

My Dear Fellow Chess Enthusiast!

First of all, can I urge you, if you haven't already done so, to renew your membership of the English Chess Federation (ECF) as soon as possible and remind your friends who play chess to do so. Because of the pandemic, the finances of the ECF are extremely weak. Unless people do renew their subscriptions there is a real danger that when the pandemic finally ends, there will be no national body to co-ordinate chess. It is as dire as that.

Secondly, I seek your support for re-election to the ECF Council, representing Bronze members. I am a bronze member myself.

If you happen to be a Silver member, I would ask you to vote for my friend, John Reyes. Although I have only recently become a member of the ECF Council, I have had a long association with chess. I played for my King's School Chester 1973-75 and Sheffield University 1975-8. I was Cheshire Chess Champion 1980 and 1990. I am also a chess problemist.

Before lockdown I ran four chess teams and played in five chess leagues.

Since lockdown I have been running sides in the Online 4NCL on Lichess and the Online County Championship and Chess2020, both on [chess.com](https://www.chess.com)

While Lichess has proved itself, [chess.com](https://www.chess.com) has had a number of technical problems, and I would urge in the future for event for the ECF to use only Lichess and to stop using [chess.com](https://www.chess.com)

Online chess has thrown up the controversial issue of online cheating and I have read letters from outraged captains annoyed when one of their players has been accused of cheating. While to an extent I can sympathise with them, we do have a duty to try and protect players who are not cheating. Anti-cheating measures are in place on Lichess and I think we do all have to accept them and accept that occasionally Lichess may get it wrong. I think that Lichess are right not to give too much detail to how they decide if someone is cheating, as this information would undoubtedly help the minority who cheat.

I think that the ECF are right to allow local leagues to decide when to restart over the board chess, as covid could disappear from some parts of the country but not others.

In the past ECF meetings have been face to face. Since the lockdown meetings have been online. They have worked well. There must be no return to the bad old days! Zoom meetings are cheaper, there is less time and money in transport. Online meetings are more environmentally friendly. They can increase transparency as they can be recorded and made available to the press and public (apart from certain items which have to remain confidential).

The lockdown presents opportunities and threats. The great opportunity is that many people who don't normally play chess started playing in the lockdown. The threat is some clubs and leagues may never re-open. Shropshire recently had an AGM and decided to wrap up the 2019-2020 season on a points per match basis and to attempt to start an online Shropshire League. I think the main threat is to leagues and county associations who have not done this, and I feel the ECF should be urging leagues and county associations to have online AGMS rather than abandon them altogether.

I have contributed articles which have been published in the magazine "Chess" and on various websites. I have had a chess problem which I created published in "The Problemist".

Another of my interests is local politics. I was a member of Chester City Council 1992-2001. I am an Independent member of Malpas Parish Council. I have great experience of contesting local elections and running campaigns. Hopefully, my experiences and skills can help to raise the profile of chess in the UK.

By profession I am a semi-retired teacher. I have experience of running school chess clubs and teaching chess in school, including a short stint with CSC (Chess in Schools and Communities).

As such I believe very strongly that encouraging children to play chess should continue to be a priority for the ECF and is more important than success of the national adult side. If re-elected I would be open to the views of any Bronze member. You can write to me at 1 Well Farm Close, Malpas, Cheshire, SY14 8QW, telephone 01948 860083 or Mobile: 07981074373, or E-MAIL: [higgiecharles@gmail.com](mailto:higgiecharles@gmail.com) or contact me on Facebook. I have recently started a Facebook profile for my chess activities - Charles Chessman Higgle