

E.C.F. COUNCIL MEETING April 2014

MEMBERSHIP PAPER

Review

At the time of the last Finance Council meeting the new Membership Scheme had been in operation for less than a full year. Even at that point it was apparent that the scheme had been a success. As I reported in October membership reached a total of around 9,500 at the end of August, the date at which all memberships expire under the new system; this compares with a maximum of under 2,100 reached under the old scheme even with compulsory membership for competitors in FIDE rated events. Updating those figures, at the start of April 2014 the membership figure was 9435, compared to 9288 twelve months earlier. An analysis of some aspects of the demographics of the membership, mostly based on the data for the end of the 2012-13 season, is attached as an appendix to this paper.

I also reported in October that we had experienced technical difficulties over the renewal process, attributed to not having had the necessity of using that element of the on-line system before. These were eventually resolved, and should not recur in future years. Independently, the providers have made major developments to their system, which appear to provide significant advantages to the officials of the Federation in the ease of use of the system.

A further item reported in October was that we would be investigating the possibility of enabling members to pay their subscriptions by Direct Debit. Owing to the pressure of other matters on the time of Directors and Officials (particularly those involved in finance) this review has not been undertaken so far.

During the year the content of the membership list has also be integrated with the grading database. This process has again experienced teething troubles of its own, but again they have been resolved in a satisfactory manner and should not recur.

Membership Categories and Rates

The Board recommend that the membership subscription rates for the 2014/15 season remain unchanged at those current for the 2013/14 season.

As part of the budgeting process, and specifically the attempt to put forward planning on a longer-term basis than a single year, there are various options for discussion on membership rates for future years. At this stage these should be viewed as the approximate consequences of accepting the differing views of funding priorities, rather than as definite proposals. I therefore do not feel it necessary to comment on the different options in this document.

The question of the number of categories of membership has been kept under review. The Board do not intend to recommend any changes at present.

Renewals

Existing members who wish to renew their membership for the 2014/15 season will be able to do so from 1st July. Individuals who are not members for the 2013/14 season will be able to join for the 2014/15 season, but these new memberships will not take effect until 1st September. The Board felt unable to agree to backdate these memberships to the date on which they were taken out.

In connection with the issue of congresses taking place in September and October and players who wish to join through a Membership Organisation, the Board has agreed that Game Fee invoices for these congresses will not be sent out until after 31st October. Bronze Memberships taken out

through a Membership Organisation, provided they are received by the deadline of 31st October, will be taken into account when applying pay-to-play fees received from these events. In view of the potential issues for congress organisers under this arrangement the policy will be kept under review for future years.

Game Fee Exemptions

There is currently a Game Fee exemption listed under the heading *WCU Members* which reads “Members of the Welsh Chess Union who play for clubs located in Wales who play in cross border leagues will be exempt from game fee until 31/08/2014.”

The Board have agreed that this be replaced with “**Where cross-border leagues are submitted to the ECF for grading Game Fee will not charged in respect of members of clubs geographically outside England who are members of the appropriate National Federation.**”

This has the effect of extending the present exemption for WCU members sine die, and at the same time removing potential discrimination by making it applicable to any Scottish clubs who might at some future time be in the same situation; as far as I am aware there are a present no such clubs.

There does not seem to be any scope for extending this or a similar exemption to the cases such as players from Bristol playing in South Wales leagues, as the organisers of those leagues do not wish us to grade them.