

Surrey County Chess Association

Alex Holowczak,  
ECF Director of Home Chess

23 November 2017

Subject: County Championships Consultation

Dear Alex,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Surrey County Chess Association ("SCCA") in response to the consultation, referenced above, that was launched on the ECF website on 25th October 2017.

Firstly, we appreciate and thank you for the opportunity to be part of the consultation.

The SCCA Board recognises that the consultation requests responses on-line, utilising the questionnaire formats you have provided. However it seems to us that it would be useful to, in addition, provide a fuller response via this communication to give a proper perspective of our position. We also have some questions for you as to how you will utilise the data once gathered.

SCCA fields all 6 tiers of county teams from Open to U-100. In a typical season SCCA teams play between 25-30 matches in the Southern Counties Chess Union ("SCCU") championships. Our participation in the subsequent ECF National Stages depends on our performances in the Union stage. Typically we have played 3-6 matches in the ECF National Stages. Hence, in a typical season, SCCA relies on the SCCU championships for 80-90% of its matches. So the first and most important message to convey is that SCCA would not want to see any changes to the county championships that would negatively impact the SCCU competition, which is the mainstay of our county chess.

Regarding the ECF National Stages, an area that we believe continues to need strong focus is that of ensuring that Controller's decisions and any appeals are managed fairly, proportionately and transparently. This is not an easy task when the time-frame required for decisions is often very short. We recognise that ECF have recently modified their rules in relation to county matches and welcome the resulting increased transparency. We encourage you to continue to review your experiences of the operation of these rules to ensure that they are practicable for all parties involved.

We are very cognisant of the burdens of both cost and time on our captains and players when they travel to venues further afield. That may be inevitable up to the national semi-finals if we play counties who are not in the SCCU. However, we would welcome some increased flexibility to have the option to play any finals at a more local venue if we are matched against another county from within the SCCU.

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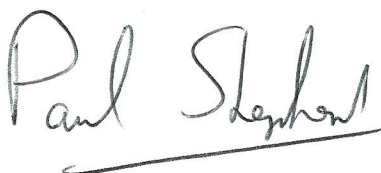
Looking through the questions you ask of the players we would like to point out that:

- a) Categorising players by grading band may not be entirely representative as a number of players fluctuate between bands season to season.
- b) It would have been interesting if there had been a question to determine whether pride in representing one's county was an important motivating factor.
- c) For lower than Open level players that the question in relation to FIDE rating desirability might have included a clear enunciation of the additional membership costs that it entailed, to put it into perspective.

A number of the questions may produce answers that require the attention of either the county organisations or unions (e.g. playing venues / conditions). As ECF is not in a direct position to influence things outside of the National Stages how do you intend to get the messages back to those who can? In particular you will gather information from both Surrey players and captains. Some of our captains have provided us with their feedback but we probably won't see all of the Surrey feedback sent to you via our internal processes. Will you be in a position to consolidate the Surrey feedback and send it to the SCCA Board? That would be helpful.

Finally, once you have a view on what, if any, concrete changes you believe should be made to the county championships we would suggest that it would be appropriate to do a second round of consultation to test support for any specific proposals. People are generally far more focussed when responding to specific proposals than answering generic questions.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Shepherd,  
acting SCCA President

cc.  
SCCA Board  
SCCU Executive Committee  
ECF CEO - Mike Truran