



Newsletter No: 8

24 July 2018

The Board hopes through this communication and other forms you feel informed and engaged.

Last Sunday (15 July), in Wellington, we held our annual conference with representatives from each of the regions, the Board and of course staff. We had a series of presentations and discussions on a wide range of topics.

From governance perspective the meeting was updated on the work being done by the constitution review group. This group are working from a premise that there should be a broad acceptance and understanding that NZ Bridge is and will continue to be an entity that has only a 6 digit annual income, can only support a limited full time resource and will continue to be dependent upon volunteers to operate. Given the foregoing, the structures and processes should be revised, where necessary, so that they are appropriate for the organisations size and, enable effective operation with regards to costs and outcomes.

And of course, that the constitution is "fit for purpose".

Inevitably when you embark on reviews of this nature there are a series of questions that require consideration, including: -

1. What are the respective roles, functions and authorities of the Board and the Regional Committees?
2. How will governance, management and, operational requirements be met?
3. How will authorities and responsibilities be expressed and exercised?
4. How prescriptive should the constitution be?

The review group is grateful for the feedback it has already received from regions, clubs and, players.

The question is will the work be completed, including a further consultative round, before the 2018 AGM in a couple of months? I doubt it. That in itself is not bad. It is important that we fully consider and put in place a constitution that is going to meet our needs for the next 10+ years. This includes the Constitution's remit around regional committees that is to be reviewed as part of our strategic plan. The current constitution is sufficiently robust and will continue to serve our interests in the interim.



In prior updates we have highlighted the work of the taskforce reviewing grading, tournaments and handicaps. The Board has agreed in principle to amend the grading programme so it is more reflective of individual player ability and that players are not being advanced into a grade where they feel out of their depth and perhaps cannon fodder. This latter point particularly applies in the open grade. The Board has also approved in principle the adoption of a handicap system based on what happens in England with the EBU. The taskforce work is complete and next phase has been passed to Murray Wiggins, John Skipper and the regulations committee to drive. If adopted the change in grading and introduction of a formal handicapping is significant. The intention in conjunction with the regions is to run a road show so players are well informed and we address together any reservations. Before closing on this subject we have been asked on a number of occasions whether there is any planned change to the ranking system. No, we will continue with rankings from Novice to Gold Grand Master. It is envisaged too that we will investigate additional levels beyond that of Gold Grand Master in the near future to recognise the achievements of those players.

Richard Solomon led a discussion on the future of the Inter-Regionals. The IP's are seen as one of our premier events and is here to stay. There was much discussion whether the IP's should continue to be run separately to Congress or whether we should revert to holding them in conjunction with Congress. It would be fair to say that opinion was evenly divided. The original intention of holding the IP's away from Congress was intended to lift their profile.

Over the last 2 years a significant effort has gone into profiling the event, meeting the players and broadcasting on BBO. Next came the question of 4 person or 6 person teams. There are some logistical issues that would need to be addressed if there was a move back to 6 person teams and the event continue to be held away from Congress. On a positive note the meeting felt that participating in trials presented an opportunity for players to be selected who may never be selected to represent New Zealand. We have seen a major increase in the number of intermediates trialling, which is a good thing. What we do next year remains under consideration.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity for the regions to discuss and provide feedback on the Regional Bridge Mates initiative. Overall there was a very positive response to this initiative. Some changes are afoot to address very large geographical areas. We still have just over 12 months of the pilot to run but early indicators are positive: -

1. Beginners at 15 RBM target clubs are 187, an increase of 87%
2. Intermediates trialling in 2018 were 164, an increase of 52%
3. Tournament participation is up by over 300.

The meeting put its mind to how do we grow the game and capture new club players. People play the game for multiple reasons, ranging from social right through to tournament participation and the "cut and thrust". The majority, without doubt, are club players who enjoy competition coupled with social interaction. This latter point is critically important to the welfare of our game. We know as players age there is less desire to go out in the evenings, particularly so in the larger cities. So we need to

think about the future and perhaps reinvent ourselves at a club level. This might involve shorter events, a bit like what cricket has done. Or it may involve more of a "pay as you go" approach like NZ bowls has adopted with some success. We must open our minds to the future needs and expectations of players. The next question is how we capture some of those players who only play bridge at home. Providing a welcoming non-threatening environment must be a start. The best way however is having existing club players encouraging friends who only play at home to come along to a club and give it a go. I ask how many people do you know who can play bridge but never attend a club. Part of the growth strategy is capturing youth of today. We have young people playing internationally, in schools, in universities, at clubs and with family. But we are only touching a few for a variety of reasons. Richard and Jan France (RBM Auckland Northland) are working on a 5-year strategy.

Then on Tuesday (17 July) the Board held its usual monthly meeting. A whole lot of "business as usual" stuff. We did however approve a small amount of additional expenditure to bring our reporting up to speed, ensuring our invoicing is current and accurate, issuing of certificates and, attending to the vagaries of the IP's.

Next week (24 July) the Congress committee meets. Pleasingly we have a new Platinum sponsor in the Hamilton City Council and 2 new and 1 existing Gold sponsors - Quail Ridge (new), Jardine Lloyd Thomson (existing) and Ryman Healthcare (new).

The Board has invited Anne Barrowclough of Auckland to join the Board, which she has accepted. Anne will join the Board with extensive commercial and "not for profit" experience including- Auckland Bridge Club (immediate past president), Pop-up Globe International (finance committee), Arrowside Services (advisor to boards), Garden to Table Trust, Parnell Community Trust and Friends of Kings College.

At the outset of this note I mentioned that I hoped we were keeping all concerned informed and engaged. Whilst we think we have made positive steps, we fear we could or should be doing better. The reality is we only touch a small percentage of members. When we communicate we know (in numbers) who opens emails or accesses the website. What we don't know who actually reads the material. We have evidence that we send material to Regions and Clubs. Whilst material may be posted on notice board it is not often posted on Regions or Club websites. There is no evidence that Clubs email material to members. From my own experience I belong to two clubs and I receive nothing about what is going on. Surely we can do better. Is the information we send relevant and interesting? I would be interested in receiving feedback.

NZB is sponsoring The Bridge Zone Radio broadcast for 6 months. We have received great feedback from those listening to the show. Save this link below and never miss a show.

<http://www.accessradio.org/player.aspx?pid=6379a3ce-8450-482c-bad1-6b4cc2574313&Last=1>

Cheers Allan