

First of all, I am honoured to have taken over from Paul Porteous within the CBAI. Thanks to all the members who have sent me good wishes, and of course to Paul for all he has done for Irish bridge.

Clubs Returning to Live Bridge

Who would have thought back in March 2020 that some twenty-one months later we would still be dealing with the fallout of the COVID pandemic, and all the uncertainty that it has created? The good news is that we now have a number of clubs back to live bridge.

Attendances have been small in some cases, but we have reports of some bigger gatherings. Anecdotally, the leader so far is the Crannog club in Cavan, with twenty tables one night. (If you can do better, please let me know.) The honour of being the first congress to return to live bridge goes to Drogheda, with an extremely well-run four-day event in the ABCD Centre in early-October. And we recently held our first live CBAI event since February 2020, the Duais an Uachtarain in Cork.

More clubs are planning to reopen in the weeks ahead, while others tell us they are likely to wait until after Christmas. The increase in COVID cases has understandably made many people more cautious.

The recent government announcement did not make any changes to the regulations for indoor events. Our guidance to clubs thinking about reopening therefore remains unchanged - all participants should be fully vaccinated, the playing room should be well-ventilated, players should avoid congregating and use hand sanitiser regularly, equipment sharing should be kept to a minimum, and some protective measure should be in place. Our recommendation on the latter is protective perspex screens, but if those cannot be used for any reason, then players should wear face masks throughout. If the screens are in use, then masks are required on entry/exit and when moving around, but not at the table. Obviously, the guidelines are subject to change; we monitor the public health guidance continuously, and will keep clubs informed of any developments.

We completely understand that some members, and some clubs, are cautious about returning to live bridge, and no-one should feel under any pressure to return if they don't wish to do so. Online bridge has been a godsend, and it has many appealing aspects, especially on a rainy winter's night. On the other hand, the longer we go without the live game, the greater the danger that it might wither away, so there is a balance to be struck. And of course, some members are not playing online, and their preferences need to be considered. Finally, some clubs may find themselves unable to use their previous premises. If yours is one of them, we suggest that you contact your regional committee in the first instance to see if they can help.

Teachers & Tournament Directors

We are conscious that we have not had any new teacher or Tournament Director courses since early 2020, and we plan to remedy that as soon as possible. If any of your members are interested in either role, let us know and we will add them to our contact list.

President's Award

The annual President's Award recognises the unsung heroes of local and regional bridge. Congratulations to last year's worthy winner, Danny Liddy, whose huge contribution to bridge in and around Ennis was highlighted in his nomination.

We are currently seeking nominations for this season's award. If you would like to nominate someone who has made a difference for bridge players in your area, please contact us for a nomination form. The closing date for nominations is 20 December.

Keep in Touch

One thing that became clear during the pandemic is that the more ways you have of keeping in touch with people, the better. With some clubs completely inactive, it was difficult to be sure that any messages or updates were getting through to members. As a result, we would encourage everyone to keep in touch with us via our website (www.cbai.ie) which is now much more pro-active than was previously the case, and also via our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Full disclosure – like many bridge players, I suspect, I am not personally a big user of social media. But there is no doubt that these channels have their place, and they certainly came in very handy during lockdown.

I am looking forward to working with all of you, and your clubs, to try to weather the current storms and ensure that Irish bridge continues to run smoothly. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions on things we should be doing, or could be doing better, I'd be delighted to hear them.

Yours sincerely,

Dermot
Dermot O'Brien
Chief Executive