

**Proposed Amendment to Finance Council Agenda item 14 “County Championship Team Rating Limits” from Surrey and Middlesex County Chess Associations (together “the sponsors”)**

The review of grading bands is welcomed in light of the introduction of 4-digit grading. The review gives the opportunity for the ECF and its constituents to consider a new structure to the county championship.

The sponsors recognise the increasing challenges experienced over the last decade of fielding a full suite of county teams. They are, therefore, sympathetic to considering changes, including widening the rating bands between teams. However, the sponsors are concerned that the current Director of Home Chess (“DoHC”) proposal, which has the bands: Open / U2000 / U1800 / U1600 / U1400, is not the optimal choice.

The sponsors move an amendment to the proposal such that the bands would be amended to: Open / U2100 / U1900 / U1700 / U1500.

Rationale:

1. Although there is a significant proportion of players rated U1400 (ca. 25%) this figure alone does not reflect that population’s willingness to play chess in the county format of one slow-play game on a weekend afternoon. In light of historic difficulties fielding U1450 teams (the equivalent of the previous U-100 section) we contend that a significant proportion of players at this level do not prioritise weekend county chess. By raising the level of the “lowest” team to U1500 from the U1400 in the DoHC proposal the sponsors believe this gives counties a better chance of being able to field the “lowest” team in practice.
2. Genuine Open teams ought to be able to field most players >2100 rating. However, even for counties that need to go below 2100 for the lower boards, the proposed amendment would still allow them to field an Open team. It would simply be the strongest 16 players that they can field.
3. The cadre of players in the 2000-2100 ratings band comprises some of the keenest amateur players in the country as regards weekend chess. A significant number of such players actively welcome the opportunities to play on the bottom boards of Open teams as well as the top boards of the first grade listed team, if they arise. However, with the current DoHC proposal, some of them may end up in a “dead zone” of being too weak for an Open team but too strong for a U2000 team in some counties.
4. By setting the limit of the first, grade-limited, team at U2100 this allows those counties who might otherwise opt for the Minor Counties competition to consider that as an alternative.