

BBL Questionnaire – Part 1

Brief background of organisations

BBL Rules

NIBA Rules

**Let's start with a bit of
background...**



**Why did we do the
questionnaire?**

Because YOU wanted it!

- ▶ Bands asked BBL to be a sounding board for changes to BBL and NIBA rules at last delegate meeting
- ▶ Executive met and decided to use it as an opportunity to find out additional information e.g. opinions on contests, band health etc.

How did we gather the
results?

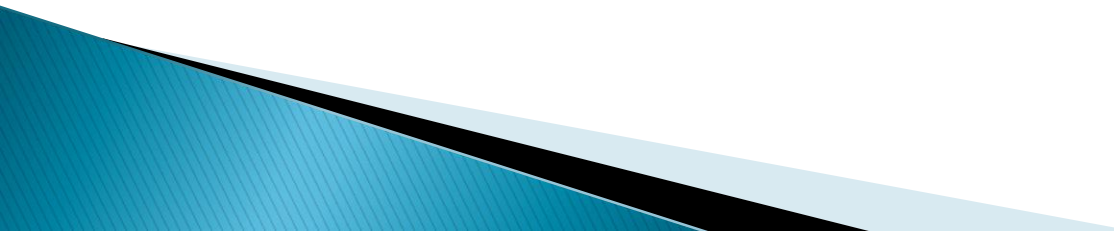
- ▶ Google forms
- ▶ Excel spreadsheet
- ▶ Annoymise (29 bands)
- ▶ Powerpoint

**What are the brass band
related organisations in NI?**

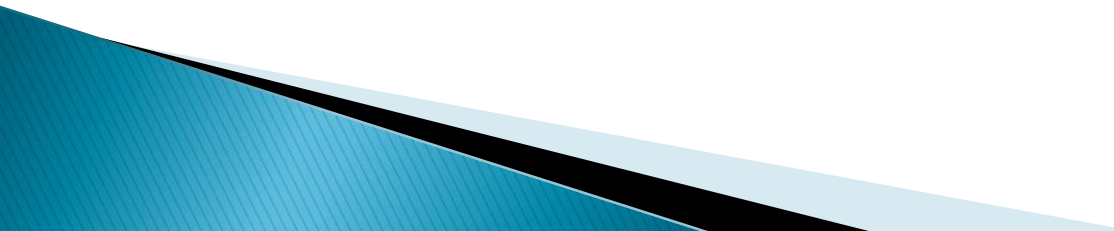
North of Ireland Band Association (NIBA)

- ▶ Made up of Brass Bands (20), Flute Bands (21), Accordion Bands (6) and Concert Bands (3)
 - ▶ Organises Championship of Ireland Contest which qualifies brass bands for the European Championships
 - ▶ Auditions NI representatives for European Youth Brass Band (EYBB)
 - ▶ Manages the contest and registration rules followed by BBL
 - ▶ Organises park engagements in the Belfast Council Area
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The Brass Band League (Northern Ireland) aims to:

- ▶ Promote and encourage all efforts tending to the continual improvement of the cultural advancement of Brass Bands throughout all sections of the community in Northern Ireland irrespective of religious, sexual or ethnic background or physical status.
 - ▶ Foster and develop links with other brass bands in the wider society.
 - ▶ Encourage the development of brass bands and their members by devising and promoting a range of activities such as contests, workshops and festivals.
 - ▶ Bring enjoyment and promote harmony in the wider community by bringing brass band music to the widest selection of people possible.
 - ▶ Encourage all sections of the community to become involved with their local brass band.
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Brass Band League NI (BBL)

- ▶ Organisation for brass bands only (19)
 - ▶ Organise 3–4 contests a year – Solos and Ensembles, Brass in Concert, Spring Festival and Festival of Brass
 - ▶ Non profit – all Executive members are volunteers and all money goes back into brass banding
 - ▶ Organise additional training courses
 - ▶ Provide support for brass bands
- 

**As you go through this
please remember...**

- ▶ Opinions expressed are the opinions of BANDS
- ▶ We would like to encourage discussion of the topics raised but please do so politely

And...

No system is perfect and it is impossible to please everyone...

...But that doesn't mean we should never strive for improvement!



BBL Rules

Note:

- ▶ *Sections in italics are the current rules*

Section 1: Membership

1.1 Full membership

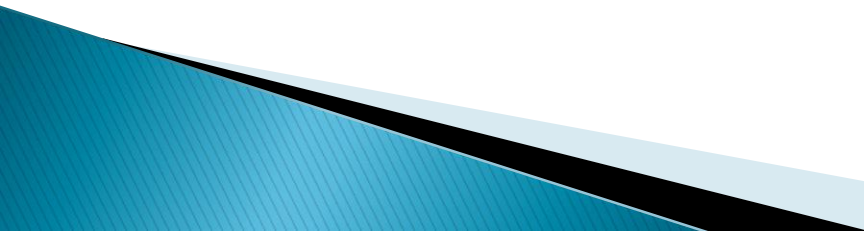
Only amateur bands shall be admitted as members of the League

Bands shall be admitted to the League on: –

- Being already members of the North of Ireland Bands Association.*
- Paying an annual subscription, the amount of which will be determined by the Executive Committee. The annual subscription is due on or before the Annual General Meeting.*
- Signifying their agreement to the objectives and rules of the BBL.*

1.2 Associate Membership

Amateur bands being members of the North of Ireland Bands Association may be admitted as Associate members at the discretion of the Executive. Associate members are expected to become full members within two years of admission. Associate members are expected to support the objectives and rules of the BBL.




Suggestion 1

Full membership:

- ▶ Only amateur bands, must be member of NIBA, pay subscription and agree to rules and objectives of BBL

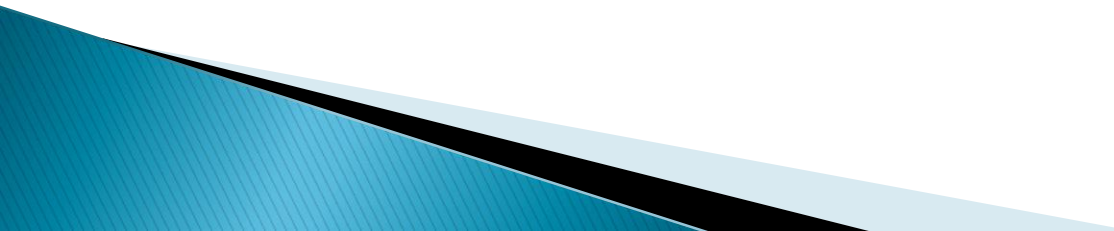
Associate membership:

- ▶ Change this so that associate memberships is for bands not wishing to contest but still wanting to take part in the non-contesting aspects of the BBL and will pay a reduced rate. If they decide they wish to contest they must become members of NIBA and pay the difference in fee.
- 

Suggestion 2

1.1 Remove the rule stating that BBL members must be members of the NIBA

1.2 Rename associate membership to non contesting membership. Remove any reference to being members of NIBA and remove time limit of 2 years for bands to become full members. Any band wishing to contest would need to upgrade to full membership. As contesting is generally to NIBA rules and registrations, they would also need to affiliate to NIBA at that point. Non-contesting members may vote, but not on matters relating to contests.



Section 2: Representation at BBL Meetings

2.1 Full Members

Each band is entitled to have three representatives to the BBL. Only one delegate is entitled to vote at meetings.

2.2 Associate Members

Representatives of Associate Member bands may attend League meetings but will not be entitled to vote. They can take part in discussions with the permission of the chairperson.

2.3 Notification of Representatives

It is the responsibility of band secretaries to notify the BBL secretary prior to the BBL Annual General Meeting of the names and contact details of their band representatives. The following information is required: –

- Band Name*
- Representatives; Forename and Surname*
- Address and Telephone Number (Day) (Evening) if applicable.*
- E-mail address if available*
- In the event of a change in representative the name of the person being replaced must also be given.*

Suggestions

- ▶ Amend in line with suggestion to section one. Associate members should be granted a vote for all non contest related business. Whether the issue being discussed and voted on is a contesting issue can be decided by the Executive

Section 3: Management of the BBL

3.1 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the BBL will normally be held on the first Saturday in December to: –

- Elect Officers and the Executive Management Group.*
- Present and approve the accounts.*
- Present and approve the Secretary's report.*
- Discuss the previous year's events.*
- Discuss and agree the annual plan.*

3.2 Election of Non-Executive Officers

The President or his nominated Deputy will preside for the election of Officers. The following officers will be elected: –

- President: The President will be a non-executive officer. The President will conduct the election of Executives and be invited to represent the BBL at major events. Presidents may hold office for up to three years.*
- Vice-Presidents: A number of Vice-Presidents may be elected. Their role will be to support and deputise for the President.*

The President and Vice-Presidents are required to support and further the objectives of the BBL.

3.3 Election of Executive Officers

- *Eligibility: Only band representatives to the BBL will be eligible for election to posts as Executive Officers.*
- *Chairperson: The Chairperson leads the BBL. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the League and Executive Management Group. The Chairperson is responsible for the calling and conduct of meetings, appointing sub-groups and their tasks. The Chairperson, with the agreement of the Executive Management Group can co-opt up to three additional BBL members to the Executive Management Group.*

In the absence of the Chairperson the Vice-Chairperson shall preside. The Chairperson in the case of a vote will only have the casting vote.

- *Vice-Chairperson: To support the Chairperson and to deputise in the event of absence.*
- *Treasurer: To manage the finances of the BBL and to support the attainment of the BBL objectives. The Treasurer will make available, annually, for audit all records of financial transactions taken on behalf of the BBL. He will present an audited set of accounts to the Annual General Meeting for approval.*
- *Assistant Treasurer: To support the Treasurer, deputise in the event of absence and undertake specific duties as agreed with the Treasurer.*
- *Secretary: To record the minutes of the Executive Management Group and manage correspondence on behalf of the BBL.*
- *Assistant Secretary: To record the minutes of League meetings and undertake specific duties agreed with the Secretary.*
- *Executive Members: Four or more additional members will be elected as Executives. The Chairperson may task them with specific functions to enable the attainment of the objectives of the BBL.*

The above officers comprise the Executive Management Group.

The election empowers the Executive Group to conduct the day to day business of the League, including the development and execution of plans to achieve the objectives of the League.

3.4 League Meeting

Full meetings of the League will take place on the first Saturday of each month (except July and August) to hear and discuss reports from the Executive Groups and to bring forward any item designed to further the BBL objectives.

The meeting will be presided over by the Chairperson or his deputy. The business of the meeting will be recorded by the Assistant Secretary. The quorum will be five bands.


Items for the agenda should be forwarded to the Assistant Secretary four weeks in advance of the meeting.

3.6 Special Meetings

Members have the right to call for a special meeting. A special meeting will be called on the receipt of a written request from the secretaries of seven or more bands. The request shall state the reason for the meeting. The request shall be forwarded to the Secretary of the BBL. The meeting should be held within 4 weeks of the receipt of the request.

3.7 Record of Attendance

Representatives are responsible for signifying their attendance by signing the Attendance Register.



Suggestions

- ▶ Section 3.3: Change duties of secretary and assistant secretary to bring them in line with what actually happens.
- ▶ Section 3.4: Add a line to say that League meetings can be held online and at a date and time of Executive's choosing as long as all bands notified at least X weeks in advance.
- ▶ 3.4 Meetings to be monthly (not necessarily on Saturdays) with a preference for online meetings to encourage attendance.
- ▶ Change items for agenda to 1–2 weeks in advance
- ▶ Record of attendance: Can be completed electronically by secretary if meeting held online.

More ZOOM Meetings – travel to and from Belfast is totally unnecessary with the proven technology available today. ZOOM is more ECO friendly.

The Zoom meeting we held I felt allowed more people to attend, it certainly got a good response, I believe they should continue especially as some bands need to travel quite a distance.

4. Executive Group

4.1 Executive Meetings

The Executive Group will meet on the first Saturday of each month or at another suitable date as agreed by the Executive Management Group, between the months of September and June. The Chairperson shall preside at Executive Group Meetings. The Chairperson may appoint sub groups and sub-group leaders to manage specific functions designed to advance the objectives of the BBL. The business of the Executive Management Group will be recorded by the Secretary. The business of sub-groups will be recorded and progress reported to the Executive Management Group.

4.2 Key Functions

- Managing BBL finances*
- Development of events and activities to advance brass banding.*
- Promotion of events and activities to enhance the image and standing of the Brass Band Movement.*
- Revision of rules and their presentation for approval to the BBL.*
- Develop and present a rolling 5 year plan and interim plans to achieve the objectives of the BBL.*

Suggestions

- ▶ Do Executive members really need to be in a band and be a BBL rep?
- ▶ Where can I find the BBL's latest 5 year plan?

BBL is a very friendly and approachable association. Thank you.

I feel there is much support and encouragement from our BBL Team keep moving forward, well done and thank you

Thank you for how you have guided bands through the past weeks. Your information and updates have been very helpful. Keep up the good work.

5. Finance

5.1 Financial Year

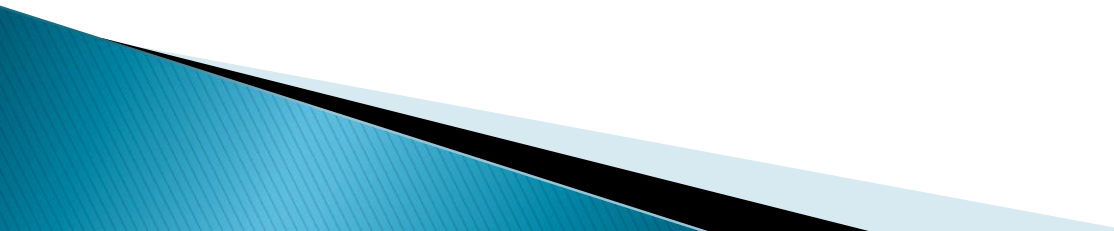
The financial year of the BBL starts on the 1st November and ends on the 31st October. All monies due must be paid on or before the date of the Annual General Meeting. Band representatives will not be entitled to vote or be put forward for election to the Executive unless all fees are paid.

5.2 Audit of Accounts

The finances of the BBL will be audited annually. Two auditors will be elected at the Annual General meeting. They cannot be members of the Executive Group. The auditors will be afforded access to all financial records.

5.3 Income

The Executive Management Group shall manage the finances of the BBL to ensure that it maintains a positive balance. It shall not commit the BBL to debt unless approved by a full meeting of the League. The Executive Management Group is empowered to maximise fund raising through band subscription and grant aid in order to achieve BBL objectives.



Suggestions

- ▶ Prizes are not profitable enough
- ▶ This could maybe be fleshed out a bit more?
It's very vague on how the cost of affiliation fees are decided.

6. Relations with other band movements

BBL members may enter into relationships with other band movements. However a BBL member is not authorised to speak or provide information on behalf of the BBL.

Suggestions

- ▶ I feel the BBL, and indeed the NIBA, should actively look to engage with the likes of Brass Bands England for guidance on various topics, such as contest structure and Covid-19 guidance. I know that the BBL has been doing this already
- ▶ The rule as states re 'Relations with other Bands' could be made more explicit on the website/ in the rule book

7. Rules

7.1 Promulgation

Rules can only be changed at an annual or special meeting. When a change is desired, notice of the change must be given in writing to the Secretary and presented four weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

7.2 Contests

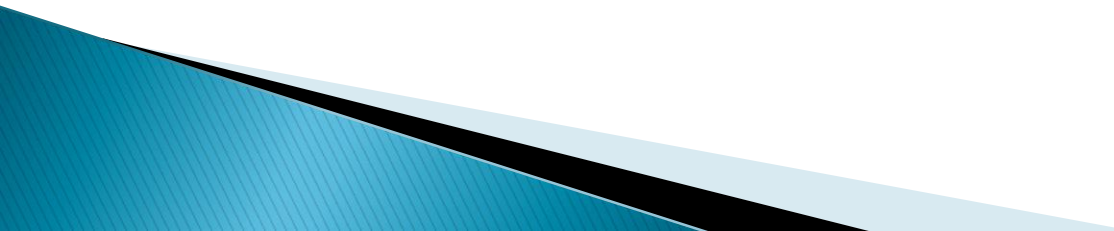
North of Ireland Bands Association registration, transfer and contest rules will apply in full at all contests organised by the BBL.

7.3 Notice of Rules

A copy of all rules and subsequent changes will be forwarded to the Secretaries of member bands and League representatives.

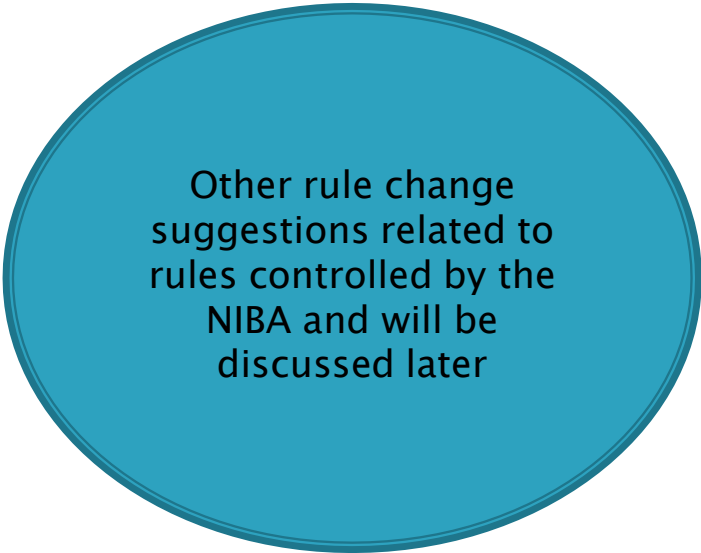
7.4 Reviews

The Executive Management Group shall review all rules at least bi-annually and report on their status at the Annual General Meeting.



Suggestions

- ▶ Remove section 7.2. BBL would need to decide what rules and registration they would follow instead.
- ▶ 7.2 Remove rule or reword to say NIBA rules may apply at BBL contests at the executive's discretion.



Other rule change suggestions related to rules controlled by the NIBA and will be discussed later

Additional comments

- ▶ Band 1: A more independent organisation moving away from the NIBA
- ▶ Band 2: The future relationship between the BBL and NIBA should be seriously explored given the impact COVID has had on banding.
The silence from the NIBA makes us wonder where our membership fee goes.
- ▶ Band 3: I don't believe we need to be part of the NIBA, or perhaps need to follow their rules.
- ▶ Band 4: We think the relationship with the NIBA needs to change and the BBL should become more of an autonomous organisation. We feel there is not much benefit in having two organisations. If this were to happen it would necessarily require a complete review of the constitution and the rules of the BBL.
- ▶ Band 5: The NIBA have done nothing for bands since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have not tried to help in any way. There has been no offer of payment for the Belfast Council gigs that were cancelled and no offer of a return in registration or dues paid. Is there any point to bands paying money to two organisations when one doesn't do anything to help?

Please note...

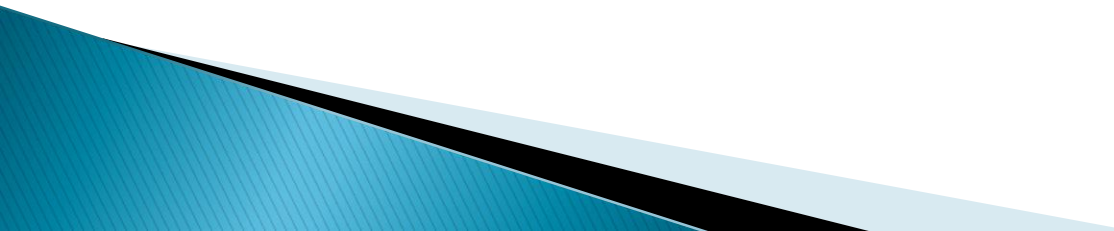
Since the results of the questionnaire came in the NIBA emailed bands to let them know that there would be no registration fees to pay in 2021 and that the affiliation fee would just be £30

And finally please remember...

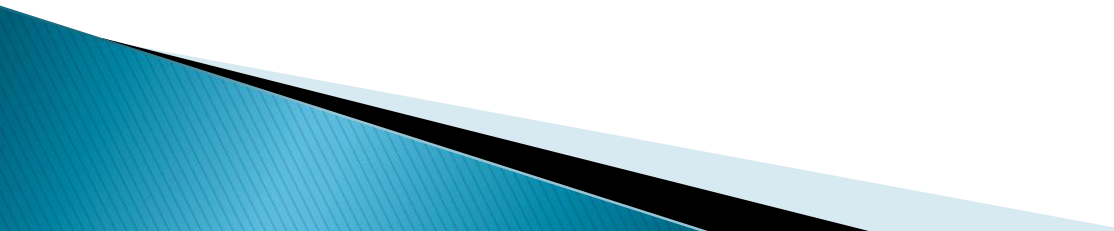
- ▶ Opinions expressed are the opinions of bands
- ▶ We want you to discuss issues but please be polite to each other

NIBA Rules

Constitution

- ▶ *Rule 24: A band must be in membership of the NIBA in order to be eligible for membership of the Flute Band Association NI, the Brass Band League NI and the Accordion Band League NI.*
 - ▶ In order for the BBL to have associate members that don't have to be members of the NIBA, rule 24 would need amended or removed.
 - ▶ 24 Remove this rule. Bands will still require membership if they wish to use the NIBA players registry and/or compete in local contests as they stand.
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Constitution

- ▶ *Rule 26: Subsidiary Leagues or Associations may only be established under the principle of Constitution and General Rule 2 and may be disbanded at the discretion of the Executive Committee.*
 - ▶ Remove rule 26. NIBA should not have the power to disband any of the subsidiary organisations.
 - ▶ 26 Remove this rule.
- 

Registration Rules

Suggested changes related to
“Contest Rules” and will be discussed
under that heading

Player Transfer Rules

- ▶ *Rule 6: A registered player is permitted to transfer only once in any twelve-month rolling period. This rule will not apply in the case of bands amalgamating.*
- ▶ The rule works to stop 'band-hopping'; however, there could be circumstances such as a band member moving house and wanting to change band, but not being able to for 12 months. There could be a clause or clarification inserted to the rule to make this distinction.

Contest Rules

- ▶ *Rule 3: Each player must be a registered player of the band for which he or she competes at least four calendar weeks prior to the first day of competition in any contest. A registered player will only be permitted to play for one band of each type in any contest except when holding multiple registration as defined by Registration Rules 4 and 8, playing as a deputy in accordance with Contest Rule 25 or playing as a guest in accordance with Contest Rule 28.*
- ▶ Change from 4 weeks to 2 weeks to recognise that everything is electronic now and much easier to update and change than in the past.
- ▶ Rule 3. Reduce the 4-week pre-contest registration/transfer rule to 1 week. There is no real need for 4 weeks in this technological age where registrations and transfers are now handled electronically, often within minutes.

Contest Rules

- ▶ *Rule 4: A professional musician will not be permitted to play in any contest held under NIBA Rules, except were the musician has been a player registered with the NIBA prior to becoming a professional. For the purposes of these rules a professional musician is defined as one who earns two thirds, or more, of his or her livelihood through playing music and as all regular bandspersons of Armed Forces and Police Forces. The Executive Committee will have the power to decide on the professional status of any player.*
- ▶ The BBL currently follows the NIBA registration rules re professional players. I believe that this rule should be changed. The current rule states that a professional is someone who earns a third or more of their income from playing. This rule is a hindrance to bands. We are trying to work within a very small pool of brass players in NI and to limit that further seems unhelpful and to the detriment of the movement. The rule also discriminates against people who are not from NI. You can play a professional player if they were registered with the NIBA prior to becoming a professional...I'm not suggesting we change the rule so bands can use 25 professionals in contests but there should be an allowance of 2 or 3 per band. It is highly unlikely that any band would gain a significant advantage from having one professional player in their band, other than filling an empty seat. I am aware of bands having to withdraw from contests due to being 1 or 2 players short. If the rule was different these bands might have been able to compete. This rule change suggestion was brought to the NIBA recently and rejected by their members. From what I am aware, it was mostly met with negativity from the flute and accordion bands and the majority of brass bands were in favour of the change. The BBL could take the lead here and suggest this change to their member bands. I think it would only be a good thing for the member bands and their participation in contests. It seems crazy that the NIBA only organise 1 out of 4 contests in the calendar year yet have control over all player registration

Contest Rules

- ▶ *Rule 11: Band players and conductors will only be admitted to contest venues upon production of an admission ticket or payment of the requisite admission fee. Admission tickets will be issued to competing bands in line with the number of players listed on their entry forms. Bands shall return all unused tickets to the NIBA. Bands will be required to pay for unused tickets not returned. The number of unused tickets will be defined as the difference between the number of players listed on a band's entry form and the number of players that sign at the registration verification desk.*
- ▶ Remove that bands will be charged for failing to return tickets as this doesn't seem to be enforced?

Contest Rules

- ▶ *Rule 12: Each band shall provide, no later than one week before the day of competition in any contest, details of guest players – comprising their names and the bands they are registered with – that will play on the contest platform. The Membership & Registration Secretary will produce a registry report based on the submitted lists containing names, signatures and photographs that shall be signed by each player and checked and verified by the contest scrutineers prior to being given permission to compete. A list of players that competed will be retained in the Registry database.*
- ▶ Again add in that guest players can be registered up to 24 hours prior to contest with an additional late fee charged.
- ▶ I think guest players should be able to be submitted up to 1 week prior to contest
- ▶ The unnecessary strictness of the rules could be putting bands off from competing in the NIBA Contests E.G: – Needing to notify NIBA so many weeks in advance if intending to use guest players.

Contest Rules

- ▶ *Rule 25: If, due to personal illness or accident, or the death or illness of or accident to an immediate relative or dependent, a player is unable to play in a contest and the officials of the competing band so affected desire a deputy, application to use a deputy may be made to the contest organisers. A doctor's certificate in respect of incapacity due to personal illness or accident must be presented with the application, if practicable. Self completed certificates will not be accepted. Deputies must be registered players of the NIBA or another formally constituted similar organisation that operates a similar formal player registration system recognised by the NIBA. On the day of competition, deputies may be played from bands of any type in the same grade as, or a lower grade than, the band desiring to use them. Bands competing in Grade 4 or 5 may also play deputies from bands no more than one grade higher than that in which they are competing. For the purposes of this rule Melody Accordion, Melody Flute, and Melody Plus Flute Bands will be regarded as Grade 4. The grade of any band from which a deputy is played will be regarded as that in which it last competed in a contest held under NIBA rules. Deputies may not be requested from a band that has never competed in a contest held under NIBA rules. Professional musicians, as defined under Contest Rule 4, will not be permitted to play as deputies.*
- ▶ The unnecessary strictness of the rules could be putting bands off from competing in the NIBA Contests E.G: – Needing a sick note for a player who isn't well if you have used guest spaces

Rule 28: “Guest player rule”

- ▶ *Any band will be permitted to play a maximum of two guest players at a contest.*
- ▶ *A player may only play as a guest player with one band in any contest.*
- ▶ *Guest players must be registered players of the NIBA or another formally constituted similar organisation that operates a similar formal player registration system recognised by the NIBA.*
- ▶ *On the day of competition, guest players may be played from bands of any type in the same grade as, or a lower grade than, the band desiring to use them.*
- ▶ *Bands competing in Grade 4 or 5 may also play guest players from bands no more than one grade higher than that in which they are competing...*
- ▶ *The grade of any band from which a guest player is played will be regarded as that in which it last competed in a contest held under NIBA rules.*
- ▶ *Guest players may not be requested from a band that has never competed in a contest held under NIBA rules.*
- ▶ *Professional musicians, as defined under Contest Rule 4, will not be permitted to play as guest players.*

Proposed changes to Rule 28

Proposed revised Rule 28

Any band will be permitted to play a maximum of two guest players plus an additional maximum of one percussion player at a contest. A player may only play as a guest player with one band in any contest. Guest players must be registered players of the NIBA or another formally constituted similar organisation that operates a similar formal player registration system recognised by the NIBA. On the day of competition, guest players may be played from bands of any type in the same grade as, or a lower grade than, the band desiring to use them. Bands competing in Grade 4 or 5 may also play guest players from bands no more than one grade higher than that in which they are competing. For the purposes of this rule Melody Accordion, Melody Flute, and Melody Plus Flute Bands will be regarded as Grade 4. Percussion guests can be played from any band regardless of grade and instrumentation. The grade of any band from which a guest player is played will be regarded as that in which it last competed in a contest held under NIBA rules. Guest players may not be requested from a band that has never competed in a contest held under NIBA rules. Professional musicians, as defined under Contest Rule 4, will not be permitted to play as guest players.

Note: This proposed change has already been submitted to the NIBA for discussion/approval at their next AGM.

Proposed changes to Rule 28

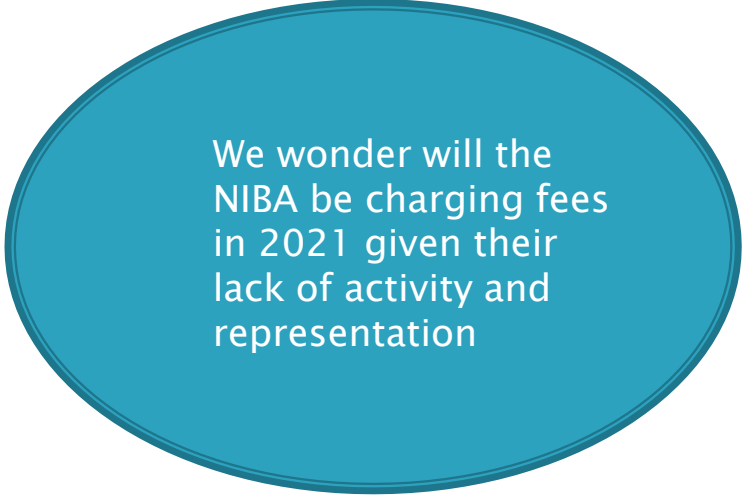
- ▶ Band 1: Add a legacy rule for questing in line with other European countries. For example, if a player was registered with a lower section band at the age of 18 or under and then subsequently registers to play for a higher section band, they should be allowed to go and play with their home band. This would help lower section bands compete
- ▶ Band 2: There are many ex professional / experienced musicians who can transfer up to help senior section bands maintain their positions but no help for lower section bands from transfer down, this rule needs changed to enable lower section bands to compete. If the rule to allow members to be registered with their initial training band it would go a long way to help,
- ▶ Band 2: As a lower section band we train our youth from 8 to 18 and then lose them to mostly Championship section or senior section whilst this is fantastic for them and we want them to go further it's detrimental for us, sometimes losing 4-5 in one go. They should be able to do both this would keep lower section bands in the contest market...if members of lower section bands are able to transfer to senior bands to help them, I really don't see why lower section bands can't avail of the same, then perhaps you would see more at contest and a more rounded contest after a few years.
- ▶ Band 3: Players should be allowed to guest for free to their first band, in addition to any other guesting rules. The idea being that players who would like to progress to a more senior band can do so with less impact on their "home" band who may have nurtured them from a young age and with whom they may hold a sense of loyalty whilst also holding a desire to progress to a more senior band. Limits could perhaps be placed so that only lower section bands can be advantaged by this facility and only to a maximum number of previous players e.g. 4.

Proposed changes to Rule 28

- ▶ Band 4: A relaxation of registration requirements and use of guest players for lower section bands could be considered in order to further encourage their participation.
- ▶ Band 5: A player from a grade 2 band should be allowed to contest with a grade 3 band and same in other sections grade above allowed to play down one grade same as being allowed to play up a section
- ▶ Band 6: Increase permitted number of guest players to 3 across all sections.
- ▶ Band 3: If a member of a band is selected to represent Northern Ireland at the European Youth Brass Band, that band should be allowed 1 extra guest player at any contest where that player is missing for that reason.
- ▶ Band 3: Allow non soloists to guest with lower section bands, i.e. no principal players and no individual prizes can be awarded to them.

Schedule of Annual Subscription

- ▶ No proposed changes



We wonder will the NIBA be charging fees in 2021 given their lack of activity and representation

Other Comments

Brass banding is overall needing support and encouragement from other bands some bands are falling away

We need to adapt rules to encourage us to support such bands

And keep moving forward as a team of musicians not letting bands fold

Show comradeship friendship

togetherness and keep updating rules

As required should be every two years

The transfer and movement of players needs looked at to help sustain all sections of contesting bands

Flexibility in rules to encourage rather than discourage participation of bands.