



THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION  
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For immediate release

## **Date set for Judicial Review into whether bridge is a sport**

The English Bridge Union (EBU) has learnt that the Judicial Review to hear arguments that bridge should be considered to be a sport has been scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September. In April Mr Justice Mostyn ruled at the High Court in favour of the Judicial Review taking place.

The EBU sought the Judicial Review after Sport England refused to recognise bridge as a sport, a position which the EBU believes to be inconsistent with both the wishes of Parliament, and the opinion of significant international sporting organisations. When ruling on what constituted a 'sport' in the 2011 Charities Act, Parliament specifically included 'mind sports', stating that sport comprised "activities which promote health involving physical or mental skill or exertion". As bridge is one of five activities recognised as a mind sport by Sport Accord <sup>(1)</sup>, requires undoubted levels of mental skill, and has known health benefits, it is covered by this definition, yet Sport England chooses to use a definition which the EBU believes to be antiquated – the 1992 European Sport Charter. The EBU is seeking to address this inconsistency in the application of the apparent wishes of Parliament, and a move towards a more modern and inclusive interpretation of the definition of 'sport'.

The stance taken by Sport England in refusing to recognise bridge as a sport is also at odds with the position taken by the International Olympic Committee, Sport Accord, the European Union, and a number of European Countries. In May the organising committee for the 2020 Olympic Games approached a number of sporting federations, asking them to submit an application to be considered to be one of the sports included in the Tokyo games, and specifically invited the World Bridge Federation to apply, further cementing bridge as a sport in the eyes of the sporting world <sup>(2)</sup>.

The EBU believes that playing bridge has a number of benefits to society, and by being recognised as a sport this will offer greater opportunities for the public to be exposed to these benefits. Playing bridge has helped improve learning and academic performance in children, and has proven cognitive benefits in older people <sup>(3)</sup>. The social benefits for those groups are also well recognised, particularly combating problems of isolation in older people. As well as the increased exposure that the status of 'sport' would afford to bridge, it would also enable funding opportunities to support the activity at all levels, particularly at grassroots and junior levels.

1 - Sport Accord is the international union for Olympic and non-Olympic sports.

2- <http://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1027259/application-process-officially-opens-for-new-sports-chasing-tokyo-2020-olympic-participation>

3 - Bridge is seen as an excellent way of improving mental acuity and delaying the onset of dementia, and the social and partnership aspects of bridge are of great benefit to those who may otherwise become isolated (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.; Participation in cognitively-stimulating activities is associated with brain structure and cognitive function in preclinical Alzheimer's disease, Schultz et al, 2014

<http://www.brainmap.wisc.edu/system/pubfiles/153/original/SchultzLarsonEtal2014.pdf?1430171907>)

## **What is Bridge?**

Bridge is a card-based mind sport, played in pairs against other pairs (the pairs are sometimes combined into teams of four or eight); The partners sit opposite each other at a table. There is an auction (often called bidding) and then the play, after which the hand is scored. The more tricks a partnership correctly predicts they will make the better their score - but if they do not make as many as they predict their opponents score points instead. In competitions the same hands are played at each table so you can compare your scores with the other partnerships and work out who did best with what they were dealt, thus almost eliminating the 'luck' aspect that exists in card games such as poker.

Playing bridge is one of the most enduring and popular pastimes in the world and for over 100 years it has fascinated people of all types and from all walks of life. It is one of the most popular leisure activities in Britain, with around 300,000 people playing on a regular basis. Famous players include Bill Gates, Omar Sharif, Martina Navratilova and members of the band Radiohead.

## **About the English Bridge Union**

The English Bridge Union (EBU) 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, affiliated to the European Bridge League and the World Bridge Federation.

The national headquarters of the EBU are in Aylesbury where around 20 professional people support and advise the committees, serve the membership, and help implement policy.