Minutes of the 2021/22 Counties Championship Meeting

Held by Video Conference on Zoom platform at 2pm on Saturday 8 May

Chairman: Nigel Towers, ECF Director of Home Chess

Teller: Paul Sharratt

Host: Mark Murrell, ECF Controller, Counties Championship

In attendance (18): James Blair (Cambridgeshire), Kevin Dalley (Derbyshire), David Gilbert (Kent), Andy McAtear (Cumbria), Steve Mann (Yorkshire), Philip Meade (WECU, Gloucestershire), Mark Murrell (SCCU & Essex, proxy for Merseyside & Sussex), Bill O'Rourke (Lancashire), John Reyes (MCCU, post voting), Mick Riding (Northumberland), Paul Sharratt (Staffordshire & Worcestershire), Paul Shepherd (Surrey), Peter Sherlock (MCCU & Lincolnshire), Nigel Towers (Warwickshire), John Wickham (EACU & Norfolk), Kevin Williamson (Bedfordshire), Rob Willmoth (Middlesex) and Andrew Wilson (Leicestershire & Rutland).

Philip Meade (WECU), Peter Sherlock (MCCU) and Kevin Williamson (EACU) were also in attendance in their capacities as County Match Controllers for their respective Unions.

Apologies: Paul Cooksey (Berkshire), Guy Greenland (Somerset) and Alan Leary (Herefordshire).

The meeting opened at 2pm, having been convened following the direction of ECF Finance Council on 24th April to determine agenda item 14.

1. Introductions

The Chairman welcomed the attendees and outlined the business of the meeting and registration/ voting procedures.

2. Rating Band limits for next season's final stages for the County Championships

The proposers of the three options that were before ECF Finance Council addressed the meeting in turn, followed by a number of delegates:

Option 1: U2000, U1800, U1600, U1400 (Board Motion) - Nigel Towers, Home Director

Option 2: U2100, U1900, U1700, U1500 (Surrey/Middlesex amendment) - Paul Shepherd

Option 3: U2050, U1850, U1650, U1450 (Southern Counties Chess Union/Croydon & District amendment) – Mark Murrell

A range of views was expressed by delegates particularly as to encouraging smaller counties by not raising the upper limit too far and support from players for the lowest section.

The Chairman called for two card votes, with the vote attracting the higher majority amending the bandwidths of the substantive motion which was Option 1:

Vote 1: Option 2 bandwidths replacing Option 1 bandwidths

For: 8 Against 34

Vote 2: Option 3 bandwidths replacing Option 1 bandwidths
(with only the U1450 section being played over 12 boards)

For 29 Against 14

Consequently 2050, 1850, 1650 and 1450 replaced 2000, 1800, 1600 and 1400 in the motion that was before Finance Council.

A third card vote was called on the substantive motion (as amended by Vote 2)

Vote 3: Replacing the existing 5 grade limited sections with 4 rating limited sections with limits of U2050, U1850, U1650 & U1450

Council is asked to consider and if appropriate agree THAT the team rating limits for County finals (and related regional stages) will change with immediate effect to be based on an Open competition plus 4 rating limited competitions aligned with 100 point elo boundaries, rather than Open plus 5 rating limited competitions based on Clarke grades, with new player limits (as now) for sections comprising: U2050, U1850, U1650 and U1450. These will be absolute limits for players in the relevant sections (following current practice) rather than averages. Selection criteria and board ordering rules will be based on the monthly list in effect at the start of the season. This will be the Original Official September list as published unless otherwise specified by the Counties Controller.

For 38 Against 7

The Director of Home Chess confirmed that this would be the format of the OTB 2021/22 Counties Championship competition.

The meeting noted that it would take some time for ratings to settle down given the change in the basis of calculation, out-of-date starting ratings due to Covid-19 interruption and the removal of the 700 (Clarke grade 0) floor. Future revision may be needed after a suitable period for these effects to work through the system.

3. OTB Counties pre-season competition in Aug/Sep 2020

The ECF Counties Championship Controller outlined a format of a 3 round team Swiss competition played in the second half of August and September comprising of two average team rated sections. Two options were under consideration: a national hybrid event (each team being in a separate venue) or a regional face-to-face event (with the option of a spring

final) and in both options, teams would be able to agree to switch between hybrid and conventional encounters.

Concerns were expressed about inclusivity, technology, and sustainable internet connections, particularly in remoter parts of the county. It was not clear if these mitigated against the distances that would otherwise need to be travelled.

The clear personal preference of the meeting was for a regional face-to-face event.

Of those present and expressing their personal views 6 indicated likely participation with 1 against participation. The substantial majority reserved their positions pending further information.

It was agreed that an outline of the proposed competition in a regional face-to-face format would be provided for representatives to take to their Counties to gauge support.

It was recognised that to be confident in that support organisers and players would need to know the changes that were under review by the Government in respect of Social Distancing for Stage 4 of the Spring Road Map and the resultant Covid-19 precautions specified by the ECF for the competition.

4. AOB – OTB 2021/22 Counties Championship participation

In a show of hands, a near unanimous majority of those present indicated that their counties would hope to support the Union stages.

The meeting closed at c3:45pm.