

PAPER IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSAL TO ECF COUNCIL TO REDUCE THE GAME FEE FOR CLUB INTERNAL GAMES

We are of the view that the present Game Fee of £2 (£1 rapid) is inappropriate to the casual player whose only competitive chess is within their own club's internal tournaments. We believe it is a disincentive to their taking their first steps in competitive chess, and that the alternative - joining the ECF @ £13 - is also inappropriate as it heightens the cost barrier for such casual or social players.

In the case of my own club, Hastings & St. Leonards, we have members who only play ever chess within the club, perhaps socially, perhaps within club competitions, but never ever in leagues or congresses. Do we require them to take on the cost of an ECF subscription, which otherwise they don't need, or hit them for £2 per game when they play in a graded club event? We might start losing members at a time when money is tight (Hastings happens to be among the 20 most 'deprived' local authority areas in England).

So the proposers ask ECF Council a reduction in Game Fee for Club internal games; we accept that some payment is required to cover grading's costs, but not at the present level for the fringe player.

In terms of the financial implications, Richard Haddrell (ECF Grading Administrator) advises for 2012/13:

*Club halfgames played 31,378 of which 28,658 by Members
Standard 24,242 : 22,659; Rapid 7,136 : 5,999*

So with club internal reduced to 50p (25p rapid) this projects a maximum loss to ECF of:

Standard: $(24,242 - 22,659) * (£1.50 \text{ reduction}) * (100/120 \text{ net of VAT}) = £1,979$
Rapid: $(7,136 - 5,999) * (£0.75 \text{ reduction}) * (100/120 \text{ net of VAT}) = £711$

Administratively, Game Fee is already at 50p standard, 25p rapid, for exclusively junior events so managing the process for Club internal tracking should be straightforward.

Unquantifiable are the following:

Whether any current Members might decide that on that basis they no longer needed to be members: (I suggest that number would be low although of course I can't be sure);

the number of additional games that might be played as a result of the relaxation of the tariff.

I regard the idea as a positive step by ECF to make it easy for beginners and novices to take their first steps in competitive chess, easing them in to competition.

This is a matter which could have been dealt with by the Board under the powers delegated to it by Council last April (*The Board shall have power to waive or reduce the membership requirements or payment of game fee in respect of specified*

categories of chess competition and / or specified categories of person...) and indeed I referred this request to the January Board. Unfortunately they did not complete their Agenda and did not discuss it and I was given the impression they would not have favoured it, so I feel it must come to Council.

Other than the purely financial one there are two arguments that may be made in rebuttal:

First, how do you propose that this loss of income should be funded?

That is difficult to answer because at the deadline for submissions to Council the ECF budget for 2014/15 has not yet been published, so one cannot see details which might lead to specific suggestions of spend less on (or earn more from) any particular item. Twelve months ago the 2013/14 budget was for £140K of Membership and Game Fee income: I would leave it to the Finance Director to manage a potential £2.7K reduction.

Second, is not the £13 ECF subscription trivial to support a national body?

Perhaps so, but (i) we are selling to players really on the fringe of being involved in club chess at all and asking them to pay £13 on top of whatever their club needs; and (ii) the ECF seems to publish nothing to promote its reasons for existence and there is no simple way of saying "this is ECF, here are good reasons for you to pay £13 to support it"

The proposal is specifically time-limited to one year to allow an opportunity for some number crunching of its success or otherwise.

I commend the proposal to Council and ask for your support (in which case please instruct any proxy accordingly!)

Paul Buswell, 5 March 2014