

Dear Members

It's great to see that many clubs are now back playing live bridge, enjoying the social interaction that was sorely missed during the pandemic. For many clubs, survival is dependent on playing live bridge. In addition, the demand for online bridge remains strong and needs to be satisfied.

As I've always said, SBU remains committed to supporting clubs because a network of thriving clubs across Scotland is critical for the future of our game. This has created challenges in offering an appropriate balance between live and online bridge so that the wide, and often conflicting, needs of our members can be met. This remains a challenge for both SBU and clubs.

Member Services

Members Services is experiencing significant change resulting from the decision of both Bill Whyte and Alison Carmichael to retire from their positions. Both have given tremendous service over many years and their contributions have been greatly appreciated. Their roles will be taken over by Anne Coles, Ann Binder, and Marc Shearer. Any queries and advice on Masterpoint allocations and the granting of event licences should now be sent to Anne Coles at masterpointqueries@sbu.org.uk. Further contact details will be issued in due course - please bear with us during a period of transition.

Operations Lead and Club Support Manager

It has proved difficult to attract a new General Manager from within our membership, and we are extremely grateful to Joan Forsyth who has acted in the role on an interim basis. We shall now extend our search outside our membership, and in the interim Marina Evans has agreed to lead the Operations Team. She will also manage an exciting new position of Club Support Manager. This position has been created in recognition that SBU needs to be more proactive in supporting clubs, many of whom we know are struggling to survive and flourish.

New Treasurer

We welcome Laura Cooper, who has a wealth of commercial finance experience, as our new Treasurer. She will take over in January, and work with Karen Birt who has been our bookkeeper for the last few months. I'd like to thank Scott Macdonald for his dedication and commitment to the role over the last couple of years.

Communication and Marketing

We are very conscious that we need to improve our communication with members by using our website, social media etc more effectively. We know what is needed, but desperately need a small team of volunteers to help deliver our plans. **If you feel you can help, please let me know.**

Strategic Plans

An essential element of good governance is to have both strategic and operational plans. Our new Strategic Plan will be published on our website before Christmas. It allows members to see what the organisation is trying to achieve over the next 3 years. It's a great read when you get bored with the TV over Christmas!

Affiliation Agreements

In September I reported that we have had a lot of feedback regarding the difficulty some clubs are having in meeting the stated requirements. There have also been questions relating to the clause on affiliation fees. Because we don't want unnecessary obstacles for clubs continuing to be affiliated, we have made changes. This won't affect clubs who have already signed their Agreement. We shall be writing to clubs as soon as possible.

Awards

Congratulations to Liz McGowan who was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to bridge over many years. Liz is the first Scot to be awarded an honour for services to bridge. It was a pleasure for me to attend the ceremony with Liz and her family.

Paul and Alex Gipson have been awarded the "Best Bid Hand" for 2022 by the International Bridge Press Association. That is an extraordinary achievement given the number of hands played across the world in international competition. As regular teammates of mine, I'll be expecting very high standards from them next year!

Vote of thanks

Thanks to my fellow trustees, the operations management team and the scores of volunteers who give up their time to support the running of the SBU, the districts and the clubs. It's been a great effort during a very difficult year.

With the success of the Summer Academy, the Play and Learn weekend in Perth, and a resurgence of teaching across the districts, it's great to see a significant number of new people learning and playing bridge. Thank you and well done to all the teachers. It's important that we build on these successes next year.

Best wishes to you and your families for a very happy Christmas and a great 2023.

Alan Goodman (chair@sbu.org.uk)

December 2022