They ran through the tasks participants were required to complete whilst being scanned including spatial awareness, memory and planning tasks as well as Stroop tests. In addition, they explained the importance of brain ridges to the brain’s surface areas and the impact of smoothing with age.
- Turning to the early interpretation of results, they highlighted the areas of difference between bridge players’ and non-bridge players’ brains they had so far identified as potentially significant (left hemisphere in three areas, interestingly one of which is known as an area that is affected by Alzheimer’s disease) and the brain functions associated with each (which include planning and attention spans).
- Whilst the differences are potentially very exciting, sample size may limit the confidence with which they can conclude on the results.
- Analysis is still ongoing and the team hope to have completed this stage by the end of January 2021 which will then inform the direction of the academic paper that will follow.
- They will keep EBD informed as to progress.



4 – STRATEGIC PLANNING

A– Strategic Priorities Update 2020 (AM) – Document E

- The strategic planning exercise was undertaken to update to the plan developed in 2018 in order to reflect progress to date and the input from GP as the charity’s new CEO. The draft document, developed following the four trustees’ workshops in October, was tabled and discussed.
- The document is intended to give the executive team a route map as to how the trustees would like to see the charity develop in the short and medium-term and should be integrated into the production of the Budget for the forthcoming financial year.
- It is intended that the document be shared with both with the Charity's staff and its major donor, the EBU.
- DoW highlighted that there are 13 “priority 1” ideas and questioned our bandwidth but GP is confident that they are achievable
- MS stressed the urgency of reviewing the platform on which EBS is based to make the product more user-friendly for teachers.
- The document was approved subject to an amendment to reflect this.
- [Subsequent discussions distinguished between the desirability of hosting EBS on a bespoke university-grade platform (such as Moodle) which would require a substantial investment, beyond our current means - and hence must remain as a long-term objective when finances permit - and the possibility of devising an easier way to access EBS on its Google Classroom platform than is currently possible using the G-Suite product offered by Google which might be achievable within our financial constraints. This will be investigated as a high priority by the EBS Committee as soon as it is formed. The amended plan was then approved by trustees.]

B – SUCCESSION PLANNING

- AM’s term expires on 1 August 2021 and he believes it would then be time to hand over the reins to a successor to guide the charity forwards. It was agreed that, given their constitutional rights over appointment of the officers of the charity, AM would consult with the EBU on an approach to recruiting a new Chair in the New Year to allow suitable time for an orderly handover.
- The potential desirability of appointing a Vice Chair (permissible but not compulsory under the charity’s constitution) was also discussed but not progressed.
- DoW’s term also expires in August 2021 and he indicated a willingness to extend to coincide with completion of the Stirling and Imperial research projects he currently supervises on the charity’s behalf.

5 - NEXT MEETING

- The next quarterly board meeting will take place on Thursday, 4th March 2021 at 12.30pm, (provisionally) via Zoom.

6 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- GP will organise a demonstration of Shark Bridge for Trustees.

MEETING CLOSED c.17.20



ACTION	AGENDA ITEM / ACTION / NOTES	RAISER	OWNER	DUE DATE	STATUS	UPDATES
A074	Classroom to Clubroom project scope to re-examine	-	GP	Deferred	Open	
A075	DBBW/GP to finalise planning for proposed EBTA changes	-	DBBW	Deferred	Open	
A084	Fund raising trustee appointment	MS	AM	Deferred	Open	
A089	Approval of Strategic Priorities Document	AM	AM/GP	A.S.A.P. [subsequently done]	Open	