

BORDER ICE RINK LIMITED

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE BIR CLUB AGM

Normally this Presidents report includes a list of successes and high points from our curling calendar. But not this year I am afraid.

At the end of our last season (19/20) COVID struck in March and the ice rink had to close early. No-one knew then what we were going to go through and how long it would take.

It turned out to be a very surreal eighteen months, filled with fear of this thing called Covid - what is happening? Nobody knows what to do, PPE, severe respiratory problems, deaths of nearest and dearest, lockdowns, limited freedom and no curling.

We (BIRC+ Directors) believed in our ignorance that we would be open for curling in September 2020. We started having meetings to prepare for the new season with Covid restrictions in place.

But then being told by the government that, no, you cannot curl - Covid numbers are rising, was quite devastating for everyone involved. There was no choice but to keep the ice rink closed. It was decided that we would try again in January 2021, but Covid got us again and this time the Rink was to stay closed. Difficult decisions and not everyone agreed, but time has proved that it was the right decision.

Sadly, over the last year we have lost a number of people who have long been the backbone of our ice rink. We all need to step up to fill their shoes and carry the ice rink forward.

Life goes on though. Over the last year we have had several meetings, some facilitated by Scottish curling aimed at helping existing members to bounce back and to look at potential recruitment routes for new curlers.

We also ran a survey of our members to try and find what we as an ice rink and ice rink club can improve on as we come out of the Covid pandemic.

I don't believe we are at the end of Covid yet - I think it will be with us in some form for a long time to come. I think we will all need to adapt to it. And we need to support and encourage those who might be finding it difficult to come back into the real world again.

We are preparing to welcome everyone back, starting with practice ice on the 26th & 27th September to help increase confidence being back on ice and thanks to the Directors at a reduced cost of £5 each. This is open for individuals and clubs to book ice for 1hour sessions.

Ice times are changing this season to allow staff more time for cleaning between sessions. There will only be two sessions for evening ice at 5.45 and 8.00pm. Doing away with 5.15 ice should make it easier for people to play after work, and no-one liked coming out at 9.15 anyway.

We are introducing a new fixed night league, initially on Wednesdays at 8.00pm. This should help curlers who are looking for a bit more curling out with the existing club structure and also those who have problems with the confusing mixed days and times of club ice.

There will still covid rules in place for a while, but hopefully a lot less restrictive than would have happened last year.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has been working hard behind the scenes (Directors, Border ice rink club, Trust members and, of course the ice rink staff) to get us back up and running again this season. It has not been easy but we are nearly there now.

I believe it's time to get out there and enjoy our curling again!