

Introduction

At the County Chairs meeting of 29 Sep 2022 there was a discussion of the proposal for changes to Online One Day Green Point (OODGP) events which was issued to County Associations on 26 Aug 2022. It was suggested by some attendees that Shareholders might wish to consider a different approach at the AGM on 30 Nov 2022. The changes are part of a coherent Proposal for major bridge events in England which is re-presented here (slightly modified as some options have changed) along with the issues which led to its creation. Any alternative must address these same issues and must integrate with the financial plans which are also being considered at the AGM.

This content of this paper offers a framework to enable the development of a comparable alternative Proposal.

Issues to Address – Finances

The Competitions Calendar makes a significant contribution to EBU income, and that income is what funds international events as well as the various other aspects of our work that are not paid for by the UMS charges, which need to be kept at an acceptable level for affiliated clubs.

The income from competitions has been falling for some years, but it has dropped more significantly since the pandemic, in part because County-organised Online Green Point events have become an attractive alternative, by offering a lower entry fee for the same Green Points that the EBU offers in national games. If these drops continue, more national events will cease to be viable, and opportunities for players will become less varied.

The EBU plans to charge for the replacement OODGP series at a rate (£20 pp) which is intermediate between the rate counties have charged and the rate for other national events. As well as enabling support of the game in general, the income so generated will also relieve pressure to raise the prices of other national games.

This proposal cannot be considered in isolation of the effect on County Association finances, and it is recognised that this change will remove an attractive, revenue earning game, from the CBA repertoire. In recognition of this, the EBU will halve the entry fees in the main county-representative events (the Corwen, Pachabo and Tollemache).

County associations will still be able to run ODGP events face-to-face on the specified weekends, as well as online Blue Point events as revenue earners if they wish but they will no longer be able to run ODGP events online, or online congresses created by combining ODGP events. They will remain able to award Green Points for county events such as major championships if they choose to run these online. Furthermore, we are considering devolving some national, green-pointed events, such as the Portland Pairs and the qualifying stage of the National Pairs, so as to provide counties with more opportunities to run online events that award green points.

Based on some broad assumptions, we forecast that the national ODGP events and other changes in the Proposal will generate an annual surplus of £30,200. We propose that £11,050 is used to halve the entry fees for county representative events. Although there will be a reduction in licence fees, we also expect numbers in national events (both online and face-to-face) to improve, leaving us with a balance to be used to allow national F2F events to be priced more competitively.

Issues to Address – Calendar Crowding

EBU licensed events and EBU organised events have always been timetabled to spread the playing options across the months, and to avoid unnecessary competition between different providers. Despite this the calendar has become too crowded, and this is exacerbated by the fact that an online event has the potential for a national audience, where in the past live events in different parts of the country interfered very little with each other and so could happen on the same dates. The existence of the online events has made it more difficult for the EBU and Counties to rekindle interest in live events, and where multiple online events are run on the same day, this represents wasteful competition (and has been seen to lead to some cancellations).

The proposal will replace the online county ODGP events, which have become spread out over a number of weekends, with a series of 10 one-day Green Point events, thereby freeing up the calendar better for live events. These will be scheduled to avoid, as far as possible, competing with County Congresses. This series of events will provide a mix of Swiss Pairs and Swiss Teams, and of BBO and RealBridge, in order to support players with preferences in any of these directions.

Benefits of the Proposal

As well as addressing the issues listed above, the new OODGP series will provide games which are more attractive to players (consolidating attendance at such events generating larger fields and higher Master Points awards) as well as giving players the incentive to compete in as many as possible to move themselves, or their County, or their Club, up the cross-event ranking which the EBU will be arranging.

Some counties have been finding it tough financially as they have not been successful in competing with other bigger counties to run ODGP events. Counties should not have to compete with larger counties or with the EBU in this way; what is offered to the players needs to be a cohesive set of events that fulfils all requirements of all the groups of players, priced consistently.

Appendix - The Proposal

This is based on a return to the established division or responsibilities, with EBU running all national events, counties running regional events and clubs running local events.

National events to continue running live:

- Easter Congress
- Year-End Congress
- Schapiro Spring Foursomes
- Summer Meeting
- Overseas Congresses run by First for Bridge – two or three per annum
- Crockfords Finals
- Garden Cities Trophy (regional and national finals)

Live congresses to continue to be run by counties and other bodies:

- Guernsey Congress
- Jersey Congress
- Great Northern Swiss Pairs - Yorkshire
- Northern Easter Congress - Yorkshire
- Harrogate Spring Congress - Yorkshire
- Scarborough Congress Now to be run for us by Oliver Cowan
- Spring Bank Holiday Congress Now to be run for us by Oliver Cowan, including the 2-Stars Pairs

National events to be run online, as well as the 10 ODGP events that will take the place of all county-run online ODGP events:

- National Point-a-Board Congress
- Corwen Trophy
- Pachabo Trophy
- Tollemache Trophy (live final)
- Seniors Congress
- National Pairs
- Portland Pairs
- Ranked Masters Pairs
- Masters Pairs (Online/F2F run by clubs)
- National Handicap Pairs (Online/F2F run by clubs)
- National Teams League – new event

National events to be discontinued, at least for the immediate future:

- Northern Midweek Congress
- Autumn Congress
- English Riviera Congress
- National Swiss Teams Congress
- Summer Seniors Congress