

Chair Newsletter August 2024

We're looking forward to moving into the new bridge season in September, and a lot has been happening in preparation for the season ahead.

Developing Youth Bridge in Scotland

Michael Rushworth has been appointed as Youth Coordinator in a part-time role to provide leadership and coordination for youth bridge within Scotland through the districts and their representatives. The SBU is really excited about this role and what it can offer moving forward. We believe that having one person who is coordinating our efforts, with clear and agreed goals, is the best way to bring about long-term success.

The Youth Co-ordinator has three key priorities in his role: running events for young people, developing a strategy to retain younger players, and developing education provision across Scotland by working with the clubs and districts. Each one of these areas will have its own committee, chaired by Michael, with volunteers who are able to contribute their time and energy into areas that they are passionate about.

The SBU has long known that our clubs and members have been incredibly supportive of youth bridge. To that end, we would like to note our thanks and appreciation to Colinton Castle Bridge Club which is providing a regular funding contribution, and Falkirk Bridge Club, East Fife League, and Glenrothes, which all gave us residue funding for youth bridge following their closure.

This is not a short-term project. The SBU is committed to youth development as the most sustainable way to grow our game. Consequently, we do need people to work with us to ensure that we are making these plans a reality. If you are interested in giving some of your time and energy to any of the areas mentioned above, please do reach out to Michael Rushworth (m.c.rushworth@stir.ac.uk). If you would like to help contribute to the work financially, Laura Cooper (financial.controller@sbu.org.uk) will be pleased to help!

Financial Update

Although the SBU is in the fortunate position of having strong reserves, the cost of running the organisation continues to rise significantly despite volunteers giving over 8,000 hours of their time last year. We will publish an operating loss this year and expect a more significant loss in the coming financial year. The trustees agreed that, with pressures on ensuring financial sustainability, we must increase income and reduce costs.

Our primary sources of income are from member subscriptions, masterpoint sales and national competition surpluses. At current levels, they are nowhere near sufficient to meet the organisation's overheads. Reluctantly we shall have to make some changes:

- (a) Having not increased the cost of supplying masterpoints and red point licences for over 7 years, we will be increasing these charges.
- (b) In 2020 the SBU worked quickly to set up a revenue share agreement with BBO, which provided a financial lifeline for many clubs during and immediately after COVID. At the time it was decided that clubs needed the income and that the SBU would absorb all the admin costs. In the 4 intervening years the SBU has covered the costs of administering the monthly BBO reconciliations and payouts to all clubs. The Trustees consider that the SBU now needs some recompense to meet future costs.

We shall be writing to club treasurers to explain these two changes in detail. We are actively pursuing other opportunities to increase income which, at the same time, provide additional benefits to our members.

We will also seek to reduce costs by no longer funding adult international players' accommodation and travel for home internationals. This is broadly in line with the other home countries. In recognition that this may be problematic for some adult players, the SBU will set aside a designated discretionary fund to help support those players struggling financially. We shall continue to fund the costs for youth teams representing Scotland.

Festival of Bridge – It's a Big Deal!

With only a week to go until the inaugural Festival of Bridge, it's terrific to see so many clubs and individual members organising events across Scotland. There are more events being added to the map on the SBU Festival web page all

the time, so click [HERE](#) to see What's On in your area. Even if you are not an avid Facebook user, check out our dedicated pages <https://www.facebook.com/scottishbridgeunion>. Bridge being played in a swimming pool, bus shelter and cliff top are a few of the innovative pop-up bridge challenges that members have organised.

We hope that everyone in the bridge community will join in the festival and help raise funds for Cancer Research this September. To find out more visit: <https://www.sbu.org.uk/festival-of-bridge> or email Robyn Glynne-Percy on festival@sbu.org.uk.

Volunteers

I can't stress enough our dependence on volunteers, without which the organisation could not function. We still need more volunteers to share the load. Please get in touch if you have any spare time and wish to give something back to the game we love.

All the very best wishes for the new season. Remember to be nice to partner, opposition and TDs and, most importantly, enjoy your bridge.

Alan Goodman

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