

**Election Address
by Dave Thomas
for post of
Director of Membership**

I have served as Director of Membership since being appointed in 2012, and am willing to continue in the post for another couple of terms.

The duties of the Director are primarily the maintenance of the Membership system, and oversight of the Yearbook and ECF Awards. However, I also see the role as advising the Board on the levels of Membership fees which are likely to be politically acceptable to Council, and I feel that being a former Secretary of one of the largest leagues in the country and having over twenty years' experience of attending Council Meetings gives me good insight into what the limits are.

The Membership system remains functional but capable of improvement, and I am actively considering what improvements need to be made for next season. We are continuing to consider what might be done to replace the residual amount of Game Fee which the Federation still collects. When the new Membership Scheme was introduced it was envisaged that the continuation of Game Fee would only be a transitional arrangement; the expense (whether in cash or volunteer time) of collecting it is out of proportion to the income it yields. The problem which has to be solved is how to simultaneously avoid creating a barrier to casual players by setting the minimum fee to be paid too high (the perception being that insisting on universal bronze membership at the current rate would have that effect) and impacting the Federation's income by enabling existing Bronze members to select a cheaper option. Two possibilities are currently under consideration: one is to introduce a lower category of membership which would entitle the member to play only a limited number of games, and the other is to permit a minimum number of games without any payment but charge Game Fee (at a significantly higher level than at present) on all games of players who play more than that minimum. In either case the suggestion is that the Leagues in which the player competes are responsible to the Federation for the fee; it would be impractical for the Federation to attempt to recover excess costs directly from the individual player. Unfortunately both proposals would require accessing a count of the games played by each non-member, and it is this aspect of the present system which causes the perceived cost to the Federation.

I accept that the delays in publication of the 2016 Yearbook were totally unacceptable. The lack of communication which led to my not even being informed of the problem will not recur, and we are intending to publish the 2017 issue early in the New Year. For future years I am looking at the additional information which would need to be available on the website to enable the Yearbook to be discontinued. One issue to be resolved is whether it is necessary for the Federation to publish a fully detailed Directory of all chess organisations in the country, or whether it would be better (because of easier maintenance and hence greater accuracy) to publish details only of directly affiliated organisations, including website links, and leave Leagues or Counties to publish details of affiliated clubs on their own websites. A formal proposal to retain or discontinue the Yearbook is expected to be put to the Finance Council in April.

I hope that Council will see fit to re-elect me.