

ECF FUNDING PROPOSALS

Amended Articles and Bye Laws will be prepared to reflect the following proposed changes, intended to implement a universal Membership Scheme, as voted for by Finance Council in April 2011.

Creation of new Individual Membership categories

With effect from 1st September 2012, all existing individual membership categories, including Family and Corporate Vice President, will be closed to new members and renewals. (Life Members will naturally be unaffected.)

On 1st March 2012, the required notice will be given to terminate all existing Membership Organisation agreements. In accordance with the terms of the agreements, termination will take place on 31st August 2012.

With effect from 1st September 2012, the following new membership categories will be created:

- BRONZE
- SILVER
- GOLD
- PLATINUM

Membership Benefits

All ECF members will be entitled to the following:

- Publication of their grade (Standard Play and Rapid Play) twice a year
- Publication of their detailed results on the ECF Online Grading Database
- Access to the online newsletter *ChessMoves*, published six times a year
- Eligibility for the ECF Master Points Scheme
- Discounts offered by HMCA Insurance
- Discounted subscription to the *British Chess Magazine*

In addition, ECF members will be entitled to benefits according to membership category as follows:

Benefit	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Platinum
Participation in graded competitions	Club events	✓	✓	✓
	Leagues	✓	✓	✓
	County events	✓	✓	✓
	Congresses (excl. FIDE-rated)		✓	✓
	FIDE-rated events			✓
Eligibility for inclusion in the ECF Grand Prix		✓	✓	✓
Cost of annual FIDE rating registration fee (€1) included with membership			✓	✓
Cost of per-event FIDE rating fee (£1.50) for Swiss system events and leagues (i.e. excluding all-play-all events) included with membership			✓	✓
ECF Yearbook	<i>Available at a discounted price</i>			✓
15-month ECF Diary	<i>Available at a discounted price</i>			✓

NB. It is no longer proposed to offer the current Junior member gifts (notebook, pen and ruler). Instead, it is intended to offer a free Certificate of Merit credit to each new Junior member.

Cost of Membership

Although it is for Finance Council to set the membership fees, the proposed annual rates are as follows:

Category	Full	Concessionary
Bronze	£12	£8
Silver	£18	£12
Gold	£27	£22
Platinum	£60	N/A

Currently, the intention is that only Junior players (under 18 years old on 1st September) will qualify for the concessionary rate.

Rationale:

1. Broadly speaking, the Bronze, Silver and Gold membership categories correspond to the likely level of chess activity on the part of the member and are, by extension, an approximation of the benefits received from the ECF.
2. The higher cost of the Gold category reflects the necessary role of the ECF in the registration of English players for FIDE rating purposes and the higher costs involved in processing the results of FIDE-rated events (i.e. the rating fees payable to FIDE and the ECF's own administration costs).
3. The Platinum category is aimed at those who wish to offer additional financial support to English chess through the ECF and can afford to pay a higher membership fee. Deducting the costs of the benefits available exclusively to Platinum members (free Yearbook and Diary), each Platinum member will, in effect, be donating just over £20 each year to support the ECF's work.

Approach to Non-Members

(a) TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Switching from the current funding arrangements to the proposed membership scheme in one year presents a significant risk to the continuity of the ECF's finances, given the pressure already created by the ending of the DCMS grant.

It is therefore proposed that transitional arrangements are put in place to minimise the risk to the ECF's funding levels while the membership scheme is bedding down. Realistically, it should be expected that this bedding-down process will require, say, two years. It is also prudent to include an element of contingency for those organisations which seek to avoid implementing the membership scheme.

As a temporary measure, to protect against potential shocks to the ECF's funding, the following (greatly simplified) continuation of the Game Fee model is proposed for **graded Club and League events**:

- A charge will be levied on each half-game played by a non-member, to be calculated at the end of August each year. The rate will be dependent upon the percentage of players in the competition who are ECF members. If there are 85% or more ECF members, the rate per half-game will be £1. If the proportion of ECF members falls below 85%, the

rate per half-game will be £2. These rates will apply irrespective of the type of competition (i.e. standard play, rapid play, junior, club, etc.).

- For **graded Congresses and FIDE-rated events**, special standing arrangements will apply – see below.

It is intended that progress in achieving universal ECF membership for English players will be monitored each year. When it is deemed that the scheme has sufficiently bedded down, it will become a straightforward requirement that English players in a graded event **MUST** be members (but see below).

(b) GRADED CONGRESSES

There will be a fee of £6 payable for each non-member or Bronze member taking part. In the case of Bronze members, the £6 will be deemed to be the fee required to upgrade to Silver membership and the individual's membership category will be adjusted accordingly.

(c) FIDE-RATED EVENTS

ECF membership at Gold or Platinum level will be required or the player's games will not be rated or graded. There are three important exceptions:

(i) In All-Play-All events, the event rating fee (currently £70 per section) will continue to be levied. In these events, there will be no additional charge per player (i.e. 'Pay to Play' fee) for players registered with a federation other than the ECF;

(ii) In all other FIDE-rated events, for all players registered with a federation other than the ECF, the rating fee of £1.50 per player will be charged (i.e. as previously);

(iii) In the 4NCL, 'Wildcard' participants (as defined in the competition rules, i.e. applicable to participation on a single weekend) will be allowed to play, subject to payment of the £1.50 event rating fee. This applies even if the player is English, i.e. not registered with a federation other than the ECF. As soon as the player ceases to qualify as a 'Wildcard', he or she must become an ECF member at Gold or Platinum level.

(d) NEW/UNGRADED PLAYERS IN COUNTY, LEAGUE AND CLUB EVENTS

The basic principle is that all players in graded county, league and club events should be ECF members. Two exceptions to this principle are recognised, one temporary, one indefinite:

- During the transitional period when time may be required to gain widespread acceptance and implementation of the membership scheme, some allowances will have to be made. The approach to these cases is set out in section (a) above.
- It is not intended that the ECF membership requirement should be a barrier to new players or those whose graded chess activity has been so infrequent that they have no grade. Ungraded players, therefore, will be allowed to play up to 3 games a year in graded league, club or county competition without having to be an ECF member and without counting towards the percentage of non-members applied to calculate the Game Fee payment set out in section (a) above. This notwithstanding, the relevant Game Fee rate of £1 or £2 will be payable for the ungraded non-member's results.

New and ungraded players would be welcome to join the ECF at the first opportunity, of course, but the above concession allows room for players to gain an introduction to competitive chess without being deterred by the expense of ECF membership.

General Observations

It will be obvious to all that the success of the membership scheme will be dependent upon a number of factors:

1. The ECF must ensure that it makes the process of becoming a member and renewing or upgrading membership very simple. An online process will be essential and must be deliverable before 1st September 2012.
2. The ECF must ensure that it maintains and publishes accurate and up-to-date records of players' membership status. This information must be online and, ideally, integrated with the online grading database.
3. The cooperation of clubs, leagues, congresses and other organisations in maximising the take-up of ECF membership is vital. It is accepted that for many leagues and associations, it may be easier to collect membership monies and pay the ECF *en bloc*. The ECF has a responsibility to help with this through clear communication of what is required, practical guidelines and information on what ECF membership pays for.

Constitutional matters

It is proposed to limit the requirement for members to sign a £1 guarantee to **Member Organisations** only (*amended 22/09/11*). Individual members will NOT have to sign a guarantee.

The current Direct Members' Representatives will be redefined in accordance with the new membership categories.

This aside, it is not proposed to make any changes to voting rights at this time, beyond those modifications necessary due to the abolition of Game Fee. The details of this are still to be worked through. No changes would in any event take effect before 1st September 2012.

Andrew Farthing
Chief Executive

23rd August 2011