

## **REPORT OF THE HONORARY SECRETARY 2021-22**

As we emerge from the pandemic, there are obvious signs that the Bridge world faces many challenges in the years ahead. Under lockdown, trends that were already taking place suddenly came very much to the fore, especially with the switch to playing online.

Although bridge has been played online for almost 25 years, it had previously tended to be the domain for players who no longer played regularly at their local club. When clubs closed down there was a need to provide a facility for their regular members and so the 'online club' was born with many NIBU clubs signing up to run their own tournaments on a regular weekly basis. The NIBU meanwhile has been running their own events in the same fashion. These have all been extremely popular with novice and intermediate players. Surprisingly though, although many players longed for a return to 'social' bridge, competitions organised on the 'RealBridge' featuring full audio-visual contact, were not a success.

Recent cautious attempts for clubs to return to face-to-face bridge have had mixed success but there are signs that numbers are increasing.

### **Affiliation**

As clubs were given a 'bye' for the past season if they affiliated during 2020-21, it is difficult to be sure how many are still active or which ones intend to activate again during 2022-23. At the time of writing only 19 affiliated clubs are believed to be fully active playing either 'live' or online. This is down from 41 member clubs before the pandemic struck. It is obviously of great concern if clubs do not affiliate during 2022-23 but the true picture will only be known in the autumn when the affiliation notice is issued.

### **Council**

Council met twice during the year; once via Zoom and in April 2022 a 'live' meeting was held at Kelvin & Malone club. 9 members attended and it seems inevitable that, with declining membership, the quota of 18 members comprising the NIBU Council will have to be reduced to a more realistic figure. Similarly the Union needs to examine its structures throughout in order to facilitate a leaner, more efficient approach to the business in hand.

### **Management Committee**

The Committee continued to work in 'Emergency' mode throughout the season and was largely successful in keeping things running smoothly. A provisional Selection Committee was set up and managed to select teams for all the Home International events. Meanwhile the Union successfully hosted the Home International Teltscher trophy in May.

### **Laws & Ethics Committee**

The Committee met once to consider the case of two NIBU members who had been accused of unethical play online. The members concerned were subsequently banned from membership for a period of 3 years.

### **Website**

The website continues to grow and flourish, now providing a gateway to an expanded range of information as well as rapid access to results of competitions both live and online.

Michael McFaul  
Honorary Secretary