

Dear Member,

Your committee met on Tuesday to consider the issues surrounding reopening the club. We came to the following decisions.

We have known from the beginning of the pandemic that bridge drives are an almost perfect occasion for sharing virus, but on present plans the government is set to allow us to reopen on June 21st. There are several factors that have led us to take a positive view of this opportunity.

1. Given the age of our membership, many of us are by now double vaccinated, and most will have had one jab.
2. The ventilation system at our club extracts air from the club, and brings in new, fresh air from outside. This is the gold standard for ventilation, and should do much to prevent aerosol infection.
3. The infection rate at large is now very low. Even with the recent rise in cases, the national daily infection rate is less than 1 per 20,000 in the population. It's a bit higher in our area, but still less than 1 per 10,000. Ten thousand is a big number compared with the attendance at a drive.
4. The records kept of every session for scoring purposes combined with our membership list provide the data needed should a test and trace exercise become necessary. Guest players will be asked to provide contact details.

So, we plan to open on June 21st – our usual four sessions, Monday Wednesday and Friday evenings, and Wednesday afternoons. In doing so we recognise there is a small risk of infection being passed on, so we shall change our procedures in the following ways to make that risk even smaller.

1. Hand sanitiser will be available at all tables.
2. We shall play without table cloths. This is not because the virus lasts longer in cloth than on harder surfaces, but because hard surfaces are easier to spray clean. There will be spray cleaners near each table and we shall ask members to spray clean the table and bidding boxes after each session.
3. At the start of a session each player will take a bidding box from a window sill, and keep it for that session. At the end of the session the box should be spray cleaned, and then returned to a window sill.
4. Bridgemates should be handled only by Norths. North should show the entered score to other players at the table (especially East) before pressing the OK button.
5. As a further option, the club is planning to buy in some extra bidding boxes which you may buy, take home and bring in for each session. (About £5 each)

6. We felt there was little we could do about cards being handled and passed on; it's the nature of a bridge drive. However, the system of rotation we have for card use means that each set is used only once each week – longer than the life cycle of the virus – so any contamination via the cards will be only within a session, and may be limited by the use of hand sanitiser.
7. We urge members to take a lateral flow test at least once a week. In case you don't know, these are available free from pharmacies or surgeries, and are self administered. (First time it takes a little sorting out, but it becomes routine).
8. We trust that if you test positive you will let us know. Given our data we can contact others very quickly. In that circumstance we may have to suspend a particular session or sessions for one or two weeks. We would notify you via e-mail if you've given us permission, and on the club website.
9. All of us occasionally cough or sneeze, but we strongly request that anyone suffering from a persistent cough or cold refrains from coming to the club in order to save the director from having to resolve any difficult situations.
10. Initially there will not be a host system.

There are three particular pinch points in our premises:

11. The cloakroom. We shall be keeping this locked. We suggest that hardy players leave coats in cars. If you really need to bring a coat into the club, try to arrive early enough to grab a N/S seat and put your coat over the back of your chair.
12. The kitchen and refreshment area. It is almost impossible to avoid these becoming crowded if we serve refreshments in the normal way, so we will continue to have a break, but ask you to stay at the table you have reached in the drive, and bring your own refreshments if you wish.
13. The toilets. We can all use common sense and the spray cleaner available.

The committee is planning to have a couple of working mornings to prepare the clubhouse – Wednesday 9th and Thursday 10th June from 10am to 1pm. We're spreading this over 2 days to reduce the number of people present before full opening up. We would find one or two more volunteers valuable. If you can help with this please contact me – preferably by e-mail at rat_tat@btinternet.com – otherwise on 0744 34 99 275.

Of course the one thing we have learnt in the pandemic is that we don't know what is around the corner. Unfortunately numbers are rising again. Our plans are all subject to the government not changing the rules, and may be affected by any recommendations it

makes. If the opening goes without difficulty we plan to hold an AGM (or is it EGM?) on Thursday 22nd July. Meanwhile the committee will keep the situation under review.

I hope this finds you well, and that we can all meet again soon.

Mike Rattenbury, Chairman