

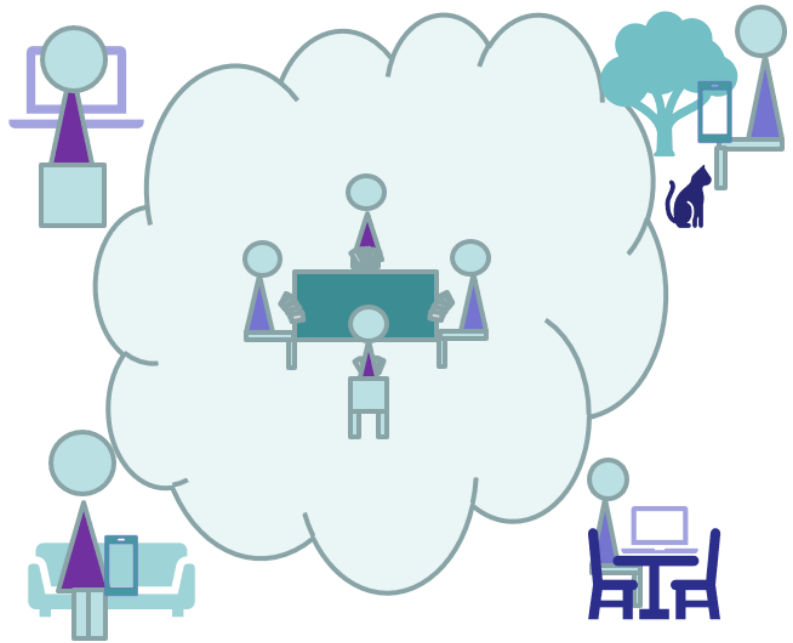
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New Normal News

January 2021



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Bridge is lucky

We can still play a version of our game online.

The EBU has become a mass provider of bridge directly to online players. Many EBU Counties, EBU Clubs and non EBU Clubs and groups are now offering online competitions.

The elite sector have particularly taken to the online game, and many think it is going to be the only game going forward. However, the level of cheating is creating a burden for governance.

Many former players of the game at the table seem to be missing. Hundreds of clubs are now offering online competition. Playing in club events, with players you know, especially when you can see and talk to them is more relaxed. But clubs are starting to experience the effects of competition for a smaller group of players, with each other and the EBU.

There is a large amount of "undocumented" social bridge on the online platforms. But many more players remain to be persuaded to go online.

Rather than fight over a reduced market, we should all be increasing the size of the market by bringing the new online social players back to gentle duplicate, bringing the previous club players online, and bringing new players to bridge by

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Most of all we must be ready to restart in the clubs as soon as possible when we can reopen.

There's a lot of potential valuable work to be done. Let's discuss our priorities and methods.

Augury

No one knows what is going to happen. The vaccines are great news, and the rollout seems to be largely going well, but problems are already emerging with supply and distribution. The scientists are still don't know how long the resistance to major illness is conferred. They also don't know whether those who have had the jab can carry and spread the virus. The virus meantime mutates and becomes more infectious. There is concern about the extent new versions may make people sicker, and resist the vaccines. So we may be in this for the long haul.

Lock down Preventing Face to Face Bridge Altogether

It's reasonable to assume that this is going to last until at least Easter, possibly to end April, May or June.

Staged Opening Up Eventually permitting Covid Secure Face to Face Bridge

A gradual ease/modification of regulations likely to be as confusing as it has been all along. Possible permission for the resumption of face to face under modified COVID secure provisions sometime in the second half of 2021.

Unrestricted Social Contact

Travel companies are making plans for 2022. Things may be unrestricted, but it may be that we will always approach gatherings in a different way.

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Let's be READY

Bridge providers need to be ready for the resumption of face to face. We need to get the money flowing again. We need a restart plan. We need to bring back as many of our previous players as we can. We need to be ready to welcome all those who have learned online.

Rules, Regs and Safety, DCMS Plan

We need to monitor the regulations, they will change fast as the government works out how to restart the country in the light of a large proportion of vaccinated or post infection population.

We need to understand how to work with local Health and Safety.

We need to open a dialogue with the DCMS to get a return plan agreed in advance.

Task - Monitor the changes to regulations as they change and report. Understand how to work with local Health and Safety. Pursue agreement of a return plan with DCMS

"Back to the table" campaign

We need a marketing plan:

1) that identifies who we want to reach. (Lapsed/New

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Press? PR?

3) Designs our message(s).

4) Looks at the timing, cost and other resources needed ...

to get those messages, through those channels, to those audiences and knows how we prompt them to react, and how we will process those reactions.

We can all do this as individual organisations, but we may be more effective with a common plan, some shared resources.

Task - Draft a Full Marketing plan for a return to the club game

Build/Renew Skills

We may have lost directing/organising skills during the pandemic. We will need them to restart. We should develop and give training in Directing (on and offline). Between us we should be able to offer such training at a very low or no cost.

Similarly we should look to boost Teaching Online, especially beginners. There are many excellent teachers online, but we need more. If we invest in a marketing campaign we must ensure potential

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priced, online teachers quickly.

Task - Draft a plan for renewing and developing directing and teaching ready for restart

The Election

Thanks to everyone who supported me. I was delighted that 40 clubs voted for me. Gayle Webb received 59 votes and the third placed candidate 13, so 112 clubs voted out of a potential constituency of 600~.

Although it's always disappointing not to win a contest, it's also a bit of a relief. Like many of us I put a lot of mostly unpaid time into bridge. I think being an EBU board director will be a time consuming, challenging, and not always very satisfying job.

I am glad not to "have a foot in each camp". My concern is for the interests of bridge providers like my bridge club. I don't think these interests always fit well with those of the EBU.

EBU and EBU Affiliated Clubs The Relationship

I put myself forward for the EBU board appointment because I believed it could make a real difference to a damaged

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ideas:

1. To reexamine the relationship between the EBU and its affiliated clubs. This relationship has been damaged during the pandemic:

Refusal of the EBU to lead the way to Club Face to Face Opening

Attempts made by EBU to obstruct Face to Face Opening

One on one EBU – Club communication

EBU → all club communication (e.g. communication of appointment of EBU board member to represent clubs)

EBU management of cash flow from BBO games to EBU Clubs

EBU competition with clubs for players at online events

EBU promoting direct membership to players rather than referring them to clubs

2. To improve the quality of communications between the two sides. I have witnessed some very bitter exchanges between clubs and the EBU. There have also been mass communications from the EBU in the last year that have caused anger, dismay and confusion. Most of all I believe the EBU must start to treat clubs with respect as partners.
3. We have to start collaboration. We can now expect a two-way conversation. The clubs are going to need to move swiftly and decisively to restart. The EBU is simply not designed to move quickly. It is also limited in resources, money and skills probably for ever now. Clubs should take responsibility for their destiny and agree a role for the EBU that the EBU is capable of delivering.

EBU Club Forum Thread

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Time to organise?

We have touched on the possibility of forming an association for bridge providers. Perhaps it is a good time to formally form up? Now that we have a club representing member of the EBU board, we may get the best from it by organising our interaction.

There are many bridge providers or organisers in these Isles: Teachers; Social Groups; have common issues: Non Aff clubs; Aff Clubs; EBU Counties; WBU, Irish Bridge, SBU and the EBU themselves.

I would suggest that all these individuals or organisations have an interest. We can form an unincorporated association by agreeing a constitution and rules. These are necessary to protect all parties.

Task - Draw up draft Constitution and Rules for an unincorporated association of United Kingdom and Irish bridge providers.

Segmentation

The world of bridge is huge and highly varied. Any conversation about it frequently needs to focus on a particular element to be useful. Estimates vary widely, but perhaps 200,000 people used to play some form of bridge regularly.

Here's a suggestion on a way to segment playing of the game in order to discuss it more effectively. There are many overlaps and inconsistencies of course and many players will find themselves in more than one group.

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Elite bridge in England is organised by the EBU. The total individual membership of the EBU is around 55,000, although more like 36,000 have taken part in affiliated events recently.

At the elite level, there are competitions between nations at World and European level. National competitions are competed amongst the quirkily constituted EBU counties, the major clubs, and teams and pairs organised individually.

Perhaps around a thousand players take part. The management of the EBU of the counties and of some of the larger clubs are generally drawn from the same population.

Affiliated Club Bridge

There are around 1,000 duplicate bridge clubs in England. Around half of them are affiliated to the EBU. The biggest of these have buildings, employ managers and are large businesses.

EBU affiliated clubs are in turn each affiliated to one of the forty EBU "counties".

The majority of clubs are smaller and typically meet on a weekly basis in community facilities, are run by volunteers and use a members club constitution. There are some substantial duplicate clubs who choose not to be EBU affiliated.

The majority of the EBU's active membership belong to one or more clubs, possibly a mixture of affiliated and unaffiliated. There are probably around 35,000 members of affiliated clubs.

Social

Players of social bridge are often highly competent but seek environments more aimed at enjoyment than competition.

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many groups who play bridge together, but it may be rubber or chicago.

Novice

Bridge teachers are everywhere. They range from fully professional to occasional volunteer. There are some large teaching businesses, teachers attached to clubs, teachers attached to groups in other sports clubs, and self starting individuals.

New Normal 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.

Zoom conferences took place on:

16th September

21st October

18th November and

16th December 2020.

A link for the **January 20th 2pm** Zoom conference is below:

Nicky Bainbridge is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: New Normal January 2021

Time: Jan 20, 2021 02:00 PM London

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

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Meeting ID: 827 6655 7292

Zoom link for the next New Normal Bridge Zoom Conference

New Normal Newsletter

This is issued once a month generally on the third weekend. It is written and distributed on an entirely non profit basis, takes no advertising or commission.

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.

[Bridge for Pleasure - Information Web Site](#)

[Click to suggest a topic \(contributions welcome\)](#)

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