



DEVON BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

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Hon Secretary's 5th circular for Devon re EBU Strategy document

This document attempts to summarize the views and situation so far and to clarify changes and misunderstandings. It is to be noted that the EBU will be producing a revised strategy document in October including, amongst other changes: the £5 one-off joining fee will be removed entirely; the proposed additional charge for visiting non-EBU members is to be dropped and that all club members would thus pay the same pay to play fee, that figure to be confirmed after further research. Rumours suggest it will be lower than 43p. There will be a discussion by Shareholders following the AGM in October, followed by further consultation with members.

(1) What is the EBU (and why?)

It is clear that many people do not understand how the voting structure works from county up to EBU so this is a brief explanation. The EBU is the national bridge organisation charged with promoting and developing bridge in this country. It has approximately 25,000 members. It also has about 1000 affiliated clubs. It is not easy to estimate of the number of players playing at these clubs – probably between 40,000 and 60,000. It is responsible for the laws and for licensing events. It is set up as a Limited Company and controlled at the top by (a) a Board and (b) Shareholders. It employs staff to carry out the wishes of the members as presented through the shareholders. Each county is represented by 1, 2 or 3 shareholders (or votes) according to their number of members. (Devon has one shareholder with 2 votes whose responsibility is to represent the views of the EBU members in the county). Each County association has its own constitutional set-up. In Devon we have 4 geographical sections each with its own committee and each sending 2 members to the DBA Committee. Individual members can have their voice heard either via their section committee or via the DBA committee. (Full details of contacts in the handbook).

All events involving Master Points are licensed by either the County or the EBU, according to EBU regulations.

Full details of the finances can be seen on the website www.ebu.co.uk but it should be noted that the latest accounts show, among other things, (a) a year-on-year reduction of 9% in salaries, (b) congress profits of £201,000, (c) spending on internationals of £78,000.

(2) What Strategy and Why?

What? The EBU proposes changing the way it raises the money it needs. Instead of a subscription and a charge for Master Points, there will be a Pay To Play (P2P) fee payable each time anybody plays at an affiliated club. The original figure estimated was 43p at 2010 rates (which includes the 13p at present paid for Master Points). It has since been suggested that this will be lower. Members of affiliated clubs can automatically become members of the EBU with no joining fee (can has replaced will, and the original £5 joining fee has been scrapped).

Why? The new system is proposed from April 2010 – there will be no changes before then. By the end of Sep 2007 all counties will have met with the EBU (Devon meets them on 10 Sep) and all members and clubs will have had a chance to have their say directly. After the AGM agenda in Oct 2007 there will be a discussion based around the results of these meetings. The final revised version will then be decided and voted on at an EGM in Feb 2008.

Why? The EBU needs to stem the flow of a decreasing numbers of people becoming EBU members and playing in affiliated clubs. After much research the EBU decided that to survive and re-vitalise the best way forward is to change its membership system so that those who play more pay more. The proposed system is based on best practice in Europe where France, Holland and Sweden have strong and healthy bridge playing communities who demand the type of services that the EBU are proposing to offer our club players and finance them in a very similar way.

What do we get? It All members get free magazines and diary and access to all County and EBU competitions. There is no separate charge for Master Points All clubs get access to a wide range of free or cut-price services.

(3) replies to questionnaire as at 2 September 2007.

More than half of the clubs have not replied, some have provided insufficient data. Many have made detailed comments both on the strategy and the performance of the EBU. Some have shown better acceptance of the revised proposals.

7 Smaller clubs in the 40 to 60 member range replied : average 69% not in the EBU, average table money £1. They see little or no benefit in having to put table money up to £1.30 for extras nobody wants. But : often the EBU members in the club are supportive of the proposals. Even so, some may discontinue their affiliation unless the revised proposals are much more attractive. Not all are computer literate. One made the constructive suggestion of a two-tier club membership for such clubs.

6 Larger clubs in the 60 to 140 member range replied : average 52% not in the EBU, average table money £1.25. They will probably be won over by suitably revised proposals.

(4) summary of extra comments with replies to questionnaire as at 2 September 2007.

Some smaller clubs may disaffiliate (possibly changed after dropping of £5). They do not want masterpoints, tournaments, magazines, diaries. Extra admin and cost unacceptable.

At some, EBU members might leave if they don't stay affiliated and non-EBU members might leave if the costs rise too much.

Some are broadly neutral but agree EBU is necessary.

Some suggest that extra money should go to support more bridge teaching and benefits for the clubs and youth bridge rather than financing a National Team.

(summary of counter-proposal) All members of affiliated clubs are automatically EBU members; extra £5+ to become full members and get magazine. Affiliated clubs provided with Bridgemate paid for by increased affiliation fee and P2P. Present strategy offers nothing for something.

(summary of counter-proposal) two-tier Club Membership – one as proposed and one less inclusive for smaller clubs.

Larger clubs broadly accept the proposals but some report antagonism towards EBU

(5) DBA committee – relevant minutes from meeting on 4 September

7.2. There will be a meeting on 10 Sep between Mike Hill and John Carter (EBU) and 2 representatives from each of Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset.

7.4. The following were identified as concerns from the replies received from clubs, which came from less than half the clubs in the county.

- (i) We would like to know the current estimate of the P2P fee as we believe 43p is too high.
- (ii) There should be a better effort in selling the package and presenting the benefit especially to the smaller clubs.
- (iii) We believe the club affiliation fee should be abolished as it is punitive for smaller clubs who would not benefit from the extras package.

There are many negatives from the players in the county due to the historical performance of the EBU.

Terence Treeby
DBA Secretary
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