



**REPORT TO THE COUNCIL OF THE
CROQUET ASSOCIATION**

**FROM THE
FEDERATION WORKING PARTY**

March 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.** The Croquet Association (CA) set up a Working Party to review the relationship between the CA and the federations and to propose, where appropriate, improvements to the existing structure. Early in our deliberations we recognized that the present stratified membership structure was a central factor in Council's relationships with clubs and federations. This emerged as a dominant issue and so a central theme permeates this Report, exemplified by the words inclusive and unified.
- 2.** We did not look for quick fixes but set ourselves a medium term planning horizon. We started with a review of federations and collected information via a questionnaire. We concluded that federation activities are entirely consistent with the CA's stated Objects. Most federations have been highly successful in promoting the game and we pay tribute to the vast amount of entirely voluntary effort on the part of federation officers. Like earlier CA studies into this and related matters, we recognised that federations are constituted as autonomous bodies independent of the CA. We do not recommend change to this.
- 3.** However, we recommend one Constitutional change to enable Federations to become members of the CA and make Federation Representatives on Council representatives of their Federation (rather than the CA Member Clubs in its region) and simplify the procedures for their election accordingly.
- 4.** Regarding the membership fee structure, we considered the present arrangements contribute to a chasm between the grass roots and the governing body. We recommend that:
 - a)** all individual members of clubs should become members of and pay a subscription to the CA (whether collected direct or as a club based subscription);
 - b)** there should be no separate membership payments by clubs or individuals to the Federations, to encourage the view that we are all one organisation;

- c)** the present individual Tournament Membership category be reduced and ultimately abolished; and
 - d)** there should be a 'pay to play' component so that those players getting the most benefit from nationally-supported resources pay a greater amount towards them. This should cover as many competitive games as is practicable.
- 5.** We point to the large growth in competitive play provided by federations and its impact on CA Calendar events. We believe this effect could be alleviated to some extent if more of the national inter-club competitions were organised to complement the federation structure. We make proposals for this which we recommend Tournament Committees consider.
- 6.** We considered the wide disparity in federation areas and club numbers. We put forward criteria that federations should ideally meet and recommend that as part of our proposed consultations with clubs and federations we should obtain views regarding possible rationalisation.
- 7.** We make outline proposals to publicise the issues over the next year and beyond; and in particular, to clarify to players what CA subscriptions pay for. Alongside this we propose a series of consultations with the clubs and federations over the winter 2013/2014.

Federation Working Party

March 2013

REPORT OF THE FEDERATION WORKING PARTY

1. Introduction. The Council of the Croquet Association (CA) established a Working Party to review all aspects of the working relationship between the CA and the federations, with a view to identifying any weaknesses and proposing, where appropriate, improvements to the existing structure. The genesis for this was a proposal to simplify the mechanism for electing federation representatives to Council which led to a wider discussion of federations and their relationship to the CA. The full Terms of Reference (TOR) together with the composition of the Working Party are at **Appendix I**.

2. Approach and Methodology. Although we met several times, most of our deliberations were conducted by email exchanges via a mailing list. As the CA has few statistics relating to federations we conducted a questionnaire to obtain basic data regarding federation activities. Although the responses from eight of the nine federations provided useful information on the scale and scope of federation activities they inevitably reflected the view of federation officers rather than a wider perspective. We have been guided in our discussions by an overarching objective - to advance croquet - and, rather than focussing on what might be possible in the short term, we set a medium term planning horizon. Although we have undertaken detailed work on a number of key issues we have deliberately confined our report to matters of principle. This is because we feel that if Council adopts our recommendations it will be essential to engage in meaningful consultations with clubs and federations thereby enabling them to shape the detailed *modus operandi*. We are proposing significant changes and to present federations with detailed plans would, we believe, be counterproductive.

3. Present CA/Federation Relationship.

3.1 Constitutions. We carried out a review of federation constitutions and our key findings are at **Appendix II**. Essentially each constitution, despite differences in wording, is consistent with the CA's Objects and enables federations to:

- a) promote croquet;
- b) assist with the formation and development of clubs;
- c) provide a forum for clubs and co-ordinates their activities;
- d) organise competitions and tournaments; and
- e) provide publicity through the production of a newsletter and/or website.

Like the earlier Constitutional Working Party (1998), we conclude that Federations were set up for historical reasons as autonomous bodies

independent of the CA and we make no recommendations to change this basis.

3.2 Governance. It follows that the CA's governance procedures, predicated by this constitutional position, are based on co-operative federalism rather than a unified system. The existence of nine autonomous bodies deprives the CA of a conventional line management structure and this has a profound effect on the overall management of the game across the domain. We have received representations that this situation is a serious constraint on the governing body and that it should be changed. Rightly or wrongly, Council is often perceived to be remote from the grass roots (and *vice versa*) but the present system has one significant advantage in that federations are closer to, and more responsive to, the clubs. For that reason, together with the judgement that fundamental change regarding this matter is likely to be infeasible, **we recommend** maintaining the *status quo*. Nevertheless, we recognise that the governance system constrains the Working Party's scope and that any proposals for change to the current relationship may only be achieved by persuasion and with the agreement of each federation.

3.3 Operational. As autonomous bodies operating under the auspices of the CA it is remarkable that the Federations are not, and have never been, members of the CA. Yet they each have a representative on Council for the clubs in their area. They also benefit from free Public Liability Insurance provided by the CA. Federation Development Officers illustrate the closest part of the present relationship: each is a member of the CA's Development Committee and they undertake a great deal of work, particularly with the formation of new clubs and the development of facilities at existing clubs. They make much valued input to the regular grant application decisions including the allocation of CA starter kits to new clubs. As with all federation officers they are volunteers but Development Officers' travel expenses are reimbursed by the CA. Federation Coaching Officers are also members of the CA Coaching Committee and they have contributed strongly to the marked expansion of coaches and coaching in recent years.

3.4 Federation Representatives. As noted above, although not CA members, each Federation has a representative on CA Council for the CA member clubs in its area. The CA Constitution sets out a complex procedure for electing these representatives, the details of which are not always followed in practice. The complexity comes because of the distinction between the member clubs of the CA within the region of the federation and the federation itself. It could be considerably simplified if this distinction was dropped, and the representatives were of and appointed by the Federations. This would make sense if the constitution is also changed to enable federations to become members of the CA in their own right. Although in theory this would reduce the influence of CA member

clubs, particularly any who were not members of a federation, in practice little would change and clubs would still be able to hold the CA to account through their votes at an AGM. Accordingly **we recommend** that the CA Constitution should be changed to:

- a) enable federations to become members of the CA; and
- b) make Federation Representatives on Council representatives of their Federation, rather than the CA Member Clubs in its region, and thereby simplify the procedures for their election.

Whilst federations would still be independent (in the same way as member clubs are), this proposal would produce a more cohesive structure and give federations a greater sense of being part of the national administration of croquet, with direct representation on its governing body, and being able to call on the CA's resources. The CA would benefit from having a more formal link with the bodies that administer the sport in the regions and, by agreeing policies that its member federations would be expected to support (e.g. provisions for election of Representatives), would enable the CA to ensure some basic standards apply across all the federations. A minor benefit would be that election procedures for Regional Representatives could be considerably simplified.

4. Federation and CA Competitions.

4.1. We considered how Federation and CA competitions relate to one another. Our questionnaire analysis revealed that while the number of competitions in each federation varies widely (from 3 to 18), overall an enormous number of competitive matches take place. We estimate that in 2012 around 12,000 competition player days (CPDs) took place which is more than the total on offer in the entire fixtures book. This number has grown substantially over the past few years and the growth is continuing, largely due to one day golf croquet leagues and events. Although we have encountered a critical view of this situation (saying that federations have developed beyond their original remit and are now adversely affecting CA Tournaments), on balance the Working Party considers this a healthy sign. Indeed it reflects a great deal of time and effort on the part of many dedicated federation officers who have worked hard to promote the game within their regions and we regard this to be highly commendable. We would not want to discourage the increasing level of federation competitions (which is consistent with a key CA objective) but it may be necessary to adjust the national offerings to take account of this expanding activity.

4.2. In terms of direct conflicts between the federation and CA programmes, we noted that federation leagues are arranged with a great deal of flexibility as to when matches may be played. Where dates are fixed, these tend to be for the final stages of a competition, generally around September time, when the national calendar is relatively free. So we

concluded that there are few direct clashes. Regarding indirect conflicts, where one suffers through the presence of the other, it is generally acknowledged that the increased availability of federation matches has led to reduced take-up of CA organised events, including fixture book tournaments

4.3. We believe this effect could be alleviated if more of the national inter-club competitions were organised to complement the federation structure. Therefore, we propose these should start at a federation level, with the federation winner then entering a national knock-out stage. The Secretary's Shield is already run along these lines, although it runs over a two-year cycle. We would hope to bring other prestigious competitions into a similar structure, either over a two year cycle or fitting into one year (e.g. with the federation stage lasting until end-July, and the knock-out stage in August/September). If at least 4 events could be run along these lines (handicap and level-play for both AC and GC) then it would ensure all federations have in place competitions suitable for all players. This has the advantage that:

- initial play in national competitions would be relatively local;
- conflict between federation and nationally organised events would be mitigated by the provision of a complimentary structure; and
- if all federations would offered at least 4 competitions, all categories of player could be catered for.

We **recommend** this proposal be considered by the Tournament Committees.

5. Federation Boundaries.

5.1 We referred above to the activities undertaken by federations, *viz.*, support to clubs, deciding relevant local issues, organising coaching, ensuring governing body policy has input from the regions, and disseminating governing body news and policy. Federations are particularly active in relation to development and competition activities providing, respectively, a vital link between clubs and the governing body on development matters and encouraging competitive croquet through organising leagues and tournaments. But we also noted that there is a wide disparity in the size and strengths of the federations. This issue caused us considerable concern and it generated a wide range of views.

5.2 Consequently we considered a range of basic criteria any regional organisation structure should meet. These were that:

- each region should be small enough for convenient travel between clubs;
- each region should be large enough to contain enough clubs to sustain an active tournament programme;

- each region should contain at least one large club to act as a hub for regional activities;
- regions should be of roughly equal playing strength to enable inter-regional competitions to be competitive; and
- regions should carry equal weight in decision making about distribution of resources (i.e., there should be roughly the same constituency).

Several of the federations fail these tests (see **Appendix III**), and we **recommend** that federations consider this in due course. If such a review takes place, we suggest that fewer regions would be preferable to additional ones. In particular, we believe that fewer federations, with sub-divisions for competitions and development along the lines of the South West Federation arrangements, merits proper consideration.

5.3 We are conscious of the fact that we did not have the benefit of starting from scratch and are dealing with changes to existing arrangements which would be unwelcome by some. Indeed, it is already apparent that some federation officers are highly proprietorial, rightly proud of their achievements, and would object to major changes. Within the working party there are differing views on this matter producing a range of opinion from doing nothing to allowing a free for all (a market approach). We have seen a variety of alternative proposals drawn up by others based on differing criteria, and each has its dissenters. As pointed out in our review of the Federation Constitutions (Appendix II para 4.3), boundary changes are constrained by the current constitutional position. So any proposal will require federation agreement and the reality is that whatever changes are proposed, individual Clubs will join their preferred grouping thereby determining the eventual composition of federations.

6. Membership Fees Structure.

6.1. The current stratified membership structure was a dominant focus of our discussions. In 2012 there were 1781 individual members of the CA and, of these, the number of active players was probably around 1650. The estimate of club players was around 7445 resulting in only around 22% of croquet players being full members of their sport's governing body. For a number of years the proportion of players having an individual membership has been between one fifth and one quarter. We consider this to be an unsatisfactory situation. It results in a serious disconnect between the CA and a majority of croquet players who do not qualify for all CA benefits and have little or no interest in, or understanding of, what their governing body does. Since, as described above, this situation is likely to worsen with the continuing growth of competitive croquet within federations, we doubt whether the current arrangements will be sustainable over the longer term.

6.2. Consequently we focussed our work on moving towards an inclusive and unified, membership structure with all croquet players being individual CA members and therefore eligible for all the benefits of full membership. We realised that this issue has been addressed by the CA on several occasions over the past couple of decades without change being achieved. Nevertheless, we agreed that the principle of all players being individual members of their governing body was so central to the relationship between players/clubs/federations and the governing body that, even though there would be challenging financial consequences to overcome, we should propose a fundamental change to the membership/financing arrangements. At **Appendix IV** below, we set out our analysis of this issue and outline our proposals for working towards cohesive membership arrangements (assuming, for presentational reasons, no increase in overall CA revenue). In summary we **recommend** that:

- a)** all individual members of clubs should become members of and pay a subscription to the CA (whether collected direct or as a club based subscription);
- b)** to encourage the view that we are all one organisation there should be no separate payments by clubs or individuals to the federations;
- c)** the present individual Tournament Membership subscription be reduced and the category ultimately abolished; and
- d)** there should be a 'pay to play' component so that those players getting the most benefit from nationally-supported resources pay a greater amount towards them. In the interests of fairness, this should cover the widest number of competitive games as is practicable.

7. The Case for Change.

7.1. As shown above, federations organise the majority of competitive play above the club level. This has significant implications for the current model of CA membership. In the past, playing competitive croquet in CA Calendar Fixtures has been the main driver for becoming individual CA members. However, many players now find they can get all the competitive play they want within federations without joining the CA. For these players, joining the CA is a high bar to occasionally entering a CA event and we can expect that the proportion of players having individual membership will reduce. A unified membership structure would remove the barrier to playing in CA tournaments, thus hopefully encouraging greater participation to the benefit of tournament play as a whole. Equally importantly, it would provide an inclusive structure enabling all players to enjoy the full range of CA benefits.

7.2. Moving to a unified membership structure would have a profound effect on the ethos of the organisation. A number of previous Council reports have referred to Council being perceived as remote from the grass roots. We believe the converse also applies. Many club players regard the CA as being the Council and its Committees. Furthermore they see this group as an elite body comprised mainly of top Association players. This is a dire situation: the gulf is wide – we have a “them and us” situation. We need to engender a change in attitude and move to the position where all players see themselves as an integral part of the CA. A unified structure would go a long way towards achieving this and, over time, closing the present chasm.

7.3. If our proposals are put to rank and file club members, there is little doubt that the main reactions will be “what’s in it for me?”; or “why do I need the CA?”; or “what does the CA do for me?”. The reality is that the typical club player obtains a wide range of services from the CA above and beyond the facilities provided by the local club. In addition to its important national and international roles and the organisation of national teams and competitions, the governing body undertakes a wide range of activities of direct benefit to every player. These include: the definition and maintenance of the laws that are agreed internationally; training and examination of referees; the provision of a handicap (and, for level-play, a ranking) and appointment of handicappers; setting standards for equipment; organization of training and grading of coaches; and so forth. But, as indicated above, the full benefits from a unified structure are greater than this and we set them out in **Appendix V**. Players will not join out of altruism so they need to be persuaded by the benefits. We believe that promoting player benefits and changing attitudes is an essential precursor to gaining acceptance of any membership and financing changes

8. Next Steps

8.1 There was a reasonable consensus within the Working Party on the need to adopt a unified membership structure embracing all players in a cohesive, inclusive structure. If Council adopts this principle, much follow-up work will need to be undertaken by Council Members. This will be a substantial change-management challenge. Most of the consequential issues which flow from this change will be contentious. There were significant differences of opinion within the Working Party on a number of points including: the adverse financial impact on the majority of players; on the number, size and boundaries of federations; the extent, impact and acceptability of the ‘pay to play’ aspects; the possible loss of clubs and members and, therefore, the risk to CA finances. As explained at paragraph 2 above, we will need to engage in consultations with clubs and federations to arrive at an agreed set of arrangements. But in advance of this, the

ground will need to be prepared with a strong marketing campaign to sell the benefits of individual CA membership to all players.

8.2. Even this preparatory phase will be problematical because the present structure provides rather tenuous communications with the grass roots. Even though each club receives a copy of the Gazette, very many club players never read it: although survey responses indicate a greater awareness, and use of, the website. Given that we will need to convince club players to embrace our proposed changes, we will need to have effective communication with them. Although the Gazette will provide an important platform we will need to explore other avenues and, in particular, obtain the support of Club Committees in promoting change.

8.3. We envisage the development of a detailed road map based on the following broad outline:

- Year 1 - Marketing Campaign to create awareness of the need to change.
- Year 1 - and continuing throughout, an expanded campaign aimed at changing players' attitudes to the CA.
- Year 2 - Initial meetings with clubs and federations in winter of 2013/14 either at Federation AGMs and/or Club Conferences.
- Year 2 - Commence preparation of detailed arrangements based on response of clubs and federations.
- Year 3 - Reach agreement with clubs and federations.
- Year 3 - Prepare enabling constitutional changes.

9. Conclusion.

The Federation Working Party considering relationships with the federations concludes that there is a very strong case for the CA to change its membership structure so that all players of all forms of the game have individual CA membership. We believe this inclusive arrangement will best secure the longer term future of the game.

Federation Working Party
March 2013

APPENDIX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To review all aspects of the working relationship between the CA and the Federations, with a view to identifying any weaknesses and proposing, where appropriate, improvements to the existing structure.

Specific areas to consider might include:

1. How best can the CA foster a close and constructive working relationship with all the constituent Federations?
2. When a club joins a Federation should that club also join the CA as an associate (full) club member? Or perhaps as an affiliate club member?
3. How can we maximise the extent to which the tournament programmes of the CA and of the Federations are complementary?

WORKING PARTY MEMBERS

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Terrery Sparkes

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The following were co-opted:

Kevin Carter

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APPENDIX II

CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION

1. Background: The establishment of Federations in the West Midlands and the North West during the late 1970's provides the genesis of the present structure of nine Federations. A CA National Development Officer extended this process during the early 1980s when the remaining Federations were formed. These developments were supported by Sports Council (now Sport England) funding in the form of a grant for the Development Officer and a series of regional grants. However, the eligibility criteria for the latter required, *inter alia*, the boundaries of regional bodies to conform to the Sports Council Regions (which mirrored Standard Government Regions). Furthermore, in order to qualify for operational funding the Federations were required to be independent bodies with their own Constitution. To meet this requirement, Federation Constitutions were drawn up based on a Sports Council template and this standardised format still forms the basis of most of the Federations' current Constitutions. So the CA's governance and organisational structure today regarding the regions is a consequence of this earlier quest for grant aid.

2. Federation Constitutions: A review of Federation Constitutions revealed that they all follow a similar format (due to adopting the Sports Council model and little subsequent amendment). They each embrace: Area of Influence; Aims/Objects; Membership/Subscriptions; Meetings; Committee; and Dissolution. Although some detailed matters vary these do not impact significantly on their relationship with the CA. All except the Southern Federation state that they were established and run "under the auspices of the CA". Each constitution describes its geographic area of influence and all Federations, except East Midlands, is able to accept membership from outside this area. Regarding membership, most constitutions have a rather open approach and may accept any group with an interest in croquet; but two Federations (Croquet North and North West) require their members to be Clubs affiliated to the CA.

Notwithstanding variations in wording, all Federations have the same overall aim of promoting the game of croquet and assisting the formation and development of clubs. Although each constitution is consistent with the CA's Objects set in its Constitution, just one Federation (Southern) explicitly states that it supports the objects of the CA. Constitutions vary considerably in their stated objectives/activities but, in summary, each Federation:

- a) promotes croquet;
- b) assists with the formation and development of clubs;
- c) provides a forum for clubs and co-ordinates their activities;
- d) organises competitions and tournaments; and
- e) provides publicity through production of newsletter and/or website.

Each constitution has a clause setting out the procedure for dissolution and disposal of assets, to clubs in its area and/or the CA. This was probably a requirement of the Sports Council.

3. The CA Constitution - defines a Federation as a grouping of croquet clubs within the Domain run under the auspices of the Association but independent of it. One of its objects (1d) is to assist the development of croquet and its clubs in conjunction with the Regional Croquet Federations. This is a key aspect of the relationship between the CA and federations and is demonstrated by the Federation Development Officers being members of the CA Development Committee. The only other reference to Federations in the CA's Constitution relates to Federation Representatives. Detailed rules are set out for their election to Council (18(b)(i-viii)) and these ensure that all member clubs are entitled to vote whether or not they are Federation members. Only the Southern Federation's constitution is consistent with these rules.

4. Discussion

4.1 Constitutional Working Party: This sat in 1998-9, chaired by Quiller Barrett, and debated fully the relationship between the CA and Federations and focussed particularly on the widely differing strengths of the Federations and the perceived remoteness of Council from the grass roots. The Working Party consulted widely and encountered strongly held views amongst the membership. They concluded that Federations were autonomous bodies "quite independent of the CA" and they made no recommendations to change that basis. However, they recommended that the nine Federation Representatives should be called Regional Representatives since the franchise for electing them included CA member clubs that might not be members of any Federation. The CA Council approved these recommendations, but the term Federation Representative was reinstated by the 2009 AGM, on the proposal of Council, and is used throughout all Constitutions (including the CA's) other than that of the Southern Federation.

4.2 Independent Federations: Looking back on the formation of Federations three decades and more ago, it seems clear to us that their establishment was little more than a device to obtain Sports Council funding. Clearly there was a real need to have a means of fostering the development of the game in the regions and the establishment of Federations met that. But the process was flawed on two main counts. Firstly, the alignment of Federation boundaries with those of the funding body took no account of the croquet situation and croquet need. Secondly, the formation of nine autonomous bodies, each with their prized independence, does not give the CA a sensible management structure and this has a profound effect on the overall management of the game across the domain.

4.3 Federation Structure: The Constitutional Working Party was much exercised by the varying size, strength and effectiveness of the nine

Federations. This remains an issue today. There are various ideas being floated to produce a more balanced arrangement. Generally these involve fewer, larger regions with sufficient members to permit geographical subdivisions so as to facilitate competitions. We will no doubt dwell on the same issues. However, changes to Federation boundaries are hampered by the present constitutional arrangements. Two aspects need to be considered: (a) Federation constitutions define their respective domains and (b) eight Federations may accept members from outside their domain (but not East Midland) and Southern may only do so with the agreement of the CA.

5. Conclusion: The CA's relationship with the Federations (and hence the grass roots) is constrained by the fact that when the necessary regional organisation was established the mechanism adopted was to form nine autonomous Federations. Each Federation's constitution enables it to carry out the range of grass root activities necessary to foster croquet at the local level: also, each is consistent with the CA's aims and objectives. Nevertheless, each is independent. This constitutional position constrains the Working Party's scope when considering the relationship between the CA and Federations. While Federations exist on their present basis, most of the desirable changes to the current relationship may only be achieved by persuasion and with the agreement of each Federation.

Federation Working Party

March 2013

APPENDIX III

CA REGIONAL STRUCTURE

A number of years ago we adopted the Sports England boundaries and created a Federation for each region. Since then, a few clubs have decided to participate in an additional or different Federation for convenience or to get more competition play, but otherwise little has changed. London is not now separate; it is part of the South East Federation.



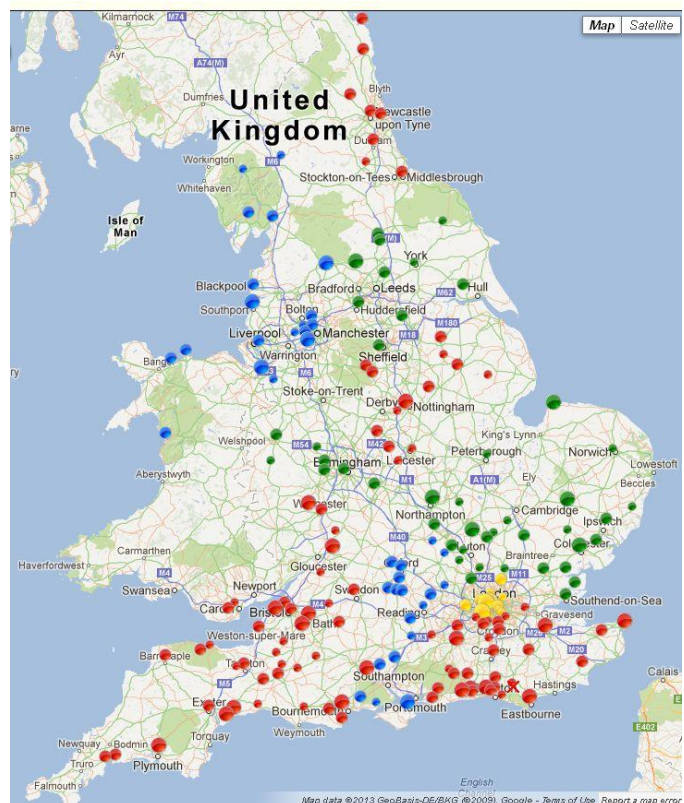
The Federations support clubs by understanding players' needs and concerns, deciding local issues, ensuring governing body policy has input from their region, and disseminating governing body news and policy to players through their clubs.

They know the development projects needed by their clubs, and the opportunities for new clubs, and they communicate these to the national level where funds are allocated.

Federations encourage competitive croquet by organising leagues and tournaments for clubs and individuals. They ensure that coaching and training are resourced as needed.

On the map, the size of the marker is an indication of the number of lawns at each CA Member Club and the colour shows Federation allegiance.

A re-drawing of boundaries is not part of this exercise, but the map exposes great disparity between some of the Federations, not only in geographical area but in size



and number of member clubs. The South West Federation, recognising its great expanse from the tip of Cornwall to the Midlands has separate Development Officers for the north and the south, and some inter-club play is similarly divided. Stronger clubs in the Southern Federation look outside for competitive play. Journeys across London and Sussex for match play can be protracted. Players favour a maximum travelling time of two hours (three at the extreme) for one-day matches between clubs

The Federations' roles require each region to be small enough for convenient travel between clubs and large enough to contain enough clubs to sustain an active tournament programme. Each should have at least one major club that could act as a regional hub. They may even decide to focus development on their hub clubs.

At a national level, each Federation should carry equal weight in decision-making about distribution of resources (so there should be roughly the same constituency) and, a lesser objective might be that inter-Federation competitions should be competitive (i.e. regions should be roughly equal playing strength). Several of the Federations fail these tests, suggesting a boundary review might benefit the Federations, clubs, and competitive croquet. This is not something the CA could impose, so the Federations are encouraged to consider the possibilities.

Federation Working Party
March 2013

APPENDIX IV

MEMBERSHIP FEE STRUCTURES

- 1. Background.** The current fee structure is made up as follows:
 - i. Subscriptions paid by clubs to the CA, based on number of members and currently about £7.30 per member
 - ii. Subscriptions paid by clubs to federations, variable between federations but generally a relatively low figure of around £15 to £20 per club
 - iii. Subscriptions paid by individuals directly to the CA, mostly for Tournament membership, currently about £37 per member
 - iv. A tournament levy of 25% of tournament entry fees for tournaments advertised through the CA fixture book.
- 2.** There are known problems with this structure:
 - i. Firstly the tournament levy might be considered the fairest element as this is charging the people who play most proportionately more. However, clubs see this as an extra tax on them, and many have moved to advertising some tournaments locally and through the federations, rather than using the central fixtures book, so as to avoid this charge. Also there is a large amount of play in federation events which does not incur this charge, making it seem less fair overall.
 - ii. Secondly having a separate club subscription fee for federations and CA could lead some clubs to query why they need to belong to the CA when they can get plenty of competitive play through the federation. This might be particularly true if we seek to rebalance fees increasing the club subscription rates.
 - iii. Thirdly the tournament membership fee sets a barrier to those who wish to try tournaments, but are not yet keen enough to enter a lot of them.
- 3.** We would like to address these issues, and in doing so we feel the following basic principles should apply:
 - i. We believe it is important to move to having a single subscription for clubs to join both their local federation and the CA. This provides a more coherent picture to clubs, and they can see a complete package of benefits coming from both the CA and the federations together.
 - ii. We believe all individual members of clubs should pay a subscription to the CA (whether collected directly or as a club based subscription), as most of what the governing body does benefits all members. For example, all players benefit from the major activities of national development of the game through grant aid, and ensuring the right infrastructure exists to support and help play at clubs at all levels.

- iii. That said, there should also be an element of 'pay to play', so that those players making the most use of the resources the CA provides pay a greater amount towards it, geared according to the amount of competitive play an individual partakes in. The amount paid ought to be on the same basis, no matter who organises the event.

Currently the 'pay to play' aspect is covered through both the tournament levy and to a degree through the tournament membership fee (as the actively competitive members pay this whereas the more social club member does not).

4. Proposed Objective. In order to achieve the above principles, we would like to implement a simple structure covering the following principles:

- i. A club subscription, which similar to the current CA subscription would be charged according to the number of club members but would also give them individual membership of the CA. The subscription would cover membership of both the CA and the federation.
- ii. A 'Pay-per-play' charge, levied on all competitive play (i.e. on all tournaments for which an entry fee is charged), which would be a fixed charge based on the number of person-days of play. While we recognise that there are likely to be difficulties in trying to make this apply to internal club competitions, we feel it should at least be levied on all competitions which are not internal to a single club's membership. This would therefore cover all federation games, as well as the current fixtures book competitions.
- iii. All club members should receive The Croquet Gazette in some form, preferably as an electronic version with hard copies sent to those members who specifically request it. This lets all club members know about competitive croquet, and hopefully encourages them to try it. This does mean the CA would need to collect the names and addresses of the club members in order to distribute the gazette.
- iv. Abolish or greatly reduce separate individual CA membership, so that club members either become CA members eligible to play in tournaments, or at least face a smaller barrier to do so.

5. Club Subscriptions. To cover the cost of Federation membership and some element of the individual membership, the current cost per member would need to increase. As for the existing system, a 'phase in' period would apply for new clubs to keep initial costs down.

It is important that federations do not see this as an attempt to take financial control away from them, which is not the intention. Therefore, there should remain the freedom for federations to set their own budgets, and to notify the CA what this means in terms of the fees to be collected for them. The CA can then build this into the membership cost, either on an actual cost basis

or, perhaps, a federation average cost so that there remains one membership cost for all.

Currently there are effectively three levels of membership:

- i. Clubs belonging to Federations but not members of the CA (only currently allowed in some federations). About 20 clubs fall into this category at present.
- ii. As above, but the clubs are also affiliate members of the CA, paying £30. Currently only 13 clubs nationally fall into this category.
- i. Full membership of the CA. In any new system, there will need to be a similar set of levels, to cater for the small clubs which could not afford full membership of the CA. The benefits offered would need to be tailored to the category of membership, as at present.

Clubs with restricted access to playing facilities (e.g. lawns only available 2 days per week) might also be charged a reduced amount.

A scale of subscription fees for such smaller clubs would need to be discussed and agreed, to meet the concerns of all involved.

6. Pay-per-play. One of the biggest issues with the existing scheme of tournament levy, is the growth of events which fall outside of the 'tournament' bracket. It has been very noticeable from the survey of Federations that we undertook, that the growth of Federation organised events (both leagues and event days) has been significant, to the extent that there are now more player-days involved in competition outside of the tournament fixtures book than there are within. We feel it is necessary to widen the net so that in as far as is possible, **all** competitive play is covered.

The biggest problem with implementing any pay-to-play system, is if clubs are able to opt out of paying in some way, therefore by-passing the system. It is therefore proposed that clubs and federations should pay this levy on as wide a field of competitive play as we can reasonably define and manage. In practice, this would need to be limited to events where there is an entry fee.

As with the current tournament levy, this will be collected from competitors as a part of the competition entry fee, and the appropriate amount forwarded to the CA by the tournament organiser. There should be no separate charge for entry in the fixtures book (except for clubs outside of the CA's domain) and therefore no incentive to run separate 'private' tournaments.

Exactly how this payment would be charged is open for debate. Paying a percentage of the entry fee (as at present) is really a non-starter, since so little is typically charged to enter Federation events. Paying per game might be the fairest, but gives rise to issues between the two codes (how much is an AC game worth in comparison to a GC game?), and could be very hard to administer. An easier route might be a fixed charge per player-day, but if we go down this route it would be important to recognise that not all days are

the same – e.g. a federation match which involves travel will contain less play in the day than a tournament, and should therefore be charged less.

As there is currently no charge made on Federation events, and there is no desire to stifle their growth, it would also be necessary to phase in any new charge for these in small amounts, so that we can monitor the effects and avoid discouraging entries.

Federation Working Party

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APPENDIX V

THE BENEFITS OF UNIFIED MEMBERSHIP

For a while the CA has been concerned about the stratified membership structure for croquet players. They can either just belong to member clubs or become 'Individual Members' (often referred to as 'Associates') of the CA. Most individual members are Tournament members but some are 'Non-tournament'.

For each of these three there is a different subscription rate (member clubs contribute a sum to the CA for each member) and a different set of membership benefits.

It is time for a more inclusive approach - we all enjoy playing croquet together and we all benefit from what the CA does for us. But it is wrong to exclude some players simply because they do not pay a high enough subscription.

One way to achieve this is for all players (within CA member clubs) to become full individual members of the CA, but also to have an additional small fee related to the amount of competitive play under the auspices of the CA or its federations (this might be dubbed the 'Pay to Play' element of competition entry fees). In this way the CA's total income would be maintained.

The advantages of this new scheme include:

- All players will become full members of the national association, confident in the knowledge that they will be putting something back into the sport they enjoy.
- The basic subscription for full membership will be considerably lower, with the balance of CA income coming from 'Pay to Play' and other sources.
- All members will receive personal copies of the Croquet Gazette.
- They will have access to the Members' Area of the CA website.
- They will be able to purchase goods from the CA shop at a discount.
- They will be entitled to attend CA Coaching Courses at preferred rates.
- They will be able to enter national and regional competitions organised by the CA and its federations. Indeed, an expanded local and regional programme is anticipated as a result of this scheme.
- Everyone will have a CA handicap and, where relevant, a level-play ranking.

- By almost quadrupling the number of full members, the CA will increase its critical mass to a level where it will more easily attract advertising and sponsorship, and hence be able to provide more funds for club grants, loans, etc.
- Likewise, the CA will seek to negotiate on behalf of its increased membership a range of deals and discounts on goods and services from third parties.

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