Dear Silver Members,

My name is Gavin Cartwright. I have been playing chess for approaching 50 years. I took a break from competitive chess for about 17 years to raise my children. I only returned a year and a half ago to club and county chess now that they are grown up. Chess is a wonderful sport that allows for a whole range of approaches but at its heart I believe it should be fun for everyone. Over my years of playing, I have represented my school, played junior level and adult county chess (for several counties), and played for several clubs around the country. I have also helped set up and organise junior chess clubs in several schools. Finally, I have played in numerous classical congresses, rapidplay and blitz tournaments. I’ve been lucky enough to win at some of those and done terribly at others. Life in chess can be highs and lows. I still remember my very first school team competition (I was 7 or 8) and coming home in floods of tears after the first day as captain because I had lost 2 out of 3 games, followed by joy the next day when we came second in the tournament.

As your representative, my intention is to ensure that you can also get the fun from chess that you are looking for. To do that I will I try to ensure that I am getting as broad a range of views to decide my approach as possible for any decisions of the council. If you are bothering to read this, then you are obviously engaged with the ECF, but I hope to ensure that any of the problems that reduce your enjoyment caused by the ECF are addressed (where possible).

Outside of chess I am involved in several national voluntary organisations where I have to represent the views and needs of many people across the country in national decision making, often when there are several differing views on the right approach. All those organisations are democratic in nature, and democracy is especially important to me. I will bring my experience in those organisations to this role. I am hopeful that the ECF is not as disparate and sometimes confrontational as those can be but if it is, again my experience will be helpful. The main thing is that I see any representative role that I take on as an honour where I am not there to push my own agenda but to be a genuine fair voice for those I represent. In this instance, I don’t have any agenda to push I am open to whatever comes my way. Having said that, in all the roles I take on, there are a couple of themes that I am very passionate about: mental health and diversity/access for all. Chess can be a brilliant sport in terms of both, but I will do my best to ensure that that continues and if possible, gets better.

Finally, my day job is as an IT Technician Team Leader in a Further Education College in Birmingham. That gives me an understanding of safeguarding but also a knowledge of how to get by when there isn’t limitless money. Obviously, my job means that I am comfortable with technology and I will use that to enable me to get views from around the country. However, personally, I believe there is nothing like playing over-the-board chess. Technology can be brilliant in terms of enabling access, but we should never forget the importance of the social aspect of being in the same room.

If you have gotten this far, thank you for reading my election address! Also, thank you if you do decide to vote for me, no hard feelings if you don’t.

Gavin Cartwright