

Ace Bridge Club held its latest committee meeting yesterday and during it we discussed your letter to clubs in detail.

I shall make the points from the paper on KCBA first - these are mainly my ideas as our committee looked at this from our clubs point of view which seemed the best way and I shall cover those later.

EBED

It seems sensible and appropriate to me that this initiative is EBED driven. I should personally like to see a National Programme, fully co-ordinated with every county, with a paid official working full-time for EBED in this capacity to reflect the importance you feel Richard Croot is putting on this - Let's call this person the Youth Bridge Administrator (YBA). Perhaps this could be funded in entirety by a small proportion of the legacy that I understand EBED received last year. I would suggest that, if possible, a designated Co-ordinator for Youth Bridge (CYB) is appointed by every county to their own committee reporting directly to the YBA, giving continuity throughout the country and ensuring that there is uniformity throughout the UK. The YBA would cascade all initiatives through the CYB's throughout the programme. They could then set objectives, record statistics and results and feed them back to the YBA which will enable them to monitor the progress, county by county, if necessary. This would also enable the YBA to have the ability to help counties who may struggle, buddying them up to more successful areas enabling the struggling counties to find new ideas and help to improve their results. This would have the added benefit of every club in every county knowing just who to contact for help and guidance should they be approached by schools, teachers or bridge players wanting to help children or grandchildren to learn to play in a structured way.

The current EBED Fun Camps for families could also feed in to both of these, the YBA to oversee and CYB's to recruit players to go to the camps and liaise over any issues.

The proposed role for our county.

- Understanding and validating the youth programme template developed by EBED Essential
- Adapting, where necessary, the EBED template for use in Kent Sensible

- Presenting EBED youth programmes to Kent clubs for consideration and potential use Yes this should be part of the appointed BYC's role in Kent
- Liaising with other counties also developing youth programmes to understand their successes and failures

Via a buddy system and through the YBA making this easier to co-ordinate effectively

- Supporting local clubs when approaching or responding to requests from schools and where appropriate assisting with the launch of bridge activities Definite part of the BYC's role
- Advising clubs about safeguarding processes and procedures Club's responsibility to ask for help but essential that they know this service is there so this would be both the YBA and the BYC's remit to cascade both correct and also up to date information
- Providing financial support (with EBED) for the delivery of bridge related activities, for example tables, bidding boxes, boards Sensible and very helpful
- Providing feedback to EBED to support ongoing programme development and improvement BYC to do this
- Developing a framework to achieve long-term sustainability for youth bridge in Kent. BYC to liaise with YBA so that this is standardised throughout all counties meaning continuity and giving economies of scale.

Options for the Future

Our committee has a good mix of established and experienced bridge players and some newer members who were in my first group of students when I started teaching. However, they all felt strongly that Youth Bridge is something that EBED needs to drive forward. They thought it would be useful to have someone at Kent County who they could liaise with now if we had enquiries from Schools or from parents and they are already fully aware of the challenges that arise when children are involved, with safeguarding being the primary need to get right and also that DBS checks are essential. A BYC in place at County could ensure that we follow all regulations to protect both children and the people trying to teach youngsters to play bridge. There could be a section on the KCBA website with a phone number and email address if we were to appoint a local BYC.

From my own point of view, my concern is that if Kent were to implement our own programme in Kent for Youth Bridge in Option 3, without having a structure in place at EBED, this may mean that work may be, at best, duplicated once the new programme is introduced at EBED, and at worst, we may find that we have been moving in a

completely different direction and we may have done a lot of work which just may prove fruitless once EBED catches up.

I therefore wonder whether we may be able to look for a BYC who, at present, may not do as much as Anton Mauve did with schools, but who would be in place, building their knowledge of the counties clubs, perhaps logging how many schools are in each club's area, acting as a liaison officer for queries from clubs whilst keeping up to date with safeguarding regulations etc. At the same time, they could keep in close contact with EBED, gaining knowledge of how their stated objectives are progressing, getting first hand knowledge of all new initiatives which are to be introduced and be in a position to get things moving as soon as we find out in which direction EBED are going.

So for the moment, for Kent, I would favour Option 1, with Option 2 being implemented alongside the initiatives initiated by EBED as they progress. We would need someone with the capacity to do the preparatory work in readiness for us to react to the direction EBED take Youth Bridge into the future at which time Option 3 would follow as a natural progression.

The way forward

This is where my committee became fully involved.

We have received no expressions of interest from local schools

We don't believe that there is a demand that exists or could be created in our club's area as the demographic from the 2021 census shows that Deal had an estimated £30K resident population where 22.7% is aged 65 years or above and although new housing is being built, no new schools have been built since this date in our area. People also move into existing housing in Deal particularly in the popular Conservation area but this has massively increased our population of part-time residents many of whom are DFL's (Down from London) who are not in evidence in the Winter months so many of these houses are only occupied during summer weekends.

At our club, we do not have any parents with school age children to my knowledge and although we have grandparents it seems that in many cases, their children live in a different part of the country now so they are more likely to be travelling to see them than taking them to school on a regular basis here in Deal giving our members little involvement in local schools.

We have no employed teachers who play at Ace Bridge Club and although I asked the question at our committee meeting, there was no one who had the time or wish to take on this role for our club. They are all volunteers, as are all EBU Bridge Club committee members, and, with a newish four year old rapidly evolving teaching club, we are fully committed in planning and delivering a weekly GD session with two experienced

committee members taking turns to supervise and help our newbies to get into the main room transitioning from online lessons to face to face play, consolidating bridge etiquette and manners ensuring they can play at any other club and know the correct announcements alerts and use of bidding box cards where appropriate. We are also now training some of the previous year's intake in learning how to score etc, whilst helping them to improve their bidding and play so that they will enter the type of NGS-9 competition which Paul G is running, and dealing with the week to week duties of running a busy club.

In conclusion, whilst I feel you will probably want this to move more quickly than the suggestion I have outlined, I shall be interested to hear from you how many responses you receive to your initial letter over the coming weeks and the thoughts they express.

I know from my own experience as AEO that emails I send are rarely acknowledge by clubs or teachers. My recent emails to 37 teachers had one reply from a teacher telling me she will pass the information on and I have had another this morning advising me that a Chair had not received my email. I have advised him that my email was sent to the teachers and that it complemented the letter sent by Stephen about the event which did go to Chairs and Secretaries.

This issue of lack of response may be something we may want to consider in the future to find more ways to garner support for initiatives such as this and perhaps look at options which may bring the county and clubs closer together.

I hope you will find the information I have provided interesting and that it will assist you in deciding the way forward for Youth Bridge in Kent.

I would certainly be happy for you to play at Ace Bridge Club and to see how it is progressing and meet some of our members so we shall definitely fix up a date for you to come to sunny Deal.

Kind regards

Pat

On Wednesday, 27 May 2026 at 20:47:01 BST, Jonathan Wittmann

<kcbachair@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Pat,

Thanks very much for your reply. I look forward to hearing the comments from your committee. So far, this is the only reply I've received but I remain hopeful (well, maybe). My next task is to bring EBED up to date with where we are in Kent which I should get done next week once my family have departed.

Thanks for publicising the Hartlip event. It will be very interesting to see how well supported it is. Your last point about setting less experienced pairs on the way to entering competitions is well made. More pairs working their way through into tougher events would be a very good result.

I haven't forgotten about us having a game and I would like to see your club. Perhaps we could fix another date over the coming months.

Best wishes,

Jon

From: Pat Welsh <acebridgeclub@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2026 7:47 PM

To: kcbachair@gmail.com <kcbachair@gmail.com>

Subject: Youth Bridge in Kent

Dear Jon

I have now returned from holiday and would like to thank you for forwarding this to all Kent clubs. Your email has been forwarded to our committee as we shall be holding a committee meeting within the next week and we shall discuss it fully and send a reply to you. Unfortunately, five out of our eight committee members, including me, have been away over the last two weeks so we have been unable to deal with this sooner.

I have also sent a letter to all the Kent teachers which is detailed below, for your information, regarding the Hartlip -9NGS event and, so far, I have received one reply from our 37 teachers offering to pass on the information.

Kind regards

Pat

Pat Welsh

Chair

Ace Bridge Club, Deal

Letter to all Kent teachers sent 25th May with copy to Paul Gibbons

Good Afternoon

A F2F competition is being run by KCBA which is open to all players with a NGS grading of 2-9. The venue will be the village hall in Hartlip, which is close to Junction 5 of the M2 making it accessible to many players in the County, and it will be held on Saturday 13th June. There will be morning and afternoon sessions of 18 boards each and pairs may choose to play in either or both of these. Full details and an entry form can be found on the KCBA website.

This is an ideal competition for both newer players and more experienced pairs and I should be grateful if you would please promote this event as widely as possible to your clubs and also to your former students. This will be a friendly event which may help to set players on the path to entering competitions, particularly if they have not tried them before.

Your help, as always, is greatly appreciated.

Kind regards

Pat

Pat Welsh

Adult Education Officer, KCBA