



Shropshire Chess Association

www.shropshirechess.org

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Dear Chess Friends

ECF Direct Membership

Many of you will be aware that the way in which the English Chess Federation (ECF) is funded is changing and this will have an impact on local chess throughout the country. Exactly how this could best be administered in Shropshire was discussed at the recent AGM of the Shropshire Chess Association (SCA) and the reason for my writing now is to explain these changes and how your Association is planning to make things as smooth as possible and facilitate the new system for both clubs and players.

What is Changing?

Currently, if you play graded chess in England, you are helping to fund the ECF in various ways:

- If you have chosen to be a “Direct Member”, you pay an annual subscription directly to the ECF in return for various benefits and the right to a discounted entry to congresses. You also fund the ECF through the “Game Fee” charged on each of your results in graded League, Club and County games. You will be paying this through your club subscription, league or match fees.
- If you are in a part of the country where there is a designated “Membership Organisation”, you may pay an annual subscription to the ECF via the local organisation. As a so-called Basic Member, you are entitled to unlimited graded games at no extra cost per game.
- If you are not a member of the ECF, either directly or via a Membership Organisation, a “Game Fee” is charged on each of your graded games. You will be paying this through your club subscription, league or match fees. In the case of congresses, you will be paying a higher entry fee than ECF members, to cover the costs to the organisers of the Game Fee payments.

From 1 September 2012:

Following the changes taking effect on 1 September 2012, you will be helping to fund the ECF in one of two ways:

- If you have chosen to be a “Direct Member”, you pay an annual subscription directly to the ECF in return for various benefits depending on the level of membership – Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum. With each level of membership comes the right to play unlimited graded games in the categories of event defined for each membership level.
- If you do not wish to be a member of the ECF, a “Game Fee” is charged on each of your graded games. You will be paying this through your club subscription, league or match fees. In the case of congresses, you will be paying a higher entry fee than ECF members at the Silver level or above, to cover the costs to the organisers of a “Pay to Play” fee per non-member / Bronze member.

What Do the Different Levels of Membership Mean?

The different levels of membership entitle games played to be graded according to the following table:

Level	Adult Cost	Junior Cost	Local Competitions (league, club championships etc.)	Congresses	FIDE	ECF Grand Prix
Bronze	£13	£9	✓			
Silver	£19	£13	✓	✓		✓
Gold	£28	£22	✓	✓	✓	✓
Platinum	£60	£60	✓	✓	✓	✓

Where players are not ECF direct members, there is a fee payable according to the following table:

Event	Standard Play	Rapid Play
League & Club (non-junior)	£2 per result	£1 per result
League & Club (junior)	50p per result	25p per result
Congresses (non-junior)	£6 surcharge *	£6 surcharge *
Congresses (junior)	£4 surcharge *	£4 surcharge *

* Applies to bronze members, as well as non-members.

Players must be Gold or Platinum members to play in FIDE rated events.

The AGM Decisions

The AGM voted to set up procedures to ensure that all its regular players become ECF direct members at a level in accordance with their requirements.

First of all, it was agreed that the SCA would become a Membership Organisation (MO) of the ECF. This involves signing an agreement, enabling the SCA to collect membership fees from individuals and pass them on to the ECF. This approach automatically generates a £1 discount which it is intended will be passed on to the individual.

Secondly, it was agreed that all players in Shropshire should generally be expected to become ECF direct members. It was recognised that there would be some players who play very few graded games, or who join a club part way through the year, and so it was agreed that players need not become members if they play no more than 3 graded games in a year.

Thirdly, it was agreed that the best way of collecting membership fees from players would be at club level. This is because different players will want to choose different levels of membership, so there needs to be that discussion at local level, in order to collect the correct fees. The decision at the AGM was that clubs would consult with their members, collect the appropriate fees and pass these details and the money to the SCA by 30th September, in order for the SCA to pass these details and the fees onto the ECF.

Fourthly, it was agreed that the league fees collected from local chess clubs would be reduced to £10 per team for 2012/13. Previously, these fees were £50 per team. This is because the ECF Direct Membership scheme replaces the old game based system, which was covered by the higher fee.

What Do Individual Club Members Need to do?

Individuals need to decide what level of membership is appropriate for them. The following advice is taken from the ECF website:

“Which type of membership would suit me best?

The choice is yours, but the following scenarios may be a useful guide to the best fit for you. You can always upgrade to a higher level at any time if your needs change.

- **“I don’t play tournaments, but I do like to play graded games in my local league and at my club.”**

Choose BRONZE membership. You’ll be able to play an unlimited number of graded games in league, club and county competitions.

- **“I don’t play tournaments either. I’m mostly a social player and hardly play any graded games at all, certainly not more than six in a year.”**

If you don’t expect to play more than 6 graded games a year, you may prefer to pay on a game-by-game basis. A £2 fee should be paid to your club treasurer when you play this game. This will be forwarded on via the Shropshire Chess Association to the ECF at the end of the year. On the other hand, why not choose BRONZE membership and take advantage of the freedom to play lots more chess without worrying about any extra costs?

- **“I’m a league and club player. I don’t normally play tournaments, but I might like to try one.”**

Choose BRONZE membership and, if you see a congress you fancy, upgrade to SILVER by paying an extra £6 (Juniors £4). Bronze members and non-members can play in graded congresses, but Silver members and above are usually able to claim a discount on their entry fee of up to £6 (Juniors £4). If you upgrade from Bronze to Silver, the price of the upgrade should be covered by the discount on your first tournament, and if you get a taste for congresses, your Silver membership will earn you a discount every time!

- **“I’m a league and club player, but I like to play at least one congress every year.”**

Choose SILVER membership. You’ll be able to play an unlimited number of graded games in league, club and county competitions AND enter as many graded congresses as you like at the discounted Silver (and above) member rate.

- **“I don’t play in a league or a club, but I do enter congresses from time to time.”**

If you only play one or two congresses a year, and this is your only graded chess, you might just want to enter congresses as a non-member and pay the full, undiscounted entry fee. If you play three or more congresses a year, choose SILVER membership – it’ll be better value.

- **“I play in FIDE-rated events.”**

Choose GOLD membership. If you’re registered as English for FIDE rating purposes, the ECF requires you to be a Gold member or above. In return, you can play as many games as you like in graded AND rated events and the ECF will pay for the FIDE rating fees (with the exception of all-play-all tournaments).

- **“I’d like to do a bit extra to support the work of the ECF.”**

Why not become a PLATINUM member? You’ll receive all the benefits of GOLD membership, plus we’ll send you an ECF 15-month diary and a copy of the ECF Yearbook. It’s a pricier option at £60 a year, but if you can afford it, your subscription will be providing the ECF with invaluable extra funds to develop chess in this country.

I’m already a member – how do the changes affect me?

If your membership expires after 31 August 2012, it’ll be converted to one of the new categories. Standard, Junior, Family and Life members will be GOLD; Full members will be PLATINUM. When your membership expires, the ECF office will contact you to explain your renewal options.”

It is possible that you are already an ECF Direct Member. This is not a problem; all you need to do is let your club secretary know your membership number to pass on to the SCA. You will not be required to pay an additional fee.

What Do Clubs Need to Do?

Clubs need to speak to all their members and ascertain which level of membership each individual wishes to take up. If the player is already an ECF Direct Member, you only need to note their membership number and pass this on to the SCA with your return.

The appropriate level of membership subscription also needs to be collected from the players (less the £1 discount) and a cheque passed to Alf Evans, Treasurer, with your return by 30th September 2012.

If you have members who do not wish to become ECF Direct members, the SCA will be charged the grading fee per game shown in the table above and will recover this amount from the club. The decision at the AGM was that members playing more than three graded games would be required to become ECF Direct Members and it is clearly in clubs' best interest to monitor this in order to avoid unexpected bills. Individuals can become ECF Direct Members during the year (without the £1 discount) and this will cover games played earlier on.

A small working group was set up at the AGM to agree more detailed procedures on these points and these will be distributed in due course. We understand that this is new for everyone and if clubs encounter practical difficulties in adopting the new system, the SCA will do what we can to assist and advise.

Conclusion

More details on the ECF Direct Membership scheme can be found on the ECF website at:

<http://www.englishchess.org.uk/>

The website includes answers to common questions and is well worth taking a look at if you have not previously been aware of the changes.

The changes have been under discussion for some time but will soon be upon us. I hope you will support your club and the association by making the system as easy as possible to administer. You can do this by reading up on the changes, asking any questions sooner rather than later, deciding promptly which level of membership is appropriate for you and of course, paying the appropriate fee to your club treasurer in good time.

With best wishes for the forthcoming chess season,

Francis Best

President, Shropshire Chess Association