

It's time for change...

Festival – The Final Verdict

By David Parry and Nicky Bainbridge

With the Festival of Bridge now concluded, it's time to reflect on the immense effort and dedication shown by club organisers across the country. The success of this event is a direct result of their passion, hard work, and creativity. We wholeheartedly thank and commend every volunteer who contributed to this fantastic celebration of bridge.

One of the standout achievements of this Festival has been the incredible fundraising effort for Cancer Research UK. The bridge community has raised over £75,000, an exceptional achievement. This remarkable success is a testament to their generosity and spirit, and we applaud everyone who has contributed to this vital cause.

However, it's important not to overlook some of the serious concerns regarding the Festival's management, particularly by the EBU leadership.

The EBU's stated purpose for this Festival was to raise the national profile of bridge. It was meant to be an opportunity for the bridge community to showcase the game to a new audience.

While the intent behind the Festival is commendable, questions remain over how resources were allocated. We asked the EBU but were told that they don't have any detailed accounts and will only create accounts as part of the annual accounts which will not be available until the end of the year. We estimate an investment of around £40,000, much of it directed towards a PR Consultant. Despite the investment, we have seen no national publicity to justify the expenditure, which should have been a key outcome of this initiative.

The EBU leadership's enthusiasm for the Festival as a means to expand bridge's reach is understandable. Yet, the evident gap between the EBU's goal and reality is a stark failure on their part.

Transparency and accountability are vital, particularly when significant member funds are at stake. The volunteers have worked tirelessly and deserve better support from their leadership.

In closing, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to the volunteers for their extraordinary efforts. Yet, we also call on the EBU to address these shortcomings, ensuring future initiatives genuinely benefit the bridge community and achieve meaningful, measurable outcomes.

Numbers and Trends

We have published these before but feel they are so important that we repeat them.

Average age of EBU members – 74

Trend - upwards

Number of EBU Clubs – 560

Trend - 15 fewer clubs every year

Number of EBU Members – 50,128

Trend - 849 fewer members every year

Data source - Tim Anderson, former Membership Development Officer, EBU

Steering the EBU

Let's listen to what the Chairman said to members in the latest edition of English Bridge.

"I have been the Chair of the EBU Board for almost a year now, and so much seems to have happened in the last nine months..."

I would like to highlight four particular outcomes we have achieved in the months since the AGM:

First, our Bridge it's a Big Deal! – a Festival of Bridge is an important and innovative way to bring bridge to the attention of many people who have... never played the game...

Second, there have been major changes at EBED...we are jointly confident that the consequences...will reap tangible rewards...

Third, the board has been looking at our Articles of Association... Assuming the necessary legal checks are complete in time, we will be presenting these...at the November AGM for approval...

Finally the whole board has been working on a new strategy...which will also be presented at the November AGM..."

So, whilst there has been much discussion, apart from the Festival, nothing meaningful has **"happened"** in the last year.

We believe the EBU needs to be steered towards halting and reversing the annual loss of 849 members, while also reducing the average age, which is steadily approaching 75!

A year to prepare new Articles for discussion is just not acceptable. The government publishes a template for Model Company Articles. It's free, takes less than a minute to download, and is used by thousands of companies every year.

Last year we proposed a new Memorandum of Association: *The purpose of the EBU is to support and promote English bridge.* It took us a couple of minutes and we didn't run it by any lawyers!

Tournaments etc.

Our priorities are to engage with social and grassroots bridge players to grow the bridge community, and to promote the game to non-players, especially youngsters. So we haven't talked much about tournaments and associated topics. Nevertheless we promised that we would refresh the tournament program. We set out our proposals in the attached paper.

Time is Running Out

If you want to see change, then please pass on the message to others like you who care about bridge. Invite them to get in touch with us and join the increasing number of players who want to see change. Speak to your club and county officers and tell them what change you want to see.

We will be standing for the EBU Board at the next AGM in November so that those who share our views have an opportunity to be represented. But time is running out. If change isn't made urgently it will soon be too late.

For more news and views, as well as updates on the EBU's successes and areas needing improvement, be sure to sign up for Nicky's newsletter. It's packed with valuable information and it's free - subscribe at: <http://eepurl.com/cZhrh1>

Regards

David and Nicky