

Best Practice for County Associations

In the EBU we recognise that counties differ in size and resources- both human and financial. Those best practice suggestions that we consider essential are shown in **bold**.

Transparency and Communications with Clubs and Members

- **The single most important thing a county chair can do is to facilitate and encourage good communication between all levels of the bridge community.**
- **A county should maintain a good website that serves both existing and potential players. It should publish CBA minutes and contact details of county officials.**
- **Use the website to signpost your clubs, teaching opportunities, results, EBU and near counties events and any other relevant items of local interest.**
- **Be a point of reference for general advice to clubs, encouraging the use and benefit of central EBU support where relevant.**
- **Minutes of Association AGM's and EGMs should be published on the county website.**
- **Counties should promote bridge to the general public (potential players) using local news publications, taster sessions, talks etc.**
- Publication of an online and/or paper newsletter on County bridge matters is a good idea.
- Effective two-way communication between associations and affiliated clubs can be facilitated by:
 - An annual meeting with invited club officials, with agenda items covering the EBU, the county association, and matters raised by the clubs.
 - Arranging for at least one executive/management committee officer to visit and play at a session of every affiliated club at least once per year to meet the club committee, talk to members collectively, or listen to any issues during play.
 - Encouraging clubs, and their members, to contact the county association when needing help with resolving disciplinary or other rulings.
 - Finding teachers or tournament directors, and helping with other matters connected with running their club.
 - Allowing all affiliated clubs space on the county website to highlight their club details, and to promote special events or publish results.
 - Maintaining a list of all unaffiliated clubs, circles, groups, etc, and listing these on the Association website, together with giving them any advice that they might request, while informing them of the value and advantages of affiliating to the EBU.
 - Keeping unaffiliated clubs informed of EBU and county events, especially any designed to attract non-EBU Members.

Association Management

- **Association governance is achieved by use of an appropriate constitution – the EBU provide a model county constitution, and advice on county constitutions.**
- **Associations must ensure that adequate safeguarding policies exist where appropriate – the EBU Youth Care and Safety Policy may be used as a model for counties.**
- **Organising events, competitions and tournaments, including those online, can appeal to all grades of membership where such events complement rather than compete with those that are provided by the clubs.**
- **The importance of publicising these events cannot be overstated.**
- **Counties should establish a transparent selection procedure with trials where feasible for representative inter-county and national events.**
- **Counties should aim to give support, including financial support, to county teams representing the county in national events such as the Tollemache, Pachabo, Corwen, and Garden Cities trophies.**
- **Counties should proactively recruit CBA committee members to reflect the range of clubs and all levels of player.**
- **Financial management: counties should maintain a prudent reserves policy as part of their risk management. They should be open to offering grants and loans to affiliated clubs in furthering objectives. Appointin an independent annual auditor might also be appropriate.**
- **Counties should appoint EBU shareholder(s) and ensure good liaison so that they can be well informed on county matters as well as keeping the CBA informed on matters related to EBU committees and the AGM.**
- Association costs can be kept to a minimum by using modern communication and publishing methods; securing sponsorship for special events, the website or newsletter; and spreading the workload amongst all executive/management committee members, and others, where necessary.
- Executive/management committee membership should comprise a representative cross-section of the membership (e.g., geographical spread, all levels of bridge playing abilities (one does not need to be an expert bridge player to be an outstanding and effective bridge administrator), active in club activities, etc.
- Counties might wish to set up working groups of 3-4 Committee Members and others to investigate topics, or issues, and charge them with suggesting remedies.
- Counties should receive regular reports from shareholders and determine whether shareholders are delegates and, therefore, vote as directed by the county executive/management committee, or are representatives and, therefore, vote according to their conscience. If the former, then does the County mandate them on specific forthcoming issues?
- Counties might consider underwriting risks around courses and events for clubs. This should to remove obstacles in the way of worthy initiatives aimed at promoting the game and widening experiences.

Bridge Development

- **Counties should identify and promote existing learning opportunities: youth/schools/universities, beginners, improvers, advanced, for working and non-working adults.**
- **They should maintain a list of all county bridge teachers and courses on the county website.**
- **They should organise training for bridge club directors or help them take advantage of the national training available.**
- They might encourage and help clubs to organise feeder sections, with supervised play for beginners to run alongside more formal teaching sessions.
- It is valuable to attend fresher days at universities to try to establish activities under the supervision of a local affiliated Club.
- Counties can assist clubs in organising a mentoring scheme for players who wish to progress via one-to-one, or joint sessions.
- They might run seminars for improving players on particular topics within bridge, with invited tutors/lecturers.
- The profile of bridge can be raised in the wider community by regular articles, for instance, in the local county press, and by publicising events on local radio and TV.
- Counties might take action to fill gaps in coverage, whether of geography or standard.
- Liaising with EBED about courses will help ensure that clubs have convenient access to courses such as TD and teacher training, that adequately meet their needs.

How do we get more people playing bridge?

- **Make bridge classes easier to find. The EBU teacher directory can help with this.**
- **Support and promote bridge teachers in the county.**
- Try to create a more attractive and widespread image of bridge clubs and players.
- Provide more flexible and quicker learning, or fast track lessons.

Youth Development

- With the support of local bridge clubs, help to organise mini-bridge sessions for children in primary schools.
- Organise inter-school activity for secondary schools within county towns.
- Support, or initiate if necessary, bridge activities within local colleges and universities for both students and staff.

Being, and Feeling, Part of the English Bridge Union

- **Develop an ethos that the EBU is not *them*, it is *us*.**
- **Ensure that new initiatives being proposed by the EBU are fully explained to the county, clubs, and members.**
- **Provide feedback to the EBU on new ideas and initiatives.**
- Support our associated charity *English Bridge Education and Development* (EBED). This might involve fund-raising for the charity, as well as spreading the word on its activities.
- Use (and encourage your clubs to use) *The Bridge Warehouse* (the EBU's shop) for stationery and other purchases (and let us know if the prices are higher than elsewhere as for many products there is a price-matching offer).