



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ENGLISH BRIDGE UNION **1 September 2017 - 31 August 2018**

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 surplus is invested in our national game.

This annual report provides an insight in to the work that we do to support our clubs, Counties and members and will be of interest to those individuals and organisations that, in turn, provide us with support to develop the game.

I 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 under the Chief Executive, Gordon Rainsford.

The Board has been reviewing our overall membership figures along with a changing and aging demographic. They decided to act to tackle the challenge this poses for the EBU along with most traditional sporting and leisure activities.

In partnership with the Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association a pilot Membership Campaign is underway to establish the most effective techniques for encouraging the take up or return to playing Bridge. This is beginning to show results with clubs responding positively to the campaign. We have appointed a part time Membership Development Officer to support the spread of this project to further Counties.

We have planned and published a new five year strategic aims document entitled "Raising our Game 2018-2023" It's available on the EBU website at www.ebu.co.uk/documents/official-documents/strategic-aims-2018-2023.pdf.

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 2018.

Attached to this report is a review of our 2013-2018 strategy document (Appendix B).

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 2017-18 the responsibilities were as follows:

Chairman: Jeremy Dhondy

Vice-Chairman: Ian Payn

Treasurer: Jerry Cope

Board Director responsibilities

Tournaments: Ian Payn	European and World duplicate bridge affairs: Jeremy Dhondy
Facilitating the strategic plan: Jerry Cope	Awards: Ron Millet
Staff development: Jerry Cope	All Party Parliamentary Group: Ron Millet
Education: Rob Lawy	Bridge Warehouse: Graham Smith
County Working Group: Graham Smith (Ian Payn Midland Group) (Ron Millet Northern Group)	Sponsorship & Fundraising: Ian Payn & Gillian Fawcett
Legal matters: Anthony Golding	Archive: Jeremy Dhondy
Magazine & Editorial Board: Jeremy Dhondy	Club Affairs: Bev Godfrey
Tournament Directors Development: Heather Dhondy	Membership Project: Ron Millet
Bridge Great Britain: Jeremy Dhondy	

English Bridge Education & Development

Our associated charity English Bridge Education & Development (EBED) receives funds from the English Bridge Union to help it operate. It runs all education services that the EBU used to run including the English Bridge Teaching Association (EBTA). New Teacher Trainers have qualified to help in the next job which is to increase the number and spread of teachers. An up-to-date database of teachers has been produced with an improved way of accessing it on the website. Collaborative Research with the University of Stirling has been moving forward and a PhD project called “Bridging the gap” is due to start. A medical research project called “Bridge for Brains” has also moved ahead. This is based at Imperial College, London. Detail of both these projects is available at EBEDs website at www.ebedcio.org.uk. The Junior Teach-In returned this year held in Kings Langley.

Finance

2017/8 was a better year financially, nearly £30k better than budget, and resulting in a small profit. This was however almost entirely due to excellent sales of the new law books, coupled with not having to pay any royalties on those sales. Other cost and income changes largely balanced each other out. Attached is a chart (Appendix A) showing our sources and application of funds, which we have used on the website to be clear about what we do with our Members' money.

Although the law book benefit will largely not repeat in the coming years, we have also now, following the careful review of our finances and costs in particular, managed to put together a 4-year plan that meets our financial objective of making a small profit over the 4-year cycle whilst keeping price increases below or at RPI. The biggest risk to this projection is probably in UM receipts, which although currently showing only a very small downward trend, are under pressure from the demographic of our players. We need to attract more new players, and we are therefore, within the budget, investing in both teaching but also critically in helping our Clubs convert and welcome taught students to Members.

The 2018/19 financial year has started reasonably, but we do and will need to keep a control on our costs, whilst also ensuring, and investing to ensure, that our Members get a good and modern service.

Clubs and Club Services

For the period from September 2017 - August 2018, six clubs have re-affiliated to the EBU and two new clubs have joined. Nine clubs closed/disaffiliated/or merged in the period leaving the total number of affiliated clubs down one at 612. The reasons for disaffiliation (where known) included a reduction in numbers, lack of volunteers and increased rent, some of which can be put down to an ageing demographic. The trend appears to be those clubs that offer a “full” service including teaching, supervised play and a variety of sessions (including afternoon play) are doing well but some of the one session evening clubs are at risk. The reasons clubs give for joining the EBU are various - hoping to attract new members, raising the profile of the club, ability to enter County leagues, membership benefits including Master Points and belief in supporting the national governing body.

The Club Liaison Officer (CLO), Bev Purvis, has visited many affiliated clubs across the country and again has concentrated both on successful clubs (to get examples of best practice) and those with falling membership (to help in boosting numbers). The CLO has visited four non-affiliated clubs during the year, but none have decided to affiliate yet although some of the votes were very close.

The CLO has been involved in some aspects of the GDPR work, the revitalisation of the County Working Groups and has attended both the MCWG and NCWG meetings as well as presenting on “What does a Successful Bridge Club look like?” at the Somerset Bridge Fair, and on “From Classroom to Clubroom” at the Teachers’ Conference. Queries and requests for assistance from clubs continue to be wide ranging but assistance with applications for CIO status, Constitutional matters and other aspects of Club Management are the most frequent. Whilst clubs have welcomed the changes for new players to the number of boards played before counting for NGS, several teaching clubs would like to see wider teacher exemptions so that they are able to offer more mentoring for other players to help them play at club/tournament level.

The CLO continues to advise on ways of engaging with social bridge players as a way of boosting club membership including the use of Chicago events at open evenings and Cafe bridge. Several articles on how to boost member numbers have been included in the Club

Management Focus newsletters and new promotional literature for clubs has been developed in conjunction with Peter Stockdale, the Communications Officer. The new EBU membership booklet has been well received by clubs with some asking for copies for all their members, not just the new ones. The CLO hopes the appointment of the new Membership Development Officer will prove a welcome additional member benefit for clubs keen to boost their numbers.

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 2017-18 the group has held two meetings for which the EBU provides secretarial support, and to which the EBU and EBED are invited – only one meeting will be held in 2018-19.

The APPG was supportive of the EBU's efforts in its case with HMRC, and the referral to the EU courts, however as each member is restricted on the number of questions which they can raise in parliament – and other matters have been seen to be more pressing, given the current political climate – no formal action on the EBU's behalf has been taken in this area.

A formal letter from the EBU was passed by an APPG member - a member of House of Lords – to the new Minister for Loneliness, asking for an opportunity to meet with her to discuss the benefits of playing bridge in addressing loneliness, creating social connections, and providing mental stimulation. To date no response has been received.

The APPG has again hosted games at the Palace of Westminster in which schools' groups play with, and against, the Peers. In November 2017 pupils from Uppingham School and Bourne Academy, who had been learning as part of Stamford Youth Bridge Academy, were the visitors; in July 2018, it was a mixed group from schools in Horncastle and Alford in Lincolnshire, and Hitchin in Hertfordshire. At each of these visits the children received a tour of the building and were able to meet with their local MP. The MP for Stamford was also present at SYBA's 2nd inter-schools event which was attended by Gordon Rainsford, and members of the Junior Squad. Further school visits to the House of Lords are being arranged for 2019.

The EBU continues to organise the annual Lords v Commons match on behalf of the APPG.

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. It has been a good year for England at international level, with three teams qualifying for the World Championships next year:

- Open

The England Open team regained the Camrose trophy with good performances from our teams over the two home international weekends. For the first time in many years, trials were held for the European Open team (with one pair pre-selected), and the team subsequently went on to qualify for the World Championships by finishing a creditable 7th in the European Championships.

- Women

The England women's team unfortunately failed to retain the Lady Milne Trophy in the home internationals, coming second to a strong Scottish team. Trials were also held for the Women's European, and the selected team, after a poor start, finished in 5th place and qualified for the World Championships in 2019.

- Seniors

The senior team came second to Scotland in the Teltscher Trophy. The England senior team for the Europeans exceeded expectations and, by finishing 8th, grabbed the last qualifying spot for the World Championships.

- Juniors

For the home internationals, as hosts, we entered two U26 teams – one of which played as the EBU team. The Junior team won the Junior Camrose for the sixth time in a row, with the EBU team finishing second. Our U21 team retained the Peggy Bayer Trophy.

Our U16 team played in the new WBF Youth Teams Online Championships and earned a silver medal. We also achieved two bronze medals in the European Youth Pairs, in the U26 and U16 categories.

All four age categories had qualified for the World Championships in China and were generously supported by several sponsors and donors. Unfortunately, we didn't manage to progress from the round robin stages, although our U16 team came close.

- Mixed

There were no international mixed team events in the period, although the EBL announced that this category would be added to the European Team Championships (and to the subsequent World Championships). We are therefore holding trials to select the (self-funded) England team.

Junior squads

The Selection Committee is also responsible for the junior squads which provide training for young players. We appointed two new squad leaders (Giorgio Provenza for the U16s, Harry

Anoyrkatis for the U26), and an U26 team manager (Paul Barden). The focus of the squads in this cycle was on preparing the teams for the upcoming world championships. Giorgio has also spent a great deal of time scouting for future talent, which is likely to be a focus for all the squad leaders as they prepare for the European Championships next year. The challenge is to continue to build on the success we have recently seen at European level.

Regulation

The Laws and Ethics Committee (L&E) is made up of seven elected individual members of the EBU and two appointed Board members under the chairmanship of 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 from the website for free. There is also a series of videos relating to The Laws of Duplicate Bridge updated by the World Bridge Federation in 2017 produced by the Tournament Directors Development Group in conjunction with the WBF and European Bridge League, 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 have 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. It provides advice on model disciplinary procedures for clubs and counties and has also produced a set of model regulations for League Competitions.

The EBU Board has made updates to Best Behaviour at Bridge (BB@B). The link is available on the website and clubs are encouraged to put this on their websites.

There is a panel of referees appointed by the L&E who hear appeals at tournaments and act as telephone referees in knock out events, on a voluntary basis. They are also called upon from time to time to give rulings from club and county events.

Tournaments and Competitions

The main innovation we had this year was forced on us: our Eastbourne venue was undergoing extensive refurbishment and so we had to find a different home for the Summer Meeting. What we did was run the two large weekend events in London, changing their format and timings to help those who wished to commute, and run the mid-week evening events at a range of venues around the country.

This mid-week format was generally popular and we intend to repeat it after we have gone back to Eastbourne. We are also intending to do something similar for the Masters Pairs next year, in the hope that it allows a significant drop in the entry fees and so encourages

more to enter. The main weekend events were a little disappointing in numbers but generally enjoyed by those who played in them, so we are looking forward to getting back to Eastbourne to have a proper holiday congress.

One new introduction we had this year was the addition of a Seniors Championship Pairs to the popular Scarborough Congress, as well as an extra Seniors prize for the teams' competition. These will be regular features, making the congress a five-day seaside event for those who are eligible and wish to take part in all of it.

Our Overseas Congresses continue to be popular and perform well financially. Recently we have held some of them in city venues such as Lisbon and Budapest, which has been a popular innovation, with the February 2019 one to be held in Athens.

We continue to hold our standalone *Really Easy Congresses and Weekends* a few times a year, but at some of our main congresses we are trying a new format to encourage less experienced players instead of *Really Easy Afternoons*. These new games are *Jack High Swiss Pairs* events, the next one of which will be at the Year End Congress in London. They are aimed at club players who are interested in taking the first steps into congress bridge but who may have found it daunting to jump straight into a major competition. To qualify, players must have an NGS of no higher than 'Jack', with extra Master Points and prizes for those ranked '9' or lower. The format is six 6-board matches and the competitions are priced at a discounted rate to encourage new participants to congress bridge.

Our Funbridge robot games issuing Master Points continue to be popular and successful. We have expanded the schedule and now have four a week, with extras on bank holidays. We also have a monthly ladder and an annual ladder with cash prizes, which has stimulated interest in the games.

We continue to be pro-active, seeking out the best formats and venues. Feedback forms are an invaluable part of this, and we would encourage all participants to submit them.

Tournament Directors Development Group

The Tournament Directors Development Group (TDDG) is a subcommittee of the Board and deals with the development and management of the EBU's active Tournament Directors. It is chaired by Board Director, Heather Dhondy. During the period the group have produced a series of videos updating the original "How Can I Help You?" series to reflect the new Laws which were updated in 2017 by the World Bridge Federation. The major promotions in the period were Phil Godfrey to National level and James Vickers to Senior.

The County Working Group

The CWG Task Team submitted their report and recommendations to the EBU Board in January. The report was welcomed and there was broad agreement on the way forward. One or two minor amendments were suggested and the recommendations were resubmitted and approved by the Board at their March meeting. This included a model set of Terms of Reference for the CWG's for guidance. They are not mandatory but they do encompass good practice from practical experience gained to date.

The Northern and Midlands CWG's continue to go from strength to strength and both have a Board sponsor and regular attendance at their meetings by EBU senior management at Aylesbury. EBED senior management are also part of the CWG process and swifter and more direct involvement has led to a better level of cooperation and understanding.

The County Working Groups (CWG) in Eastern region, South West and the South East have yet to emerge but there has been some progress in the South West. The actual geography of the South West presents communication and cooperation issues that make intense and close working together very difficult. Therefore, it is likely that two or three counties might start things going via email or Skype, and hopefully other counties would join in future.

Both the Midlands and Northern CWG's have provided proof of the value of working together and they have also offered to help the South West get things going. Once the South West is up and running we could convene the National County Working Group to coordinate and support each other on a much broader and bigger scale. Hopefully, that in turn would encourage the South East and Eastern counties to take part.

The benefit and value of the CWG's is now well understood. As always, it needs people to commit the time to it to make it work. Thankfully, the CWG's have proven that the initial investment in time has led to lasting improvements and increases in county membership.

Membership

For some time the Board has been concerned about our levels of membership. These have been stagnant for several years. The situation has been made worse year on year by the increasing number who never play in one of our affiliated clubs, at least not in a formal session. That number is slowly growing both as a figure but also as a proportion of the total. This problem is made worse by the steady ageing of our membership where the average age now is probably just short of 70 years old. For the smaller clubs, which form most of our affiliates, that puts an increasing strain on the few stalwarts who run them.

In Autumn 2016 the Board acted and decided there should be a pilot Membership Campaign. The Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association was chosen to partner the EBU and lead in this venture. They in turn set up a small management team and appointed a part time Regional Development Officer, who became the first point of contact with active clubs. The approach has been one of joint development with the EBU providing financial support for the marketing development and materials. This was helped by a €3000 grant from the European Bridge League.

The YCBA style has been one of mentoring and gentle support with individual clubs being encouraged and helped to take the lead in running a membership drive in their own catchment area. To date 25 clubs have been approached and 13 are running their local campaigns. With the occasional exception the Campaign has been a great success. About 200 new members have been generated with one club increasing their number by a third.

Reports to the Board containing more detailed information on the statistics and the early results of the Campaign can be seen here -

www.ebu.co.uk/documents/miscellaneous/MEMBERSHIP-CAMPAIGN-THIRD-REPORT-Sept-17-combined.pdf

Several key conclusions have arisen from this work.

The experience has been that once convinced, clubs are remarkably enthusiastic in pursuing a membership campaign. It is almost as though they had been waiting for someone to

crystallise their concern and encourage them to deal with it. The gentle approach sometimes threw up novel ways of campaigning. Word of mouth and the use of targeted Facebook advertising seem to be the most effective. Finally, the direct costs for a club to run an effective campaign can be as little as £200.

Recently your Board agreed to start a roll out of the Campaign to other areas. At the time of writing we are in discussions with 3 Counties whilst Manchester working with Merseyside & Cheshire have started their campaign with their own Project Officer in post.

Nationally we have appointed a Membership Development Officer, Tim Anderson, who initially will be working in this area for two days per week. Among his duties will be the development of a Resource Centre to assist all Counties and clubs that wish run a campaign and the offer of support where ever it is needed.

It is worth pointing out that we lose about 3500 members through natural wastage every year. Given the average age of our membership that is to be expected. However, it means that all the effort put into teaching throughout the country merely enables us to stand still.

This Campaign aims to take us beyond that situation, ensuring a successful future for our organisation at all levels

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 & Development, with whom we share offices and some administrative systems. EBED has a Chief Executive in the person of Donna Wright, as well as three other staff.

Some further highlights

- **Media coverage**

The verdict in the VAT case at the European Court prompted a significant amount of media interest, though several planned pieces and interviews were cancelled once the (less controversial, and therefore less interesting) result was known.

Nonetheless, some pieces, including interviews with Board Members or staff, were included on news programmes on both ITV and the BBC, and some national and local radio stations. The result, and some of the issues surrounding the case, were reported in all national newspapers, in many regional and local publications, and in many publications around the world. In most instances the reporting was neutral in tone, though often not factually accurate. Our media monitoring service estimates the value of the coverage in the printed media to be around £15m – though as 2/3 of

the coverage was in outlets outside the UK, this figure should be treated with caution.

Despite efforts to engage with the national press regarding the junior teams' participation in the World Youth Team Championships, disappointingly the only coverage of the event was in their bridge columns, and nothing was reported in the 'main part' of the papers.

- **IT and Data matters**

We are still not entirely over the problems associated with the replacement of our membership database software and some members are inconvenienced by not being able to see a complete current record of their accounts. We are aiming to provide a solution to this, but it is proving to be less simple than one might imagine.

We have introduced a new online shop, which uses the Shopify software and provides a much improved shopping experience for members. We have also made our first steps in to selling products via Amazon, which we hope will attract custom from those who are unaware of the Bridge Warehouse.

The introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation in May led to us having to tighten up some of our procedures, but in the process allowed us to provide clubs and counties with new information and reports that we expect them to find useful.

A combined EBU and EBED directory of bridge clubs and teachers, with a geographical finder feature, has just been launched and we hope it will be expanded in due course to include tournament directors.

- **Staff**

Julie Murray, our receptionist for over six years, has left and her place has been taken by Liz Goodchild, moving across from the Bridge Warehouse. Liz's place in turn was taken by Emma Gardiner, but she too is now moving on and will be replaced by Steve Walker.

Clare Burnage, our accounts assistant, has just had twins so is on maternity leave, but we look forward to welcoming her back to work in due course.

Peter Stockdale is leaving us after more than five years as Communications Officer.

General Meetings 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. There are currently two shareholder meetings a year, one of which is an annual general meeting held in November and the other a Shareholders' Meeting held in May. This report will be presented to the shareholders for discussion at the Annual General Meeting on 28th November 2018.

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 2017 – 31 August 2018

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

Honorary Counsel

David Ewart QC

Pro Bono Advisor (*The Pro Bono Adviser advises any Defendant charged with an Offence on the procedure set out in the Disciplinary Rules if requested to give such advice by the Defendant*)

Stephen Barnfield

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

Norman Inniss, Joy Mayall, 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, Dick Davey, Ron Davis, Tony Forrester, Mike Huggins, Jane Jensen, Fiona Littlewood, Clive Owen, Martin Pool (Chairman), Shirley Pritchard, Bryan Willis

EBU Pie Charts of income and expenditure 2017-18

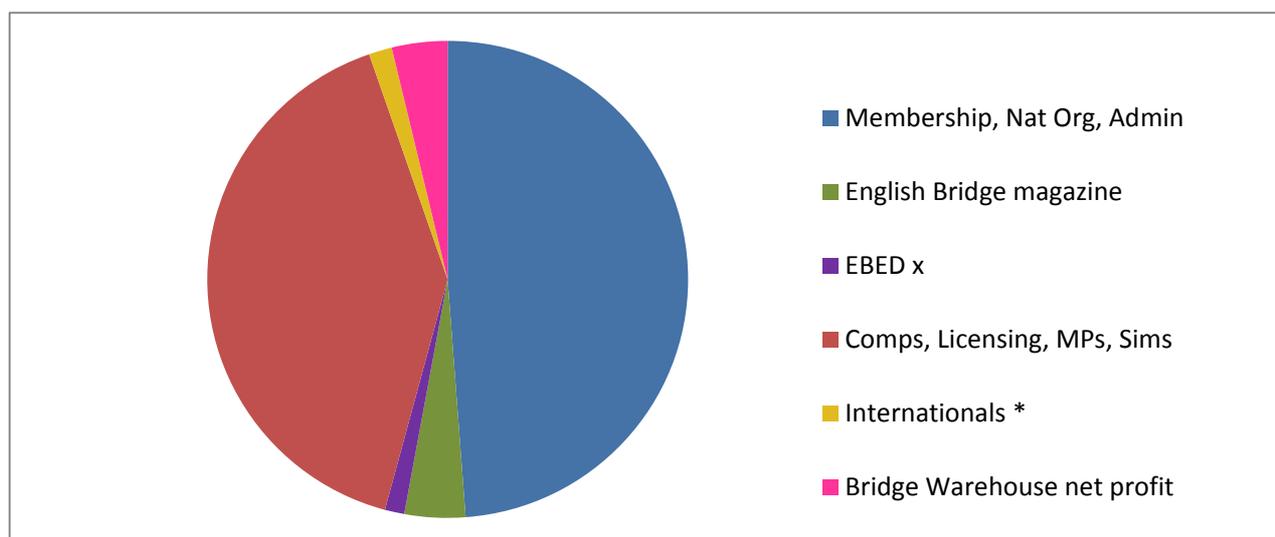
	INCOME	EXPENDITURE(£,000s)
Membership, Nat Org, Admin	706.8	-546.0
English Bridge magazine	59.3	-167.6
EBED ^x	18.8	-95.8
Comps, Licensing, MPs, Sims	586.3	-493.3
Internationals *	22.6	-143.10
Bridge Warehouse net profit	54.2	
	1,448.0	-1,445.8

^x English Bridge Education and Development charity

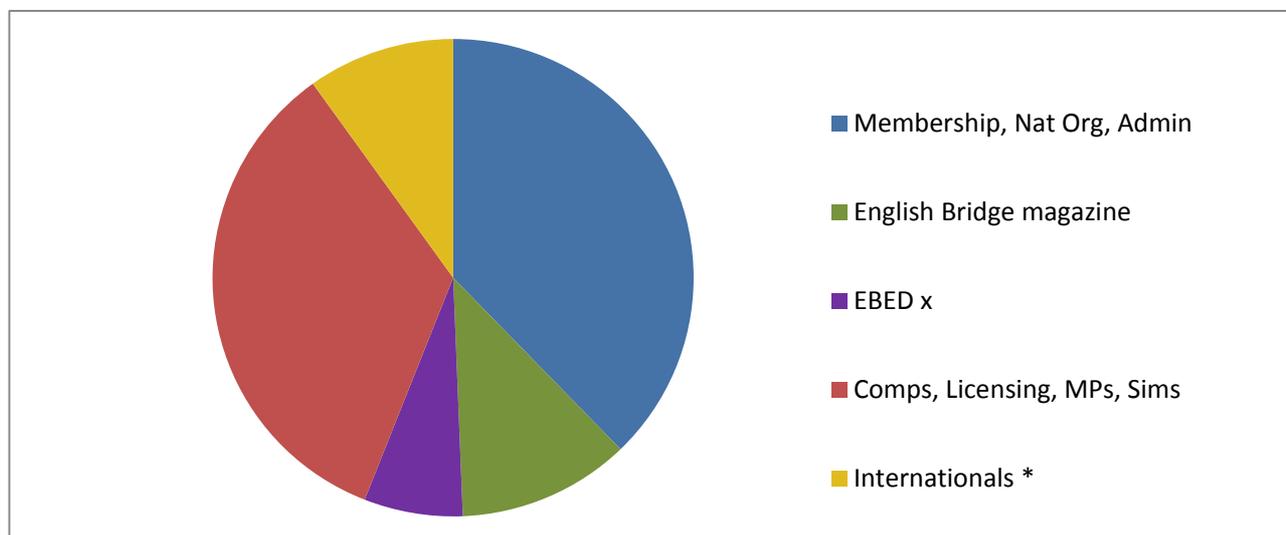
* Ave of last four years as Internationals finances vary according to a four-year cycle

2017-18 Internationals: 28.3 -134.0

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



Appendix B

REVIEW OF 2013-2018 STRATEGY: BIDDING FOR THE FUTURE

Introduction

1. This is a review progress against our 2013-2018 strategic objectives, under each of the original 10 sub-strategies.

Governance and Charitable Status

2. We have made progress in a number of key strands in this area. EBED is established, we are simplifying our governance, eg removal of the Tournament Committee, and generally apply the principles of the Charity Good Governance Code. We are more involved worldwide, and our communications are improved, albeit some of our stakeholders would still like more. We haven't found the resource to do much on volunteering, although this was the subject of some preliminary work by one of the County sub-groups.

Supporting Bridge and Securing the Future

3. In terms of the 2 main strands identified for action, promoting the game and supporting our international players, we have made good progress, including setting up and running an U16 international squad for both boys and girls, but we or more precisely EBED has made only a little headway with attracting charitable donations. Further progress, particularly in supporting our international teams, has to some extent been constrained by financial pressures.

Relationships with our Counties and Clubs

4. We established new County Working Groups, but they have had mixed success geographically. Following a review with County Chairs in the summer, they are being re-launched. We have provided additional popular support to Clubs (eg Insurance and equipment grants) and in teaching, often but not only through EBED, including the Telegraph advertisement and other initiatives set out in the Education heading below.

5. In the remaining two areas of this strategic strand, both related to attracting non-affiliated players, our efforts are still progressing but membership has remained more or less constant. It continues to be problematic to balance making the EBU a value-added benefit to Members, whilst gaining some relationship with non-affiliated clubs, which largely, but not entirely, we have delegated to EBED. The action around low-cost ways for people to learn bridge was devised to make our potential charitable status clearer, and perhaps, given we went down the EBED route, has proved not to be a priority for the EBU.

Education

6. We set EBED clear priorities, and provided funding, in improving teaching both generally and in schools particularly and were set and remain as their priority areas, for which the EBU provides the funding. The new Fast Track Bridge teaching programme has been launched after careful trials, and looks like being a success. Progress in schools is, maybe not surprisingly, slower than hoped with huge competition for time and resource in schools. But activity continues and a number of areas are running strong programmes for younger players eg the Regional Junior Camps and a successful programme in Stamford BC.

7. Separately the EBU has attracted EBL part-funding to set up a pilot of attracting new players to our Clubs through teaching. Yorkshire has led this trial with a selection of Clubs, and with help from Aylesbury, and following an evaluation of the results, this is now being rolled out with dedicated resource.

Tournaments and Regulations

8. On tournaments, we have regularly reviewed our tournaments and have introduced new ideas, eg point-a-board, as well as rationalising others. We are not alone in world bridge in looking at decline in attendances, but there are some signs of stability or even improvement in selected events.

9. On online, we are not the leading provider, but we have introduced successful competitions, including with robot partners and opponents and an increasingly popular online knock-out tournament. We have partnered Funbridge in extending our online reach, and participation has been excellent and above expectation.

10. On regulation we have improved presentation of the rules, as well as simplifying some aspects. It is fair to say that many members will always find the rules complex, but we can be satisfied with progress here. And an online forum has been set to facilitate discussion.

International Teams

11. Our international teams have had a good record, and we have increased our support for junior teams, within the constraints of financial pressures and other priorities.

12. We successfully hosted the Champions Trophy.

13. We are more engaged with the EBL, and are pushing them towards greater transparency, albeit change is slow.

Technology

14. We have made good progress across all the elements of this strand. We use a blended form of communications, including making an enhanced magazine available online; We continue to push forward and trial the use of new technology at our congresses; We have

online tournaments clearly established; and the website was improved, albeit a further refresh may well be appropriate over the next couple of years.

Our Employees

15. Overall there has been progress in this area, albeit continued effort remains appropriate. We have introduced more systematic communication between the Board and Aylesbury, and our employees are very supportive of, and committed to, what the EBU is trying to do. We have managed to ensure our employment packages are competitive both on a general and particular basis, and we have successfully reformed our sick leave provision. We have a Succession Plan. Finally, we analysed alternative premises, but decided instead to stay where we are and made some investments in improving our current building.

Archives

16. The EBU's archives have been reorganised, and are now more accessible, and generally our attention to this area has improved. A history of bridge, volume 1, was also commissioned and published.

Communication and Reporting

17. We have reported on our progress, through the Annual Report, through more Newsletters to particular audiences, and through as open as possible publication of our own Board and Sub-Committee minutes.

Conclusion

18. We have generally made good progress in taking forward our 2013-2018 Plan, but a few areas were deprioritised or found more difficult than we hoped (eg converting non-affiliated clubs) and the economic climate has been tighter than was being forecast for the 5-year cycle. The strategic areas identified 5 years ago remain valid and are being built upon for the next 5-year Plan. In particular, we need to create the financial headroom to invest in retaining and if possible improving, our membership numbers to safeguard the future of duplicate bridge.