

# **PROPOSAL ON AMALGAMATION OF NIBU & CBAI**

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## **Executive Summary:**

- Working groups with members from both the CBAI and the NIBU have been examining the potential for an amalgamation of the two bodies for some time;
- The working groups are agreed that an amalgamation would be in the best interests of bridge in Ireland, and bridge players in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;
- This document summarises the proposals for amalgamation under all the key headings of relevance to members;
- For the typical club bridge player, it is anticipated that very little will change; local bridge will continue to be organised as it has been in the past;
- At the wider level, it is felt that amalgamation will create a better background for the promotion and development of bridge throughout Ireland;
- Where changes have been recommended, every effort has been made to respect the traditions and practices of both jurisdictions;
- A new legal structure, that of Company Limited by Guarantee, is proposed for the new amalgamated body, under the name “Bridge Ireland”;
- The former NIBU area, designated as “Northern Ireland”, will form a region within the new body, joining the thirteen current regions of the CBAI;
- Regions have a large degree of autonomy in how they organise bridge within their territory;
- The Northern Ireland Region is guaranteed representation on the Board of Bridge Ireland for at least the first nine years of its existence, and will attain the Presidency (a ceremonial one-year role) at the first opportunity, probably for season 2027/28;
- Nothing will change in relation to our international teams, and agreement has been reached that both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland can continue to play in the home international series for the moment;
- There will be some costs to amalgamation, but these have been kept to a minimum, and some may be recovered by way of external funding;
- Amalgamation of the NIBU and the CBAI will create one of the very few newsworthy events within bridge, which may create an opportunity for publicity for the game;
- The working groups strongly commend amalgamation to the members of the NIBU and the CBAI, and welcome feedback on these proposals.

## **Background:**

Working groups from the Northern Ireland Bridge Union (NIBU) and the Contract Bridge Association of Ireland (CBAI) have been discussing, with the approval of their respective governing bodies, the potential for an amalgamation of their two bodies into a single 32-county bridge federation responsible for the regulation, promotion, and development of bridge throughout the island of Ireland.

The conclusion of the working groups is that the conditions for a successful and productive amalgamation can be achieved, and this document summarises the proposals on the main issues that will be of relevance to members of both bodies.

The first point to make is that the intention has been to ensure in so far as possible that, for the ordinary bridge-playing member of the NIBU or the CBAI, nothing of substance will change in the way you play your bridge locally, at your club or within your region. If that is the extent of your involvement with bridge, then, other than receiving correspondence from a new body with a new logo, you may not notice any real change at all at local level.

At the wider level, it is anticipated that the changes as a result of the establishment of this new single body, and the synergies created by the amalgamation of the current two units, will create a more dynamic and better-resourced organisation that will be better able to focus on the long-term development of bridge in Ireland. If you are involved in the administration of the game, or in its promotion, therefore, some things will undoubtedly change. The expectation is that these changes will be for the better, and that they will, in the aggregate, mean that bridge will be better-recognised and more successful in the long-term than would otherwise be the case.

This document reviews the main issues involved in the running of bridge in Ireland, and sets out the recommendations of the working groups under each major heading.

## **Legal Structure & Governance:**

The new body will be called “Bridge Ireland”, and legally it will be a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG), domiciled in the Republic of Ireland. The name Bridge Ireland is seen as clear, simple, modern, and consistent with other sporting bodies. The working group on governance sought legal advice on the optimal structure, and this advice was clear and categorical that a CLG structure would be the best way to go. Indeed, the CBAI was advised that, even if an amalgamation did not ultimately go ahead, a change to a CLG would still be advised. The current model of an unincorporated association is old-fashioned and lacks clear governance and accountability, leaving potential liability issues uncertain. In particular, up-to-date

legal advice is that any body with paid employees should have some form of limited liability status. Sport Ireland recommends that all bodies under its remit adopt the CLG structure, and the majority of Irish sporting bodies have done so.

A CLG is a company which does not have share capital, and whose legal structure provides that the liability of its members is limited to such amount as the members, per the constitution, undertake to contribute to the assets of the CLG in the event of its being wound up (generally a nominal amount).

The working group recommends that all members (current and future) of Bridge Ireland (i.e. the current members of the CBAI and the NIBU who join the new body, and any additional future members of the new body) should also be “members” (in the technical sense) of the new company. The reason for this is to preserve what was strongly felt to be an important democratic principle for both bodies – that every member has the right to attend the Annual General Meeting, to ask questions of those charged with organising bridge on behalf of the membership, and to propose resolutions for change to be considered. Every member will thus commit to the contribution of the nominal €1 capital on any wind-up of Bridge Ireland.

Under the new corporate structure, the members of the Board will have responsibility for the running of Bridge Ireland and will be liable under the Irish Companies Acts. The working group recommendation is that the Board should consist of six to nine individuals, elected by the AGM, with term limits of no more than three three-year terms (so a maximum of nine years in total) applying to their service. It is highly recommended that the Board should comprise individuals with significant experience in areas of management that will be important for Bridge Ireland, such as finance, governance, human resources, operations, marketing, information technology, etc.

If the requisite skills cannot be found within the organisation, the Board will have the facility to co-opt up to two additional members for the Board who are not members of Bridge Ireland. Members of the Board should not also be members of a Regional Committee.

The Chairperson of the Board is a role which requires particular skills, so that individual will also be elected by the membership at a general meeting. The Chair will be limited to two two-year terms in that role (though they may continue to serve on the Board if re-elected, subject to the overall term limits for board members). It is agreed that at least one of the Directors, for the first nine years of operation of Bridge Ireland, should come from the Northern Ireland region.

Given its managerial responsibilities for Bridge Ireland as a business (albeit a not-for-profit one), the Finance and Governance & Risk Committees (see more below) will

report directly to the Board. It is anticipated that the Board will meet at least quarterly, and more often if necessary.

There was also felt to be a need for a body with responsibility for running day-to-day bridge, as opposed to running the Bridge Ireland organisation. As a result, another body, the Bridge Management Group (BMG), is proposed for that purpose. It is envisaged that this body will draw extensively on the experience and knowledge of the regions of Bridge Ireland for its members. Each region will be entitled to two nominees to this group, one of whom must be the Regional Secretary. These nominees, along with the President, the President-Elect, and the Immediate Past-President, will form the BMG, so 31 individuals in all. A limit of two three-year terms (so six years total) will apply, except in the case of members by virtue of their role as Regional Secretary. The BMG will elect a Chairperson and Secretary from among its members, to serve a maximum of two two-year terms in either role.

It is envisaged that this group will meet quarterly, and more often if needed. In a change to current practice, it is recommended, on the basis of best practice, that there be no facility to nominate alternate delegates should a delegate be unable to attend, as experience shows this can lead to discontinuity which disrupts the flow of work. The bridge-related committees of Bridge Ireland (International, Junior, Teaching, Laws & Ethics, Competitions & Masterpoints, and Promotion & Development) will report to the BMG.

In light of the legal structure of Bridge Ireland, it should be noted that, in the event of differences between the Board and the BMG, then the Board will have the ultimate say, after appropriate consultation with the BMG. In addition, the CEO will report formally to the Board, although he/she will be expected to support and inform both the Board and the BMG, and to attend meetings of both bodies unless specifically requested not to do so.

Finally, there will continue to be an important ceremonial one-year role for a President within Bridge Ireland. The President will be, by virtue of their office, a member of the BMG for the three-year cycle of their term (President-Elect, President, Immediate Past-President). The President will be elected by the regions in rotation, and the new Northern Ireland region will be accorded the opportunity to nominate the President at the first available opportunity, probably for the 2028/29 season, assuming that the Western Region will already have nominated a President for 2027/28 by the time any amalgamation comes to pass.

This new structure involves some significant changes to the current governance model of the CBAI. The Board (which is required as a CLG) and the BMG (established to facilitate the involvement and expertise of the regions) will replace the Governing Council and the Management Committee. The skills expected of the board members,

and the involvement of the BMG, will eliminate the need for the institutional memory currently provided by the long-term Vice-President position and the President Emeritus, so these roles will be discontinued. The role of the Honorary Treasurer will be replaced by the board member chairing the Finance Committee, and the Honorary Secretary's duties have effectively been taken over by Head Office, so those two roles will also disappear.

This new structure will require a new constitution (in the context of a CLG, incorporating Memorandum and Articles of Association), and terms of reference for the various committees. A copy of the constitution will be available to any member of either the CBAI or the NIBU who wishes to see it in advance of any vote on amalgamation. The other documents will be finalised by the Board of the new body, with the terms of reference of the various committees agreed with the relevant committees once their members are known.

### **Membership:**

Both bodies generate memberships through affiliated clubs. It is proposed that each affiliated club be required to register, and pay a registration fee for, each of its members, regardless of whether or not that member is also a member of another club. (This is currently the case within the CBAI, and was until recently the case within the NIBU. The rationale for it is that Bridge Ireland will supply its services to the relevant club, rather than to the individuals directly. There are also potential logistical issues in managing memberships on a single-registration basis.)

The proposed registration fee is €12.50, or £10, per annum, which will see no increase for either CBAI or NIBU members. Agreement has been reached with Bridge Great Britain (BGB) that both the NIBU and the CBAI can continue to enter teams into the home internationals for a 5-year period even in the event of an amalgamation (see below). Given the costs of hosting these events, some initial funds have been allocated to the Northern Ireland region, which might also have to build an additional premium into its affiliation fee to generate the necessary funds. One CBAI region currently does this already, for different purposes, so it is an option.

Both bodies also agree that a virtual (non-club) membership should be available, but needs to be introduced in such a way that it does not jeopardise club participation. Both the CBAI and the NIBU currently have a small number of such members.

Membership data will be retained on a database managed by the Bridge Ireland head office in Dublin. This database, which is currently being re-developed to allow members, clubs, and regions to access some of the data directly, will allow for direct member communication via email. This aspect will be managed in accordance with

the regulations applying to personal data; communication with members will be on bridge-related matters only, and they will have the right to unsubscribe if they wish.

### **International Participation & The Irish Bridge Union:**

It was felt very important by the NIBU delegates that Northern Ireland could continue to participate in the Home International Series run by BGB – the Camrose, Lady Milne, Teltscher, Junior Camrose, and Peggy Bayer Trophies. As a result, agreement was reached at a very early stage with BGB that both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland would be able to continue to enter teams into the home internationals for the next five years after any amalgamation (in which case neither the NIBU and the CBAI would any longer exist in its own right), and that the position would be reviewed at the end of that five-year period. Obviously, it will fall to the new Northern Ireland Region to determine how teams for Northern Ireland are selected, and to the thirteen Republic of Ireland regions to decide for their teams.

Hosting these competitions in rotation is an expensive business. Given these costs, it has been agreed by both bodies that current NIBU funds at the date of amalgamation should be retained within the new Northern Ireland Region, for use for this purpose. It is assumed that funding for the players on these home international teams will continue on the same basis as currently.

If a single All-Ireland body is formed, then the need for the current confederation of the NIBU and the CBAI for international purposes, the Irish Bridge Union, will disappear, and that body will become obsolete. The World Bridge Federation and the European Bridge League will need to be informed of the change, and the IBU can then be wound up. It has been agreed by both bodies that any funds within the IBU at the date of wind-up should pass on to Bridge Ireland.

### **Competitions:**

The proposal is to retain nearly all the current major IBU and CBAI competitions, designating them “All-Ireland Championships” at the relevant grade. The current IBU Moylan (Pairs) and Egan (Teams) competitions could be re-branded as “closed” competitions (i.e. open to members of Bridge Ireland clubs only), and the major CBAI competitions would become All-Ireland “open” events (i.e. open to any entrants in good standing with any NBO, although such individuals would be expected to register with Bridge Ireland in return for the benefit of playing in any of the “majors”). These competitions are: the Spiro, Coen, Master Pairs, Jackson, Revington, McMenamin, Geraldine, Holmes Wilson, Davidson, Laird, Bankers, Kelburne, Tierney etc). Three of the current NIBU Red-pointed events would retain that status – the NI Pairs and

Teams as qualifiers for the All-Ireland Finals, and the Belfast Swiss Pairs as a new All-Ireland competition. Other regions would also be able to run their regional Pairs and Teams qualifiers as Red-pointed events (subject to participating numbers).

Several IBU events were identified as having lost their core “identity”, which has seen a significant reduction in numbers attending in recent years. These are the Burke, O’Connor, and IBU Club Pairs competitions. It was agreed that the role of these competitions be reviewed by the relevant Committees of the new Bridge Ireland.

Finally, it is recommended that new All-Ireland online leagues and a Gold Cup knockout event be introduced as soon as practicable. The former might be based on the existing NIBU online leagues.

### **Grades & Masterpoints:**

Both the NIBU and the CBAI already run grading and masterpoint systems. While the two have a lot in common, as might be expected, there are nonetheless some differences between the two. The proposal hereunder is an effort to combine the best aspects of both, and to present a methodology that allows (1) for reasonable progression along the grades for members keen to progress competitively, (2) scope for predominantly social players to play extensively within clubs without advancing further than they might be comfortable with in grade terms, and (3) for the organisation of fair competitions by Bridge Ireland, with members able to be confident that they will play against others of broadly the same standard as themselves.

Every existing member of either the NIBU or the CBAI who becomes a member of the new Bridge Ireland will retain the same grade and masterpoints as they have already, although there may be a reduction in the number of sub-grades for Masters within the NIBU. The grades (in advancing order) will be: Novice 2; Novice 1; Intermediate B2; Intermediate B1; Intermediate A2; Intermediate A1; Area Master; Regional Master; National Master; Life Master; Grand Master.

In the future there will be two types of Masterpoints. Red Points will be awarded for all the major Bridge Ireland Open competitions, including All-Ireland Championships, international trials, and such regional, open, or congress competitions that have been allocated Red-point status. If the organisers of any event feel that the standard of entry merits Red-point status, they are welcome to apply for same to the Bridge Ireland Competitions & Masterpoint Committee. Club Points will be awarded for all club competitions, and for regional, open, or congress competitions which have not been allocated Red-point status.



Club Points equate to Red Points at a ratio of 5,000:1. But Club Points will be recorded separately, and will not automatically convert to Red Points at any stage. Red Points will be reported and recorded as soon as practicable after each competition, and no later than three months after it. Club Points will be reported and recorded at the end of each season, over the summer.

Players will be able to view their masterpoint holding, including the start-of-season amount and any amounts subsequently accrued, via the Bridge Ireland website. Formal regradings will take place twice a year, on 31 December and on 1 September. As is currently the case, a player who has embarked on the qualifying phase of a competition at a particular grade may complete that competition even if they are subsequently regraded; they may not, however, enter any new competitions at their old grade.

Players may request a regrading, upwards or downwards, via their Regional Committee, and the request will be adjudicated by the Bridge Ireland Competitions & Masterpoint Committee. That Committee may also regrade players by observation of their results, at its discretion.

### **Operations (Office, Staff & Website):**

The new body will retain the office and staff in Templeogue, Dublin; the staff will retain their current employment rights and conditions under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

The Head Office will be responsible for selecting venues and organising and running competitions; maintaining the member database; communicating with regions, clubs, and members on matters relevant to them; co-ordinating promotional activities and providing materials for same; dealing for major competitions and for clubs where requested; maintaining the website and advertising bridge classes; producing the quarterly Irish Bridge Journal; training and supporting teachers (in conjunction with the Teaching Committee); supplying bridge materials to regions, clubs, teachers, and members; running the annual Simultaneous Pairs competitions; organising financial affairs, including sourcing sponsors; maintaining trophies and historical archives.

It is not anticipated that the amalgamation will, in itself, create a need for any additional staff. As the organisation develops and grows, however, this need may arise. It is also probable that, as the organisation progresses from its current model, which necessitates the input of lots of data, towards a model more oriented to marketing and development, that the skillset required of staff will alter correspondingly, which may create a need for new staff.

Bridge Ireland will be able to supply stock to member clubs throughout Ireland, on the basis of the CBAI's current arrangements. Their courier offers 32-county coverage at a rate of €10 per parcel. A discount of 20% is offered to affiliated clubs on most items of stock (stationery, playing cards, boards, etc) but not on bigger-ticket items (tables, dealing machines, etc). Bridgemates were not previously discounted, but they are about to become so with the move to Bridgemate III standard. Bridge Ireland will also supply unaffiliated bridge clubs, but no discounts will be offered in those cases.

A new Bridge Ireland website will be developed, and the current CBAI will be discontinued. The current NIBU website will be retained as a regional one.

### **Committees:**

Both the NIBU and the CBAI have committees responsible for many aspects of regulation of the game. Early in discussions, however, it was noted that neither has any committee charged broadly with promotion and development of the game, and it was felt that this omission should be rectified within any new body. There was also the scope for the rationalisation of some existing committees whose responsibilities appeared to overlap.

As a result, the following committees are proposed, and Terms of Reference will be drawn up for each of them in due course.

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Reporting To:</b>
<b>Finance</b> Role – to advise the Bridge Ireland Board on all relevant financial issues, including member registration fees and staff salaries	Board
<b>Governance &amp; Risk</b> Role – to oversee Bridge Ireland's risk management frameworks, internal controls, and corporate governance practices to ensure alignment with strategic goals and regulatory requirements	Board
<b>International</b> Role – to select, prepare, and develop teams to represent Ireland in international competitions	BMG

<b>Junior</b> Role: to deal with matters related to junior bridge (Under-26)	BMG
<b>Teaching</b> Role: to deal with matters related to the teaching of bridge, and to ensure a steady supply of new, accredited, bridge teachers, and upskill existing ones	BMG
<b>Laws &amp; Ethics</b> Role: to make recommendations on matters relating to the laws of bridge and how they should be implemented; to deal with allegations of cheating or other unethical behaviour; to act as credentials overseer for entry to major Bridge Ireland competitions	BMG
<b>Competitions &amp; Masterpoints</b> Role: to oversee all aspects of Bridge Ireland's competitions, and to manage its masterpoint scheme, including regrading issues	BMG
<b>Promotion &amp; Development</b> Role: to utilise Bridge Ireland's resources to promote the game of bridge in Ireland, including growth in membership and public awareness; to support Bridge Ireland's efforts in fundraising; to manage succession planning at all levels within Bridge Ireland	BMG

### Finance:

Accounting advice is that the amalgamation of the two bodies should be straightforward in most aspects. It is proposed to choose the current NIBU accounting year-end of 31 March rather than the CBAI's 30 April; the latter means that it is often difficult to have fully-signed accounts sufficiently in advance of the summer AGM.

Neither the CBAI's nor the NIBU's accounts are currently subject to a full audit. While it is agreed in principle that Bridge Ireland should strive to this standard (although there will be no legal or operational requirement for it to do so), it is also acknowledged that (a) there will be a substantial extra cost for a full audit, and (b)

the current accounting packages in use will need an upgrade if they are to be used as preparation for a full audit. As a result, it is recommended that the Board of Bridge Ireland keeps this matter under review.

It is important that existing banking arrangements can be maintained where appropriate, and that existing tax exemptions in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland can be retained. Informal advice indicates that both these outcomes are achievable.

There will be a need for both sterling and euro bank accounts, and for prices in both currencies.

### **Regional Structure:**

It is proposed that the current territory of the NIBU joins the existing thirteen regions of the CBAI, becoming a fourteenth region within Bridge Ireland, under the name “Northern Ireland”.

The working groups noted that there is a wide disparity in size, in both geography and membership, amongst these potential fourteen regions. No obvious restructuring solution presented itself, however, and the groups were conscious of respecting established territories. It was recommended that this matter be kept under review by Bridge Ireland, and that opportunities for change might present themselves in the future. In particular, there were attractions to a provincial structure, which is common amongst many sporting bodies. Aside from a single annual Interprovincial Championship, however, there was really no current provincial structure within bridge in Ireland on which to build. Again, it was recommended that this be kept under review in future years.

The regions have a large degree of autonomy in how they run bridge within their territory. As subsets of Bridge Ireland they will be subject to the oversight of the Board, and will therefore be obliged to structure themselves as prescribed by Bridge Ireland, and to run their events in accordance with the regulations promulgated by Bridge Ireland. Each region must have a Regional Committee, with at least the following officers: President, Secretary, Treasurer, and as many Development Officers as it feels to be necessary given the size and geography of its territory. It must hold an AGM each year, at which a set of (unaudited) accounts must be presented. These accounts must also be furnished to the Finance Committee of Bridge Ireland prior to the Bridge Ireland AGM.

The main functions of the region are to support the clubs within its territory; to encourage the running of classes within the region; to assist clubs in the

development of sufficient Club Tournament Directors for the region; to run qualifying events for the All-Ireland Graded Finals competitions (Master Pairs and Teams, Intermediate A Pairs and Teams, Intermediate B Pairs and Teams); to encourage participation by counties within its remit in the All-Ireland 4Fun Teams competition; and to develop and promote bridge within the region. In terms of that last function, it is expected that each regional Development Officer will play an integral role in the work of the new central Promotions & Development Committee outlined earlier in this document. Regions are free to run as many other regional competitions as they wish.

The importance of the regions within Bridge Ireland is recognised in that the main bridge decision-making body, the BMG, will be made up of regional representatives, plus the President, President-Elect, and Immediate Past-President (themselves also regional nominees).

Regions will continue, as is currently the case within the CBAI, to have enhanced representation at General Meetings, with one regional delegate provided for every four hundred (400) members in the region as of the previous 31 March, subject to a minimum of two delegates from each region. These regional delegates will each have 400 votes in any General Meeting.

Tradition has been that the Chief Executive of the CBAI is invited to all the regional AGMs. In practice, the CEO was frequently not able to attend all of them, particularly as some were always held on the same date. It is suggested in future a board representative might accompany, or stand in for, the CEO to ensure a senior Bridge Ireland presence at every regional AGM.

### **Costs:**

There will clearly be some costs associated with an amalgamation process, although the intention is to keep these to a minimum. It is estimated that legal and other advisory costs pre-amalgamation will amount to between €10,000-12,000. There will also be costs for the registration of the corporate name Bridge Ireland, and for the corresponding website domains. All these preparatory costs will be shared between the CBAI and the NIBU in 90:10 proportion.

In addition, there will be costs for the development of a new logo, and the production of new stationery, promotional banners, etc. It is not anticipated that these will be substantial. It also seems likely that the costs of changing current administrative arrangements (revenue authorities, banking, suppliers) will be minimal.

Depending on decisions taken by the new Board of Bridge Ireland, further additional costs may arise if functions currently managed informally are formalised – e.g. a formal audit, formal HR arrangements, etc. The recommendation is that a comprehensive review of all these functions be undertaken early in the life of Bridge Ireland to ensure that the Board can be comfortable that compliance obligations are being met, and to allocate additional resources where necessary. It is also envisaged that a member of the Head Office staff will act as Secretary to the Board, and will have responsibility for co-ordinating the various reporting mechanisms set out in the new structure. Depending on the review, that may require an additional staff member, or may be managed from within existing resources.

There will also be once-off costs in revising the membership database currently in development to take account of changes as a result of any amalgamation.

It is recommended that Bridge Ireland should acquire Directors' Liability Insurance cover for its board members, which will create an additional recurring cost.

Finally, it is recognised that the amalgamation event may create a unique opportunity to generate some publicity for bridge in Ireland. To maximise this opportunity, it may be necessary to engage the services of a public relations professional.

On the plus side, there will be a saving of some of the current expenses of the Irish Bridge Union. The core expenditures (of selecting, preparing, and sending teams to international competitions) will still apply but some ancillary ones (e.g. audit fees) will disappear along with the IBU itself.

It may also be possible to generate some external funding in respect of the amalgamation. Funds are offered for cross-border initiatives under a variety of headings, and it will be worth exploring whether any such funding might be available to help defray either the formation or the running costs of Bridge Ireland. The most likely source of funding is a programme called the Shared Ireland Civic Society Fund, which is currently closed for funding, but is expected to re-open in March or April 2026.

The relevant working groups are strongly of the opinion that any costs associated with the amalgamation and the opportunity it presents to reshape the nature and operations of the new bridge body are essential to drive the development of bridge in Ireland. They believe that a new organisation organised as suggested, and under the leadership of a skilled and committed Board and BMG, will be ideally positioned to develop and grow the game in an efficient and effective way compliant with best practice to build trust amongst members, partners, and other stakeholders.

**Next Steps:**

The broad plan is that the CBAI intends to review these proposals with its regions, to seek their input, and ultimately to present a full proposal to members, either by email or via its website. A formal motion of amalgamation will then be put to the CBAI's AGM in July for approval.

The NIBU intends to review these proposals with its clubs, and then to hold a special EGM in February/March to deal with some constitutional issues around any potential amalgamation. Assuming these are dealt with, a formal motion of amalgamation will then be put to the NIBU's AGM in June for approval.

Assuming the members of both bodies approve the proposals, it is planned that the new Bridge Ireland will be up and running for the start of the 2026/27 bridge season on 1 September 2026, and that it will take over the functions currently managed by the CBAI and the NIBU. These two bodies will be wound up and will pledge to transfer their assets (other than the amount set aside for the NIBU to fund future home international events, as outlined above) to Bridge Ireland. An EGM of the new company, Bridge Ireland, will be required in August 2027 to elect the Board of Directors, and to address some other preparatory matters.

All current CBAI and NIBU member clubs will automatically join Bridge Ireland unless they expressly confirm in writing that they do not wish to do so, and the new season 2026/27 will commence in the usual fashion for the clubs.

Once it becomes clear that both the CBAI and the NIBU are committed to an amalgamation, a public relations campaign, with specialist external input, will take place to try to maximise publicity around the amalgamation.