

## **HBA AGM 2024**

### **Membership Report**

The last 12 months have been positive for HBA as regards membership, and bridge playing in general. HBA remains with 20 affiliated clubs with the majority now in a stable or even growing position. Covid had an impact on everything, including bridge playing but it now appears as if we are at least back to our pre Covid position in Herts.

Individual clubs make their own decisions as to what programs to offer in terms of face to face or online with some of the larger clubs offering a program that includes both options, in order to appeal to and attract a broader membership. Overall across the clubs in Hertfordshire there are multiple bridge options on offer on most days of the week which gives a good choice for HBA members. Across the Herts affiliated clubs just over 60% of bridge is being played face to face now.

Over the first 8 months of 2024 the number of player sessions played at Herts clubs has increased by 9.7% over those same months of 2023. That is on top of a 6.8% increase for the full 2023 year over 2022 so signs of good steady growth.

At the time of writing this report HBA has 2,045 members (including 45 secondary members). This is an increase of 46 since the 2023 AGM report. It is however down from 2,115 at the time of the 2019 AGM report. This is a slightly misleading comparison as accuracy and completeness of the member database continues to improve. EBU have recently confirmed that Herts has roughly the same number of active members (those who have played in the last three months) as we had immediately before Covid.

Overall it seems that most indicators are positive for the future and Hertfordshire does seem to be doing better than many other counties. Many clubs across Herts are offering new teaching programs from September/October and these should bring new players into our clubs in future and continue to help drive the positive trends.

HBA does seek to engage with its affiliated clubs and members as much as possible and I would like to thank the various club contacts and Membership Secretaries for their assistance and support throughout the past year. HBA does issue a short monthly communication to its members and I am pleased to say that over the past twelve months the proportion of members receiving that has risen from almost 95% to 95.5%. That is further evidence of the improving quality of our member database. Most of the 4.5% who do not receive either don't have access to e mail or have unsubscribed as they have stopped playing bridge with their club membership to lapse at the next club renewal.

Alan Woof

HBA Membership Secretary