

## REPORT OF THE PROMOTION, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL TEAM TO THE OBA AGM JUNE 2024

During the past year the team's meetings have discussed:

- 1) Organising cafe bridge events in the county
  - 2) Organising an Oxfordshire teachers convention
  - 3) Stimulating activity at clubs that have seen dangerously declining numbers following covid
  - 4) Working with unaffiliated clubs in the promotion of bridge in the county
  - 5) Assisting the EBU in the promotion of their proposed bridge festival to be held in September
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- 1) Two charity cafe bridge events have been organised during the year, the first at Henley last September attracted 50 pairs and the second at Abingdon this May attracted 36 pairs raising respectively £1200 for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and £500 for Sobell House. Our thanks to all those who took part and particularly to those who contributed considerable time and effort to making them a success.
  - 2) Whilst the proposed teachers' convention has been discussed it has yet to prove possible to arrange a date to run it. It would be good to arrange this before the festival so that there can be discussion as to how to gain the greatest benefit from the festival week.
  - 3) Last summer we set up an incentive scheme (OTT and OOPS if you remember) trying to encourage people to visit other clubs. It would not be unkind to describe this as a failure - we found that most club players are not keen to travel to other clubs. This is a pity because if your club is struggling for numbers we believe one of the best things you could do is to play at other clubs in your area and encourage their players to come to yours.
  - 4) Some years ago the Midlands Counties Working Group (MCWG) formed a subcommittee to look into what could be done to encourage unaffiliated clubs to affiliate to the EBU. Following discussions with several unaffiliated clubs the subcommittee concluded that there was not much that could be done as long as the EBU continued a "one size fits all" approach aimed mainly at competitive rather than social players. It recommended that a new approach would be needed and that unaffiliated clubs should have an equal say in what that approach should be. This was well received by the MCWG but it slowly became clear that the EBU Board was unlikely to take this forward at a national level. However they would not stand in the way of it being done at a local level. Accordingly the MCWG encouraged Oxfordshire to pursue the idea of setting up a new venture to promote bridge in the county combining both its affiliated and unaffiliated clubs. The OBA management committee approved this approach and we discussed how we would go about it. At this point the EBU announced its plans to hold a national bridge

festival in September and we took the decision to put the venture on hold and instead to try to involve our unaffiliated clubs in the organisation of the festival. We hoped that this would lead to a better starting point for working with unaffiliated clubs on bridge promotion in the future. The long-term aim as proposed by the MCWG sub-committee, which we agree with, is that the EBU should become the national body for all bridge players, if necessary with a two-tier structure.

- 5) The national bridge festival is planned for the week September 9 to 15 this autumn. The aim is to raise awareness of the game of bridge at the same time as raising money for Cancer Research. By running a wide variety of local events ranging from Bridge Taster sessions to Play with an Expert, from Social Bridge to Bridge Marathons, and many others, the EBU hopes that with the support and help of Cancer Research a lot of publicity can be generated and hence generate a whole new phalanx of beginners to our great game. The role of the OBA in this is to act as an intermediary, encouraging clubs to take part and publicising their plans when they do. We wrote to all the affiliated clubs and as many unaffiliated ones as we were aware of asking them to let us know what their plans are. So far we have only had a few positive responses and we hope there will be many more very soon. No club should feel it is too small to put on an event of some kind, even if it is only for example a social Chicago bridge event to which non-members are invited run alongside that week's weekly duplicate. The OBA has a publicity budget and we are happy to spend some of it underwriting such events - but we need to know about plans well in advance so that we can include them in a county-wide marketing campaign. We are particularly concerned that following covid there are fewer clubs in the county playing face to face bridge and believe strongly that people should be able to find a successful face to face bridge club playing in their area wherever in the county they live. The festival is an opportunity you should not miss, but its success depends upon local feet on the ground which is not something that the OBA committee is able to provide - IT IS UP TO YOU!