



Open Letter from the NCCU February 2005

To All Counties, Clubs, Leagues, Congresses, Rapidplays, County teams and especially all Players

The Northern Membership Scheme

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1/ Purpose

The NCCU (Northern Counties Chess Union) will introduce a Northern Membership scheme on 1/6/2005 that will provide the following entitlements to all members:

A/ All games played by that player will be graded for free, be they congress, rapidplay, league, county, club or junior games.

B/ All members will automatically become basic members of the BCF (British Chess Federation) and will be entitled to a free e-mailed copy of 'Chessmoves'.

C/ Membership of the scheme will be £10 per year for adults over 18, £5 per year for all aged 18 and under, guaranteed for the first three years.

D/ The cost of membership will be held at £10/£5 until 31st May 2008.

2/ Rationale

Massive rises each year in the level of BCF Game fee (19% increase this season alone, with an equivalent rise next year forecast) means ever more expense for the chess player and for all BCF graded events (be they league, congress, rapidplay, county or junior events). The game fee is hidden in entry fees to these events, but is very apparent to treasurers and event organisers who struggle to keep events afloat.

This cannot continue. This year Northern events have been lost, and others removed themselves from BCF game fee. To reverse this trend, the NCCU placed a proposal regarding 'membership' to the BCF as a means of abolishing game fee (seen by event organizers as a BCF poll tax).

The BCF Management Board have accepted and wish to support the NCCU proposal that a trial scheme be run this year in the North by which anybody can join the scheme for £10 (£5 for juniors). For that, the person would have every game graded by the BCF. Even if the person played in ten congresses or three leagues, he would pay no more than the £10 (£5 for juniors) – so the more you play chess, the cheaper it gets! Game fee would be taken away from your club, congress, league, county and rapidplay fees that you pay.

It has been calculated that average savings across the NCCU for every adult person who joins the scheme = £13.12 - £10 = £3.12 per year. The next year it would be a saving of approximately £5.75.

Casual players would be encouraged to play more club games and league or congress events both to improve their play and also to make best use of their membership. As a result more players would be represented on the national grading list, and league and congresses would receive a much needed boost in numbers.

Current membership of the BCF is only just over 1000 members. There are over 2000 Northern players. We wish as many as possible to become BCF members through this scheme.

3/ Implementation

The NCCU will now roll out this scheme (see an entry form attached). We in the NCCU hope that players will seriously consider and then take up the proposal. Your NCCU representatives are backing this scheme and hope you will too. **Please pass this message on to every player you know as soon as possible.**

The scheme will operate as follows:

1/ The Scheme will be open for players to join immediately, though the year to which it applies will begin on June 1st 2005 (in line with the BCF grading year).

2/ Clubs will be asked to collect the fee and membership form from each of their players who wish to join the membership scheme - £10 for adults, £5 for anybody 18 or under as of 1/6/05. The clubs would then forward these fees and member details (see excel template attached) to the NCCU. In turn, the club would NOT pay the game fee element of any league they play in, nor would they pay the game fee element of county competitions. Obviously the club would then adjust downwards the club membership fees next year for NMS members.

This is the preferred membership joining method, since each county will also be made aware of players eligible to play in county teams / competitions, and will have their contact details.

3/ The NCCU will issue membership cards to each member through their clubs.

4/ The NCCU will collate all monies and relevant membership numbers and grading information from all Northern counties and forward to the BCF.

4/ Frequently asked questions and answers

Q1. What is the (NCCU) BCF Membership Scheme?

A1. The NCCU are committed to replacing game fee with a membership scheme and have proposed to run a pilot scheme in the North of England, known as: 'The Northern Membership Scheme'

Q2. Why a membership scheme rather than game fee?

A2. Game fee is seen as a stealth tax imposed on players by an invisible organisation, the BCF. Apart from 'tax' collecting most players never have contact with the BCF. Game fee has risen to unacceptable levels; a 19% rise imposed last year alone. Membership will bring the BCF closer to the player and give players a say in the organization.

Q3. What are the benefits of being a Northern Membership Scheme Member?

- A3.
- a) Pay only £10 a year (£5 if 18 or under as of 1/5/2005)
 - b) Pay no Game Fee
 - c) All games will be graded: League/Club/Congress/Rapid play/
 - d) With Game Fee, the more games you play, the more you pay. As a member, you play as many games as you like at no extra cost.
 - e) Reduced Entry fees at NCCU Congresses
 - f) You automatically become a basic BCF member.
 - g) You will be able to enter all eligible BCF competitions
 - h) You will receive 'Chess Moves' by e-mail

Q4. How do the costs break down between 'game fee' and being a 'NMS Member'?

A4. Game Fee 2002/03 = 36p 2003/04 = 43p an increase of 19%
If 19% rise in 2004/05, Game Fee would be 51p.
BCF Basic Membership = £10 – price guaranteed for the next 3 years.

Q5. What date does the NMS Membership scheme start and finish on?

A5. Start from 1st June 2005 until 31st May 2006 (to coincide with the Grading year)

Q6. Are all the NCCU Counties taking part and do they all support this?

A6. Yes – at the last NCCU meeting in December 2004, all County representatives present were in support and agreed to take these proposals back to their respective County's.

Q7. What happens if I play in a Chess Congress in June/July/August 2005, will my games be graded?

A7. Pay to become a NMS member at the first Congress you play in after 31st May 2005 and all of your games will be graded.

Q8. What happens if I am a Member and play against a player who is not a member?

A8. This will not alter the current arrangements for grading. Your game will be graded in the usual way and so will your opponent (assuming he has paid his game fee. If he has not, then the game will be graded, but you opponent will not get a grade from this game).

Q9. Who is eligible to join?

A9. All those players who are not at present BCF members.

- Q10. If I become a NMS member half way through the season, will I be able to get my previous games graded?
A10. Yes, they will be graded. (It pays to become a member early as game fee will have already been paid for these previous games!)
- Q11. Will there be a discount for paying at the start of the 2005/06 season?
A11. No, but £10 fee is £6 less than the current Standard Membership and is guaranteed not to rise for at least 3 years.
- Q12. I Live and play outside the NCCU and would like to join:
a) Can I join
b) What benefits do I get?
A12. a) Yes, apply direct to the BCF.
b) The same as an NCCU member (see Q/A 2)
- Q13. I do not want to become a NMS member, what will I have to do to have my games graded by the BCF?
A13. a) Pay Game fee on League/Club/Congress/Rapid play games
b) Pay full entry fee into all NCCU Congresses.
- Q14. An NCCU chess player who is a NMS member lives on the border with another (non-NCCU) chess Union/County and plays in both areas, does he have to pay any game fees?
A14. No, the BCF will recognize the player as a BCF member and as such does not have to pay any game fees.
- Q15. An NCCU chess player who is a NMS member lives on the border with another (non-NCCU) chess Union/County and plays Congresses in both areas, does he have to pay any game fees in the non-NCCU area?
A15. No, the non-NCCU Congress should not take any game fee from you.
- Q16. A club has 2 teams and a NMS member plays in both. One team requires all players to be a BCF Member to participate; the other team is in a league where BCF membership is not required - what will happen to all the games of the NMS member?
A16. All the games will be graded in the usual way, but the Basic member will not have to pay game fee, whereas other non-members will have to.
- Q17. How long will the Pilot scheme last?
A17. It is anticipated that the scheme will run a minimum of 12 months, when it is hoped that other chess unions/leagues and the BCF will adopt the scheme as an ongoing proposition.
- Q18. How many Congresses are participating?
A18. It is hoped that all Congresses and rapidplays within the NCCU will participate – they have NOTHING to lose and, in fact, they will be beneficiaries because people should want to play more (cheaper) chess!
- Q19. How do I apply?
A19. NCCU Club and County Secretaries will process your application or you can send £10 (£5 if 18 or under) direct to the NCCU, using the enclosed Entry Form.
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The Northern Membership Scheme Entry Form

Under the pilot scheme run by the NCCU, I wish to become a Northern membership scheme member (and therefore also a BCF basic member) and enclose a cheque for £10 (or £5 for a junior) payable to 'The NCCU'

Name

Address

.....

Tel No. Date of Birth.....

E-mail address Male/Female.....

Chess Club BCF number..... (if known e.g. 176606F)

I agree that the information on my grading can appear on the BCF Website. Tick Box

I would like 'Chessmoves' e-mailed to me at the e-mail address above. Tick Box

Fill in Form and hand to either:

a/ Your club treasurer with £10 (who will forward all monies and club members entry forms to NCCU)

or b/ The NCCU president as follows:

Bill O'Rourke, NCCU President, 101 Queens Park Road, Heywood, Lancs OL10 4JR

Upon receipt by the NCCU you will be issued through your club (or direct) with your Northern Membership Scheme card.

Obviously we would like to get every Northern player as a member of this scheme and playing as much chess as they want to at a cheaper price! Our belief is that if we in the North show the scheme to be a success, the rest of the nation's chess players will want to join the scheme soon after!

Yours sincerely

The NCCU working party:

Bill O'Rourke NCCU President and Lancashire President

Dave Cole NCCU Vice-President and Cumbria President

Bryan Bainbridge NCCU Vice-president and Durham Vice-President