

Gazette Article for Feb 2015

Proposed changes to CA subscriptions and structure

As most of you will know by now, the CA Council is proposing some significant changes to our subscriptions and membership structure. We believe this is necessary in order to safeguard croquet's future throughout the country and at all levels of play, competitive and social. For a game such as ours to survive long term it requires constant effort towards development and publicity to attract new players. The CA has extensive programmes to achieve this, but to sustain them we need to ensure that the money available is sufficient. All indications are that the current subscription structure relies too heavily on tournament players, while current trends are for reduced tournament play – please see the last edition of the Gazette for a more complete breakdown of the issues. It is time we took action to address this.

Following my paper in the October Gazette regarding the proposed changes, I have been consulting with the Federations and have attended some of their AGMs to discuss the issues further. While it is clear that a number of you have concerns, I believe the majority support the plans and hence Council have decided to go ahead with the proposals as put forward at that time (and re-iterated below). We have also confirmed that this will be the subject of voting at a **Special General Meeting to be held at 11:15am at Hurlingham on Saturday 28 March 2015.**

The resolutions being put to the vote are on the formal agenda, a summary of which is published on pages 4 and 5 of the Croquet Gazette and the full version, including detailed constitutional changes, on the website. Individual Members wishing to vote in advance of the meeting can either do so online, or post the ballot paper, which you can cut out or download from the website. Member Clubs can only do so by post or by email (which must come from the club secretary, please).

Motion 1 is to allow the CA to rebalance subscriptions (increase club subscriptions while reducing individual tournament subscriptions), and will require a simple majority. Motions 2 and 3 are for changes to the CA constitution which therefore require 60% of votes cast to be in favour. The motions are phrased in the terms needed for the CA to be able to make the changes, and as such are relatively simple. They should be viewed in the light of our overall intentions, which are as follows:

(1) We introduce a two-tier club membership system. For smaller clubs that have fewer than two full-sized lawns, or access to their lawns only part-time, we hold membership fees at the current level (after inflation). These clubs will benefit from the other changes listed below, while not having to pay anything extra. For larger clubs we increase the fees paid per croquet playing member from the current level of £7.95 per head by up to £1 per head above inflation each year for the next five years.

(2) We make all croquet-playing club members eligible to become Individual Members of the CA with a vote at General Meetings as soon as is practicable (administration systems to handle the changes are likely to take two or three years to become fully operational). This will result in a roughly threefold increase in the CA's membership. For obvious reasons CA membership would apply only to club members for whom a "per capita" fee has been paid and thus non-playing members and members of clubs that are only Affiliate Members of the CA would be excluded. Clubs which do not wish to participate in this scheme will not be forced to do so, but this would mean that their members would lose out. Similarly, individuals may ask their clubs not to forward their details if they wish, but again this would mean they are not recognised as members.

(3) We distribute The Croquet Gazette to the enlarged membership as soon as is practicable. The best way to achieve this is under discussion.

(4) Allow the enlarged membership to enter tournaments in the CA fixtures book. We would enable this by increasing the levy payable by £5/day, while allowing tournament members a

discounted entry of the same amount. Tournament members would also be given priority entry to them. This should help to ensure tournaments are fully subscribed.

(5) Once all club members are eligible to become members of the CA, we drop the system of clubs having a separate vote on CA issues, so that only individual members may vote. (Club voting was introduced because otherwise some clubs would not be properly represented, but this would no longer be the case under the new system.)

(6) Reduce other fees for tournament players over the five year period as far as is possible while balancing income.

For the scheme to succeed, I believe we will also need to ask Federations to ensure that all clubs belonging to a Federation also become members of the CA (where they are not already). We believe this is fair, considering the degree to which the CA supports Federation activities. It will remain an option to join as an affiliated club only, but the fee will increase to £50 per year (from £35). It should be noted that members of affiliated clubs would not benefit from the new individual CA membership as described above. These measures will be the subject of negotiation with the individual Federations over the forthcoming year.

Throughout the five-year implementation period of this plan, the CA would monitor the effects of the changes, and may recommend that the changes are halted if necessary.

If the changes go through, the CA will be seeking the help of club secretaries in maintaining the membership details. We plan to provide an on-line membership database facility which clubs can use and which we hope will help them in maintaining their own records. Clubs which use this facility will not then need to take any further action. For clubs not using the facility, we will need secretaries to enter or amend membership details on-line once a year, or to forward these details to the CA office.

Finally, I have heard a number of concerns regarding giving the CA email addresses and other personal details. I would therefore like to reassure members that all such data is held securely, password protected, and is not shared with any other parties except as needed for our own purposes (e.g. for the distribution of the Gazette). This facility has been in use for tournament members for some time, and we have had no issues with misuse of the data. Members can, of course, opt not to provide email addresses if they prefer, but our plan will be to increasingly use electronic means of notification for any upcoming issues or votes, so that it is possible they may miss important information if they choose to do this.