



9 October 2025

Newsletter No 5 for 2025

Oops! Some oops are bad and some turn out in your favour. Earlier in the year I advised that Anne Barrowclough and I would be retiring at the end of the year having completed 9 years on the Board. Here is the good oops. On checking and rechecking our records Anne has another term. Whilst she is required to step down this year she is entitled to re-stand which she will be doing.

Later in the year I will share my reflections on my time on the Board which has been rewarding.

However today I want to focus on the here and now as we head into 2026 and beyond.

1. Each year there is a board rotation cycle that allows our members (the Clubs) to endorse the direction and work being done, elect new for fresh ideas, or a mix of both that will help steer the direction of the organisation in the years ahead.

I am not eligible for re-election. Anne and Kate Terry are required to retire by rotation but are offering themselves for re-election. So, this year there will be three positions available for election. Subject to the number of nominations received we may be required to hold an election.

The election cycle is part of our democratic process, and we encourage you to put your name forward via your club nomination process. Involvement within the Board is an opportunity to contribute to the future management of bridge in New Zealand. Enthusiasm and energy are important attributes but there are certain skills and experience that we believe will benefit the Board effectiveness in the next few years: -- governance; IT and particularly IT project management; marketing; comms, fund raising, people and operational management.

Through my tenure there has been stability on the Board which has allowed it to have a cohesive and unified approach. Currently the board is served with a range of existing skill sets.

- a) Anne Barrowclough (Auckland)- Strategic and Financial Management, Governance, Performance Management.
- b) Sue Brown (Kerikeri)- Financial Management, Governance, Risk and Audit, Performance Management
- c) John Skipper (Christchurch)- General Management, Risk Management, Governance
- d) Peter Newall (Wellington) - Strategic and Financial Management, Project Management and Business Transformation, Governance, Comms, Performance Management



- e) Kate Terry (Tauranga) - Comms, Data and Analytics, Committee Leadership (Teaching and Learning, and Online), Strategic and Business Management.
- f) Sam Coutts (Dunedin) - Technology, General Management, Youth

is a summary of our planned engagement for 2026. The intention is that more of the operational tasks being undertaken at a committee level, with board meetings focused on strategy, governance and oversight. Board members will however continue to have an operational involvement at a committee level.

2. Over the last 12+ months our focus has been 'business as usual' but with an eye on the future. The future focus being on how we broaden interest in the game and engage with new players, including those who are not affiliated or who only play socially.

a. The message at the AGM was to control spending and ensure a continued focus on business as usual (supporting clubs). We have made changes which we have already shared with you. Through expense control and revenue exceeding forecasts we are projecting a small surplus in 2025. We need to generate surpluses if we want to continue to invest in the future.

b. Congress is a very important part of NZ Bridge 'business as usual' and we expect a portion of the surplus will be generated from this event. Not only have player numbers increased from 620 last year to 735 this year (with some events already closed) we have also had wonderful sponsorship support from:

- **Palmerston North City Council**
- **Palmy Function and Conference Centre**
- **Grassroots Trust Central**
- **Pub Charities**
- **NZCT NZ Community Trust**
- **Apex Car Rentals**

If you have an interest in joining this group of supporters or know someone who may be interested, please let Bridget know.

c. The priorities for 2026 continue to be support for clubs, helping clubs retain and build a vibrant club environment that meets the needs and expectations of its community. We want to see clubs grow and we want to see greater participation. This will include -

- **The roll out of the new teaching and learning material** which will be available for all 2026 beginner courses. It has been greatly refreshed with a focus on making it simpler to learn and attempting to lower the perception of complexity. Hopefully this will also help with retention of beginners. On the 18th and 19th of October the Teachers

Conference will endorse the new teaching material which has gone through a testing regime over the last 6 months. Having a focus on introducing new players to our game is 100% right, but there is a thirst for more help for those who want to improve and expand their skills. This year we have provided online Improver and Intermediate lessons and online supported play sessions which have been hugely popular. These will continue in 2026. Over the years I have benefitted from lessons from Geo Tislevoll. I vividly remember a comment he made early on - "players here are keen on playing too many gadgets and many don't know when and how to use them". Hopefully we can help in this space and assist players with building their playing capability and knowledge as well as their partnership agreements- adding further enjoyment to their game.

- NZ Bridge is committed to **fostering a safe, respectful and fair playing environment** for all participants- clubs, players, directors, scorers, and administrators. As our bridge community grows, so does the need for consistent and transparent approaches to managing player conduct, disputes, and appeals. To that end the Board has set up the Fair Play Committee to take the lead on a cultural and procedural shift towards higher standards of behaviour across all play, through education, empowerment, and resource provision. It is currently developing its policies, procedures, protocols and a delivery plan. It will not only deal with issues as they arise but will be tasked with improving and managing behaviour (the nemesis of the game) and on spreading learnings and insights into the clubs and players. The new framework will be released in the new year and will cover the roles of recorders and the Conduct Disputes and Discipline Committee. There must be clear demarcation lines between all three.

The roll out of **the toolkit has been** a project in 2025 with ~80 components already available. The plan is that the toolkit will be maintained and expanded.

- **The Incorporated Societies Act.** Most clubs have actioned or are in the process of re-registering. We remind those clubs who are yet to start the process you only have to 5th April 2026. Failure to re-register will result in being struck off and forced to wind up and distribute your assets. We will continue to provide support.
- **Marketing.** We have had to curtail the extent of support we can provide. We will continue to support a marketplace presence and promotion of beginner lessons.
- **Communications.** We are committed to retaining a communications plan including news from the chair; news from the regions; specific project updates; the daily hands; international news; learnings and insights from the Fair Play Committee.

- **Development of the website.** We didn't get it right earlier in the year and called a halt on activity. The plan was for two phases- initially a public facing website followed by migrating the 'back end'. We have decided that we need to bring these phases together and that is what we are working on. The website as well as being a link to all things bridge also contains back-office functions of membership management, masterpoints, tournament management, tournament results, teaching and learning, etc. We will only roll it out when we are satisfied that it is functioning as intended. It is an urgent piece of work as the existing hosting arrangement will not be supported in the future. Once complete we can then advance the building of a handicapping and ranking system.
- **Regional Changes.** We have made changes to the management of tournaments with more flexibility for regions to manage events in their region.

We have also decided from next year there will be a change to how we run the regional championships. This change should reduce the input from the regional committees, giving them more time to focus on development and assistance in their region. Plans are afoot to have a closer link with the regional committees so there is better alignment between the board and the regional committees.

Experience shows that coming together on a more regular basis there is a chance to share ideas and learnings. A chance to take advantage of what others have built and tried.

3. Accountability

The primary purposes of NZ Bridge as expressed in our constitution are to:

- Deliver a vibrant, prosperous, and appealing sport.
- Raise the profile of bridge, improve player engagement and participation, and maintain the standards of the game throughout New Zealand.

Therefore, whatever we do must be tied to the purposes set out above.

We are building a scorecard along the following lines. If there is anything else, you would find helpful please reach out.

Membership movement by club and by region
Level of participation at club level and at tournaments
Type of tournaments supported
International success
The number of young people taking up the game
The demographics- age and gender- of people playing
Number of people playing v membership
Number undertaking lessons- beginners, improvers, advanced
Level of retention of people entering the game- year 1,2,3
Level of issues referred to the Fair Play Committee
Relationship with the Board, Executive, Regional Committee
Operating Metrics, including financial performance

When the constitution was changed in 2022 the election of the chair shifted from a vote at the AGM to an election by the board. The change allows the board to focus on the leadership it needs to carry out the plans it has set. I have had the privilege of being elected by my colleagues. Election of the chair also provides flexibility to make changes away from the formal annual meeting. As we approach 2026 the Board thought it beneficial to signal the future leadership. Peter Newell is chair designate, and his position will be ratified at the first meeting post 1 January 2026.

Cheers Allan