



28th March 2018

**ECF MEMBERSHIP SCHEME PROPOSAL – SUPPORTING PAPER
For the ECF Finance Council Meeting 28th April 2018**

Proposal from the NCCU:

‘That the Bronze and Silver levels of Membership be merged to form a Standard membership level.’

General Proposition

The NCCU (Northern Counties Chess Union) has been considering and discussing the structure of the current ECF Membership Scheme. The ‘metallic’ range of membership options (including juniors) extends to seven categories, (Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze) which the NCCU consider excessive and overly burdensome in terms of administration. The NCCU are proposing to simplify the categories and change their names as follows:

- ECF Patron (formerly Platinum)
- ECF FIDE Member (Formerly Gold)
- ECF Standard Member (Formerly Silver and Bronze)

In terms of fees Patron and FIDE would remain the same, but the new ECF Standard Member category would be £20 (more than current Bronze, but less than current Silver).

The reasoning behind this change is to:

- Simplify the current structure for players
- Encourage members to play increased levels of chess
- Help chess organisers trying to keep pace with different membership levels
- Reduce the burden on ECF, club, league and congress administrators.
- Reduce administrative costs

The Supporting Paper looks at:

- Considerations involved
 - The Implementation
 - Financial implications for chess players and the ECF
- Appendix A gives the breakdown of likely income, taken from the current ECF Membership list. This compares favourably with the Membership Analysis paper C24.7 from Dave Thomas in April 2016.

Considerations

- Players and Members
- Congresses
- Leagues
- The ECF
- Aspiration

Players and Members

- Simple to understand; pay £20 and play as much graded chess for the rest of that season as you like without any obstacles to doing so whatsoever.
- After the proposed budget increase this year to £17 for Bronze membership, players will have to pay £3 more for £20 standard membership, but will be getting all the advantages of silver membership that would have cost £24.
- Can play in their favourite congress without having to pay £7.50 extra 'tax' for the privilege - Pay only £3 more and get what costs £7.50.
- It would be favourable having a one yearly fee instead of having to upgrade.
- Silver members will be getting a reduced fee.
- As the cost of Silver upgrade or 'pay-to-play' fee to play in congresses is relatively modest, it is offering Bronze members a benefit in which some of them may possibly have no interest – so they may simply see it as a price hike that subsidises congress players at the expense of league players. But we want to encourage more congress and league play by reducing the differential between the current fees to zero with a balanced increase/reduction.
- It may be argued that it goes against the principle that players who play more chess should pay a higher membership fee; but getting rid of game fee towards membership was always against this principle, as it encouraged playing more chess without the penalty of paying more money.

Congresses

- All players eligible to play in congresses without further costs, removing obstacles to players entering congresses.
- It enables current Bronze members to enter congresses more cheaply than is currently the case.
- For congresses, the slight reduction in cost for a current Silver member would be an incentive.
- Many Congress organisers stated that attendances have reduced owing to the extra differential cost bronze members have been asked for in 'pay-to-play' at their own local congresses. If the Standard rate were introduced it could be an incentive for current Bronze members to play in congresses with a slight increase in fees offset with a bigger reduction in the Silver upgrade.
- Probable increased attendances at congresses you play in, securing their future and leading to better playing conditions and prize money.
- Helping the volunteers who run chess by removing layers of administration caused by the bronze / silver split, which is cumbersome upgrading to different levels and waiting for confirmation before paying and playing at events.

Leagues

- When players are upgrading from Bronze to Silver throughout the chess year it causes unnecessary delays which have knock-on effects for League organisers, match captains and club membership secretaries.
- Helping the volunteers who run chess by removing layers of administration caused by the bronze / silver split.
- Most junior events are currently outside of the ECF due to the cost and this should help to get more events graded; as league chess is currently unsuitable for them.

The ECF

- It will result in a not inconsiderable reduction in administrative effort both for the ECF Office and for players upgrading from Bronze to Silver, as players are upgrading from Bronze to Silver throughout the chess year which can cause time delays.
- The principle espoused when proposing the membership scheme was pay your membership fee and then play as much chess as possible i.e. removing obstacles to playing more chess is in line with ECF Strategic plans.
- A slight increase in revenue with less paperwork must be attractive.
- Simpler administration for the ECF and Regional National Club and County administrators and Match Captains.

Aspiration

- The metallic differentiation of 'bronze / silver' came out of the blue from past ECF management and was 'tacked on' to the new membership scheme that thankfully got rid of game fee, which was also a nightmare to administrate. Little thought was given to what this 'tax' was to do to congress attendances; nor were congress organisers asked whether they were willing to collect this tax when it would reduce entries to their events.
- It takes us some of the way towards a single universal membership rate for all members.
- ECF past decisions that there should be a gold membership to provide for playing in FIDE events remain in place, but move away from the principle of a single universal membership rate. But merging Bronze and Silver memberships it could possibly be part of a transition to a single universal membership rate in due course if the rates move together.
- In time the differential between Standard and Gold can erode, just as it has done between Bronze and Silver; so that a merger of the two at a later date could become feasible. But we need to walk before we can run and take a piecemeal approach.

Implementation

We recognise that implementation could be available for the 2018/19 scheme year if the Council and ECF Board agree. The NCCU would ask that the ECF Council consider this proposal at the Financial Council meeting on the 28th April 2018 (and if agreed, be ratified by the ECF as soon afterwards as possible).

Appendix A

Income Breakdown per Member Category (based on current membership)

(a) Comparison with fees this year's ECF membership at current rates versus what would have been generated with £20 standard membership for merged bronze / silver.

(a) Comparison with fees with next year's ECF membership at estimated increased rates versus what would be generated with £20 standard membership for merged bronze / silver.

ECF Membership Analysis							
		2017-2018	No. members	Revenue	If Bronze Silver merged	Revenue	
		at £20					
	Bronze	16	3834	61344	20	76680	
	Silver	23.5	2136	50196	20	42720	
	Gold	34	1994	67796	34	67796	
	Platinum	70	146	10220	70	10220	
	total			189556		197416	
					If Junior Bronze Silver merged at £15		
Junior	Bronze	9.5	137	1301.5	15	2055	
Junior	Silver	17	732	12444	15	10980	
Junior	Gold	27.5	587	16142.5	27.5	16142.5	
Junior	Platinum	70	7	490	70	490	
	total			30378		29667.5	
				Grand total		227083.5	
NOTE: Of the 2565 Junior Silver members, 1833 in free first year							
		2018-2019	No. members	Revenue	If Bronze Silver merged	Revenue	
		at £20 (Standard membership)					
	Bronze	17	3834	65178	20	76680	
	Silver	24	2136	51264	20	42720	
	Gold	35	1994	69790	34	67796	
	Platinum	70	146	10220	70	10220	
	total			196452		197416	
					If Junior Bronze Silver merged at £15		
Junior	Bronze	10	137	1370	15	2055	
Junior	Silver	17	732	12444	15	10980	
Junior	Gold	27.5	587	16142.5	27.5	16142.5	
Junior	Platinum	70	7	490	70	490	
	total			30446.5		29667.5	
				Grand total		226898.5	
						227083.5	