

ECF Finance Council Meeting, Saturday 27 April 2019 - Bronze members' responses *** DRAFT ***

Member	Budget?	DWOI?	Not DWOI?	Fees?	Jnr trust funds?	Female county?	Reps?	Comment
PL				Y		N		<p>I am in favour of reasonable membership increases particularly if "the national teams " do well. I am not in favour of female positive discrimination. If anyone is good enough they should be in the team not just as the token minority. And it is established but does it encourage more girls? Yes the chess players are aging. I refer again to our top players doing well. Let's get the PR dept (?) Working to put such performances reports into social media and the national press. That will trigger parents to consider chess options for their children. And on this subject clubs have a responsibility and a part to play to reach out to schools. ECF to produce material to help? (If this is already being done my apologies for ignorance)</p>
LR		DWOI?		Y				<p>My view continues to be that chess is run on a shoe string and overly reliant on volunteer time. As I've mentioned previously, I'm a member of other sports associations such as the ASA and British Cycling where the cost is around £27 and £40 respectively (Still under a quid a week). I would support the bronze fee rises but actually I'd be minded to double them (and merge with silver and gold at the same time). That way we might get enough money to actually pay for both administration to deliver the things you note have not progressed and deliver them in a better way. There can be discounts for juniors etc</p> <p>I realise none of the above will happen. We'll tick along with tiny increases in membership fee at most, relying more and more on over stretched volunteers, chess won't be promoted, and the ticking time bomb will go off. But I feel I should at least make my views known.</p> <p>I genuinely appreciate the efforts you put into consulting the bronze membership and the time you devote to chess. Thank you to you (and Gareth who I don't know) for all your efforts which are appreciated.</p>

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TS				N		Y		<p>I find it disturbing that the ECF fees have increased above inflation to finance particular projects, but those projects have not occurred.</p> <p>It is also a concern that the Bronze members appear to be paying for the elite to benefit, when sponsorship opportunities should exist.</p> <p>On the issue of female participation, the proposal is a good start, although would better players want to play against substantially lower grades if grading restrictions were removed?</p> <p>I would want to see this linked with an incremental target. Say 10% by 2022, 20% by 2026 and 30% by 2030.</p>
KB						N?	Y	<p>My feelings on the various issues seem to be very much in line with yours - please vote as you feel.</p> <p>With regards to the to the question of Women's representation I am not sure that I understand - as far as I am aware there are very few registered female players in our area so finding one to play may be difficult!</p>
AM				N		N		<p>With regard to the proposal to increase membership fees over the next couple of years. I would ask that you vote against any increase as this is paid by our club and passed on to our members.</p> <p>Thanks for your communication and hope this is resolved in a manner agreeable to our members</p>

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PM				N				<p>I guess my views on fees are as follows.</p> <p>The biggest increases in fees are for Bronze and Silver members. These will be for club members who play in matches against other clubs and for internal games. Arguably, I'd have thought that this was an easy group to cater for. So why increase fees by 53% over the review period. If you contrast this with the Platinum rates then you see that as in normal life, the plebs pay extra so that the elites can get a free ride. This is disgraceful however highlights a problem that the ECF has. It's run by elites for elites and the justification of the extra fees is that the elites can be paid to play chess. If they don't fancy chess then I suggest they take up politics as quite clearly they believe the plebs should always foot the bill.</p> <p>Throughout all of this, I've never seen a list of how many members in each individual category there is. The ECF wants an extra 500 members a year however if these are all bronze then an extra £10k in income is not going to pay for the extra officer they're recruiting. Not only that, but how about a matrix of number of members by demographic. If the ECF believes (and quite correctly in my opinion) that there's a demographic time bomb then produce the relevant charts so that us plebs who are expected to pay more so that the elites can have a few jollies can visualise the problem. This information is all available I've no doubt so it shouldn't take too much effort to put into a chart / table.</p>
SM	N		I	I	N	N		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. vote against the budget proposed 2. vote in favour of capping international expenditure 3. vote against Board's membership-fee increase proposals 4. vote for NCCU proposal to pin membership to inflation 5. 8(b) might be voted on as a package with 8(a). If so vote for it, but 8(b) seems meaningless to me as the ECF already seems eager to extract as much money as it can from trust funds. 6. vote against mandatory inclusion of a female in ECF Open team championship. (My own participation as an Open team member is long past, but I am guided by my county's Open captain.)

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KM				N	Y?	N?		<p>I support and admire your approach of seeking a mandate from the members that you represent however I found it difficult to isolate the questions that you are seeking succinct answers to, I will do my best:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I strongly disagree with fees increasing by anything more than the cost of living (my pension increase) and certainly not 25% over 2 years. 2. I do not have strong views on how the funds are managed providing that they are kept within the ECF income. I do not feel as though the ECF has strong financial management, if more money is required then it should take the approach of many charities these days and seek donations in wills as we are indeed an aging group. 3. I am in favour promoting chess in all walks of life especially in schools, this is where I started. 4. I am wary of especially promoting any particular group e.g. females, I think everything should be "open". There is a danger of being sucked into issues like under representation of ethnic or LGBT groups etc.
GT				N				<p>I play in a chess club and play about 12 competition games per year but as from September we had to join the ECF and pay sixteen pounds just to have my games graded thats one pound 25 pence per game and now there is talk about increasing the fee to eighteen pounds at 81 years of age I look like having to stop playing the 12 competitive games I play each year and say thanks to the ECF for bringing my chess career to an end all I wanted to vdo was play chess</p>
AB				N				<p>I am not sure whether this on the finance council's agenda but my main concern relates to the ECF monthly grading proposal change which was "voted" through by the consultation but at no point were the costs of this proposal presented. ECF members need to know what it is going to cost before we can decide on the merits of this proposal. The move to ELO is an obvious carrot but that should not be the reason for embarking on monthly grading. More info needed please.</p> <p>ECF membership fees. In my opinion, the proposed increases are too much too soon. It would be helpful to see a graph of fees over time to see whether a smaller increase in line with inflation is merited. Also graphs of the number of active members over time would be helpful, so we can more easily visualise what the state of decline is. It would also be useful to see a pie chart of how the ECF fees are spent. Apologies if these already exist. All I see is a spreadsheet with a lot of numbers which is very hard to assimilate.</p> <p>It seems that generally there is a huge amount on the agenda and in the strategy and in my opinion the ECF is trying to do too much. It should concentrate on a few essentials and get those done well, and in a timely manner.</p>

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MC				N				<p>As a club secretary I am very concerned about the relentless rise in ECF membership fees. Getting more women into chess will be irrelevant if this keeps up as there will be a lot less men! The amount is becoming a serious disincentive for people to move from online/friendly chess to playing in a club.</p> <p>Coupling the fees rises with pay rises to force them through created the impression of an organisation that saw club chess as nothing more than a cash cow. It also begs the question of whether having a dedicated office is the best use of resources. Perhaps we should look at outsourcing.</p> <p>The NCCU have a point. I suspect much more of these rises and Yorkshire will restage their breakaway grading system. Personally I think ECF fees need to go down not up. My other gripe is the annual renewal system. The Birmingham League runs a summer league which is ideal for giving beginners an introduction to competitive chess. It's graded and players must be ECF members. So I've got players who are having to fork out a full years membership for 4 months of</p>
SR		I?		Y?		N		<p>Since most of us are now middle aged men, I don't think the fee is a problem in absolute terms, even if the percentage increase is rather more significant if looked at in isolation.</p> <p>The lack of junior support is an issue, but presumably this has been addressed in other forums many many times. Is it not possible to produce some sort of anti-stockfish type software (similar to the anti plagiarism software used for university admission applications) and run tournaments on line.</p> <p>I think our best players are a very useful resource in increasing participation, but we need to increase media impact of our successes, or any money invested in this way is wasted. Do we not qualify for lottery funding for this high class international competition?</p> <p>I am strongly opposed to tokenism or quotas in team selection. If we discriminate in favour of women, there is no logic in not using a quota system for all demographics. I suspect there are bodies prepared to make trouble in this area. Teams should be picked on merit alone. If there are too few female participants, we need to ask why and try to deal with it.</p>

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SA				N				<p>Most Bronze members resent having to pay any fees at all to the ECF, just for them to play chess.</p> <p>£16 is the maximum they should be paying as most chess players are not bothered about having a grading and most do not play in congresses. In effect they are paying £16 a year just to play the game of chess. I know of no other sport where you have to pay a fee to the organising body for the right to play. Club fees are fine, but there should be no additional costs, just to play chess.</p> <p>Hopefully the fees will remain at £16 and they should definitely not be raised at all. The ECF income will go down, if the increase in fees is approved, as less and less players will bother paying the increased fees, as they get nothing for the annual bronze membership.</p>
GD				N				<p>The fees are already too high</p> <p>Please do not increase them</p>
DM				N	Y?	Y?		<p>I am very much in favour of the initiative to encourage more women into the game and to assist the development of juniors. They are, after all, the future of the game. However, like many others I'm sure, I cannot support the proposed membership fee increases. From £16 to £20 in two years represents an increase of 25%. This is way in excess of inflation, which hovers between 2%-3%. Bronze members are not prolific players, perhaps playing a dozen or so inter club matches per season. If these fee increases are approved I will seriously think about abandoning competitive chess and restricting my activity to social chess at club level.</p> <p>You will, of course gauge the level of resistance to these proposals but if there is a mass exodus, the revenue lost will negate (or worse) the effect of the increases.</p>
BR	N?		I	I	Y			<p>I agree with and support your proposals.</p> <p>In general, I appreciate your desire to get detailed information on how the ECF plans to achieve its goals, and how it spends, accounts and budgets across the areas mentioned. In particular, the "expected" 500 new members a year, based on the analysis by Angus, appears unrealistic. It would be very useful for the Finance Committee to prepare a pessimistic budget scenario where membership stayed flat. What do the year-on-year membership numbers for the past few years look like?</p>
AA				N				On the proposed increase in membership fees, I am opposed to this change.

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PL		DO	I			N		<p>My personal take on the main issues shown below.</p> <p>International Chess</p> <p>I agree with the proposed £30,000 limit for the 2019/2020 period but thereafter it will need to be reviewed and certainly some allowance made for inflation. Success at international level does not necessarily translate to more grass roots members though it may encourage very keen juniors.</p> <p>Development Officer</p> <p>I think this is basically a very good idea. However, I think the ECF Board should know what they expect the appointee to do and be able to prepare a job specification. They should also set targets on the number of new members annually probably in conjunction with the appointee. This is just normal commercial practice and is necessary in my view for a paid position. It is likely to be very difficult to find a suitable candidate.</p> <p>Membership Fees</p> <p>Personally I would like to see that office staff are properly remunerated at market levels. If that means that membership fees need to be increased above inflation then I would support that increase to the extent that is necessary to achieve that aim. I think the Board should provide data to enable that to be calculated. I remember seeing somewhere that a figure of £6000 has been mentioned to cover the salary increases. This may result in the Bronze membership fees being increased from £16 to £17 to include inflation.</p> <p>Womens Chess</p> <p>Womens chess is being developed at the top level but there appears to be nothing effective being done to encourage more women to play chess. I found the rejection at the AGM to provide assistance to the proposal from Amanda Ross very disappointing.</p>

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								<p>1. I support your view in respect of the capping proposal for international chess. I think the members are entitled to know the total amount paid in respect of appearance fees. The anticipated</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3. growth in membership over the coming years looks like wishful thinking. There seem to be serious concerns regarding finances in just about every area of chess. <local information re finances and encouragement of juniors>. (On what basis did the chair disallow your proposal last year to cap the international budget at £30,000?)</p> <p>4. I support the N.C.C.U. proposal to cap increases in membership fees at the level of inflation. I expect this to be discussed by Officers and Team Captains at a meeting of the <County> Chess Association on <Date>. My impression is that the meeting is likely to support such a cap.</p> <p>5. I favour seeking sources of funding for junior chess. My policy regarding juniors playing in the <leagues> teams is to give them priority in terms of selection. I am on the <league>? Junior Chess Committee... <local information about promotion of junior chess>.</p> <p>6. I oppose the crackpot Idea of requiring the Open County teams to include a female player. This extends to requiring any team to include a female player, a junior player, etc.. If female players</p>
DM	N?		I	I	Y	N		
JO				Y				i'm quite happy that bronze membership be increased to £18 and then £20.
IH				N?				I see that there is a fee decrease at the junior end of the age spectrum, but not at the other. Can we consider reduced rates for pensioners. At present, the idea that pensioners should support female players who who may be well off by means of their earnings is rather odd

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JL	N		I	I				<p>Thanks for the info. I am a reluctant member of the ECF (forced to pay to play matches) so I have no interest in wading through all your links. But thanks for a well set out précis of the key items.</p> <p>I would support your proposals</p> <p>Your reps are strongly inclined to support the capping proposal and to vote against the budget as we are doubtful about funding. We'd happily change our mind on the latter if convincing information is provided, otherwise we think the Board needs to reassess. But please tell us what you think.</p> <p>The inclination of your representatives is to vote against the increases proposed by the Board but to support the inflation-rate increases proposed by the NCCU. However, increases are necessary to support the budget and likely the budget and the fee increases proposed by the Board will be voted on together, as a composite motion.</p> <p>The various proposals do not seem to have been followed through so I am unimpressed. To me</p>
AF			O?	?				<p>They don't seem to have answered the question about additional staff. Like you I was under the impression the changes made last time were supposed to reduce admin costs. Did those changes not work?</p> <p>£2 this year and £2 next year will make it pretty much 50% increase over four or five years. I thought they were making it an e-sport and were going to be raking it in.</p> <p>£20 a year is not that much but obviously that's on top of club membership.</p> <p>Finally I wouldn't want them doing away with bronze membership and making us all pay higher rates. For family and other reasons I can't get involved in congresses and championships , wonderful as they may be..</p>

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JL						N		<p>Hi I read your email and was a little concerned about the requirement to have one female member in each county team.</p> <p>The proposal is that each team in the Open section of the national stages of the county championships should field at least one female player with qualification requirements for that player to be put aside.</p> <p>I was concerned about the qualification requirements being set aside. This would mean that a county team could bring in a female player from anywhere (including abroad) and possibly pay a female professional to play. This does not seem right. Also if a county team does not have a female player would they just default a board or would they lose the match? i.e. what would the consequences be?</p>
AL				N?				<p>You asked for views on this. The only issue I would comment on is the one you have particularly highlighted. Whilst I personally am in a position where I could pay the increase to £18/£20 there is a principle here. My first question is why limit increases to Bronze members only. I understand they pay the least apart from Juniors but if the services are balanced between Gold Silver and Bronze then why apply to only bronze?. My second point is that % wise a rise of 25% over two years does seem very high. The Consumer Price Index for the year to September (on which most CPI related increases are based) is 2.4%.</p>
SW	N		I	I	Y			<p>I agree with the approach and suggested actions. Thank you for a detailed and comprehensive overview. You have my support for the actions you propose to take.</p>
MD				Y				<p>I have no objection to the proposed increases in fees for Bronze membership in 2019 & 2020.</p>
MD	N			N		Y		<p>Although I'm retired, and have time on my hands today (it's raining!), I don't have the will power to wade through all the links in your e-mail!</p> <p>However, I did follow the link re AGM Card Votes to discover that "my" local rep didn't use "his" either for County or local league.....</p> <p>What confidence I had in ECF's financial planning has taken another knock, and although I can easily afford to Pay an extra £2 I would prefer to pay just £1 as forecast, so please vote against items 1 & 2. I don't understand the trusts involved in item 3, but would wish to encourage junior chess. Item 4 – we should all be encouraging greater female representation & membership – at all</p>

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DW		DWO	I	?	Y	N?		<p>Budget for 2019/20.</p> <p>I think that funding of a development officer role is a good idea, so long as there is a clear way of demonstrating that they are increasing participation in chess. The items for women's chess and office salaries also appear reasonable.</p> <p>However, I do not think that it is the role of the ECF to fund international players from general membership subscriptions.</p> <p>Membership fees.</p> <p>I have no objection to the membership fees as proposed, except that they should be used for grassroots chess rather than to support international teams.</p> <p>Trust funds.</p> <p>Investigation into the use of trust funds as proposed seems reasonable.</p> <p>Female participation in county championships</p> <p>I live in North East England and do not have the opportunity to play in county championship chess. I don't think that there is any problem mandating a minimum number of male / female players in a team, but I do disagree with the proposal to relax the eligibility criteria for female players only. If the eligibility criteria are to be relaxed, then this should apply to all players</p>

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DC	Y	DWO		?	Y			<p>1. Budget I think we now have a very professional board who are modernising English Chess. All their reports appear very professional and they give me confidence in their wish to progress the English Chess through the ECF.</p> <p>- <i>Development Officer position / Women's chess</i> I am for the promotion of chess in the areas we are not representative of the general population.</p> <p>- <i>ECF Office</i> I am supportive of paid employees for critical key area, although I am not certain that some non essential tasks need be done by paid employees. For example the entry of events on the ECF calendar. There appears a significant amount of voluntary roles within English Chess, especially at council when I would expect all delegate are volunteers. I don't believe the voluntary role has been fully taped, although I suspect no one at council would be willing to take on any extra responsibilities.</p> <p>- <i>International chess</i> I want to support the English Team and Malcolm does do a rousing speech. It does however seem to represent a high proportion of our costs. But I feel there is a disconnect between the team and ordinary members. Not sure how this can be fixed, especially as any initiative is likely to cost money.</p> <p>I want to support the board. The last thing I would want is for them to resign because we are not prepared to support them.</p>

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MP	N?			N				<p>Since direct ECF membership was introduced the scale of increase in membership fees way above inflation has been staggering. It appears to me that the ECF board believe passionately in various projects, i.e. International chess, Junior chess, Development manager, yet their financial management is cause for concern. In a competitive market, the membership would vote with their feet and change their allegiance. But ECF have no competition, and no regulatory body overseeing their financial governance. As members, we are held captive by the grading system.</p> <p>Speaking as a club secretary, I have had an unprecedented number of enquiries this season. Predominantly they are coming from players who have been playing online, and fancy their chances at club (OTB) chess. The majority come for a couple of weeks, but faced with the financial realities or playing ability realities, they do not take their interest further. Club chess is saddled with the basic cost of venue hire. We are not helped by the increasing cost of ECF membership on top of that. I share your concern that ECF expectation of increases in membership numbers are fantasy. Online chess may be producing fresh interest among younger players, but I do not see that being translated into increased club membership, and thereby increased ECF membership.</p>

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PL	N	W	I	I	Y	N		<p>That's a lot of information; more than I currently have time to do justice to. Regarding the areas where you ask for specific responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a Development Officer position. From what you say, the number of members doesn't appear to have increased by as many as 500, let alone "above and beyond" that figure. I agree with your statement last year - "We agree it would be a very good thing if competitive chess had wider appeal - among females and younger (post-school-age) people in particular - but more information on how this might be achieved would be welcome." - and I don't think that a Development Officer should be funded or instated, without a very clear and detailed plan of how this person should proceed, and how their success or otherwise should be measured. • Women's chess. I entirely agree that women's chess needs to be encouraged, though I understand that this must be a very long term project, struggling against the image of chess as very "nerdy". • The ECF Office. Bureaucracies always want more money for themselves; how is it being spent? • International chess. I think the focus should be much more on grass roots than on prestigious international events. You won't get more members out of the latter, which cater for the already-committed few. <p>Definitely support the capping proposal - how did the Chair justify blocking it, last year? - and vote against the budget.</p> <p>Again, I agree that you should vote against the increases proposed by the Board and support the inflation-rate increases proposed by the NCCU. Bronze membership has already increased from £13 to £16 since I was previously a member; I don't see any improved benefits and think that these changes are simply being made "because we can". No increase in excess of inflation is</p>

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SB	N?				Y?			<p>You say you are being critical but I feel you have every reason to be and I would like you to continue to question, probe and get answers to those questions. I think it's really important that the Board delivers value for money to it's members and that money doesn't disappear down a hole with no accountability. It's really important that ALL sources for funding are fully explored and followed up before the Board commits more members money to some of the approaches suggested. As for funding additional people in the office - I would want to see precisely what they are going to deliver - and I assume such a role would be offered on either a consultancy or fixed term contract so as not to permanently tie the ECF into paying for the additional roles.</p> <p>Please keep doing what you are doing Whilst it's only an extra £2.00 per bronze member we should all feel that it is money well spent.</p> <p>Good luck for the meeting tomorrow, please keep up the good work.</p>
AF	N	DO	I	N	Y	N?		<p>Bronze members' rep. Support for increased spend on Development Officer and ECF Office is qualified (I'd like to know more). Not yet convinced that extra spend on women's chess will translate into an increase in the number of female players. Against approval of the budget as I don't believe the income numbers for new members and I don't support spend on international chess above £30K. Strongly against increases in fees as they've already increased enough in recent years and as at the current level they're a barrier to entry and don't represent value for money. Afraid I'm not convinced by the proposal on female participation in the national stage of the county champs though maybe I shouldn't have a say as I don't play county chess.</p>

TOTALs N:6 D:5 D:0 N:14 N:1 Y:2 Y:1
Resps:34 N?:4 W:4 W:0 N?:2 N?:0 Y?:1
Y:1 O:5 O:1 Y:4 Y:7 N:8
Y?:0 I:2 I:9 Y?:1 Y?:3 N?:4
I?:6