2016 Constitution of the Northern Ireland Bridge Union.

1 Name

The name of the organisation shall be the Northern Ireland Bridge Union (‘the Union’)

2 Purpose

The purpose of the Union shall be to develop, encourage and control all forms of Duplicate Bridge in Northern Ireland.

3. Government

Government is vested in the Council of the Union subject to the provisions of this Constitution.

The Council

The Council shall consist of 18 members of Council – the President, the Chairperson, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Master Points Secretary, the Competitions Secretary (‘the Officers’) and 12 Councillors (‘the Councillors’) one of whom shall be the Vice-Chair or Immediate Past-Chair as elected under Clause 4.2.4.

3.1 Council Meetings

3.1.1 Council meetings shall be convened by the Secretary or the Chairperson and shall take place at least three times a year.

3.1.2 Any member of the Union may attend a meeting of the Council as an observer and in a non-voting capacity. A member of the Union may only address a meeting at the invitation of the Chairperson or the Chair of the meeting.

3.1.3 Any member of the Union may ask to raise an item of business or address Council at a meeting providing they have given at least 8 days’ notice to the Secretary.

3.1.4 Any 6 or more Councillors may require the Secretary to summon a meeting of the Council.

3.1.5 A meeting shall be deemed to be quorate when 6 or more Councillors entitled to vote are present.

3.1.6 The Council shall be chaired by the Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson the Vice Chairperson or the Immediate-Past Chairperson shall take the Chair. Should all three be absent Council shall elect a chairperson for that meeting.

3.1.7 All matters shall be decided by vote. The Chairperson shall have a vote and in the event of a tied vote, a casting vote. Members of the Management Committee shall have no vote. Each other Councillor shall have one vote. No proxy voting shall be allowed.

3.1.8 Each meeting shall consider written reports or exceptionally verbal reports from the Management Committee and from each committee appointed by Council – any verbal report shall be submitted to the Secretary in writing prior to publication of the minutes of that meeting.

3.1.9 The agenda and accompanying papers of all Council and Committee meetings shall be posted on the Union website 7 days prior to any meeting. Draft minutes, agreed by the Chairperson, shall be posted on the Union website within 14 days following any meeting.

3.2 Election of Council Members

All candidates for election to Council shall be members of the Union

3.2.1 A nomination of a candidate to stand for election either as an Officer or as a Councillor shall be made by at least one affiliated club and submitted to the Secretary in writing at least 21 days before an Annual General Meeting ('AGM') following notice by the Secretary.

3.2.2 Should more than 1 candidate be nominated as an Officer or more than 12 candidates be nominated as a Councillor then an election shall take place by secret ballot at an AGM. Should 12 or fewer candidates be nominated as a Councillor then all shall be deemed elected.

3.2.3 Up to the number of vacancies, the candidates who receive most votes shall be declared elected. Where 2 or more candidates receive an equal number of votes, there shall be a further secret ballot between those candidates.

3.2.4 Should there be no nomination of a candidate for a vacant post of a Councillor or an Officer, the Council shall make an appointment to fill each such vacancy.

3.2.5 No club may nominate more than 4 members to Council

3.3 Powers

The Union shall have the power to:

3.3.1 Promote, organise and manage bridge tournaments, congresses and matches in a range of formats.

3.3.2 Determine rules and procedures governing all aspects of the Union's objectives and its relationship between the Union, affiliated clubs, members, Management Committee, committees and Council.

3.3.3 Accept, reject, terminate or suspend the affiliation of any bridge club.

3.3.4 Discipline any member of the Union and debar them from participation in Union events after completion of the procedures set out in the Disciplinary Procedures of the Union.

3.3.5 Levy annual fees and subscriptions from affiliated clubs.

3.3.6 Affiliate with national or international bridge organisations either directly or through its membership of the Irish Bridge Union.

3.3.7 Purchase, take on lease or in exchange, hire or otherwise acquire and hold for any estate or interest any lands, buildings, easements, rights, privileges, concessions, patents, patent rights, licences, and any real or personal property of any kind necessary or convenient for the purposes of or in connection with the objects and business of the Union.

3.3.8 Erect, enlarge, alter and maintain any buildings necessary or convenient for the objects and business of the Union and to contribute to or subsidise the erection, construction and maintenance thereof.

3.3.9 Appoint trustees from among the members of the Union for any purpose relating to the holding of real property, stocks, shares, investments or other property or for the purpose of exercising any rights of ownership and management over the same.

3.3.10 Mortgage and charge all or any of the real and personal property and assets, present or future, of the Union.

3.3.11 Accept legacies bequeathed to and donations made to the Union.

3.3.12 Manage or dispose of any property or asset belonging to the Union.

3.3.13 Arrange for the selection of players and team officials to represent the Union

3.4 The Management Committee

3.4.1 The routine business of the Union as set out in Appendix One shall be dealt with by the Management Committee.

3.4.2 The Management Committee shall comprise the following Officers of the Union:- The Secretary, the Treasurer, the Master Points Secretary and the Competitions Secretary and shall be chaired by the Treasurer

3.4.3 The Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson shall be entitled to attend each meeting of the Management Committee but neither shall have a vote.

3.4.4 The Management Committee shall be responsible to and report to the Council.

3.5 The Members

3.5.1 Members are those individuals who are members of an affiliated bridge club**.**

3.5.2 All members of affiliated clubs agree to accept and abide by this Constitution and all rules and policies made by the Union.

3.5.3 There is no provision for individual membership of the Union. Membership is only via membership of an affiliated club.

3.6 Affiliation

3.6.1 Any bridge club in Northern Ireland may apply to the Secretary for affiliation. Council shall decide whether to accept or reject such an application.
3.6.2 Each affiliated club shall provide the Secretary with a list of its members and an affiliation fee before November 1st each year.
3.6.3 Affiliated clubs shall have full powers to manage their own affairs and to benefit fully from the proceeds of internally organised competitions, congresses etc.
3.6.4 Affiliated clubs shall be licensed to issue Master Points

3.7 Fees

3.7.1 The minimum annual affiliation fee for a club is in respect of 8 members.
3.7.2 The annual affiliation fee payable by a club is determined by the total number of members of the club using the formula - A x B where A is the individual membership fee and B is the number of registered members of the club.
3.7.3 The Council may levy a reduced annual affiliation fee in respect of any club in which at least 80% of the members are students
3.7.4 Any change to the annual affiliation fee shall be agreed at the AGM of the Union.
3.7.5 The annual affiliation fee is payable upon application for affiliation and subsequently on 1st November each year. A club shall be deemed to be in arrears if the annual affiliation fee is outstanding on 1st February the following year and may be disaffiliated as a consequence.

3.8 Finance

3.8.1 The Management Committee shall be responsible for the Union's Finances and shall prepare an annual budget after each AGM, for Council approval.
3.8.2 The financial year of the Union shall be from 1st April to 31st March
3.8.3 The Treasurer shall keep proper books of account
3.8.4 The Treasurer's accounts shall be prepared at the end of each financial year
3.8.5 An independent accountant, who shall not be an Officer, ('the Examining Accountant'), shall be appointed at the AGM.
3.8.6 The Examining Accountant shall examine the books and accounts of the Union and submit a report prior to the AGM of the Union stating the extent and basis of the examination and the opinion formed as a result.
3.8.7 The Examining Accountant is entitled to receive notice of all general meetings of the Union, to attend and to address a general meeting of the Union.
3.8.8 Should it be proposed that the Examining Accountant be changed from the previous Examining Accountant, the existing Examining Accountant is entitled to all rights set out in clause 3.8.7
3.8.9 Any 2 members of the Management Committee shall sign Union cheques.

4. Meetings of the Union

4.1 General Meetings

These provisions shall apply to each meeting of the Union

4.1.1 Each meeting of the Union shall be an AGM or an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM).

4.1.2 The Secretary shall e-mail the secretary of each affiliated club at least 14 days prior to a meeting of the Union, setting the time, date and venue of the meeting and sending the agenda and all accompanying papers in respect of the business to be transacted thereat, including in the case of an AGM the report of each Officer, the annual accounts and balance sheet.

4.1.3 The agenda and all accompanying papers shall be posted on the Union website concurrently

4.1.4 Each member of the Union shall be entitled to attend and address a meeting.

4.1.5 Each member attending a meeting shall be entitled to one vote on any motion or resolution presented at a meeting.

4.1.6 A meeting shall be deemed to be quorate when 25 or more members are present.

4.1.7 The draft minutes of a meeting of the Union shall be circulated within 28 days after a meeting of the Union.

4.2 Annual General Meeting

4.2.1 An AGM of the Union shall be held in June each year

4.2.2 The advance notice of an AGM shall be e-mailed to the secretary of each affiliated club and posted on the Union website at least 8 weeks before the date of the AGM shall include the date by which nominations of candidates for Council must be received by the Secretary.

4.2.3 If an AGM is found to be inquorate, business shall cease to be transacted and the AGM shall be adjourned to a time and place as determined by Council, notified to the secretary of each affiliated club and posted on the Union website. Should the adjourned AGM also be inquorate the members present shall form a quorum

4.2.4 The business of an AGM shall include the:

- approval of previous minutes, annual accounts and balance sheet
- consideration of reports from the President, Chairperson, Officers and the Chairpersons of each committee
- election for a term of 3 years, in every fourth year of the President who shall not be eligible for immediate re-election
- election for a term of 2 years in alternate years commencing in June 2016 of the Chairperson who shall not be eligible for re-election but who shall serve for one year as Immediate Past-Chairperson.
- election for a term of 1 year in alternate years commencing in June 2017 of the Vice Chairperson in anticipation of the election of the Vice Chairperson as Chairperson at the next AGM
- election for the term of 1 year of the Secretary, Treasurer, Master Points Secretary and Competitions Secretary who shall be eligible for re-election
- election for the term of 1 year of the Examining Accountant
- election for the term of 1 year of Councillors and (if required) of trustees
- change to annual affiliation fees, if any
- consideration of any resolution submitted in compliance with clause 4.2.5

4.2.5 A resolution to be moved at an AGM shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 21 days before the meeting and signed by the proposer, 8 seconders and the secretaries of 2 affiliated clubs.

4.3 Extraordinary General Meeting

4.3.1 An EGM shall be convened by Council or required by Notice to the Secretary from the secretaries of 4 or more affiliated clubs:

4.3.2 Notice of an EGM shall be made by the Secretary stating the purpose of the meeting in the form of a resolution to be voted on at the EGM ('the Notice')

4.3.3 No business shall be transacted at an EGM other than that specified in the Notice.

4.3.4 An EGM may be called to effect changes in the Constitution in accordance with clause 6 of this Constitution.

4.3.5 Within 10 days of receipt of the Notice of an EGM, the Secretary shall arrange a meeting of the Council at which Council shall set the time, date and venue of the EGM which shall be held within 6 weeks of the date the Secretary received the Notice. The Secretary shall then post full details on the Union website and send full details to the secretary of each affiliated club.

4.3.6 If an EGM is found to be inquorate business shall cease to be transacted

4.3.7 Other than the Council, no other party or parties may call a further EGM to consider the business set out in the Notice until the expiry of one year from the date of the Notice.

5 Delegation by Council

5.1 Council shall appoint members to represent the Union as delegates in meetings of the Irish Bridge Union, Bridge Great Britain and other appropriate bodies.

5.2 Council shall appoint members to a Selection Committee, to a Laws & Ethics Committee and to a Tournament Committee.

5.3 No officer shall be eligible for appointment to either the Selection Committee or to the Laws & Ethics Committee. The Secretary, or an Officer appointed by the Secretary, shall attend meetings of the Selection Committee and the Laws & Ethics Committee but shall have no vote.

5.4 Council may appoint members to other committees with a functional role or may delegate authority to do so to the Management Committee.

5.5 The quorum and membership of all Committees shall be determined by Council from time to time.

5.6 Council shall delegate to its Laws & Ethics Committee:-[a] the right to hear and make a final ruling on all appeals against any decision made by a Union competition Appeals Committee; and [b] all matters to be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedures of the Union.

5.7 Council has the right to have the final say on any appeals arising from decisions of any committee save as set out in clause 5.6 provided that such appeal is lodged with the Secretary within 21 days of the publication of the decision of the Committee on the Union website

6. Constitution

6.1 Council may call an EGM to consider changes in this constitution.
6.2 A member of the Union may propose changes to the Constitution at an AGM providing the wording of the proposed changes are submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 21 days prior to an AGM and supported by the secretaries of at least 4 affiliated clubs.
6.3 Each proposed change to the Constitution shall only be implemented after a vote in agreement of at least two-thirds of members at a general meeting.
6.4 A copy of this Constitution shall be posted on the Union website.

7. Suspension or expulsion of clubs and individual members from the Union

7.1 Council may give an affiliated club notice of suspension or expulsion from the Union and shall provide particulars of any complaint made against such a club.
7.2 The club shall have 21 days to respond to such a notice and may reserve the right to address a meeting of the Council verbally or in writing.
7.3 The decision to suspend or expel any club shall require a 60% majority vote amongst Council members attending.
7.4 Council may suspend a member of the Union from participation in Union events should it be deemed desirable to do so after having complied with the Disciplinary Procedures of the Union.

8. Voluntary Resignation and removal of Officers and members of Council

8.1 A Council member who wishes to resign must do so by writing to the Secretary.
8.2 Council may appoint replacement Officers or Council members on a temporary capacity pending the AGM.
8.3 Council may fill vacancies on Council arising from any cause.
8.4 A Council member or a Committee member may be removed from office if, in the opinion of two-thirds of the Council, the member has failed to carry out duties in a satisfactory manner.

9. Winding up

If the Union is dissolved, any property and funds remaining after settling debts and liabilities will be distributed to the affiliated clubs pro rata the membership of each affiliated club.

10. Interpretation

Any question on interpretation of this constitution shall be referred to and decided by a panel of 3 persons appointed by the members of the last appointed Laws and Ethics Committee.

Appendix One

1 The Treasurer shall record and be responsible for the safekeeping of all the Union's assets and shall inter alia:

1.1 keep books and accounts showing the financial affairs of the Union
1.2 receive funds from and to examine the accounts of, amongst others, Tournament Directors, the Congress Organiser, the International Match Manager and any other person receiving monies on behalf of the Union
1.3 receive all monies payable to the Union
1.4 make all payments on behalf of the Union
1.5 submit to each Annual General Meeting duly certified accounts and balance sheet for the preceding year
1.6 consult the Council if there are extraordinary items submitted for payment
1.7 prepare a budget for consideration by the Council

2 The Management Committee shall meet at least four times per year and shall

2.1 receive an estimate of income and expenditure for the year
2.2 monitor all items of expenditure of the Union
2.3 incur, within the available resources, such expenditure as it considers appropriate in pursuit of the objects of the Union
2.4 make recommendations to the Council on financial matters
2.5 deal with other financial matters of the Union

3 The Management Committee shall:

3.1 receive lists of members and subscriptions from affiliated clubs
3.2 pass subscriptions to the Treasurer
3.3 keep a record of all members of the Union
3.4 deal with all master point matters

4 The Management Committee shall

4.1 actively pursue obtaining sponsorship for the Union and events organised by the Union
4.2 investigate the acquisition of premises by the Union
4.3 provide when appropriate such business plan as the Committee considers appropriate for the continuance of the Union

4.4 publish on the Union website the agenda and minutes of each meeting
4.5 attend Council meetings and report to Council at each Council meeting

Alternative clause 4.1 providing for appointment of delegates by clubs with only delegates entitled to vote at a general meeting

4. Meetings of the Union

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4.1.2 The Secretary shall e-mail the secretary of each affiliated club at least 14 days prior to a meeting of the Union, setting the time, date and venue of the meeting and sending the agenda and all accompanying papers in respect of the business to be transacted, including in the case of an AGM the report of each Officer, the annual accounts and balance sheet.

4.1.3 The agenda and all accompanying papers shall be posted on the Union website concurrently.

4.1.4 Each member of the Union shall be entitled to attend and address a meeting.

4.1.5 Each affiliated club may appoint a delegate or delegates (‘the delegates’) to attend a general meeting. Only such delegates are entitled to vote at a general meeting.

4.1.6 Club secretaries shall notify the Secretary in writing of the names of each delegate of their respective club at least 7 days prior to a general meeting.

4.1.7 At a general meeting each delegate properly notified to the Secretary shall be entitled to one vote on each motion or resolution presented at a meeting.

4.1.8 The number of members of an affiliated club shall determine the number of delegates which the affiliated club shall be entitled to appoint as follows:-

Club membership	Number of delegates
1 - 40	2
41 – 70	3
71 – 100	4
101 – 130	5
131 – 160	6
161 and more	8

4.1.9 A meeting shall be deemed to be quorate when 25 members or more are present.

4.1.10 If a meeting is found to be inquorate business shall cease to be transacted.

4.1.11 The draft minutes of a meeting of the Union shall be circulated within 28 days after a meeting of the Union.

4.1.12 This ‘Alternative Clause 4.1’, if accepted, to be operative following completion of the 2016 AGM.