

WBU Honoraria Policy

Introduction

Council started to look at the honoraria paid to some of the volunteers who take on important roles for the WBU. Jean Cufley did some very valuable investigations as part of this review. At its meeting on 18/7/2010 Council passed the review over to the WBU Management Committee (MC) which established a small group, consisting of those members of the MC who do not receive any honoraria and have no interest in receiving one.¹ Council considered their report in March 2011 and added a few aspects. This is the report updated in the light of Council's decisions.

Background

The WBU has always been an essentially volunteer organisation. Only in recent years have we appointed a Chief Executive, whose remuneration is very small for the work involved. The CE plays a central role of course, but the bulk of the WBU's administrative and organisational activities are undertaken by countless individuals at club, area and national levels. They give their time and efforts in return for the enjoyment they have gained from bridge, and out of dedication to their fellow players.

It has become the custom for the WBU to give small honoraria to people undertaking major tasks at national level. The levels of such honoraria have not been reviewed as a whole for some years, and it was felt that some of them might need adjustment, which is why this review was suggested at Council.

Principles

There are a number of principles that we feel should be recognised relating to honoraria:

We must be constrained by what we can afford. Current honoraria, not including the fees paid to the CEO, come to over £2 per member.

Volunteers should not be out of pocket. We should reimburse our volunteers for any expenditure they incur in carrying out these roles. We should err on the side of generosity in doing this. Computer expenses are an awkward issue which is discussed below.

Honoraria are not 'pay'. If we considered them to be so, the hourly rates would be completely derisory, clearly contriving any minimum wage legislation. Our honoraria should be seen as tokens of our appreciation for the work undertaken by these much valued volunteers.²

Broad comparability. It is impracticable to measure accurately the effort that goes into each role. But we should at least have a good idea of which are the most onerous roles, and endeavour to ensure that the levels of honoraria reflect this.

Honoraria should only be given for major tasks. Dozens of volunteers contribute to the running of the WBU, and it would lead to all sorts of problems if we tried to give honoraria to more than a small minority that undertake major roles. Apart from comparability issues, we would be in danger of undermining the important culture of selfless volunteering that we so much rely on. We must, however,

¹ Chris Davies, Jill Knight, Neville Richards, Mike Tedd and Adrian Thomas

² Note however that honoraria are considered by HMRC to be income and hence taxable.

be very gracious in marking our appreciation of our unpaid volunteers for the work that they do and the problems that they solve.

Computer Expenses

Computers are getting a bit like cars. Most people have them and will on occasions use them as part of the work they do on behalf of the organisations for which they work. The marginal cost of use is much smaller than the non-marginal costs of purchase, maintenance, line rental and so on. Indeed with computers the marginal costs are usually very small.

A hard-hearted organisation might insist on only meeting marginal costs. But the user may well feel a need to have a more modern more-reliable machine than he or she would have just for personal use, and may feel aggrieved at meeting 100% of the non-marginal costs.

The WBU should have a policy on computer expenses. Our recommendation is that they should only be paid when the task requires regular significant use of a computer – more than just emails. Perhaps £50 a year might be a reasonable contribution for the WBU to make in such circumstances. Specific expenditure clearly for WBU purposes should be met in full, of course; for example specialist software can be needed for tasks like laying out the newsletter & journal and for managing the website, and the WBU should purchase such items.

Recommendations

The most demanding and vital roles we have are:

Master Point Secretary

This is currently a huge labour-intensive task for which the honorarium of £2000 is appropriate. With direct entry of points the effort needed should become very much less. However the transition may itself be quite demanding as many clubs need help to move over.

It is recommended that the honorarium be reduced to £1000 per year when the transition is complete, but stay at £2000 in 2011-12 in the expectation that the transition will be demanding.

Treasurer

This is a vital and time-consuming role with a lot of responsibility. The current honorarium does not reflect this.

It is recommended that an honorarium of £1000 be paid (with effect from 2010-11).

National Tournament Organiser

This is another vital role. We have seen how care and energy applied to this role can transform our members' participation and the enjoyment they get from our competitions. However the responsibilities of this role have been reduced by Neville taking over the Journal and a volunteer running the two cups.

It is recommended that an honorarium of £500 be given for this role.

There are several important roles which need to be considered:

Membership Secretary

This is now a much easier task than it used to be, thanks to the investment in computerisation. There have, however, been quite a lot of little issues to address during transition.

It is recommended that an honorarium of £250 be offered for 2010-11 but that there be no regular honorarium after that.

Newsletter Layout etc

This is a technical challenge that has to be done professionally in an intensive period as soon as the text is ready to be processed. From 2011-12 the honorarium should be £200 per year, assuming 4 issues; whether this should still be given should be reviewed when the role passes to someone new.

Organisation of the Welsh and Cambrian Cups

This is a shining example of a volunteer in action. We are indebted to Mike Best for volunteering to take this on and very pleased by the increased participation. There has been a lot of work getting the new format for the Welsh Cup going.

So we have thought hard whether it would be appropriate to introduce an honorarium here. However it is recommended that this should not happen. This is clearly a role where a contribution to computer expenses is appropriate.

Minutes Secretary

We used to give an honorarium to the secretary who prepared minutes for Council and the AGM. Now that Council meets much less often, it is recommended that this honorarium cease.

There are two roles being undertaken for which the incumbents do not accept honoraria, but for which honoraria might be appropriate when things change. These are the Newsletter Editor and the Website Manager. The two incumbents were part of this review group so it was left to Council to consider whether there should be honoraria for future incumbents in these roles. Council decided that an appropriate level of honorarium might be £500 in each case (for the Editor, assuming 4 issues of the Newsletter).

There are many other roles undertaken by volunteers without honoraria being given. Assembling a complete list would be impossible, but they include President, selectors, youth coordinator, chair of L&E, and many committee members. In none of these cases should we award honoraria, but we should perhaps work harder to mark our appreciation of the contributions they make – for example we might arrange inscribed gifts when someone retires from a role. As previously mentioned, we should be meticulous in ensuring that our volunteers are reimbursed for reasonable expenses that they incur on the WBU's behalf.