

GOSPORT BRIDGE CLUB, TITCHFIELD BRIDGE CLUB, SOUTHSEA BRIDGE CLUB, LOCKSWOOD BRIDGE CLUB AND PORTCHESTER BRIDGE CLUB COMMITTEES' COLLECTIVE VIEWS ON THE EFFECTS OF THE EBU STRATEGY PROPOSALS ON THEIR CLUBS AND MEMBERS.

1. **Introduction.** Due to the very short time frame imposed on us by the Inter-County Meeting on 1st August 2007, it has not been possible to consult our entire Club Memberships. However, informal contacts with some members have been possible and this paper is the considered response of six Bridge Club Committees and takes into account those member's views. The EBU Strategy documents and this response will be put to our Clubs' Membership at AGMs or Extraordinary AGMs as appropriate and any consensus views from the full membership that are radically different from those in this response will be communicated immediately to both the EBU General Manager and the Chairman of the HIWCBA. To aid our Member's in their deliberations, a copy of the EBU Proposals and this response will be displayed on our Club Web Sites and Club Notice Boards with immediate effect.

2. **General.** The EBU proposals have combined measures to 'Invigorate' Clubs with a major change to EBU Funding arrangements. We all consider that to be a mistake and a better approach to be to implement measures to 'invigorate the club scene' first and only then consider re-organising funding arrangements because:

- a. The first priority must be to 'Invigorate the Club scene and make it more appealing. Any EBU Funding Proposals will founder if that is unsuccessful.
- b. Funding changes can hardly be deemed 'Invigorating' to Clubs and any opposition to them will distract Club Members from the need to make the Club scene more appealing.

3. **New Services for Revitalising Clubs.** Comment on the proposed new services for EBU members is at ANNEX A. Many we already enjoy but the free weekly on-line game, Club Forum and increased EBU Shop discounts are good ideas. However, EBU Members who wish to take advantage of many of the 'New' EBU Services will require a computer and modem. A high percentage of our members have neither and would be unable to enjoy most of the proposed additional EBU services. Additionally, every Club would have to invest in a Club computer or have guaranteed access to one or more member's computers if these proposals are implemented. Some suggestions of other services the EBU could introduce which would enhance the package are:

- a. **An On-Line Members site** where members could post problems in bidding, play or general interest matters. We think the EBU would discover a lot of new contributors, pundits and new material if they did and, of course, their own experts would retain significant input.
- b. **Enhance CASS.** CASS is an excellent program but it could be expanded – see ANNEX A, Para 2 for some improvements that would be welcomed by GBC.
- c. **Encourage younger Members to join the EBU.** Post school and University, prospective Bridge players work and the only time they can attend Bridge Classes is in the evenings. Our experience of Bridge Classes during the day is very positive but a very large workload falls on the teacher. We would propose that the EBU becomes much more pro-active in this area and:
 - (1). Approaches all education Authorities that run Evening Classes urging them to have both Bridge Beginner and Improver Courses.
 - (2). Asks Clubs to run such courses on a Club non-Bridge night so that the workload can be shared by a small team, partners provided for beginners, etc.
 - (3). Puts together a standard support pack of cards, a simple system convention card and explanatory sheets, bidding boxes and Lesson Plans. LEAs would probably contribute most of the cost of these.

d. **Institute an on-line teaching site** where members can be taught Bridge skills such as Systems – eg. Standard English and Precision – and card play interactively. The EBU has the experts to put together such courses.

4. **Financial Effects.**

a. **Club.** A detailed estimate of the financial effects that the EBU Proposals will have on our Clubs and our members is at ANNEX B. It takes account of multiple Club Membership and an estimated 10p difference in P2P charges between EBU and Non-EBU Members. Clubs and their Members' total annual payments are expected to increase substantially with the bulk, but not all, of that increase

being borne by the Non-EBU Membership. Clubs would also collect an initial fee of £5 for each new EBU member and remit it to the EBU. To make the new EBU proposals revenue neutral for our Clubs, **either**:

(1). **Table money would have to increase** by the EBU estimate of £0.30 per session for EBU members and by a larger, indeterminate amount for non-EBU members. Two further Table Money rates will be required for EBU Member and non-EBU member visitors. It is impractical to collect, check and account for four different amounts of Table Money at each Bridge Session. Additionally, how will a Club know whether a visitor is an EBU member? Clubs have to know at the time Table money is collected. It is not sufficient to be told later by the EBU when they send Clubs a bill. Issue of an EBU Membership Card could solve that, but is not mentioned in the EBU Proposal. In addition, Titchfield Bridge Club only charges its members an annual fee, so this option is not available to them. **Or:**

(2). **Members Subscriptions would have to increase.** Our Club Membership fees would have to increase by about £7 to £10 for all members. However, Club EBU members would then be subsidising the non-EBU members. To take that into account, EBU member's subscriptions would have to increase by about £3 and non-EBU Member Subscriptions by about £13, a very large difference. If we did that our non-EBU members would just leave. If we then told them that, if they paid the EBU a £5 joining fee, the increase would only be £3 they would consider that their freedom of choice as to whether to be an EBU member or not was being removed, that they were being financially coerced and leave even faster.

b. **EBU.** The EBU appears to have included a large allowance for inflation and contingencies which will raise £115,000 more in revenue from Club members than is currently raised today. They also have significantly underestimated the income that will be generated by the projected initial P2P fee in their proposals. Details are at ANNEX B.

5. **Other Practical Problems.**

a. **Elderly Members of multiple Clubs.** A significant proportion of GBC members are OAPs living alone. Bridge for them is mostly an essential social occasion to meet and have interaction with other human beings. Most of them have no interest in Black MPs or being members of the EBU and many belong to as many as four local Clubs. They will pay a lot more both in P2P and their proportion of the significant increase in each EBU Club Subscription particularly if they are non-EBU members. Our Bridge Clubs will probably lose members due to the increases that the non-EBU Members will have to pay – there are unaffiliated Clubs in the area - and our Clubs rely on such members to be financially solvent. We have already had comments from Club members that we should consider not being affiliated to the EBU. If some of our Clubs did leave the EBU, it is a sadness to say that they might well attract non-EBU members from the local Clubs who remain affiliated.

b. **Leagues.** There is no mention in the EBU Proposals of Bridge Leagues but we presume that P2P will apply. Who will collect this money – District and County – and why should League players pay to play in their own homes? Additionally, a number of local League Team members are not EBU members and we have encouraged them to play in Teams as well as Pairs as an introduction to competitive Bridge. The good work we have done may well be undone by these EBU Funding proposals

c. **Multiple Clubs.** Members of multiple Clubs as opposed to large multi-session single Clubs, get no added value but do get increased costs – It is ridiculous to charge a small club like Southsea with 89 members £125 while charging Young Chelsea with well over 500 members, an affiliation fee of £150. Also Members of multiple Clubs will pay far more - EBU Fees for five single session Clubs total £250; a large club with 5 sessions per week pays £150. We suggest that the EBU abandons this change to Club affiliation Fees for, if it does not, it will find that Clubs like Southsea will unaffiliate.

d. **County Competitions.** If any Hampshire Clubs unaffiliate as a result of these proposals and we are aware of at least two Clubs in our local area that might, County and National

competitions such as the NICKO, HICKO, Cahalan, Solent Trophy and Basingstoke Cup, which are already suffering from a reducing number of entries, will be adversely affected.

e. **Changing the Rules.** Our members are tired of alerting and announcing changes. Our opinion is, the announcing changes are not working, revert to the old alerting procedures and stop changing the rules so frequently.

5. **Summary.**

a. The EBU proposals have combined measures to 'Invigorate' Clubs with a major change to EBU Funding arrangements. Surely, the proper approach is to invigorate the Club Bridge scene first and only when that is achieved, look at funding since funding changes can hardly be deemed 'Invigorating' to Clubs. Also, opposition to funding changes may distract EBU Members from the need to make the Club scene more appealing.

b. The EBU proposals are not complete – e.g. Leagues - and do not seem to have considered how Clubs will implement the new arrangements. This is not straightforward and it will be very difficult for Clubs to sell to their Members. It will also be difficult to sell to Club Committees, as it appears that the EBU is seeking to offload to Clubs administration that they currently carry out.

c. Practical Club problems mean that an increase in Club Subscriptions is, probably, the only sensible method of collecting P2P money. There would be a strong financial incentive for non-EBU members to join the EBU but the impression that many non-EBU members would get is of coercion and a financial 'gun' being held to their heads. Many would just leave and join a non-affiliated Club. We, and probably most affiliated Bridge Clubs, rely on non-EBU members to remain solvent. Any proposal that might reduce Club membership is most unwelcome. Therefore, why not be bold; eliminate Club implementation difficulties by scrapping the EBU Joining fee. Every member of an affiliated club would automatically be an EBU Member and a small increase the P2P fee would cover the cost of new Club members per year. There would be a very large jump in EBU membership and magazine circulation would soar making it more attractive to Advertisers and Sponsors. Note: Money could be saved by sending magazines in bulk to clubs for distribution - a suggestion that has been made in the past by one of our members to the EBU, but ignored, and which is the system the Deutscher Bridge Verband has been using for at least 20 years to distribute their monthly magazine – with Clubs telling the EBU how many they need which will be less than club membership due to two EBU member households and multiple club membership.

d. If any Clubs unaffiliate as a result of these proposals, and that is probable, County and National competition entries will be adversely affected

e. The proposed additional services introduce little that we do not already have and are unlikely to have the dynamic effects anticipated particularly as a computer and modem are required to enjoy many of them. We assess that, for our Clubs, only one will have new beneficial effects (Item 6), five have marginal benefits and eight will have no new beneficial effects. We have proposed additional services that would improve the package but we still anticipate that, rather than gaining Members, the EBU will lose a significant number and that a number of Clubs will un-affiliate if these proposals are introduced as they stand. The current funding arrangements are well known and work. Why do we have to change them now? There may be a sound basis for this but we can find no reasoning in the Proposal covering why we have to change EBU Funding arrangements at an estimated cost to the EBU, Clubs and EBU Members, of £170,000 with no explanation of why it will cost so much. The EBU FAQ states that this cost will be recovered from the EBU Membership but does not specify over what time frame. A more productive use of that money could be to further improve services to Members and Clubs. If that were successful, EBU income would increase substantially. In other words 'Speculate to accumulate'.

f. The EBU forward revenue projections contain a large allowance for inflation and contingencies and a P2P regime is very financially sensitive to any loss of Club membership.

g. The EBU proposals also demonstrate considerable naivety:

(1). What is to stop most of the current EBU Membership not renewing their Membership Subscription for the next two years and then rejoining for £5 saving each of them £40?

(2). What is to stop there being one EBU affiliated Club in a geographical area that all Bridge players who want to retain EBU membership would join and only play there in simultaneous pairs events, etc? Most of their Bridge would actually be played in cheaper, unaffiliated Clubs. They would save money and the only loss would be a few Black LMPs that most players consider have little relevance.

(3). These proposals have highlighted something that four of our five Clubs did not know – Clubs can remain affiliated to the EBU and opt not to issue Local Master Points for some or all of their sessions. Some of our Clubs may exercise that option in the near future.

g. Finally, we are told that P2P is ‘best practise’ in other EU countries. Yet only three examples are given by the EBU and probably the most successful of those countries in terms of Bridge membership as a percentage of population – The Netherlands – has a much smaller Member’s Subscription than the current EBU Membership Fee and no P2P Fee. We suggest that the EBU approach them to discover what they are doing so successfully that we could copy.

6. **Recommendation.** In their current form, we are of the opinion that these EBU proposals are incomplete, not fully researched and will not only not achieve the stated aim of rejuvenating Clubs but will positively drive Clubs to unaffiliate and non- EBU members to leave affiliated Clubs. That is unacceptable to us and, should the EBU proceed with its published proposals in their current form, we would, regretfully, have to formally ask our Memberships if they wish our Clubs to remain affiliated to the EBU. However, we have been informed by the EBU that the existing proposals are likely to be significantly amended as a result of the consultation process. If that does occur, then we will review our recommendation to our members.

Comments on New Services to be provided by the EBU.

1. ***Free rating system software.*** Some of our Clubs already do this by Spreadsheet – e.g. Johnny Hordle Trophy. Free software to do this will save the Club Scorers a little time – about 5 minutes per week.
2. ***Free scoring program.*** This is CASS, which has already been issued by the EBU. It is an excellent program but I understand there is no current plan to develop it further. If Clubs want to organise or score multi-section/session, Swiss Pairs/Swiss Teams or Multi-Teams events or Butler/IMP Score events they will have to invest in a commercial computer scoring program such as Scorebridge or do it by hand. Note: Scorebridge also calculates Handicaps but it is a programme that the GBC Committee has not bought and has limited knowledge of. If the EBU is considering financing an alternative to CASS, we consider that would be a waste of money.
3. ***Free web site hosting on an annual basis.*** We already have free hosting of our web sites.
4. ***Free monthly electronic newsletter - also available to individual members.*** This is a new service. The EBU have issued no details and how much more information it will have than is already available on their web site is unknown.
5. ***Free access to online Club Committee Forum*** This is a new and useful addition to current EBU services. We presume that it will enable Clubs to exchange views with other Clubs and solve problems. In other words a form of on-line chat club that would be cheap to introduce onto the current EBU site.
6. ***Free exclusive online club night once a week*** This is also a new and useful addition to current EBU services. It will provide an additional free Bridge game once per week but access should not be restricted to specific days/times as this may clash with Club Bridge nights. Additionally, there may be server capacity difficulties if large numbers of players try to use this service simultaneously. We hope the EBU has factored that in. We also trust that Members personal details and e-mail addresses will be tightly controlled – an essential requirement. We also note that unlimited free internet access to Bridge games is already available on MSNzone
7. ***Free Club Directors' Handbook.*** We presume that this will be a simplified version of the White Book that is already available on-line at no cost.
8. ***Free Club Managers' Handbook*** There are no details of what this will contain but we seem to be able to manage our Clubs successfully at the moment so it may be of limited value.
9. ***Free service of Club Liaison Officer.*** There are no details of what this officer will do.
10. ***Free computer deals and hand records.*** A new service. Hampshire have already invested in a Duplimate that provides this and commercial scoring programs also provide this service – see 2 above. We doubt that our Clubs will find this service useful.
11. ***Free Club Constitution.*** We have all had a Club Constitution for many years. How useful a 'one-fits-all' constitution will be is debatable.
12. ***Club insurance discounts.*** Of limited value.
13. ***A Club Bridge Shop discount that exceeds that given to individual members.*** A useful asset but it is unlikely to make more than a few, but welcome, Pounds difference each year to us.
14. ***Discounts on club director training.*** Useful, but these courses, we strongly believe, should be free.

ANNEX B

**FINANCIAL EFFECTS ON LOCAL BRIDGE CLUBS AND THE EBU
INCLUDING SPLIT EBU SUBSCRIPTION AND HIGHER NON-EBU MEMBER P2P FEES**

Local Bridge Club Facts, Assumptions and Implications:

1. Master Points cost 38p per certificate and are awarded to the top third of the field, i.e. they cost approximately 13p per player per session.
2. Therefore the cost implications can be derived from a simple calculation of the player sessions represented by each Club's Master Point Certificate expenditure divided by 13p. Knowing Club Membership and the EBU – non-EBU Membership split, the new costs can then be derived for both EBU and non-EBU members and Clubs using the EBU Estimated P2P fee of 43p per player session and an assumed non-EBU P2P fee of 53p.
3. The results for each of our Clubs is below.

Gosport Bridge Club.

| Item | Club | | Individual Club Member | | | | Notes |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| | | | EBU Member (GBC has 45) | | Non-EBU Member (GBC has 34) | | |
| | Old | New | Old | New | Old | New | |
| Affiliation Fee | £24.00 | £50.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £20.50 x 45/2.5. Assumed each Club member is a member of 2 ½ other Clubs. |
| EBU Subs | £0.00 | £0.00 | £369.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Master Points | £304.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | Player sessions = 304/0.13 |
| P2P Fees | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £573.00 | £0.00 | £534.00 | =2,339 |
| Totals | £328.00 | £50.00 | £369.00 | £573.00 | £0.00 | £534.00 (1) | (1) Reduces to £433 if all non-EBU Club Members join |
| Overall Total | Old = £697.00 | | New=£1,157.00 | | | | Annual Increase = £460 |

Titchfield Bridge Club.

| Item | Club | | Individual Club Member | | | | Notes |
|-----------------|---------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| | | | EBU Member (TBC has 43) | | Non-EBU Member (TBC has 38) | | |
| | Old | New | Old | New | Old | New | |
| Affiliation Fee | £24.00 | £75.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £20.50 x 43/2.5. Assumed each Club member is a member of 2 ½ other Clubs. |
| EBU Subs | £0.00 | £0.00 | £353.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Master Points | £450.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | Player sessions = 450/0.13 |
| P2P Fees | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £790.00 | £0.00 | £861.00 | =3,462 |
| Totals | £474.00 | £75.00 | £353.00 | £790.00 | £0.00 | £861.00 (1) | (1) Reduces to £698 if all non-EBU Club Members |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | join |
| Overall Total | Old = £827.00 | | New=£1,726.00 | | | | Annual Increase = £859 |

Lockwood Bridge Club.

| Item | Club | | Individual Club Member | | | | Notes |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------|--|
| | | | EBU Member (LBC has 17) | | Non-EBU Member (LBC has 51) | | |
| | Old | New | Old | New | Old | New | |
| Affiliation Fee | £24.00 | £50.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £20.50 x 17/2.5. Assumed each Club member is also a member of 2 ½ other Clubs. |
| EBU Subs | £0.00 | £0.00 | £139.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Master Points | £270.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | Player sessions = 270/0.13 |
| P2P Fees | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £223.00 | £0.00 | £826.00 | =2,077 |
| Totals | £294.00 | £50.00 | £139.00 | £223.00 | £0.00 | £826.00 (1) | (1) Reduces to £669 if all non-EBU Club Members join |
| Overall Total | Old = £433.00 | | New=£1,099.00 | | | | Annual Increase = £666 |

Portchester Bridge Club.

| Item | Club | | Individual Club Member | | | | Notes |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------|----------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| | | | EBU Member (PBC has 38) | | Non-EBU Member (PBC has 51) | | |
| | Old | New | Old | New | Old | New | |
| Affiliation Fee | £24.00 | £50.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £20.50 x 38/.5. Assumed each Club member is also a member of 2 ½ other Clubs. |
| EBU Subs | £0.00 | £0.00 | £312.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | |
| Master Points | £300.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | Player sessions = 300/0.13 |
| P2P Fees | £0.00 | £0.00 | £0.00 | £424.00 | £0.00 | £701.00 | =2,308 |
| Totals | £324.00 | £50.00 | £312.00 | £424.00 | £0.00 | £701.00 (1) | (1) Reduces to £569 if all non-EBU Club Members join |
| Overall Total | Old = £636.00 | | New=£1,175.00 | | | | Annual Increase = £539 |

Southsea Bridge Club

Southsea Bridge Club estimates that the **Annual increase in their costs will be £700.**

EBU Facts, Assumptions and Implications.

4. From the EBU FAQ 5, the EBU is seeking to raise £750,000 from Club members with P2P to remain revenue neutral. However:
 - a. The actual amount that the EBU estimate will be raised from the EBU Membership is £865,000 because the EBU has built in a large allowance for inflation and contingencies. However, the EBU has informed us that, if the contingency and/or inflation allowance is not required, the initial P2P fee they set will be reduced accordingly.
 - b. The EBU have not included income from County events, £25,000 has been deducted for County master point income in the calculations but P2P at County events will actually raise about £30,000.
 - c. It has been assumed by the EBU that all the current non-EBU Club members will become EBU members. About 50% of Club members are currently not EBU members and no allowance has been made for possible loss of membership or for some Club members remaining non-EBU members. If Clubs lose 10% of their membership as a result of these proposals, many Clubs will have to raise their Club membership fees by a significant amount to remain solvent and the EBU would lose about £86,000 per year in revenue. Conversely, if Club membership remains the same and 10% of Club members do not become EBU members, EBU revenue will rise by £20,000.
 - d. No mention is made of how the one-off capital injection of £120,000 that will be raised if all Club non-EBU members join the EBU will be used.
 - e. The Club Subscription income – about £60,000 per annum – is not included in the EBU calculations. The EBU proposals state that it will be used to fund the increased services that will be provided.
 - f. The actual EBU income from P2P could be significantly higher than the EBU predict because the basis for the EBU P2P calculation of player-sessions is current LMP income. That underestimates the actual number of player-sessions as some Clubs do exercise their option not to issue LMPs for some or all of their sessions. That under-estimate is likely to be of the order of 25% to 30% but could be more or less. The EBU have informed us that they will be carrying out further research with Clubs to more accurately estimate the current national number of player – sessions and that data will be used to determine the actual initial P2P fee.

If you have any comments on this document, please send them to:
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