

AEO report for KCBA Committee Meeting 12th June 2022

Since our last meeting, on 29th March, I contacted all Kent Clubs and set out our proposals to assist Clubs to increase their membership by recruiting teachers. This letter advised Clubs that there was a Teacher Training Course (TTC) planned in Kent for May/June, date to be advised once finalised, and asked them to contact their members to see whether any of them would consider becoming an EBTA trained teacher. There were two questions asked of the Clubs which required an answer. Number of responses from all our Kent Clubs. NIL

Also, on 29th March I wrote to all the EBTA teachers advising them of the PlayBridge Marketing initiative from EBU and explaining why Kent County were encouraging Clubs to actively seek new teachers and asking them if they knew of anyone who may be interested in joining them as another teacher. I asked whether they were willing to become a dedicated teacher for their local Club. Number of responses from 27 teachers contacted. NIL. However, I did have one email from Brigid Lavelle supporting my endeavours.

I was advised of the final date of the TTC by email from Chris Lohan on 9th May but, unfortunately because I was ill with Covid, I was unable to send out this confirmation to Clubs until 23rd May however, the dates of the course were not until 25th and 26th June and I had already given advance notice of this course to all Clubs on 29th March.

Only 1 person had actually signed up for the course by 31st May although there were 3 others who had registered an interest by then but the requirements from EBED were that a minimum of 7 participants were required to allow the course to continue. In view of booking difficulties where the full sum had to be paid up front and was non-refundable EBED decided on that date to postpone the course until September (date yet to be agreed). Chris asked me to write again to the Clubs to advise them of the postponement which I did on 31st May.

In that letter, I advised all Clubs that this course had regretfully had to be postponed because of the low response and I asked them once again to canvas their members to promote the September TTC. I also added "It is vital that we actively recruit new members to our Clubs to ensure the future of Bridge in the County. To facilitate this, I should be grateful if you would please let me have the name and contact details of the person in your Club who has responsibility for encouraging the recruitment of teachers and players in order that I may email them directly with details of the exciting new initiatives we are planning to help you all to achieve this. Would you please let me have their contact details by 10th June 2022"

I had hoped that, despite the previous lack of response, this may raise the profile of recruitment of both teachers and players in Clubs and encourage them to prioritise this within their Clubs. I also thought that this would also give me an email database to reach the Club members who were actually dealing with recruitment. To date I have had only 1 response from Stephen Pierce providing his contact details.

I suggest that this issue of recruitment in our Kent Clubs is discussed at our Committee meeting to formulate a plan to raise the importance of this to our Clubs.

Smartbridge

I have had further discussions with Giorgio Provenza and Tony Russ about the trial they have asked Kent to conduct on this new teaching initiative. My recommendations were put to the Working Group on 30th May and it has been agreed that Kent will take part in the second trial of Smartbridge which is due to start in the middle of September. I conveyed our decision to Giorgio that afternoon and have had a further meeting enabling me to confirm that Kent County will have substantial input into the management of this initiative.

In view of the lack of response from our Clubs, I foresee that this Smartbridge trial will need to be driven forward by our Committee if we are to provide the level of participation which will be required to make the trial viable.

I am happy to offer to co-ordinate the whole Campaign and liaise with both EBED and also the volunteers from the Clubs not only throughout the 12 weeks of the trial but to carry on working with Clubs afterwards. This will ensure that they are able support these new players and work with them to consolidate their initial learning and eventually introduce them into those Clubs once they are ready. It is important that we try to convert as many of the students into Club players ensuring that the Clubs who have taken part can see a benefit from their time investment during the trial.

I should like to suggest a separate working group is formed consisting of the main volunteers who will lead the venture for each Club which will enable us to have a support network between the four Clubs and it will also give us an overall consistent approach to the running of the trial.

We shall need the involvement of four Clubs. I shall volunteer to take part with Ace Bridge Club in Deal, Paul has agreed that he may be willing to volunteer with Thanet Club, Norman is going to approach three Clubs in his area who he believes will be able to work together as one Group (which will be extremely helpful for the trial as it will mean that this can be tested to see how we can make this work) and we shall need one other Club to take part. I am therefore asking all of the Committee members whether you would be able to contact one of your own Clubs to make up the fourth in the trial please.

Please also read my initial report and recommendation made to the Working Group on 20th May as this gives full details of how the trial will work and what the volunteers roles will be.

Pat Welsh
11th June 2022