

# PLANS FOR SEASON 2021/22

## PLEASE READ VERY CAREFULLY

8 September 2021

Dear Club Secretary,

Welcome back to the 89<sup>th</sup> Season of the Contract Bridge Association after a pleasant summer – and a few more sunny days this month to round it off!

The good news from the most recent government announcement is that the prospects of re-opening for live bridge look more promising than at any stage in the past twelve months. From September 20, indoor gatherings of up to 100 people are permitted, provided all attendees are immune (i.e. fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID within the past six months) and suitable protective measures are in place. We are recommending perspex table screens (or face masks throughout if screens are not used), minimising shared equipment, frequent hand sanitisation, and general common sense of the kind we have all got used to applying over the past eighteen months. The virus is still present, and we still need to be careful. From October 22, it seems likely that the limit on numbers will be removed, and some other restrictions may be lifted too. We await further guidance in that regard. If you have not purchased the protective screens yet, we still have a small number in stock at a discounted cost of €35 per table, but our supplies are diminishing rapidly, so if you do plan to buy them, don't delay (*these are now completely sold out – DO'B*).

Some clubs already have made plans to re-open from 20 September, and lots of others are considering their options. Obviously some players will be keener than others to return to the physical table, but we hope that during the season the entire bridge community will be able to meet again the way we used to, enjoy a glass of wine or a cup of tea, share the news of the day, and agonise over a poor bid or admire a brilliant play. We have learned from the pandemic just how important the social aspect of bridge is to us all, and hopefully it will not be too much longer before we can experience it again. While a large portion of the bridge community went online during COVID (and what a lifeline it was!), lots of clubs and individuals did not, and they will in many cases need encouragement and support to come back. In particular, some clubs may have issues with the availability of their venue. This gives us the opportunity to demonstrate that the bridge world is indeed a genuine community, and to show that we can look out for each other.

Previous prudent financial management, the strong uptake of online bridge, and some government support funds, all meant that the Association was able to weather the storm in 2020/21 satisfactorily, even though affiliation income, which is comfortably our main source of revenue, fell substantially. But the office remains as busy as ever, and there are bills to be paid, so we would welcome the remittance of the appropriate affiliation fees as early as possible this season. As was the case last season, an early bird discount is being offered to encourage prompt payment.

### **AFFILIATION FEES 2021/22**

**If a club makes a payment for affiliation fees before 1 December 2021, the fee per member will be €10. If a club has not re-opened at that point, this return can be based on the membership figures from 2020/21 (when no names were removed from the records apart from those we were informed had passed away). For affiliations returned on or after 1 December 2021, the standard fee of €12.50 per member will apply.**

We hope that you feel the Association and your staff have served you sufficiently well both recently and over the years to allow you to support CBAI in this way. €10 works out at less than 20 cents a week – a very small price to pay to ensure that bridge in Ireland continues to be run well.

We took a pragmatic view last year, and did not lapse any non-paying clubs or members due to the prevailing uncertainty. Our expectation is that all clubs will have the opportunity to return to live bridge during 2021/22, so we are planning to return to our normal procedures. Any clubs that do not send in affiliation fees, or any members that do not affiliate, will be treated as lapsed and removed temporarily from our systems. In the case of individuals, that will mean that they are ineligible to play in CBAI competitions until they re-affiliate.

Although the vast majority of our members dearly want to get back to face-to-face bridge, your feedback is that the online world has something to offer too, and it is our hope that clubs and organisers will continue to provide choice to their members wherever they can, even after we return to live bridge. On behalf of all who played online, sincere thanks to everyone who stepped up to ensure that online bridge was a great success – there are far too many to list here, but you all know who you are!

### **CALENDAR SEASON 2021/22**

You will appreciate that at the time of writing is still difficult to be definitive about the calendar for the season. Our intent is to have CBAI competitions back live as soon as it is safe to do so. Our first foray will be a multi-venue Duais an Uachtarain on September 25, with groups of up to 100 playing in a single competition in a variety of venues across the country (*this was subsequently postponed, as a number of the proposed venues were not yet operative – DO'B*). In terms of congresses, Drogheda Congress will be the first to return live, with a range of competitions planned for the ABCD Centre in Drogheda from 30 September to 3 October, with numbers limited.

The IBU Simultaneous Pairs Week will be held from 1-5 November 2021, and the CBAI Simultaneous Pairs Week will be held from 7-11 February 2022. Each represents a valuable source of much-needed funding for the respective bodies, so if your club has not supported these events previously, you might consider doing so this season. The Simultaneous Pairs can be run online or in-person. Just give us a call if you'd like more details. And keep an eye on [www.cbai.ie](http://www.cbai.ie) for further events, and join us on Facebook and/or Twitter to get the notifications first-hand.

### **CBAI PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME**

The current €105 per annum renewal cost will be maintained. If you renew between 1 September and 28 February, the annual premium applies; if you renew after 28 February, you will pay €65.

Please note, **if a club does not pay the insurance premium then they have no cover in place.** This means they don't even have insurance for a committee meeting, be it at the club or the local hotel or wherever. If you have insurance on club property or equipment, you should of course maintain that cover too.

### **CLUB DISCOUNTS & SUPPLIES**

Affiliated clubs continue to benefit from the 20% discount on offer. We have all the necessary supplies to replenish your stocks for re-opening – so please just let us know what you need and we'll be happy to provide it.

### **NEWSLETTER**

Your feedback from last season was that the online newsletter was the way to go, so you'll find this year's version on the website [www.cbai.ie](http://www.cbai.ie). Our thanks to all who contributed material for the Newsletter, and to our advertisers – please support them wherever you can.

### **OFFICE STAFF**

You will know that we are saying goodbye to Paul Porteous, who is retiring after almost thirty years' service to the CBAI. It is a cliché to say that an organization would not be in the shape that it is without the efforts of a particular individual – but in the case of Paul's influence on the CBAI, it is certainly true. I am honoured to have been appointed to take over from him, and am all too aware that the shoes I am filling are big ones! Thanks also to all the office staff who worked very hard, in difficult circumstances, during the year. If you phone the office, or drop in to see us, you'll be dealt with by Bernard, Carmel, Eimir, Freda, or Siobhan, each of whom will provide a friendly welcome and do their best to help you.

Please stay safe and well – hopefully it won't be too long before we can meet at the table again!

Best wishes,



**Dermot O'Brien**  
Chief Executive Designate