



DEVON BRIDGE ASSOCIATION

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This appraisal of the EBU Strategy document is prepared in June 2007 by the DBA Secretary from the point of view of Devon, its clubs and its bridge players. As a rural county, the clubs tend to be scattered and relatively small – none is believed large enough for 2 movements on any playing night.

This version contains answers to my questions from the EBU vice-Chairman Sally Bugden; the figures were passed by her to Mike Hill who has reviewed them (see comments).

Note especially (i) the document “Why change now?” (see end), (ii) a new set of FAQs will appear on www.ebu.co.uk soon, (iii) that the P2P charge is based on guesstimated figures and is likely to be changed.

Unlike the strategy document all my figures are at 2006 rates (the last full year available).

Initial conclusion

These proposals will have to be accepted by General Meetings of affiliated clubs. It is quite likely that there will be strong opposition from non-members of the EBU (especially those who don't want freebies or have historical or political reasons for never joining) and from members of the EBU who regularly play 2 or more times each week. The strategy as stated at present does not seem to address the problem of how to get the proposals accepted at club level.

EBU figures and some comments / queries

Individual subscriptions raise £395,000 for the EBU from just under 25,000 members (Mike Hill EBU).

Club subscriptions raise £25,000 for the EBU from just under 1000 clubs averaging £25.00. (Mike Hill EBU).

If we take the EBU estimate of 55% club members who do not belong to the EBU, then there are about 55,000 members of affiliated clubs. This estimate will be distorted by dual membership.

Club Master Points raise £255,000 from 2,010,000 player sessions p.a. (EBU figure),

Which works out to 38,650 player sessions per week (52 weeks).

This in turn works out to (i) about 39 player sessions per club per week;

Or (ii) 1.55 player sessions per EBU member per week;

Or (iii) 0.7 player sessions per club member per week.

The effect on the Devon Bridge Association

Financially neutral in terms of subscriptions from the EBU.

But the increased number and type of members means that county competitions will be open to (virtually) all and it will no longer be required to cross-check entries against a membership list. It is possible this will lead to increased entries and a lower requirement in terms of subscriptions from the EBU.

The effect on the Devon's affiliated clubs

Historically, about 10 years ago new club members were asked if they were joining the EBU as well. This practice has since dwindled or ceased with the result that most if not all of our 35 affiliated clubs have a significant number of non-EBU members. Table money at most if not all clubs is between £1 and £2 per session. So an increase in table money of 27 p represents a 13.5 to 27% rise.

[A straw poll on 30 June : table money at Devon clubs Torquay £1.50 (about 8 tables 4 days a week), Plymouth £1.50 (about 6 tables 5 days a week), Kingsbridge £1.00 (about 10 tables 2 times a week)]

[Compare with London area : Young Chelsea about £7, Putney £7 (about 12 tables), Ruff £7 (about 8 tables), Wimbledon £3 (about 20 tables), Monday Tooting £3 (about 16 tables)].

Amount paid p.a. in £ by clubs to EBU per 52-week year at 2006 rates, not allowing for savings on extra services. (bracketed figure p per playing session)

CLUB A	Old sub		new sub
8 tables once a week	20 (1.2 p)		50 (3.0 p)
*MP 1664 player sessions	216 (13 p)	P2P	632 (38 p)
TOTAL	236 (14.2 p)		682 (41 p) increase just under 27p

Percentage increase 5.2% on £5, 9% on £3, 18% on £1.50, 27% on £1.00

CLUB B	Old sub		new sub
8 tables 4 times a week	20 (0.3 p)		125 (2.0 p)
*MP 6656 player sessions	864 (13 p)	P2P	2530 (38 p)
TOTAL	884 (13.3p)		2655 (40 p) increase just under 27p

Percentage increase 5.2% on £5, 9% on £3, 18% on £1.50, 27% on £1.00

*(Mike Hill EBU) Although master points are issued to the top one third of the field in club duplicates, the number of certificates issued is only precisely one third of the number of participants when the number of tables in play is divisible by three. If it is not, then the proportion of participants receiving master points rises. For an 8-table example, it is actually 37.5% (6 pairs out of 16). This would make the current cost of master points 14.3p rather than 12.7p for 8 tables. However, we did use a figure of 13p in our calculations as a rounded average for all table sizes.

Question 1 : is it right to assume that in an affiliated club all current non-EBU members will be obliged to either (a) pay £5 to join the EBU, or (b) pay an increased P2P charge, or (c) find another club?

(answer from EBU vice-Chairman) In the current strategy document, this is what we are proposing. We do hope, however, that we have made it attractive for the majority of players to stay and play in our affiliated clubs.

Question 2 : is there scope for the £5 joining fee to be waived or reduced for those who join in, say, the 3 months immediately prior to P2P?

Note : If we take the EBU estimate of 55% club members who do not belong to the EBU, then there are about 30,000 non-members of the EBU who belong to affiliated clubs. This estimate will be distorted by dual membership. This joining fee seems to raise approximately £150,000.

(answer from EBU vice-Chairman) This is totally dependent on the reactions that we get from our proposals. But... we cannot retain the status quo if we are to undertake our job properly, which is to develop and promote bridge in England. Any other positive suggestions that your members can put forward which will enable us to achieve our objectives will be considered very seriously by the board and reported at the AGM.

Question 3 : at all affiliated clubs, the club members will be required to choose between (i) an increase in table money of about 27p and (ii) ceasing to be affiliated. (a) why should they?, (b) what can EBU members say to others to persuade them and avoid a them / us confrontation?

(answer from EBU vice-Chairman) I am in the process of creating another FAQ about the benefits of belonging to an affiliated club. We believe that many players now and in the future will want the package of extensive services that we will be offering to our affiliated clubs, differentiating them from other clubs, making them more attractive and accessible. When the FAQ goes live I will let you know as I believe this will provide the answers to your question.

The effect on the Devon's EBU members

Amount paid through the club to the EBU, plus annual subscription.

	Old cost		new cost	
50 plays per year at Club A	£18.50 + 50 @ 13.9 p = £24.85		50 @ 41p = £20.50	gain £4.35
100 plays per year at Club B	£18.50 + 100 @ 13.0 p = £31.50		100 @ 40p = £40.00	loss £8.50
150 plays per year at Club B	£18.50 + 150 @ 13.0 p = £38.00		150 @ 40p = £60.00	loss £22.00

Question 3a : at all affiliated clubs, the club members who play 3 times a week will have the additional choice in question 3 of (iv) an annual increase in cost of £22.00. Again (a) why should they?

(answer from EBU vice-Chairman) Firstly, I must point out that the P2P charge is based on the guesstimated figures that we have calculated from the total subscription income in 2005/6 married with the data analysis that we have received from only 45% of our clubs. So it is likely that when we have the complete data there will be a change in the figure. The more people that play the lower the figure is likely to be. Currently, the statistics show us that on average 40% of members of our clubs belong to the EBU, the other 60% are non members.

(Mike Hill EBU) we had estimated that the break-even point was 75-80 sessions a year. But, as Sally has told you, the actual P2P charges will depend very much on how many people actually play and, for that reason if no other, I should be a little wary of promulgating precise cost numbers.

(Mike Hill EBU) Across the 45% of affiliated clubs from which we had data to analyse, the proportion of EBU members was about 45%. Assuming (as we have) that those numbers are representative, that means that more than half the members of affiliated clubs are not EBU members.

The effect on the Devon's non-EBU members

Amount paid through the club to the EBU.

	Old cost	new cost	
50 plays per year at Club A	50 @ 13.9 p = £6.35	50 @ 41p = £20.50	loss £14.15
150 plays per year at Club B	150 @ 13.0 p = £19.50	150 @ 40p = £60.00	loss £40.50

This does not take into account the one-off joining fee of £5 or the free diary, magazine and services that the new members will get whether they want them or not.

Question 3b : at all affiliated clubs, the club members who play 3 times a week will have the additional choice in question 3 of (iv) an annual increase in cost of £40.50. Again (a) why should they?

(answer from EBU vice-Chairman) Finally, I have attached a short document on Why Change Now? [copied at end of this document] It explains our viewpoint and gives reasons why we cannot retain the status quo. I do hope this helps to answer your final question.

The next stage for Devon

In order to compose a County response to the document, it would be appreciated if all clubs could take a little time to answer the questions that follow for us and return their answers to the County Secretary.

Terence Treeby, DBA Secretary

3 July 2007

Club name _____

(1) Approximately how many members in your club? _____

(2) Approximately how many of these DO NOT belong to the EBU? _____

(3) How many sessions per week do you have? _____

(4) What is your average attendance (no of players)? _____

(5) What is your table money? £_____

(6) Do you have any comments so far on the EBU Strategy Document? (on other side if necessary)

(EBU document referred to above)

Why should we change the EBU membership system now?

We fully understand that there are a number of players in this country who just want to go out and play bridge without any other services attached.

However, it is our belief from the research that we have undertaken that there are many players now and in the future, who will be attracted by our package of free services and advice.

Every duplicate bridge player benefits from the intangible services that we offer – regulation of the game, training of club tournament directors, support and training of teachers and their students - but making these points to gain support and more members has failed in the past.

It is our role as a national bridge organisation to promote and develop bridge in this country. We believe it is only right that this initial phase of our strategy should be based on re-vitalising our clubs.

Why do we need to do anything?

We need to stem the flow of a decreasing numbers of people becoming EBU members and playing in our affiliated clubs. With the changes that have occurred in society in the last 20 years, there is little or no teaching and playing of bridge in the family environment. We are constantly asked by our members about developing the game in schools, universities, amongst the middle aged and the elderly. We cannot do this without a strong and increasing membership base. We have proposed an initial phase of a strategy where we offer free services and advice to our clubs to help them be more attractive and accessible to bridge players. The support and training we provide to our partner teachers and their students and the growth we hope to achieve in this area, will, we hope, create more people to play bridge in clubs.

What are the options?

Leave the current system in place and simply increase charges in line with the reducing membership?

This would result in a decreasing and ageing membership leaving a few people to pay a great deal of money for ever diminishing bridge activities.

Reduce the size and shape and therefore cost of the EBU in line with the reducing revenue?

This would have a similar outcome as the first option as it is effectively asking us to retain the status quo and reduce our activities as our income decreases. With both these options the EBU would be failing to fulfil its duty as an NBO as it would effectively be allowing bridge to die on its fee

Introduce a 2-tier membership system. One tier being club players and one tier being tournament/competition players?

This was considered, but decided against in terms of market sustainability as it was regarded as too expensive for tournament players who already contribute a substantial amount to the EBU's coffers. A two tier system would also be very expensive to run.

Why was this proposal chosen from the other options?

This proposal was chosen because of its focus on our grass roots, because it aims to re-vitalise and differentiate our clubs, because of its simplicity and fairness – those who play more pay more. And, most importantly, because we had done our research and based it on best practice in Europe where France, Holland and Sweden have strong and healthy bridge playing communities who demand the type of services that we are proposing to offer our club players and finance them in a very similar way.