



## Notes from the EBU County Chair's Meeting held via Zoom, at 13:00, on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021

### Present:

Ian Payn	Chair	Gillian Fawcett	Vice Chair
Jerry Cope	Treasurer	Gordon Rainsford	Chief Executive Officer
Adrian Darnell	Board Member	Cathryn Fox	Board Member
Anthony Golding	Board Member	Rob Lawy	Board Member
Ron Millet	Board Member	Kay Preddy	Board Member
Patrick Shields	Board Member	Gayle Webb	Board Member
Andy Margetts	EBED Chair	Lee Guy	EBED Vice-Chair
Giorgio Provenza	EBED CEO	Sam Kelly	Note Taker & Communications Officer

Chair or designated substitute			Chair or designated substitute		
	Present	Apologies		Present	Apologies
Avon	Peter Shelley		Mersey/Cheshire	Julian Merrill	Christopher Raymond
Bedfordshire	Colin O'Hara		Mersey/Cheshire	Paul Roberts	
Bedfordshire	Pippa Green		Middlesex	Peter Hasenson	
Berks & Bucks	Mick Green		Middlesex	Lyn Fry	
Berks & Bucks		Mike Ribbins	Norfolk	Robert Smith	
Cambs & Hunts	Adam Bowden		North East	Nigel Durie	
Channel Islands	Norman Le Cocq	Andy Hall	Northamptonshire	Chris Wormleighton	
Cornwall	Liz Perry		Northamptonshire	Fred Davies	
Cumbria		Trevor Ward	Nottinghamshire	Mark Goddard	
Derbyshire	Jim Parker		Oxfordshire	Kathy Talbot	
Devon	Geoff Clements		Somerset	Tony Russ	
Dorset	Mark Hooper		Staffs & Shrops		Pamela Booth-Jones
Essex		Paul Mollison	Suffolk	Jeff Orton	Malcolm Pryor
Gloucestershire	Ian Sidgewick		Suffolk	Richard Evans	
Hants & IoW		Andy Hughes	Surrey	Tim Warren	
Herefordshire	Chris Chowney		Surrey	Sue Thorburn	
Herefordshire	Keith Stait		Sussex	Peter Clinch	
Hertfordshire	Paul Littlewood		Sussex	John (Treasurer)	
Isle of Man		John Large	Warwickshire	Mike Thorley	Darren Evetts
Kent	Paul Gibbons		Warwickshire	Myra Scott	
Kent	Norman Inniss		Westmorland		John Ellwood
Lancashire		Brian Irlam	Wiltshire	Lucy Cross	
Leicestershire		Dean Benton	Worcestershire	Barbara Griffiths	
Lincolnshire	Kiat Huang		Yorkshire	David Guild	
Lincolnshire	Maria Vietri-Nelson		Yorkshire	Nick Woolven	
London	Chris Duckworth	Dominic Flint	Yorkshire	Lesley Millet	
Manchester	Irene Davies				
Manchester	Alan Mould				

## **Opening comments**

Ian Payn (IP), Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming all those present and thanked everyone for coming. He stated he hoped this would be a good opportunity for the board to discuss proposed plans and strategy and to receive feedback from counties. IP confirmed the etiquette for feedback or questions via the chat function.

## **Financial Strategy**

JC (Treasurer) noted when he spoke at the County Chairs meeting last year, the EBU was not in a good place financially. However, with a huge amount of hard work (particularly from GR and everyone involved in setting up competitions online), and difficult decisions and redundancies made over the last year, by the end of quarter three we had managed to stabilise, but still with a heavy loss. However, quarter four was amazing for income, particularly March, when people played a lot of online bridge. This means we may have a small surplus for the financial year end 2021. This is slightly skewed, as we had over £100k worth of government assistance, we had £25k worth of grants and a lot of furlough money, as well as some very welcome donations, including from counties, plus no international expenses of any kind. We also had a reduction in the fees owed to the World Bridge Federation and the European Bridge League. This all totalled approximately £200k, without which we would have had a heavy loss.

This means that for the current financial year we need to find another £200k worth of income or make reductions in expenditure of £200k to break even this year. JC cautioned that we would not receive a reduction in fees from the WBF or EBL this year. JC also noted that the April UMS figures were considerably down from March numbers, with current May figures on the same level as April.

JC laid out a plan to break even across the two years, to use the small surplus from 2021 to cover the deficit expected in 2022. This will reduce the shortfall.

JC reiterated that the EBU is in a much better position now than it was thought we would be and this is down to a lot of hard work by everybody right across the bridge family, so a massive thanks to all involved. He asked counties to comment on their financial positions or to ask any questions about his report.

Alan Mould (AM) (Manchester) asked if JC thought the loss from 2021-22 would be a one-off or if this would repeat in 2022-23 and going forward. JC said it's difficult to predict, membership numbers seem to be holding up, and online is more profitable than face to face but it depends how much and where people want to play. The key is what will happen in the next quarter four. It will be likely that price increases will come in 2022-23, and staff pay is one of a couple of areas that will need attention.

Norman Inniss (NI) (Kent) confirmed that Kent have just about broken even. The big success in Kent is the 9 High games that have been running online weekly. Kent have no ongoing costs which helped.

David Guild (DG) (Yorkshire) noted that a lot of people have not been playing online at all, so when these members start playing face to face, this will be additional income. He also stated that Peter Cox from Australian Bridge Federation gave a very good presentation for Bridge: A Mind Sport for All (BAMSA) that is available on YouTube with statistical information from returning to face to face bridge following lockdown.

Alan Mould (AM) (Manchester) stated Manchester county have almost no online presence, but this has been filled by clubs running online games. He noted that most Manchester clubs are planning to continue to run online games alongside face to face games.

Peter Clinch (PC) (Sussex) asked about pricing of Green Pointed events for counties compared to EBU, and what impact this might have on the EBU. GR stated that competitions pricing is being reviewed.

Many people included an update for their county in the chat function, IP confirmed these would be looked at following the meeting.

### **Chairs Survey Results**

IP thanked those involved with the County Chair survey, GW, CF and KP.

KP talked through the results from the recent County Chairs survey. She thanked everyone for responding and noted the high response rate with 35/39 counties completing the survey.

KP highlighted some of the results of the survey. Full details of the presentation are attached below.

KP noted there are variations of club affiliation across counties, an average of 50% of clubs are affiliated to the EBU. Membership to population ratio also varies across counties, with some as low as 4 in 10k and some as high as 32 per 10k.

Nearly half of responders expect membership to remain the same over the next three years, with nearly half expecting membership to decrease. Only a small percentage expect membership to grow in their county. Nearly all responders expect online bridge to continue.

The results also showed how clubs performed during the pandemic, with about 50% of clubs now playing online in some form. The number of players has not decreased as much as the number of clubs. Results showed that it is anticipated that up to 20% of clubs will not re-open.

The survey asked counties to share their successful strategies for recruiting new learners, responses included posters, newspapers, word of mouth, social media and taster sessions. These responses help the EBU to develop strategies to share with counties.

The value of the EBU was looked at during the survey, with details about how the EBU has supported counties during the pandemic. Many responders highlighted the following achievements of the EBU: moving to playing online, preparing advice for the future and keeping members engaged and informed. KP highlighted some of the suggestions that were given as part of the survey, with a lot of focus from the responses on increasing membership and teaching.

KP concluded her presentation with planning for the future. The number of players has been decreasing and is likely to continue to do so. We need a drive for new players and teachers, this should be a collaborative effort from the EBU, Counties and Clubs working together.

Richard Evans (RE) (Suffolk) asked about the potential of using RealBridge to help in recruitment and teaching, with ideas for how to appeal to new learners and to link to teaching materials. KP stated that there are very early discussions with RealBridge currently. Kiat Huang (KH) also stated that the English Bridge School could be a nice integration to RealBridge if they were willing.

### **EBED Update (AM)**

AM gave an update from EBED of changes since the last update at the AGM.

AM confirmed that EBED are looking to train more teachers. The training package has been tweaked to incentivise good teachers to get additional help to progress and develop their role, one option being mentoring. The aim is to produce better teachers, not just more teachers.

Online teacher training courses will continue throughout 2021, three have already taken place this year, dates for face to face teacher training will be announced shortly.

AM confirmed EBED did a series of seminar training sessions on RealBridge details how to use the platform to the best advantage for all EBTA teachers. He also talked about the current offering available through the English Bridge School (EBS). EBS also runs online supervised play sessions to support students whose teachers have not been running sessions during lockdown. EBS also run gentle duplicate sessions on RealBridge as an affiliated club, through which they have signed up over 500 new members to the EBU. EBED are about to trial a seminar on 3<sup>rd</sup> June at the end of the gentle duplicate sessions, aimed at the same audience.

EBED have been developing some materials for clubs to help them attract social bridge players to join duplicate bridge sessions.

The programme for TD training has been published for face to face training later in 2021; there will also be refresher sessions available.

The Schools Cup was able to take place this year, with over 20 tables. This was a higher turnout than previous years, for which thanks go to Giorgio. EBED are working on a new way of teaching bridge to school students, with an emphasis on learn whilst playing. A new volunteer Youth Officer has been announced.

EBED have had a difficult year financially, with a loss of £100k in the last financial year. The majority of people working at EBED are volunteers, with only three full time equivalents of staff.

AM introduced Lee Guy (LG) as successor to AM. LG gave a brief overview of his bridge playing history and his employment background.

### **Membership Initiatives**

KP thanked her colleagues GW and CF for help in putting the details of the proposed marketing strategy together. KP highlighted some details from the report. The full report can be read below.

The report focused on the primary ambition of the EBU, which is to increase the number of players who play the game of bridge in England. A country wide drive to get new players and teachers is required. This needs to be based on collaboration between the EBU, the counties and clubs. The responses from the county survey show that the majority of responders agree with this ambition. However, financial constraints must be considered.

The report showed that membership grew slightly from 2011 to 2014 and has since plateaued at around 54k members. However, although the number of total members is showing as stable, the number of regular players has been decreasing.

KP had looked at the potential for new players and concluded that there is great potential for new players, but the EBU is constrained by a number of factors, including finances, a bottleneck of teachers, and lack of volunteers. KP noted that online play has made bridge more accessible to new players. Other areas that may benefit from being more accessible are clubs and competitions. Some of these areas are best tackled by the clubs and counties who have more accurate local information. The EBU will approach the details from a national level with nationwide campaigns. Regional campaigns from counties and local campaigns from clubs will also be needed for success.

KP talked about the tools that the EBU currently provide. There are also further ideas in development, including a library of press articles; a library of shareable publicity leaflets, etc. The focus on these services will be making them collaborative, shareable and useable for all clubs and

counties. Communication will be key in implementing these new ideas and a communication sub-committee has been set up, with the first meetings already having taken place.

KP concluded on a positive note, saying that while it will take hard work, the plans are being implemented and she asked for any feedback. The key to success in this operation is collaboration between the national body, counties, clubs, members and teachers. There has to be buy-in, and each set of stakeholders needs to work with other sets to achieve the end – more players.

RM proposed regional development officers to help facilitate membership campaigns locally. The roles will be part time and paid, with costs covered by additional session receipts that they gain. RM notes that each county had been sent a monthly analysis of session data and membership activity in their areas, it is hoped this will encourage counties to target failing areas within their county. It is hoped this information will be provided every three months.

RM proposed a labour exchange for teachers, to help match clubs with teachers, this will involve collaboration with EBED. RM also encouraged counties to sign up students to the EBU as soon as possible in their lessons.

RM gave three suggestions for membership development: new varieties of bridge competitions to allow less skilled players to become involved in play; an organised effort to encourage non-active members to return to play; and developing online teaching, possibly following the example of the Yorkshire development method.

1hr37.04 (break) 1hr49.16

There followed a discussion about membership.

Ian Sedgwick (IS) (Gloucestershire) expressed interest in the Yorkshire method and implementing it in Gloucestershire. He asked about the costs and the tutorial role within the clubs. Lesley Millet (LM) (Yorkshire) confirmed that from a treasury perspective, the costs were minimal. IS asked for an information pack to be sent to clubs to help with implementation of membership recruitment. Cath Fox (CF) stated that a toolkit is being developed following the Yorkshire method, with the intention of sending it to clubs. All future initiatives should have a reusable and shareable toolkit.

Norman Inniss (NI) (Kent) expressed concern about returning to face to face. He suggested teacher training will be better suited remaining online, at least partially. IP agreed that a two-pronged approach will be needed.

### **Re-Opening (RL)**

RL had circulated papers prior to the meeting. He said it was heartening to hear so many of the same messages repeated, as this shows the board are all on the same page.

RL described the background and rationale of the current work with competitions. The competitions sub-committee had met numerous times since its inception at the start of the year. The work by the sub-committee is expected to continue into the next year and beyond, with consultation of counties and clubs throughout.

RL noted that following the survival of lockdown a review of competition strategy was undertaken, with a plan for the next few years. He stated that central to the plan is the idea that the EBU should provide an appropriate environment for clubs, counties and members to thrive and advance their play. There is a crowded competitions programme, that was needing review even prior to covid.

RL shared some of the issues and questions for the EBU medium- and long-term plans. One issue is the carbon footprint, for example some meetings and competitions may continue online. Equity and

fairness is also an issue to be considered for competitions. Pricing is another issue that should be considered when making decision about online or face to face competitions. All elements need to be considered for a successful plan.

GR talked about the current EBU national competitions. The first live face to face event will be the Summer Meeting in Eastbourne. The venue is flexible with our booking and will only charge for space used. The date of the competition is also a few months after the proposed easing of lockdown and therefore is more likely to go ahead. GR stated that this does not mean that clubs or counties need to wait until August to hold their own face to face events.

Following the Summer Meeting, it is planned that future national events will return to face to face, with the exception of the Tollemache Qualifier. There will not be a Blackpool Year End Congress this year. Instead, the London Year End will include some online hybrid events.

The Corwen and Pachabo events will run online in June. Feedback will be requested from entrants to help determine if future events will also be held online.

GR highlighted the advice and information available to clubs on the EBU website. He confirmed this is advice only and is not a set of rules for clubs to follow.

GR asked for any questions from those present.

Alan Mould (AM) (Manchester) asked about knockout matches, how it should be decided if these are to be played online or face to face. GR advised that at present online play should be the default, unless agreed otherwise, but that this may change in future.

Paul Gibbons (PG) (Kent) talked about competitions for lower ranked players, for example the successful 9 high events run by Kent. RL confirmed that these competitions will be included as part of the competitions strategy.

Jeffrey Smith (JS) (Manchester) asked with the decline of the entrants in the Lockdown League, how long will this event continue. GR noted that the current decline in entrants was expected and there is no need yet to change the event format.

IP thanked everyone for attending and advised that all questions and comments will be taken into consideration.

The meeting finished at 15:38.



# County Survey Results

May 2021



# *Survey – Discussion Agenda*

1. Responses and County Membership
2. Future Expectations
3. Pandemic
4. Successful Strategies Deployed
5. What Counties Value in the EBU
6. Successful Clubs
7. Main Conclusions





# County Survey Results

Responses and County Membership



# Survey Responses

- Sent to all 39 counties; 35 replies
- Representing:
  - 618 Affiliated Clubs (excluding EBU, Miscellaneous, and Counties)
  - 55,975 Members (based on member primary allegiance)

Note: some responses too late to be included in this presentation

*Excellent response providing a good understanding of views*



# Club Affiliation and County Membership

## Club Affiliation

- Total c.50% of clubs are affiliated.
- In Berks & Bucks c.85% of clubs are affiliated
- In Merseyside c.25% of clubs are affiliated

## Membership

- Average members per county: 1,435
- Average members per club: 90
- Smallest County (Isle of Man) 99 primary members
- Largest County (Surrey) 5,748 primary members
- Population to membership ratio 4 to 32 (per 10,000) (ignoring Channel Islands 232)
- Recent member growth (2015 to 2020) + 94 (Oxfordshire) to - 26

### Notes:

- Some differences between counties are due to boundary variations and clubs shifting allegiance
- History has driven some of the differences in affiliation

*Only 50% of clubs are affiliated;  
Counties have very different affiliation %s and member to population ratios*






# County Survey Results

Expectations for the Future



*Do you expect the number of members in your county to rise or fall in the next 3 years*

	Increase	2
	Decrease	16
	Stay roughly the same	19



*We should expect a decrease in membership .. But some counties are bucking the trend (Kent and Suffolk expect growth)*



# How bridge is changing...

Definitely Possibly Maybe No

There is an urgent need to recruit the next generation of Bridge players.

On-line Bridge is here to stay.

Weekday evenings and afternoons are the preferred times to play

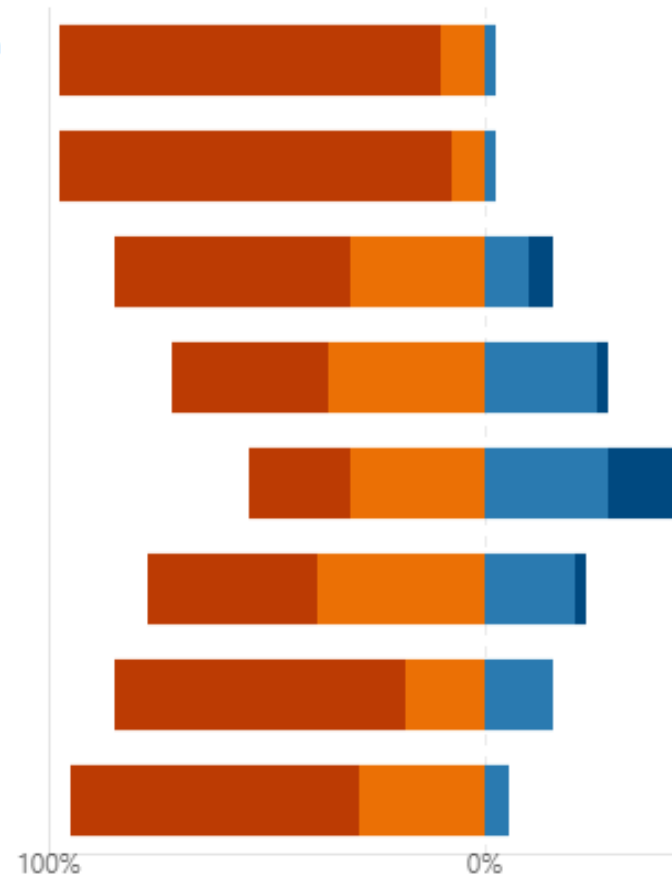
Some players enjoy playing against standards better than their own

Players of all levels would like to play for their county against similar level players

A teacher recruitment drive is needed

More club and county volunteers are needed

Players enjoy playing against those who are a similar standard to themselves.



- 89%: on-line is here to stay
- 87%: an urgent need to recruit new bridge players
- 66% say more volunteers are needed
- Only 38% think a teacher recruitment drive is definitely needed though only 2.5% say it isn't necessary at all
- Players mostly like to play with their own standard
- Some enjoy playing against better players
- More than half think there is a demand for inter-county play at a lower level
- Most prefer to play weekday afternoons or evenings

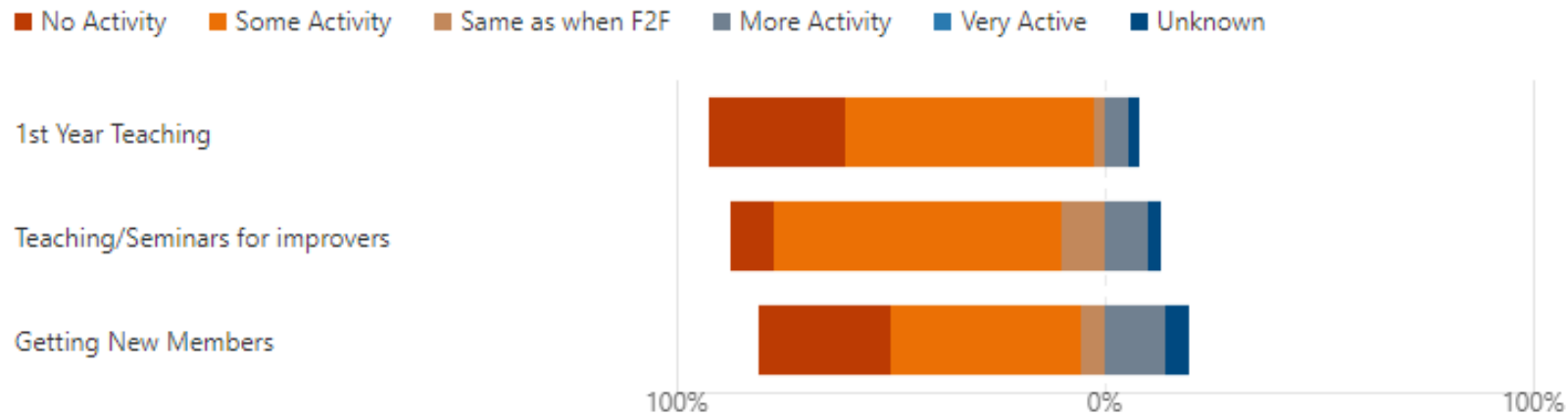


# County Survey Results

## PANDEMIC

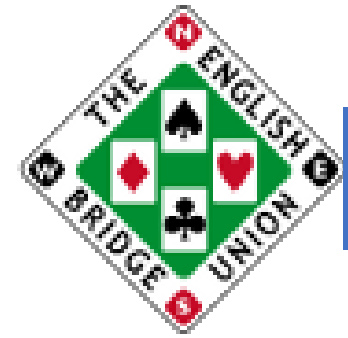


# How Did Clubs Perform in the Pandemic



- *Over 30% offered no first-year teaching during the pandemic. Only 5% of respondents saw an increase.*
- *Just over 10% offered no improvers teaching during the pandemic but around 10% increased improver teaching.*
- *About 30% did no new player recruitment during the pandemic. Around 13% increased efforts to get new members.*





# How Did Clubs Perform in the Pandemic

## Question:

*Number of Active Affiliated Clubs (running on-line/F2F sessions) in April 2021 compared to in February 2020*

More than 75%	6
More than half	15
Less than half	14
Less than 25%	4
Difficult to say	0



*c.50% of affiliated clubs are playing on-line in April 2021 vs F2F in February 2020*

*c. 80% of players are playing in 50% of clubs*



# *How many Clubs Will Not Reopen?*

● Less than 5%	4
● Less than 20%	24
● Less than 50%	7
● More than 50%	2



*9 counties are expecting over 20% of Bridge Clubs to not re-open by the end of this year*

*(Somerset, Kent, Nottingham, Derbyshire, Surrey, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Suffolk & Leicestershire)*

*A significant number of our 618 clubs not re-opening/potentially closing this year*

*(Assuming that those who have not replied are roughly on a par with those that have)*



## *Statistics during the pandemic*

- April 2019 vs April 2021

Year Month	Total Sessions	Max Unique Players
April 2019	178,701	36,358
April 2021	146,680	20,701
April 2019 vs 2021	<u>82%</u>	<u>57%</u>



# County Survey Results

Successful Strategies Shared



# *Successful Strategies to recruit new learners*

Posters + Newspaper stories + Social media + tasters + word of mouth → new players

If we increase the velocity of publicity and make it easy, we will find people who want to play bridge

Good Teachers have a very loyal following.

Off-line	On-line	Word of Mouth
Local Newspaper press releases Town/Church/Local Magazines Library/Church/Local Noticeboards Playing in public places with sign up	Facebook advertising Website Publicising on other web sites E-mail communications	Taster sessions Learn in a weekend Recommendations Free introductions Tell your friends Bridge creates friendships that create demand



## *Successful strategies to teach new learners and existing players*

Play + Seminars + Competitions + Social Events = new members + member retention

Website with everything going on helps!

Help everyone enjoy the game!

Beginner	Improver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Beginner Lessons (staggered calendar)</li><li>Beginner Seminars (on/off line)</li><li>Supervised Play</li><li>Hand Reviews (on/off line)</li><li>Fun competitions</li><li>Social bridge events</li><li>Online lounges to just play</li><li>Weekend bridge holidays</li><li>Make it fun</li><li>Charity Events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improver lessons</li><li>On/Off-line Improver Seminars</li><li>On/off-line Hand Reviews</li><li>Inter-county competitions</li><li>Themed play to learn a convention</li><li>Teach/Play/Discuss</li><li>Coaching</li><li>Mentoring</li><li>Banded NGS Events e.g. &lt; 9</li><li>Weekend bridge holidays</li></ul>



# County Survey Results

What You Value in the EBU



# *What you value in the EBU...*

## **National Body**

- Provides National face of Bridge
- Respected Governing Body
- Guardian of Bridge's reputation (esp re cheating)
- Handling Conduct Issues
- "Run" Bridge

## **Competitions**

- Co-ordinate National games where county is not big enough
- Run national competitions for different levels of players
- NGS & MasterPoint systems
- Green Point Events
- The Annual Calendar of Events

## **Promotion**

- Runs Social Media and Media campaigns

## **Teaching**

- Works with EBED to provide TD and Teacher training

## **Services: Members, Clubs and Counties**

- Wealth of information via its web site
- MyEBU for members, clubs and counties.
- Provides email and Zoom updates
- Provides Member Services
- Provides Club support
- Provides County support
- Shares success stories across the regions

*A similar survey 2 years ago showed that the value of the EBU was not so well understood  
The pandemic crisis has underlined the value of the EBU*



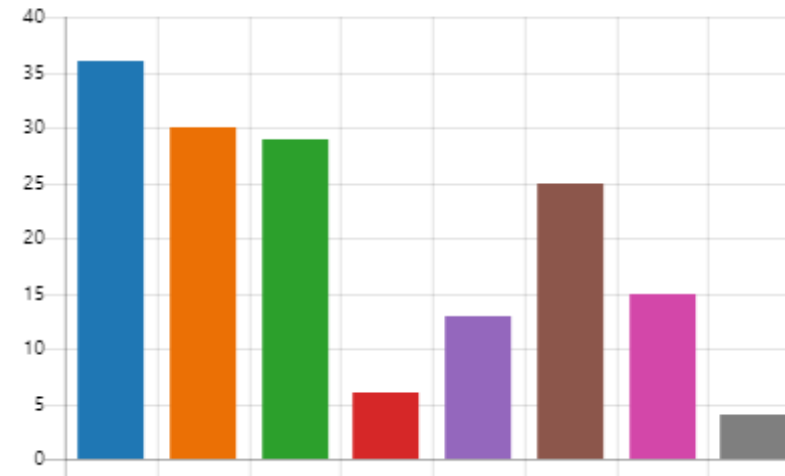


# How has the EBU Supported You In the Pandemic?

13. How has the EBU supported you during the Pandemic (tick all that apply)

[More Details](#)

	Moving play to on-line	36
	Providing advice for the future...	30
	Keeping Members engaged w...	29
	Engaging non-members in cas...	6
	Providing telephone support/...	13
	Holding Zoom meetings for C...	25
	Regular e-mail support	15
	Other	4



- *A huge thanks to Jonathan and team for helping the clubs move on-line - mentioned by many counties!*
- *In the crisis the EBU and its staff stepped up and were there to support clubs and counties*

- *Several unaffiliated clubs have affiliated as a result of the Pandemic.*
- *The EBU achieved this in a climate of significantly reduced revenues and staff cut backs.*



# *Suggestions – a selection...*

## **Increase Membership and Teaching:**

- Bold initiatives are required to recruit and teach new players. There are some great examples in some counties. EBU Board needs to select and propagate.
- More advertisements promoting the benefits of learning to play bridge.
- More is needed to advertise the game and get beginners interested.
- National efforts with juniors, when school bridge has almost died. Maybe a nationally-coordinated campaign to attract teachers and new players?
- More social media presence + use of influencers to reach and attract the young
- EBU needs to take this opportunity to rebrand bridge as an exciting online game for young people.
- A second level of club membership might help bring unaffiliated clubs on board.
- Teaching, teaching, teaching.
- We need a strategy to get more new players. To facilitate that we need a publicity campaign and more teachers, and a way to fund both of those.

## **Competitions and Playing**

- Develop a free of charge How to Play Bridge primer to introduce more new players to the game.
- Do not exclude non-members from EBU events and to downgrade master point allocations for events that include non-members.
- Reduce the P2P amount. It is crippling our online games.
- Look closer at Green Point events, the cost of actual green points and making events double session are reducing numbers in some areas.
- More support ideas and advice about running successful events online.
- More support for counties to run things on RealBridge for those who like the social element of the game.
- Advice on providing competitions for less experienced players.
- Be more thoughtful when scheduling major tournaments and competitions.

## **Communication and Approach**

- EBU tends to be too formal and bureaucratic. Need to take a more relaxed pragmatic approach.
- Maybe a Zoom seminar on how to organize post-Covid club nights.
- Sharing of best practice from around the county in a user-friendly format.



# County Survey Results

Successful Clubs



*A selection of Clubs you told us are doing a really good job:*

- Highgate Golf Club Bridge Club
- Fivehead Bridge Club
- Axe Bridge Club
- East Midland Bridge Club
- **South Bucks Bridge Club**
- Caterham Bridge Club
- Dorking Bridge Club
- **Bawburgh Bridge Club**
- Corsham Bridge Club
- Marlborough Bridge Club
- Newcastle Bridge Club
- **Cheltenham Bridge Club**
- Ashby Bridge Club
- Grantham Bridge Club
- Ross Bridge Club
- Chelmsford Bridge Club
- **Deva Bridge Club**
- Warrington Bridge Club
- Manchester Bridge Club
- Cambridge Bridge Club
- Hitchin Bridge Club
- **Watford & Bushey Bridge Club**
- **Leeds Bridge Club**
- **Wetherby Bridge Club**
- Ilkley Bridge Club
- Ripon Bridge Club
- **Sheffield Bridge Club**
- Hull Bridge Club
- **Stamford Bridge Club**
- **Wallingford Bridge Club**
- **Welwyn Garden City Bridge Club**
- Trowbridge Bridge Club
- Chippenham Bridge Club
- **Bolton Bridge Club**
- **Southport Bridge Club**
- Ipswich & Kesgrave Bridge Club
- **Scunthorpe Bridge Club**
- **County Bridge Club**
- ... and more ...

*Red Clubs = Top 50 by  
players 2019/2020*

*We will work with these (and other) clubs in  
order to share their successful strategies with  
other clubs & counties.*



# County Survey Results

Key Messages to Counties



# Main Conclusions

- *Online is here to stay. People like it.*
- *The numbers of players has been decreasing over many years*
- *Most counties expect numbers of players to decrease over the next 3 years*
- *Number of active affiliated clubs is expected to significantly decrease*



- *A country-wide drive to get new players and new teachers is required*
- *Based on collaboration between the EBU, Counties and Clubs*
- *We must embrace the online game and find the best ways to incorporate this format of the game to help support counties, clubs & players.*



# *Player Recruitment, Membership & Communications*

New Team:

Gayle Webb (Club Liaison)

[gaylewebb@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gaylewebb@blueyonder.co.uk)

Cath Fox (Marketing/Technology)

[cathfox@btinternet.com](mailto:cathfox@btinternet.com)

Kay Preddy

[kay.preddy@ntlworld.com](mailto:kay.preddy@ntlworld.com)

Assisted by:

Ron Millet – long serving Board member with on-going responsibility for Player Development

*We are keen to work with and learn from Members, Clubs and Counties.*



Thank you !





# Marketing

Player Recruitment, Membership and Communication



# *EBU Marketing Ambitions (draft)*

## Primary ambition:

*Increase the numbers of players who play the game of bridge in England*

## Secondary ambitions:

Ensure the EBU is a respected brand;

Increase the numbers who play bridge under the auspices of the EBU;

Promote the game of bridge in England by ensuring its benefits understood;

Support EBU volunteers at Club and County level to deliver this Marketing Strategy.



## *How to support the Primary ambition*

*To increase the numbers of players who play the game of bridge in England, the EBU considers that:*

1. A country-wide drive to get new players and new teachers is required
2. This should be based on collaboration between the EBU, Counties and Clubs

The responses to the County Survey showed that most of you agree.

We must achieve this within our financial constraints.



# Historic Player Statistics

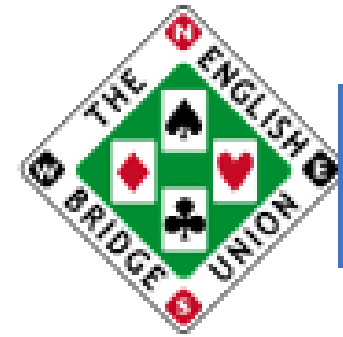
- 1970's
  - tournament players numbered c80,000
  - EBU Membership was 10,000 but membership was optional
  - If Warminster was typical, only a small fraction of players were EBU Members
- 2010 to 2019 player stats remained stable but that masks underlying trends  
.....

Prior to UM (Pay to Play), members of a club chose whether to join the EBU or not. In the Warminster club, there were about 8 - 10 members out of a membership of 60 or so.

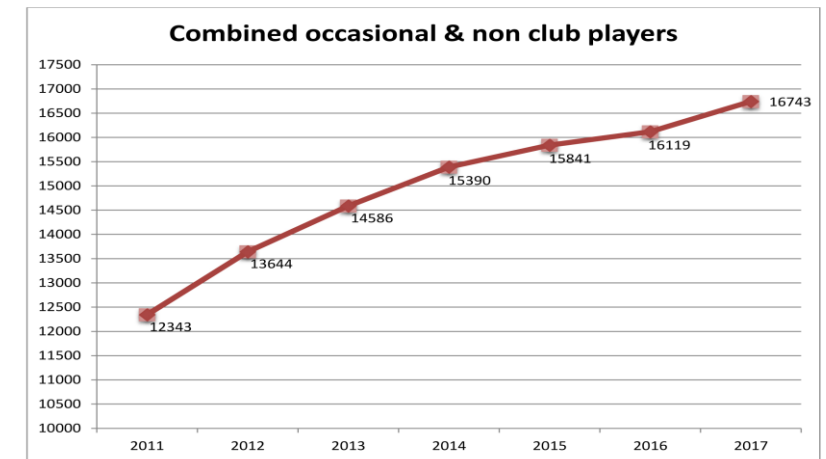
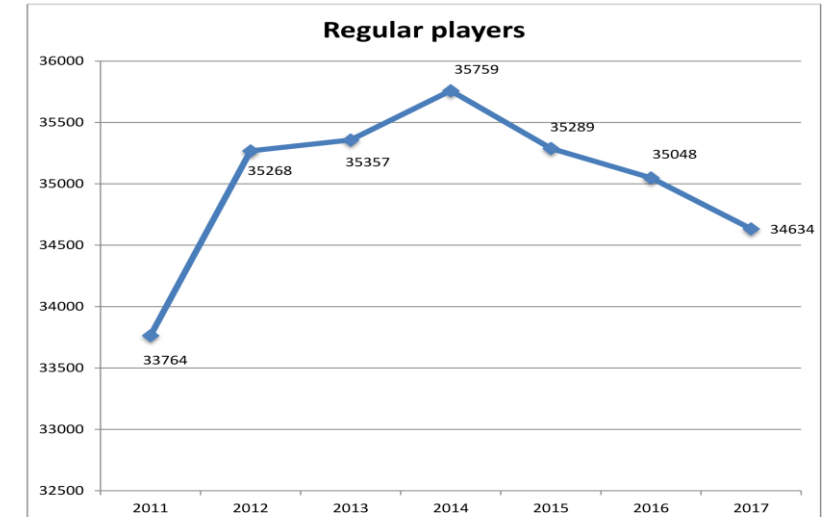
Year Month	Total Sessions	Max Unique Players
April 2010	132,3144	34,778
April 2011	138,3721	35,292
April 2012	139,2054	35,788
April 2013	141,0797	36,076
April 2014	139,7647	35,716
April 2015	139,0519	35,645
April 2016	137,8618	35,284
April 2017	137,6330	35,221
April 2018	137,3731	35,117
April 2019	140,7406	35,477
April 2020	93,9971	34,691

English Bridge Union: Bringing Bridge to Everyone

Note: Recent EBU data taken at slightly different times – there are slight variations



# Recent Trends In Membership



Membership grew marginally from 2011 to 2014 then plateaued.

However:

- 'Non-playing' and occasional members grew absolutely and proportionally.
- Active members declined.

B:

This table shows a combination of members in the UM1 & UM0 (when applicable) categories  
UM1 – 2011-14: Members who played fewer than 12 Club Sessions in the Financial Year  
2015-17: Members who played between 1 and 11 (inclusive) Club Sessions in the Financial Year  
UM0 – 2015-17 only: Members who have not played any Club Sessions in the Financial Year

Engl

Note: Recent EBU data taken at slightly different times – there are slight variations



## *Statistics during the pandemic*

- April 2019 vs April 2021

Year Month	Total Sessions	Max Unique Players
April 2019	178,701	36,358
April 2021	146,680	20,701
April 2019 vs 2021	<u>82%</u>	<u>57%</u>



# *The Potential Audience*





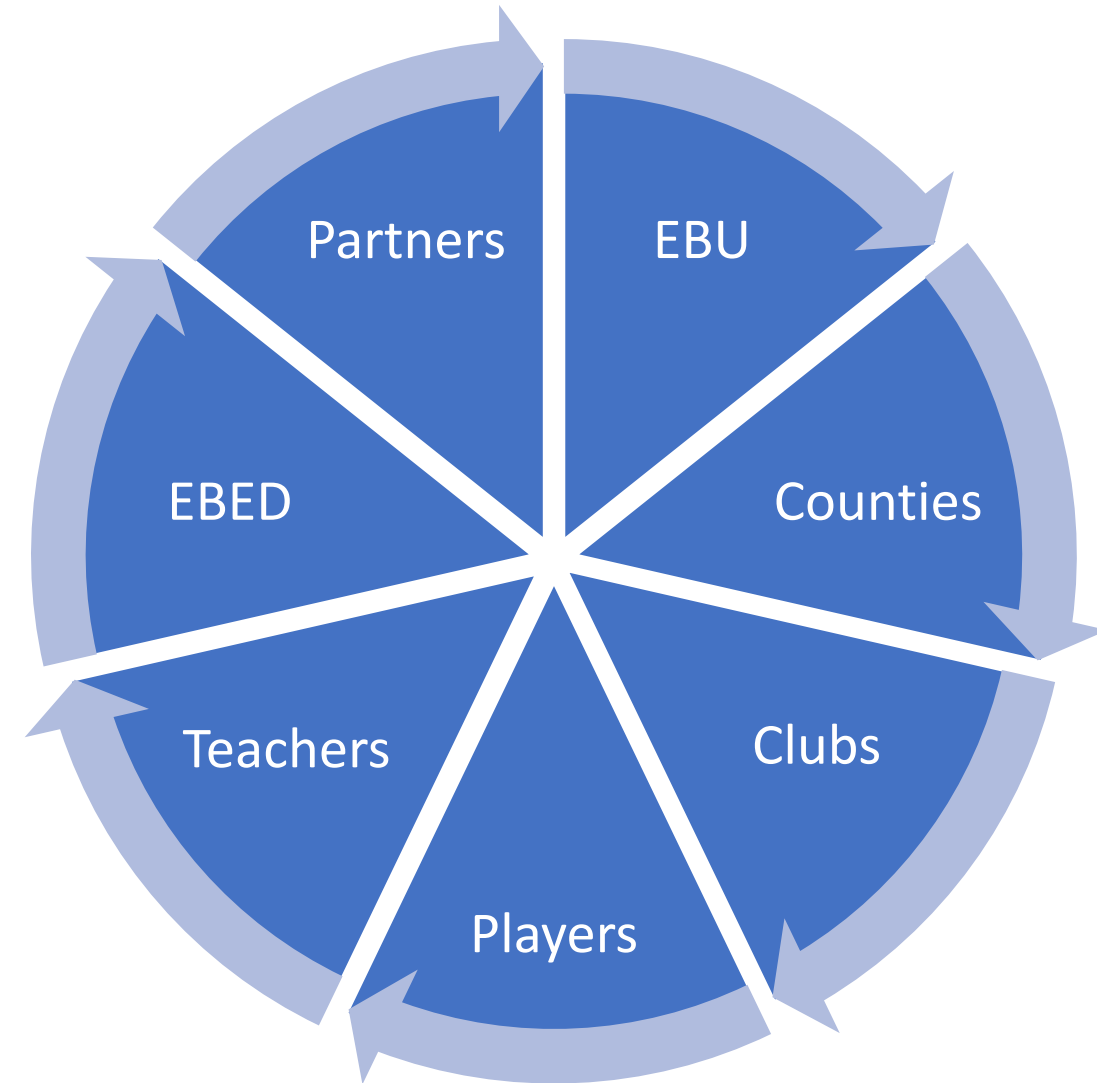
# *Challenges, threats and opportunities ....*

## Finding and retaining more players:

1. Lack of funds
2. Teaching throughput - faster ways to teach
  - Online teaching?
  - Yorkshire initiative?
  - More teachers
  - Other?
3. Making the game (more) accessible
  - 'Just Play' - Easy ways to play immediately that online bridge can provide;
  - Online – coffee lounge etc.
  - Clubs
  - Competitions
4. Accurate information
5. New, non-EBU, opportunities

## More Volunteers:

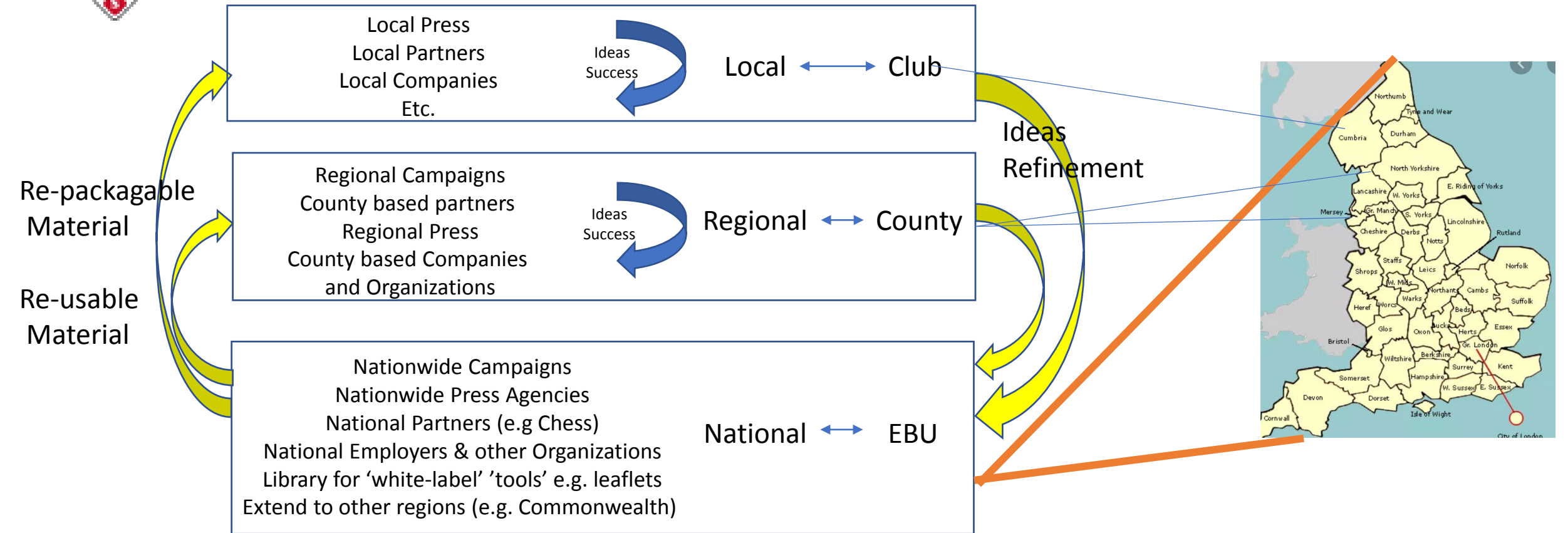
1. How to increase volunteer base
2. How to best harness the talent of our loyal members







# The Approach

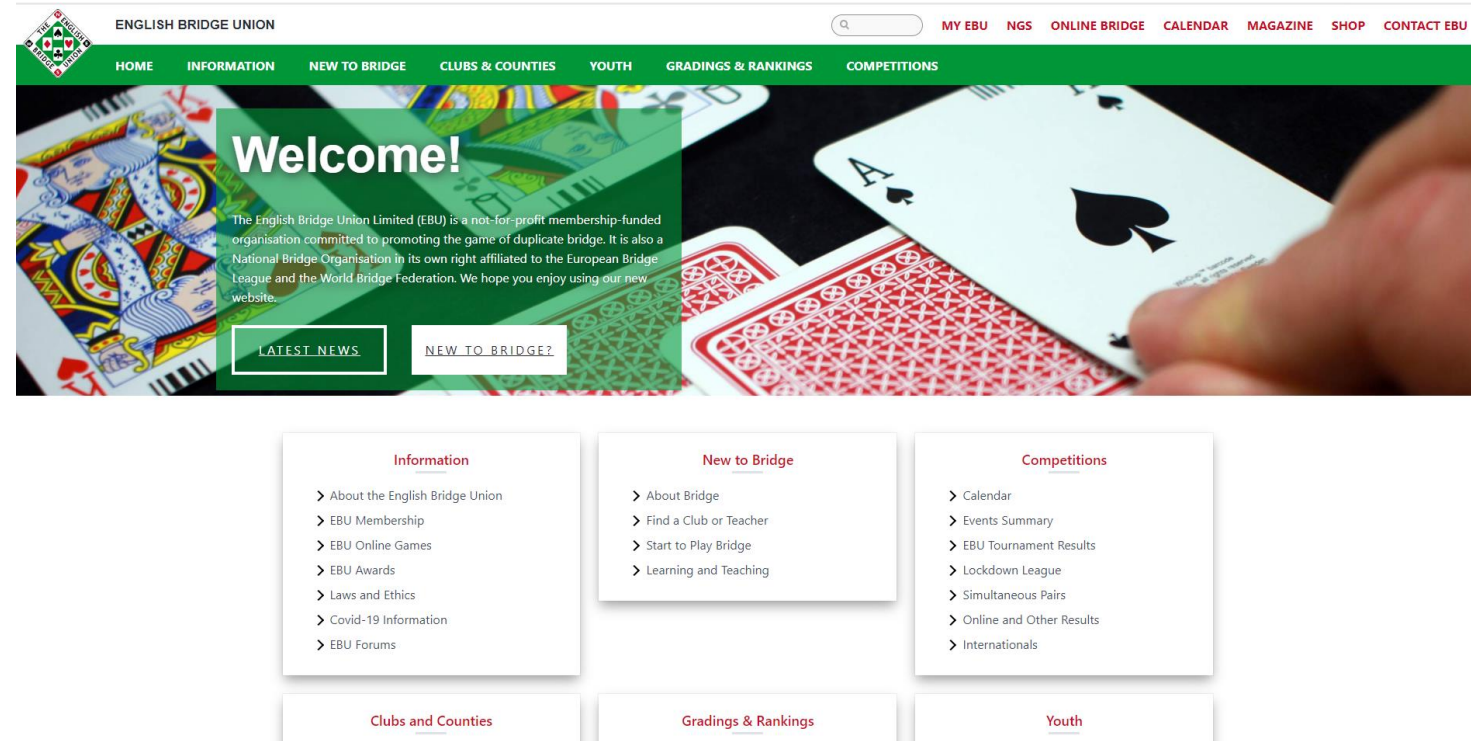


*Collaborative, Re-usable, Joined-up – Communication will be important*

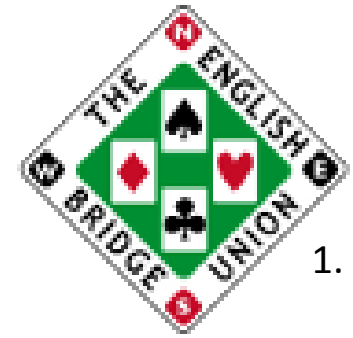


# *What we already provide*

1. NGS
2. MasterPoints
3. Competitions
4. Regulation
5. Teaching (through EBED and others)
6. Telephone and Email Support
7. Comprehensive Web Site with tools (with plans for enhancement)
8. MyEBU
  1. Members
  2. Clubs
  3. Counties
9. Magazine



*Gayle Webb is creating an audit of tools; she (an experienced bridge administrator) was surprised by the richness of what is already available*



# *Ideas In development*

1. Press
  - EBU maintains library of articles that can be 'localised' and bridge columns that can be reused
  - EBU creates relationships with national press agencies to publish bridge columns and articles
  - Counties or Clubs provide information to localise articles
  - Counties engage with local press – use bridge columns and articles
2. Other Publicity
  - EBU maintains 'white label' leaflets
  - Counties and Clubs provide local information
  - Clubs and Counties distribute locally
3. Focused contacts e.g. Retirees, The Services, Work-based, other card players, Schools and more
  - EBU contacts Nationwide
  - Clubs and Counties contacts locally
4. Attracting Non-affiliated Clubs
  - EBU creates a (hopefully) compelling case to join
  - Used locally by Counties
5. Wider than England
  - Consider Commonwealth – white label or EBU
6. Clubs and Counties
  - EBU builds on and extends its existing toolkits
  - Ensures all know of their existence
  - Refine according to needs

*Collaborative, targeted, reusable*

English Bridge Union – To bring bridge to everyone



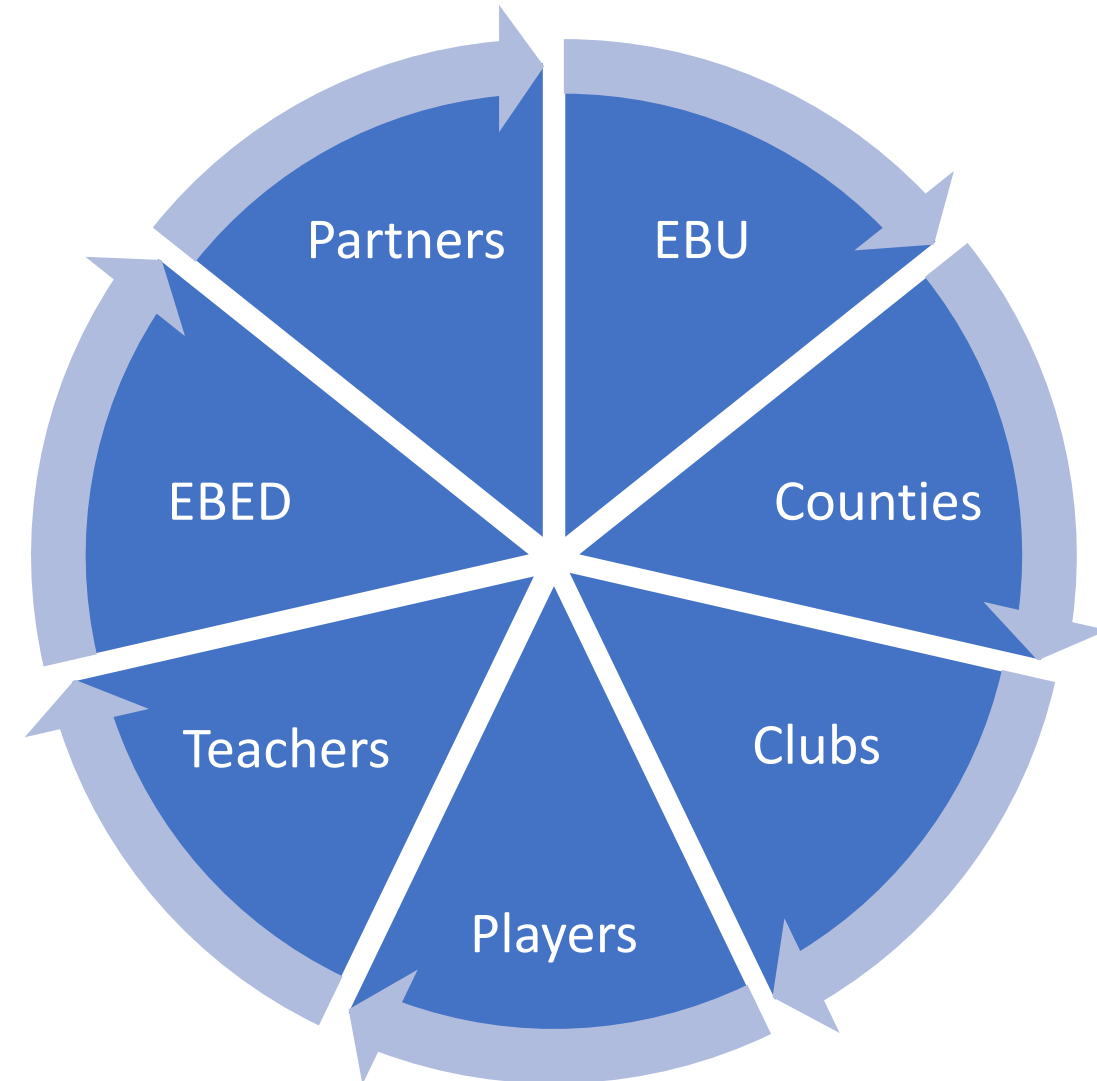
# Communication & Collaboration

“Internal” Communication & Collaboration (is and) will be critical to success

- Gayle Webb (Club Liaison) and Patrick Shields (County Liaison) are working with clubs and counties to find the best ways to communicate effectively
- Working group is established
- Expect more focused communication
- ... more to follow when the group has progressed ideas

“External” Communication & Collaboration will increase our success

- Teaching Partners
- Bridge Partners (Other NBOs etc.)
- Technology Partners
- Other Partners





# *Future*

Possibly the most exciting time and biggest opportunity for Bridge

It's down to us to take the moment

The future is now!





# We have a lot to do!

Please contact us with your ideas, your news and your constructive criticism.

Your feedback and patience very much appreciated.



# Player Recruitment, Membership & Communications

## New Team:

Gayle Webb (Club Liaison)

[gaylewebb@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gaylewebb@blueyonder.co.uk)

Cath Fox (Marketing/Technology)

[cathfox@btinternet.com](mailto:cathfox@btinternet.com)

Kay Preddy

[kay.preddy@ntlworld.com](mailto:kay.preddy@ntlworld.com)

## Assisted by:

Ron Millet – long serving board member with on-going responsibility for Player Development

We are keen to work with and learn from Members, Clubs and Counties.