

4th January 2021

Dear SCCA volunteers, club officials and participants,

I hope you and your families are safe and well and that the year 2021 will bring back to you all of the freedoms you are currently missing, including being able to play chess OTB again, when it is safe to do so. This is an update on SCCA's response to the COVID pandemic.

At the EGM last August, we advocated a prudent and cautious approach in light of uncertainties and the indications from other countries at the time. Regrettably, the subsequent progression of the pandemic has justified that position. Looking forward, new uncertainties exist, including the impact of new variants of the virus, the pace and phasing of the vaccination programme and the government response in terms of restrictions and guidance. We will continue to monitor government guidance and use a prudent and cautious approach to the resumption of OTB chess, including our plan to consult at the right time with our member clubs before any such resumption takes place.

It now seems near impossible that we will have any type of OTB 2020-2021 club competition season. The best that we can hope for, but is by no means assured, is that we might have enough time to complete the suspended 2019-2020 season OTB ahead of a new 2021-2022 season in the autumn.

A decision is required about the summer Surrey Individuals in the next few months, while significant uncertainty will still exist. A friendly online individual event in lieu may be the prudent path to take.

With long lead times required to commit to it, and noting how difficult it has been to make it viable in normal times, we do not envisage attempting to resurrect the Surrey Chess Congress ("SCC") in 2021. Together with the SCC Board, the SCCA Board has agreed that the company that has been used as a vehicle for the congress will be wound up. That decision was based entirely on the desire to simplify administration by bringing the running of the SCC "in-house". We continue to have the objective to run the SCC again, when the time is right.

On county chess we will await developments from both SCCU and ECF and will also be advocating a prudent and cautious approach in those forums, where we represent SCCA interests.

With no OTB competitions possible I would like to express the Board's appreciation for the great work that has been done by our officers to produce and support online alternatives for our participants.

Thank you to Julien Shepley, Trevor Jones and Mike Gunn for captaining our Surrey county teams in ECF and SCCU online competitions.

The second cycle of the Surrey Online Friendly League is now underway. My fellow director, Huw Williams, has done fantastic work to get it up and running from scratch and he has been very well supported by Brian Skinner and Ed Mospan.

Richard Tillett has also gone the extra mile by organising a 22-board team, in a friendly email correspondence match with the Braille Chess Association, that kicked off on December 28th. That, combined with entering a new correspondence team into the international States and Regions CCC, as well as the traditional C&DCCC, represents a significant and welcome growth of our correspondence chess footprint.

Wishing you and your families a safe and happy 2021.

Paul Shepherd – SCCA President, for and on behalf of the SCCA Board