

Background

Clubs across the league are finding it increasingly difficult to field six-player teams on a consistent basis. Variations in player availability, club reorganisations, and even occasional closures, have made the current format unsustainable. In some cases, clubs are being forced to move players between divisions simply to meet team quotas — a practice that, while understandable, compromises both fairness and the integrity of the league. Some teams are able to play in Divisions 1-4 purely on the basis of "quantity" than "quality", leading to frustration amongst stronger players in the lower half of the League, who miss out due to not having enough players in their Club, or all being available at a given time.

Proposal

That the minimum team size for Divisions 1–4 be reduced from minimum six players to minimum four players per team.

Rationale

Sustainability: A 4-player structure is more achievable for clubs with fluctuating membership.

Fairness: Reduces defaults and ensures results are decided over the board.

Accessibility: Allows smaller clubs to participate fully without excessive recruitment pressure.

Integrity: Removes the need to shift players unethically between divisions.

Proven Success: Similar 4-board formats operate successfully in the same league in lower divisions and some 4NCL competitions too. In fact, it will increase participation for bigger Clubs, for example a Club with 8 players available can field two teams rather than one, which is not the case with a 6 person team.

Conclusion

This proposal aims to protect participation, fairness, and long-term sustainability. A 4-player minimum ensures that clubs of all sizes can continue to compete ethically and consistently, strengthening the league as a whole. It also ensures that Chess players are able to concentrate on the game itself rather than organising themselves for meeting seasonal demand.