

2025 Management Report By David Guild, Joint Chair of YCBA

May I start by saying a huge thank you to all the YCBA Board, Committee Members and those working in the background to make our County's organisation such a productive benefit to our Yorkshire Clubs and Members – and all delivered on an entirely voluntary basis! Thank you all!

The YCBA is a net contributor; we always give out over double what we receive in fees. Lesley is going to show you this when we look at the annual finances.

Let's look at our performance stats.....

Now that the EBU releases monthly session stats that we share with our clubs we should all have a better understanding of how your club and County are performing – if your club does not receive these stats, just ask.

To summarise at County level, we have been static for the last three years at 3,500 Yorkshire members.

Armed with better current stats we are far more knowledgeable and now realise that over 10,000 “included EBU members” do not actually play in any club sessions. Mainly they are former players who just keep up their club memberships for nostalgia loyalty purpose.

Our true national membership is now under 30,000 regularly playing members – for Yorkshire equating to **2,200 regular playing members**. Quite a drop when we apply the “currently playing test” from 3,500 Yorkshire members previously reported.

Peoples' leisure activities are always changing.

For comparison, I went to the NEC at the end of May for the 3-day Tabletop Gaming Expo, similar to a national Congress, and they had 42,000 unique players attending.

We have to accept that Bridge is now a minority social activity and we are not currently engaging with our public. We need to reach out more and take club growth seriously – if we do not plan to grow, our continued slow decline is inevitable.

For many of our long-established clubs that are comfortable, this message may seem an irrelevance but look around you, we are losing smaller clubs and no new clubs are being formed. Bridge demand is out there and some of our clubs are modernising, taking risk and achieving growth. If this is your club, I applaud you!

But back to this YCBA year.....

We are continuing to support our clubs with our free teaching platform, free TD courses our general advice service and our generous grants. We gave out **£8,000 in grants in this year**. Additional to our equipment grants, which we expect to have more demand as clubs replace their old Bridgemates with modern alternatives, we have our teaching grant to defray teaching premises rental and our diversity grant to share costs of better club access improvements – such as disabled toilet facilities. These newer grants are already being taken up.

Besides our grant, this year we have achieved a lot of other work on diversity development and Ron is going to speak on this later.

At last year's AGM, I spoke a lot about offering a Teaching Course support service. I personally spent a lot of time talking to our clubs and non-affiliates about this. It was frustrating that, whilst we encouraged a couple of non-affiliates to themselves start teaching, generally I failed to encourage our clubs to either start teaching or to expand their teaching beyond their present club teacher where demand exceeded teacher capacity. We started the service in September 2024 but had to close due to lack of take up. A pity as club growth is directly proportional to teaching level.

Nick is shortly going to speak about the way that we are continuing to change our approach to our tournaments programme to make them more inclusive at all player ability levels.

But there is a more fundamental educational problem with tournaments that we need to tackle at the grass roots. Clubs are not selling tournament participation sufficiently to our recent members. In this absence, I think the grapevine still operates with the outdated message that tournaments are intense, scary and to be avoided whereas the truth is that they are there to enrich all players whatever level.

We, the YCBA, are also at fault as we do not sufficiently sell ourselves and our achievements and products to club members, something we need to address urgently – nothing is more frustrating for us than seeing a high level of our member emails being unopened as quotes “junk mail”.

Finally, I need to finish with a plea.....

We believe that the YCBA is relevant and provides a very worthwhile service to all clubs and membership across our County. I hope you do too.....

For some time, we have planned to modernise our Board structure and to involve more people in the running of our administration and competition services so that we can smoothly go forward. We are now coming to the stage where retirement from our Board and desire of others to step down is frustrating our development and threatening our work continuance in its present form.

Across the last 18 months, Nick and I have sent out previous messages to both Clubs and members that we need more volunteers, and we flagged this up at our last AGM,..... all to no avail. This cannot continue... ..We need more helpers urgentlyand they do not need to be long served members, every new member from day one brings with them their lifetime skills. And, whilst we are short on Board Members, we welcome those who want to share in just a specific task such as taking bookings, helping with duplimating etc.

We will shortly send out a further request for helpers which will itemise the roles and tasks where we need additional volunteers, but we need your support as Club administrators to ensure that this time our message is not just taken as another of those irrelevant emails from the YCBA.

Thank you, we will pass next to Lesley, our Treasurer, to show you the financials.

David, June 2025

