



CHARITABLE STATUS FOR ENGLISH BRIDGE CLUB

The Charity Commission has recently made the ground-breaking decision to award charitable status to a bridge club in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The Charity Commission stated that: "sport has often been used to advance charitable aims but, following a change in the law introduced by the Charities Act 2006, it is now charitable to advance amateur sports or games, which promote health by involving physical or mental skill or exertion."

The charitable purposes of Hitchin Bridge Club are :

- The advancement of amateur sport by promoting the game of bridge for the benefit of the residents of Hitchin and the surrounding area.
- The provision of facilities for the learning, teaching and playing of bridge for the benefit of the residents of Hitchin and the surrounding area with the object of improving conditions of life.

Hitchin Bridge Club was recognised as being established for exclusively charitable aims for the public benefit in advancing amateur sport and providing recreational facilities. The club was registered as charity number 1140362.

Recent research has proven that undertaking regular mental activity such as playing bridge can significantly lower the risk of developing forms of dementia in our older population¹. Additionally, research shows that social interaction amongst the elderly can stave off cognitive decline. Playing bridge has also been proven to benefit school pupils, not only in their education but in later years when they have more time available for a leisure pursuit. The game provides both high level mental stimulation and social engagement.

The President and founder of Hitchin Bridge Club, Mrs Margaret Eddleston said: "I am really pleased about the decision of the Charity Commission. The club wishes to help more people learn to play bridge and to reap the benefits from regular mental stimulation and companionship it provides. Recognition that bridge is a sport of the mind and its importance to the mental health and well being of players by the Charity Commission is very welcome. With the benefit of charitable status the club can now concentrate on providing a new community building for the residents of Hitchin which will provide modern facilities for playing the sport and a wide range of other community activities".

The bridge club is affiliated to the English Bridge Union.

Notes:

1 - see Annals of Internal Medicine, American College of Physicians and the Washington Post, 2003 reporting on: Verghese, J. 2003. The effects of mind games on Alzheimer's and dementia. Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, USA.

Press:

For further information, please contact **Matt Betts**, the EBU's press and communications officer, on **01296 317 200** or by email Matt@ebu.co.uk.

About Hitchin Bridge Club:

The club started in 2000 with only a handful of bridge players. In 2005, it became affiliated to the EBU. It successfully obtained a lottery grant in 2007 to purchase a Dealer4 card dealing machine and associated equipment. In February 2011 it became the first bridge club to obtain charitable status and is now a charitable company limited by guarantee. The club currently plays two evenings a week but is hoping to increase this. Membership is approximately 125 and the club is proposing to build a new club house and community centre to replace the current hired hall, which is due to be demolished in the next 2 years. See: www.hitchinbridgeclub.org.uk/

Charity Commission:

The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. See www.charitycommission.gov.uk for further information or call the contact centre on 0845 300 0218. As of 28 February 2011, the Charity Commission is opening a [public consultation on the advancement of amateur sport as a charitable aim](#). **Rosie Chapman, at the Charity Commission, said:** "For years, sporting activities have been used to further a wide variety of charitable aims, for example to advance the physical education of young people or to relieve disability or the effects of old age. Now that advancing amateur sports or games is in itself a charitable aim we want, with the help of the sector, to explore what that means. We are particularly interested in hearing views on what types of sport or game which involve mental, as opposed to physical, exertion might be capable of being charitable. We are also publishing reports on our final public benefit assessments, which looked at sport and recreation charities." See full press release [here](#).

What is Bridge?

Bridge is a trick-taking card game of skill and chance. It is played by four players who form two partnerships (sides); the partners sit opposite each other at a table. The game consists of the auction (often called bidding) and play, after which the hand is scored. Further information on the EBU and bridge can be found on the Media section of our website, please view [here](#).

Who Plays Bridge?

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, tennis legend Martina Navratilova, actor Omar Sharif and the world's top investor, Warren Buffett...to name just four. In this country an estimated 150,000 people play bridge regularly in hundreds of clubs in cities, towns and villages up and down the land.

About the English Bridge Union

The English Bridge Union was formed on 23 May 1936 and is a non-profit making membership-funded organisation committed to promoting the game of duplicate bridge. It is also a National Bridge Organisation in its own right affiliated to the European Bridge League and the World Bridge Federation. New players are the lifeblood of the game and the EBU are keen to encourage them. For more information on the English Bridge Union please visit: <http://www.ebu.co.uk/media/pressresources.htm>