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## New Normal News October 2020

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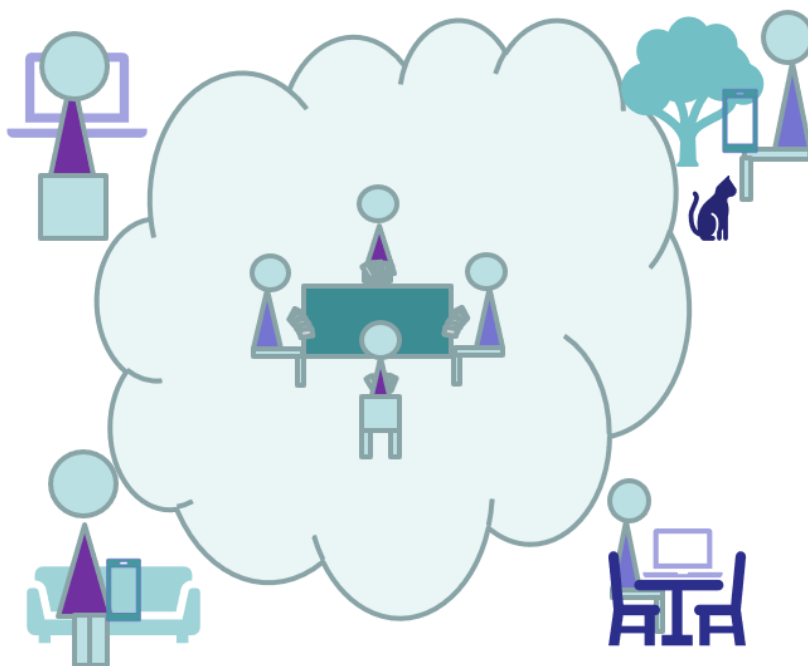
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18 October 2020 at 19:11

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**New  
Normal  
News**

**October  
2020**



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Bridgeinthenewnormal

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## In this edition...

Online Bridge Playing gets Visual - the launch of RealBridge

Face to face bridge update

Teaching in the New Normal

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Zoom Conferences

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## Online Bridge Playing gets Visual!

RealBridge has three bridge clubs using it for play, the EBU is trialling the qualifying round of a serious competition on it and many players, teachers and club organisers are trying it for free at well run taster sessions.

It's bright new feature is the inclusion of video windows and sound processing where you can see and talk to your partner, your opponents and even the director.

It's bidding and playing features are as ever slightly different but at least as good as those on other platforms.

This is a far more social feel for club sessions.

It ends the need for teachers to manage Zoom or whatever alongside practice sessions making it much easier to teach and coach.

It is probably as exposed to cheating as any other platform.

It may not convince the substantial proportion of players not playing online to give it a try, but it will be more attractive for those looking for a pleasant game with people they know.

Bridge Club Live have announced the future addition of video and sound. FunBridge has advertised a future update to its look, so we expect this facilities to evolve quickly in the near future.

It's definitely worth a look. Here's a link to their site. Check out the News for taster sessions.

RealBridge

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## Face to Face Bridge Update

Rugby Village Bridge Club has run 22 Face to Face sessions in total on Monday and Thursday Afternoons. 36 players have played 287 times between them. Northampton and Stamford are still playing. East Essex has ceased due to being in a Tier 2 area. South Croydon, Coventry and North Warwick have ceased.

To return to face to face bridge, a club needs a rare

combination of circumstances. The venue has to be operated by a willing organisation. There must be thorough ventilation. Any former capacity for bridge will be reduced by more than half to accommodate socially distanced tables. Screens, PPE, sanitiser and extra equipment will be needed. Volunteers to carry out Covid secure set up, take down and marshalling will be needed.

In July the outbreak seemed under control and soon to be over. Recent events have shown that the balance between controlling the spread of the virus and allowing economic life, education and some leisure is a very fine one and is becoming increasingly political and contentious.

There is hopeful news on treatments, testing and tracing. Every effort is being made to find a vaccine. However, the effectiveness, availability and duration of any vaccine is unknown. It may well be two years or more before face to face bridge can be played at open tables.

It is estimated that only 30% - 40% of the players who were active before lock down are playing online. Two years of online only bridge might make it very hard to win back those players if Covid secure measures were entirely lifted.

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## Government guidelines/regulations and EBU position

March 2020

National Lockdown; All bridge clubs close.

## July 2020

Lockdown partially lifted nationally.  
Government issues guidance on

- socialising/mingling/mixing in domestic and some hospitality settings: limited to 2 households
- use of multi-purpose community facilities allowing up to 30 people to be inside provided they are socially distanced and covid precautions are taken

EBU says it cannot see how bridge can be played safely

## August 2020

English Bridge publishes article and risk assessment describing how to play bridge safely.

## September 2020

Government updates guidance on

- socialising/mingling/mixing in domestic and some hospitality settings: limited to six people
- use of multi-purpose community facilities allowing up to 30 people to be inside provided they are socially distanced and covid precautions are taken

EBU says now no doubt that bridge cannot be played safely. (Sept 10th)

EBU says its attention drawn to documents but still no doubt bridge cannot be played safely. (Sept 14th)

- Some clubs give up face to face
- Some clubs abandon plans to open
- Travellers cancel bridge holidays
- Welsh Bridge Union give up on face to face, citing the EBU position

- English Chess Federation give up "over the board", citing the EBU position

### Following Sept New Normal Conference:

- Some clubs write to the EBU asking support for developing/agreeing guidelines on playing bridge safely.
- EBU writes to DCMS and others requesting information
- DCMS point the EBU to the same documents

### October 2020

EBU announces that it will not be holding face to face competitions.

EBU Suggests clubs consult their local environmental health officer. It seems that they finally acknowledge the possibility of playing Covid-Secure bridge.

### Government brings in localised "Tiers"

- Tier 1 guidance for multi-purpose community halls still permits up to 30 people to engage in Covid secure activities.

### Next Steps

We need to agree guidelines for bridge club premises, hotel function rooms and similar venues.

We hope the EBU will cooperate, or at least not obstruct this effort.

We need to understand if the DCMS would let us to use the established process. While bridge is not

acknowledged as a sport it has so much in common with other sports in that it is played in dedicated, sometimes purpose built venues and has grassroots, recreational and elite levels.

## Draft Guidelines

I have prepared a rough draft of guidelines for safe bridge. It took longer than I hoped and was a lot of work, but it's worth putting out for comments. You can download it from the web site. It's a word document and revision marking should be turned on, so please make your comments and suggestions in your own version and email it to me. It's at the bottom of the page.

Draft Guidelines for Covid-secure face to face bridge

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## Teaching in the New Normal

Bridge teachers range from highly resourced professionals to solo altruistic volunteers. They teach in every kind of bridge club, or as part of holiday or other revenue earning contexts, as an indoor alternative in golf and other clubs, as part of larger charitable concerns, or simply as individuals. They may keep up with the latest approved bidding systems, or stick with their own approach to the game.

No single organisation serves the interests of this total community, nor has a more detailed picture of it.

There are organisations, notably EBTA, to whom they may belong. Teachers may use EBED's BFA services or materials, No Fear Bridge, other teaching related tools, manuals and resources or produce their own.

They may have bridge specific, or teaching qualifications or other.

EBTA probably represents between a quarter and of third of the total. Although a charity, EBED has always relied on income from the publications supporting its own curriculum and bidding system.

In these difficult times EBED has been open about stress on its financial position. It has announced an increase in EBTA teacher's annual subscription from £25 to £45.

Recent developments at EBED have included the launch of the English Bridge School using Google Classroom to provide a student management and communication framework for teachers, and loaded with BFA materials for teaching. To use the English Bridge School teachers take on a branded English Bridge School identity and refer their students to EBS at a cost to the student of £60 per year, on top of anything the student is paying the teacher and spending on other materials or services. Those who provide bridge teaching at lowest possible cost may find this unaffordable. Google Classroom is available to any google account holder, so teachers can use it directly.

Networks of teachers are springing up, some linked to



particular service providers, but others of like minded independents.

We would be very please to hear from individual teachers, or teachers in formal or informal networks on how best to strengthen and support teaching. The biggest threat to bridge is that the awareness and knowledge of the game is lost with the current generation of players.

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## EBU Futures

The EBU has issued a call for views on possible changes to the Universal Membership (P2P) charge that is its major source of disposable income.

This seems a strange exercise at this time.

It might be more relevant for the EBU to consult on its role in new world.

It seems presently focussed on financial survival, partly through some cost control and partly through raising revenue as an operator of online tournaments. It could help all of us if it issued a report on its activities since April, its current financial position and some vision of the future.

No one knows what is going to happen, but I would like to see a strategy for a future that consists of an imminent national lockdown for six months, followed by a further eighteen months of potential Covid-secure only

bridge.

While that happens its stakeholders: players; clubs; counties, should consider what they reasonably expect of the EBU, particularly in the development of the game.

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## Zoom Conferences

The meetings are informal gatherings. They are intended to bring together a wide range of perspectives. They should allow constructive debate. The proceedings are not secret and will be recorded and published widely.

The first Zoom conference took place on 16th September. The next is planned for 21st October, followed by another on 18th November.

### 16th September Zoom Conference and Face to Face Bridge

On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September the Zoom meeting attended by twenty-four individuals . Some people were formally appointed to represent organisations, many others attended as individuals. Several EBU affiliated clubs, at least one unaffiliated club, at least one other NBO, several bridge holiday providers, other bridge product service providers, bridge teachers and

individuals to be represented.

The planned main topic was face to face, or club house, bridge. The meeting discussed the current government guidelines, approaches to playing the game in a COVID secure environment and the role of the English Bridge Union.

The meeting agreed that guidelines for the safe playing of the game need to be urgently agreed with government. Although there may be a new national lock down soon, such guidelines could be used as soon it is lifted.

EBU Affiliated Clubs agreed that the EBU, as National Bridge Organisation, was best placed to undertake getting this agreement.

After the meeting a draft letter to the EBU was prepared. EBU Affiliated Clubs were invited to use it as the basis for letters to the Chair and Chief Executive of the EBU.

Progress (Not all clubs have reported):  
Rugby Village BC wrote to EBU, and got "holding" reply.  
Northampton BC wrote to EBU got no reply. Richmond BC believed to have written. Coventry and North Warwickshire intended to send a letter. Helen Barr, a bridge holiday provider wrote to DCMS and got a letter directing her to the existing documentation.

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Wednesday 21st October at 2pm

The next New Normal Zoom Conference will take place at 2pm on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October planned to last for ninety minutes.

Everyone who was invited to the last one will be sent the link to the October one.

Topics for discussion may include, but not be limited to:

- Progress on Face to Face Guidelines
- The EBU UM Consultation
- EBED Subscription Increase (£25-£45)/Google Classroom/EBS

If you would like to attend the meeting or to check that you will be invited, please click on the button below.

The link will be sent to everyone who attended the last one for whom I have an email address. There were attendees whose email address I don't have. I will also send it to people who have asked since.

If in doubt please use the button below to receive the link.

Send Zoom link for New Normal Bridge Zoom Conference

The plan is to offer a zoom meeting to discuss bridge in the new normal once a month. The following one will be Wednesday November 18th.

Previous New Normal newsletters and a subscription form are available on the Bridge for Pleasure web site.

There is also information on playing Covid-secure bridge.

A freely available bridge teaching scheme with lesson plans, notes, deals, homework quizzes and answers is there for all.

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Bridge for Pleasure - Information Web Site

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## This newsletter

is planned to be issued once a month, mid month.

It is written and distributed on an entirely non profit basis, takes no advertising or commission.

### Future topics

Topics under consideration include...

Quarantining and cleaning

Online teaching tools and techniques

Experience of clubs holding club competitions online

Social games in the new normal

Please suggest anything you would like to see.

Please pass on your news, or submit items relevant to the future of bridge.

Click to suggest a topic (contributions welcome)

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Please forward the letter to anyone in the bridge world who might be interested. Anyone can subscribe using the link below,

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