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New Zealand Bridge Online Bridge Strategy Consultation

This submission is from the Hutt Bridge Club Committee. Our indicated preference was for our Committee to have a consultation meeting via Zoom with the Working Group but, as this has not eventuated, we are making a written submission.

As part of our preparation for a recent Planning Day, we surveyed our members and included questions about online bridge to help us answer your questions below.

Implications of Online Bridge

1. What are the major implications of online bridge from your perspective and how should they be addressed by New Zealand Bridge?

75% of our survey respondents agreed that online bridge will be an important part of the game in the future. Nearly all respondents also said that they enjoy playing bridge at the club with half of them also indicating that the social side of bridge is important to them. Preserving and protecting face-to-face (f2f) bridge is clearly important to our club. Strategic management of online bridge is required to ensure that (f2f) bridge is not super ceded or side-lined otherwise the financial viability of clubs such as ours under the current club based model is undermined. Addressing the issue as you are now doing is good – acknowledging that there are now two main platforms to play on while encouraging both.

Online Bridge Sessions

2. In the future would you like there to be a regular schedule of online bridge sessions (e.g. daytime and evening sessions similar to club play)?

Yes. We are considering adding an extra evening session of online club bridge to our programme next year as well as having several other series online within existing club sessions.

- a. What are your reasons for saying this?

42% of our respondents said they would use online bridge if it became a regular option for club play with a further 32% indicating that they would play occasionally. So, we think there is a place for online bridge at our club in a complementary way with f2f.

- b. If this is something you would like to see, should they be run by New Zealand Bridge, by individual clubs or both? What are your reasons for this view?

If they are part of the club's programme, then the club should run them.

Tournaments

3. What would be your ideal future – e.g. in-person, online, mix of in-person and online - for the following types of tournaments:

Our members were unsure about whether tournaments should be online.

- a. B-Point Club tournaments? *We would like to run our usual tournaments either online or f2f.*
 - b. A-Point Club tournaments? *We would like to run our usual tournaments either online or f2f.*
 - c. Regional events and Mini Congresses?
 - d. National events?
4. If online tournaments are part of your ideal future who should organise them (e.g. NZ Bridge, regions, clubs)?
If clubs are allocated a tournament, then they should organise them whether they are online or f2f.

What are your reasons for this view?

Online tournaments should be organised by whichever body is hosting them.

5. How important is it for in-person and online tournaments to be scheduled at separate times?
Very important.
- a. What makes you say this?
Otherwise, we are competing with ourselves.
 - b. If they are held at the same time, should there be geographical restrictions on who is allowed to enter the online tournament?
Restricting entries based on location to online tournaments seems counterintuitive.
6. What would be your ideal future for the Interprovincial Championships?
If they remain removed from National Congress, then online seems a good option.

At what time of year and how (e.g. in-person or online) should it be held?

F2f at Congress or online maybe earlier in the year soon after the trials.

Learning

7. What, if anything, should be done to support people learning bridge online?
We think lessons for beginners should be f2f at the club using the NZB lesson plans. If there were extra standard recorded tutorials or examples available online as a supplement, we would support that. We would also support beginners from our community learning online from NZB if we were not offering f2f lessons at the time but would like to see them then being encouraged to join our club to receive the ongoing mentoring/coaching and practice.
- a. If you think online lessons should be offered, who should organise them – NZ Bridge, clubs or both? What makes you say this?
NZ Bridge – for consistency and presumably the ability to offer a range of courses and the same course at various time slots.
 - b. If you believe NZ Bridge should offer some centrally organised online lessons then:
 - i. How should clubs be involved to ensure learners can transition to club play?
We think beginners should be taught f2f at the club (see above) but if ones referred by us or from our district do learn online, then they should be referred to us and we should also be given their contact details (with

their permission of course) to follow up. If playing online requires a NZB number, then anybody who learns this way needs to belong to an affiliated club anyway and then it is up to us to look after and retain them.

- ii. How often should online lessons be run?
Regularly – maybe 4 times a year especially for Improvers.

Resourcing

- 8. We invite ideas and thoughts about how the following aspects of online bridge should be resourced (e.g. by NZ Bridge, by clubs or both) in the future:
 - a. Online directing
Training by NZB with a directory available so clubs can find a director for their online tournaments.
 - b. Technical support for playing online
If it's to be RealBridge, then they provide technical support? Clubs should support their players on how to check they have the right equipment and provide access to a tutorial on how to play online using RealBridge. NZB could have both these tutorials available on its website.
 - c. Organisation of any Online National Events
Organised and charged for by NZB.

Revenue

- 9. What, if anything, should happen in terms of sharing some or all of the revenue from the following types of online bridge:
 - a. Club sessions run by clubs but open to all bridge players
Revenue stays with the club which also meets the expenses.
 - b. B Centrally organised online sessions run by NZ Bridge
NZB.
 - c. Club tournament players
Revenue stays with the club which also meets the expenses.
 - d. Regional events and mini congresses
The region or organising body.
 - e. National Events
NZB.
 - f. Online lessons organised by NZ Bridge
NZB.

Other Comments

- 10. Are there any other comments or thoughts about in-person or online bridge that you would like to share as part of this consultation?
If NZB accumulates a lot of new money from offering online services, then some mechanism to return some to the clubs which players/ learners come from should be considered along with cutting some costs to clubs who may find a drop in f2f playing numbers threatening their viability. This could take the form of reducing the cost of masterpoints or the NZB levy.