

## Chairpersons Report 2024

I would like to welcome the representatives of the NIBU affiliated clubs and any individual members to this Annual General meeting 2024.

Today brings to an end my two years as Chairperson in what has been a short but interesting adventure. I have visited many of our affiliated clubs across the country meeting and playing with a wide variety of players at all levels and interests.

Covid has brought dramatic and possibly permanent change to the way many of us will play bridge for many years into the future. Too many people are now content to play their bridge online, sitting at home in casual clothes with their favorite mug or glass in hand, not having to dress up and travel to their local clubs. In and around Belfast members have a choice of several clubs within a 5 or 6 mile range and many are returning to club bridge, meeting with other members and enjoying the benefits of social engagement.

Unfortunately, in rural areas many of our clubs have not reopened and a member is faced with a 12 – 15 mile drive to play at a club and it may require a 25 – 30 mile drive to the next nearest club, so while many members are content to play online attendance at the clubs is limited. There is no apparent solution to this problem we can only hope that in time members will return to their clubs. If anybody has any suggestions the committee would be delighted to receive them.

NIBU competitions, in recent years many of these have been cancelled due to a lack of entries and many are now held online so that travel is not an impairment to entry, to encourage more members to participate. On my tour of the clubs many members raised the issue of casual and intermediate players competing against senior pairs as a reason for not entering many competitions. Many of these same players compete with these same seniors at the weekly online events and at their clubs without any hesitation or problem. As an Intermediate player myself I relish the challenge of playing against senior players even when the outcome is poor. On many occasions senior players approach intermediate players with some trepidation as they are not sure how to interpret their bidding or play. The senior pair doesn't always get the best result. I encourage as many of you as possible to support all our NIBU competitions, take a chance, go for the experience and enjoy your hands as they come.

There are questions over the security of BBO and the potential for cheating which while not critical for the casual game is unacceptable for the more formal competitions which means that Real Bridge may be the favored platform for more NIBU events going forward, so where possible take the opportunity to explore, and find out about it.

The big issue going forward is a possible amalgamation of the NIBU with the CBAI and over the coming months we will be exploring the potential benefits or drawbacks of such a union. The incoming committee will arrange one or more discussion groups and seek your opinions through club secretaries, assess the opinions that have been submitted, and make a recommendation for the membership to consider for possible ratification at next year's AGM or a Special General Meeting. Your opinions matter and I encourage you and your clubs' members to attend any

discussion group near you, discuss the issues and exchange opinions. It is very important for as many members as possible to take part in discussion of this issue.

I must thank the outgoing management committee and subcommittees, especially the office bearers and committee chairpersons for their guidance and help over the past couple of years. It's only when you have been part of the committee that you see the amount of work that the office bearers put in on your behalf, the hours spent arranging reports, competitions, meetings, managing the website etc.

I also thank those that have represented the NIBU at various events often at their own expense and finally it only remains for me to hand over this chain of office to the incoming chairperson for the next chapter in NIBU history.

I wish the incoming committee and Diane Greenwood as Chairperson all the best for their term of office and hope they enjoy the incoming year as much as I have enjoyed the last two years.

Thankyou.