



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION

1 September 2018 - 31 August 2019

The English Bridge Union is the governing body for duplicate bridge in England, representing communities of bridge players at club, county and national level. It is funded by members for members and provides the infrastructure and development of the game in England. It is non-profit making and any and all surplus is invested in our national game.

This report provides an insight in to the work that we do to support our clubs, counties and members.

We would like to thank all the volunteers that make up our national team - the Directors of the Board and all the members of its committees and the dedicated team of staff led by Chief Executive, Gordon Rainsford. Volunteers are a precious commodity!

We published last year a five year strategic aims document entitled “Raising our Game 2018-2023” It’s available on the EBU website at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/documents/official-documents/strategic-aims-2018-2023.pdf>. The Board are currently looking at elements of this plan and will report regularly on progress.

The statutory annual report and accounts will be able to be viewed on our website www.ebu.co.uk shortly after the EBU’s Annual General Meeting on 27th November 2019.

The Board

The Board is made up of eight directors elected by the shareholders, who are the representatives of our counties, and up to two appointed by the Board, renewable annually. The directors receive no remuneration for the work they undertake. They have legal and financial responsibilities as set out in the Companies Act 2006.

Each director takes responsibility for one or more aspects of the EBU’s business. This responsibility includes budgetary control, delivering strategic objectives and regular reporting on the work of the department and committee associated with it. For the year 2018-19 the responsibilities were as follows:

Chairman: Jeremy Dhondy

Vice-Chairman: Ian Payn

Treasurer: Jerry Cope

Board director responsibilities

Board Member	Responsibilities
Jerry Cope Treasurer	Financial Strategy Staff Development, 5 Year strategic plan 2018-2023
Jeremy Dhondy Chairman	Editorial Board Chairman, Archive and Web development, WBF/EBL liaison, Annual Report, ,BGB Liaison. Board member: L&E, Selection
Heather Dhondy	Chairman TDDG, Chairman L&E
Gillian Fawcett	Sponsorship & Fundraising. Selection/Internationals, Chairman Selection Committee
Anthony Golding	County and club constitutions, Bye laws, articles. Legal advice, Eastern CWG
Rob Lawy	Education, Volunteering, SW CWG
Ron Millet	Membership project, Awards, All Party Parliamentary Group, Mini Bridge Visits, Northern CWG
Ian Payn Vice-Chairman	Tournaments and competitions Board member: Selection, L&E Tournament Panel, Midlands CWG
Graham Smith	EBU Warehouse Facilitator for meetings County Development, Chairman National County Working Group

Finance

2018/9 was at a high level a good year financially, with a surplus of nearly £36k. But this result was heavily impacted by two particular events. Firstly, thanks to the generosity of Members, £60k was raised in donations for the World Youth Champions, for which our young players across all age groups qualified. These donations, as a contribution to Youth Bridge, were organised through EBED, enabling the claiming of gift aid and considerably enhancing their worth to the young players. Secondly the EBU received around £10k in back payment across a number of years in Employment Allowance. So although the surplus was very welcome, the underlying position is less favourable, and we continue to need to search for economies, if we are to avoid above inflation increases in UM. One such economy, which also avoids waste, is to make our annual diary opt in rather than opt out.

Nonetheless because of the one-off surplus in 2018/9, the EBU Board decided it could afford to budget for a one-off deficit in 2019/20. This new financial year is currently broadly tracking budget overall, with results a little better in UM, but with margins in our Warehouse and Competitions tracking a bit below what we had planned.

As we did last year, we are publishing (Appendix A: Charts) showing our sources and application of funds, which we are publishing on the website to be clear about what we do with our Members' money. These charts averages expenditure over the four year international cycle which is also the basis of our budgeting approach.

Clubs and Club Services

The new Club Liaison Officer (Jonathan Lillycrop) started in July with Bev Purvis having left for new pastures. Help has been given to a good number of individuals who have contacted the CLO with a range of queries.

No new clubs have affiliated since Ashton and District (in June). Frodsham & District Bridge Club are disaffiliating, their reason was “Dwindling numbers (several 2.5 tables recently) are threatening survival so we need to reduce costs and play less duplicate. Regrettable after 48 years but it was that or close the club”. No other clubs have disaffiliated since April 2019. Bridgwater Bridge Club and Cannington Bridge Club have merged to form Bridgwater and Cannington Bridge Club.

The CLO has visited and played at nine affiliated clubs: Ealing, Exeter, Chipping Sodbury, West of England, Hitchin, Upminster & Cranham, Watford & Bushey, New Chiswick and Milton Keynes. He has also visited one club (Bridport) which is considering affiliating and will return in the autumn to speak at their committee meeting before a vote on affiliation takes place at the club’s AGM in January. All of the affiliated clubs visited had a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Some constructive feedback was received. Over half of the clubs visited had strong teaching programmes and this was helping to sustain and grow the numbers of players attending sessions. Many clubs offered great value, for example, at Hitchin it is £3 table money for members including complimentary coffee, tea and biscuits.

The free places on Club Teacher Training Courses continue to be popular. There are only two more courses in 2019 which are both full but where there is interest EBED will be informed so they can consider running a course in that area for next year. The CLO is proactively reaching out to clubs who have booked on to courses and have not yet claimed a free place to ask if they want to use their free place. This should hopefully mean that the information which goes to accounts for refunds after the course is correct and final.

The CLO introduced himself as part of the Summer Club Management Focus. In the CMF an announcement about the club forum was made and people were encouraged to use it for general questions which may be of interest to multiple clubs. Some changes have been made to the Club Management Handbook and these will continue.

There have been many emails about diaries, some people were unhappy with the decision for 2020 to make the diary opt in but once help was offered with opting-in then everyone was accepting. Members have been told that there is no intention to deprive anyone of a diary who wants one but that the EBU is trying to reduce waste and reduce postal costs.

Membership Development

Tim Anderson was appointed as Membership Development Officer (MDO) in September 2018, working with the CLO and Communications Officer to promote and advance the EBU’s Membership Campaign and to support clubs in their teaching and marketing.

A number of county associations has signed up to our campaign agreement, based on what was done with considerable success in Yorkshire. Specifically, Manchester, Merseyside and

Cheshire, Somerset, Norfolk and most recently Northants. Other counties including Surrey and Nottinghamshire have not formally signed up, but have undertaken membership development work in part as a result of the wider campaign and the publicity we have given it.

The MDO also created a resource site with information and media to support membership campaigns, including a blog with regular updates on this topic.

In practice, addressing the ageing membership of our clubs and the decline of the game among younger people is an issue that goes beyond a specific membership campaign and the MDO has been promoting the idea that all EBU clubs must be to some extent teaching and novice-friendly clubs in order to keep the game thriving. He has worked on getting better statistics on playing activity in every club and to keep these updated.

Many clubs discover that while getting newcomers started with gentle bridge sessions is not so difficult, migrating them to normal club sessions is challenging. This is also relevant to the EBU organisationally since it is not until they join normal club sessions that they start playing in UM sessions and contributing to the EBU. This has been and continues to be an area of focus.

Another facet of the work is helping clubs to work with teachers and to train new teachers, in cooperation with EBED. The MDO attended the EBED teacher conference in the summer to explain the membership campaign and support teachers in finding opportunities to teach with local clubs or even to form a club.

A lot of bridge is played at non-affiliated clubs and in some parts of the country the number of non-affiliated clubs exceed those who are affiliated. The influx of players who learn later in life and in general are tilted more towards social than competitive play is often a factor in people choosing non-affiliated clubs, though it should not be as EBU clubs are for bridge players of every standard.

Addressing both the perception and in some cases the reality that EBU clubs are less welcoming to novices than they should be is therefore a priority and will help us both to keep clubs affiliated and to attract more. A scheme in development which we call EBU Assured (not necessarily the final name) aims to get clubs to commit to a welcoming culture as well as providing routes for newcomers to learn and play bridge. In conjunction with this, we are working on a modern and user-friendly EBU club directory that will help new players to find the right club. Putting this into effect has some complexity because of the legacy technology in use in the current web site and the MDO is working with the team to address this and to better promote our clubs via our web presence.

Parliamentary Activity

The All Party Parliamentary Group for Bridge (APPG) continues to be chaired by Bob Blackman MP, with Baroness Henig acting as the primary point of contact for the EBU and the coordinator of the majority of the group's events. In the year 2018-19 the group has held one meeting for which the EBU provided secretarial support, and to which the EBU and EBED were invited.

The APPG has not hosted any school's events in 2019 and no future school visits have yet been planned but it was noted that school visits are welcome Notice of 2-3 months must be given for planning the events.

We were sorry to learn of the death of Lord Skelmersdale. He had been a great supporter of schools visits and a regular conductor of tours of the Houses for the visitors. The EBU continues to organise the annual Lords v Commons match on behalf of the APPG.

Media coverage

Media coverage over the last year significantly decreased from 2018, when coverage was high due to the outcome of the VAT case at the European Court.

Most coverage in the national press has been through their bridge columns.

There has recently been some TV coverage on ITV's Coronation Street. The storyline involves Ken Barlow setting up a bridge night in the Rovers pub, where joined by Brian and Cathy, Evelyn, Geoff and Yasmeen. To help create the storyline, the show's writers consulted EBU member and Manchester bridge player David Debbage.

Online media coverage has dropped by 30% from the previous year. However, total media exposure for the year was 2,930 pieces in the UK press.

International Performances

England's representation in international duplicate bridge competitions is an important part of the EBU's activities as a national bridge organisation albeit, like all expenditure, we need to keep a close eye on overall costs. Successes at international level help to raise public awareness of English bridge and to attract new players to the game. Our participation in international events provides us with an international profile in the bridge world and it also brings more influence within the European Bridge League (EBL) and the World Bridge Federation (WBF).

The Selection Committee, made up of seven elected and two ex officio members and chaired by Gillian Fawcett, is responsible for selecting the teams to represent us internationally.

- **Open**

The Official England Open team were second in the Camrose trophy, which was won by the EBU team. Both teams were made up of players who had competed in the Premier League, and all performed well over the two weekends - but the England team failed to deal with the Welsh as comprehensively as their colleagues on the EBU team, hence the finishing positions. The Black team competed in the Champions Cup, an annual competition for national champions of the top 10 Countries in the European Championships, and finished with a very creditable bronze medal.

- **Women**

The England women's team regained the Lady Milne Trophy which they lost last year. An England Women's team was invited to the International Mind Sports Association World Masters, where they won a bronze medal.

- Seniors

The senior team had a comprehensive victory in the Teltscher Trophy, winning the event with two matches to spare.

- Juniors

The England U21 team won the Peggy Bayer Trophy with a margin of over 70VPs ahead of second place. The junior U26 team won the Junior Camrose for the seventh time in a row, Our U16 team played in the WBF online youth championships and did very well to qualify for the knock out stages, where they were defeated by a strong Russian Team.

In the Junior Europeans, the U21 team and the U16 team did exceptionally well to achieve bronze medals, and the U26 team also qualified for the world championships in 2021. English players also achieved bronze medals in the World Youth Open Championships.

- Mixed

The mixed team played in the inaugural European Mixed National Teams Championships, and qualified to play in the World Championships led in September 2019.

Junior squads

The Selection Committee is also responsible for the junior squads which provide training for young players. We appointed a new squad leader of the U26 squad (David Bakhshi), who has enthusiastically championed the coaching and development of young players.

The U16 and U21 squad leaders also continue to find and develop new talent, and Giorgio Provenza (U16s) has successfully developed almost complete beginners to bronze medals in the European Championships. The U26 Women's squad has not had as much success, but there is a core of players keen to improve and achieve England representation.

The challenge for the squad leaders is to develop their teams to be competitive at the next World Championships

Regulation

The Laws and Ethics Committee (L&E) is made up of seven elected individual members of the EBU and two appointed Board members. The chairman is Heather Dhondy. It is responsible for the regulation of the game in England.

It produces two annual publications, the White Book (primarily information and guidance for Tournament Directors) and the Blue Book (primarily information for players). Both publications are available free from the website. There is also a series of videos relating to The Laws of Duplicate Bridge (2017) and a group of forums for various English Bridge Union interests.

The L&E hears cases of both a technical and disciplinary nature. Appeals from tournaments are reviewed by the L&E so that they can offer advice and ensure the consistency of decisions. An annual booklet of the major decisions is published and is available electronically from the EBU website. Appeals are reviewed and comments published in the minutes of the L&E meetings.

There has been several disciplinary cases during the period which have been considered by the L&E concerning complaints of bad behaviour. If warranted, these are passed to a prosecution panel for further investigation, however the L&E encourages these issues to be dealt with at a local level where possible. There is a mediation service available for such cases where both parties agree. A pro bono adviser is also available and this year Joy Mayall has been appointed for this role.

The committee provides advice on model disciplinary procedures for clubs and counties and has also produced a set of model regulations for League Competitions. In addition, the committee has produced a set of guidelines for disciplinary committees this year.

A panel of referees is appointed by the L&E who hear appeals at tournaments and act as telephone referees in knock out events.

Tournaments and Competitions

After 25 years of using the Royal National Hotel, this year we found a new home for our main London congresses, the Easter Congress and the Year End Congress, at the ILEC centre in West Brompton. Our Summer Meeting also made a welcome move back to Eastbourne, to newly-built premises in the Devonshire Park complex.

At that Summer Meeting we held a discussion session on the future of EBU Competitions, which was very well attended and raised a lot of points and a number of useful suggestions. One outcome was the creation of a discussion forum at <https://www.ebu.co.uk/forum/categories/ebu-tournaments>, which has produced some further ideas. We are already planning significant changes to the schedule of next year's Summer Meeting, as well as considering whether we have too many events aimed specifically at seniors in the competitions calendar.

Last year we ran the Masters Pairs according to a new model, whereby clubs ran the various heats themselves, publicising the event among their own members as well as the national publicity, and setting their own entry fees. This created an event that was much cheaper to enter than previously and players seemed to enjoy playing in familiar surroundings, so the outcome was a field four times as large as in the previous year. Encouraged by this response we are intending to run the first stage of the next National Pairs along similar lines.

We continue to look for competitions formats that will appeal to our less-experienced members and those who have not played in national events. With this in mind, we offer a couple of "Really Easy Weekends" each year, a "Really Easy Congress" at the Summer Meeting and a number of "Jack High" Swiss Pairs events. One suggestion that came out of the Summer Meeting was to run a national event handicapped by NGS, and we are actively looking into how we might do this.

We have expanded our Funbridge robot games programme and now have one game a day (two of them scored by IMPs) issuing master points. We also have a number of ladders based on players' best scores over an extended period from those robot games, including one handicapped by NGS grade.

Our Overseas Congresses continue to be popular and perform well financially.

Tournament Directors Development Group

The Tournament Directors Development Group (TDDG) is a subcommittee of the Board which deals with the development and management of the EBU's active tournament directors. It is chaired by Board Director, Heather Dhondy. The major promotions in the period were Chris Benneworth to National level and Robert Sassoon to Senior. We had two retirements from the panel; Malcolm Carey and Nick Woosnam. We thank them for their services and wish them well in future.

The County Working Groups (CWG)

The two active CWG's in the North and the Midlands have continued to show the benefits of regional cooperation. We encourage counties from the other regions to contact either one or both of them for hints and tips on how to get going in their own regions.

We held our first National CWG meeting in August in London attended by both Northern and Midlands representatives and we were joined by Tony Russ from Somerset, who is keen to get the South West up and running. It only needs one or two more counties in the South West to contact Tony and you can count on the full support of the EBU as well as the other CWG's to make a success of your own group.

Senior staff from Aylesbury were in attendance and the National CWG provided a very useful forum to swap ideas and discuss best practices for mutual gain. Of major concern to all clubs and counties is the subject of recruitment, learning and development of new bridge players- the lifeblood of any organisation. The results of discussions about the relationship between the EBU and EBED has been fed directly into the EBU Board task team headed by Ron Millet. In future the board propose to engage in more concrete discussions about what the EBU hope for from EBED and how they can best provide it.

We shared experiences and ideas for recruiting and developing new players with a focus on the social aspects of bridge rather than the competitive element. Whilst recruitment is best driven locally, central resources are available from Aylesbury for continuity etc. In that regard it was agreed that we need to make our own website a lot more user friendly and easy to navigate for new and potential new bridge players. In my personal view this is a priority

Another initiative coming out of the national group was the use of technology to overcome the geographic issues of closer working or, indeed, of just meeting up to discuss things.

Applications like Skype and Zoom were discussed and Samantha Kelly, our Communications Officer has already addressed this issue with the offer of direct help from staff in Aylesbury helping and supporting clubs and counties to set up their own teleconferencing capabilities. Staff will be on hand to take interested counties through the process step by step to make it as easy as possible to use.

A practical suggestion was to promote closer cooperation at all EBU events. At our last AGM we had a working lunch of counties in their own regional groups. We repeated the

experience again at the meeting in May. It created such a positive atmosphere that we are hoping to include it again in this year's AGM.

Clubs and counties already have the officers and the use of technology can overcome geographic and scheduling issues. The benefits of closer cooperation are plain to see and EBU staff are on hand to help set up and support the formation of new CWG's. All that is needed is the desire to make it happen at club and county level.

EBU Headquarters at Aylesbury

We have a full-time staff equivalent of around sixteen, serving over 54000 members through the provision of tournaments, regulation, international support, club and membership support services including the Bridge Warehouse providing bridge books and supplies, and communications including Club Management Focus to affiliated clubs, and Events Focus to 'tournament players'.

We also aid the charity English Bridge Education and Development, with whom we share offices and some administrative systems. EBED has a Chief Executive (Donna Wright), as well as two other full-time and two part-time staff.

- **IT and Data matters**

We are almost ready to go live with an update that will allow members to see a complete current record of their accounts on My EBU. Other updates to My EBU are imminent, including a much-improved display of NGS grades, with partnership grades showing as well as individual ones.

Much of the IT work in the last year has been behind the scenes and may well not have been noticed by members, though it will have improved the performance of the results pages and the rest of the website. Further unseen changes are being undertaken that will lead to us being able to start to update the website.

Registration forms allowing students to sign up online have been launched on both the EBU and EBED websites, and we can now take credit card payments of invoices on My EBU.

A combined EBU and EBED directory of bridge clubs and teachers, with a geographical finder feature, was launched last year and further improvements to it are currently under way.

- **Staff**

We are coming to the end of a period of significant change in our staffing, after a year during which Dawn Mertens retired and Ian Mitchell left, each of whom had been with us for over 20 years. Bev Purvis also left after three years as Club Liaison officer and her place has been taken by Jonathan Lillycrop, who is also responsible for EBUScore support and development. Nicole Barclay is taking over some of Ian's other tasks and she'll be working part-time from home. Nick Doe is now the secretary of the Laws and Ethics Committee.

Sam Kelly is now very much settled in as Communications Officer, as is Steve Walker in the Bridge Warehouse and Amanda Williams on reception, Clare Burnage is back part-time after having her twins and Jackie Farrugia has also joined us part-time in the accounts department.

The final change is that Charlie Bucknell has joined us as Tournaments Administrator, with particular responsibility for Internationals and licensing, as well as being secretary to the Selection Committee and the Tournament Directors Development Group.

Annual General Meeting and Shareholdings

The EBU is a company limited by shares. Our shareholders do not get any financial remuneration, their shareholdings and voting rights are based on the number of members their county has. This report will be presented to the shareholders for discussion at the Annual General Meeting on 27th November 2019.

For full details of our constitution and structure please see the EBU's Articles and Bye Laws available on the EBU's website www.ebu.co.uk

Jeremy Dhondy

Chairman

For and on behalf of the Board of the English Bridge Union

Staff members and national volunteers 1 September 2018 – 31 August 2019

Details of the directors, committee members and staff can be found at <http://www.ebu.co.uk/biographies/ebu>. We are also grateful for the assistance of:

Honorary Counsel

David Ewart QC

Pro Bono Advisor

Joy Mayall

Disciplinary Panel (a panel drawn from this group hears and decides on cases that are prosecuted by the Prosecution Panel named below)

Sally Bugden, Norman Inniss, Kath Nelson, William Nicolle, Jackie Pye, Paul Roberts, Ed Scerri, Paddy Seligman, Geoff Smith, Jeff Smith, John Williams.

Prosecution Panel (a panel drawn from this group conducts prosecutions on behalf of the EBU)

David Bakhshi, Heather Bakhshi, Simon Cochemé, Ron Davis, Tony Forrester, Mike Huggins, Jane Jensen, Fiona Littlewood, Clive Owen, Martin Pool (Chairman), Shirley Pritchard, Bryan Willis

Appendix A

EBU Pie Charts of income and expenditure 2018-19

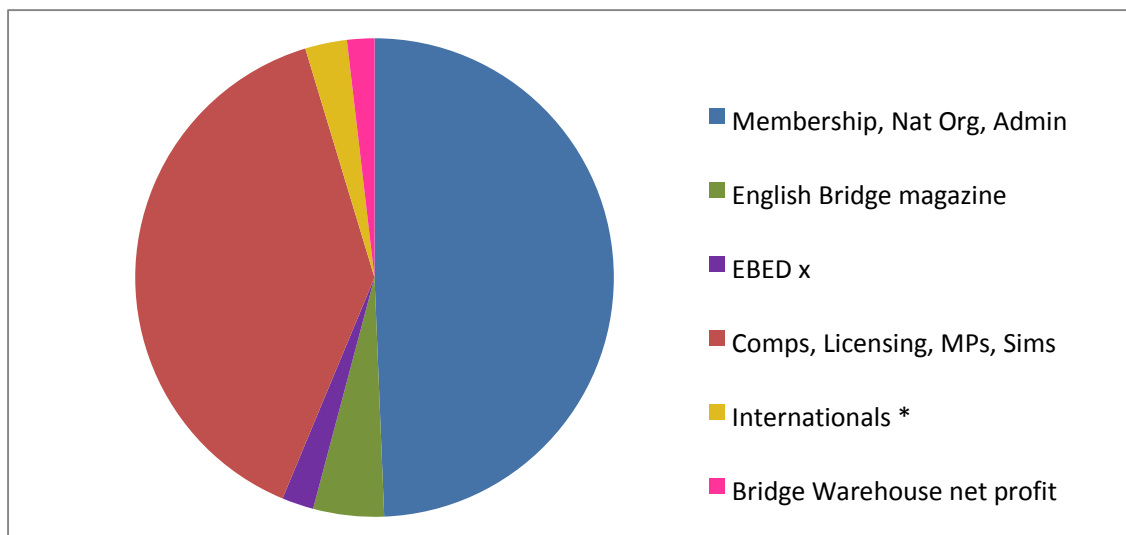
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE (£'000s)
Membership, Nat Org, Admin	713.5	-480.8
English Bridge magazine	69.1	-170.1
EBED x	31.0	-113.4
Comps, Licensing, MPs, Sims	564.4	-496.1
Internationals *	40.9	-168.40
Bridge Warehouse net profit	26.7	
	1,445.6	-1,428.8

x English Bridge Education and Development Charity

* Average of last four years as Internationals finances vary according to a four-year cycle

2018-19 Internationals: 89.9 -198.5

INCOME



EXPENDITURE

