Dear SCCA Club Officials, Representative Members, Full Members and Life Vice Presidents,

As we flagged at the June 28th 2020 AGM in the “roadmap” of general meetings required going forward we are now calling an Extraordinary General Meeting (“EGM”) on the above date. The invitation and full agenda accompany this letter.

The EGM will deal with several mechanical changes to the Bye-Laws driven by the impending changes to the ECF grading system and the timing impacts forced upon us by the suspension of OTB chess due to COVID-19.

We are also going to take the opportunity to use the EGM for three other purposes:

a)      To give Richard Tillett the opportunity to give an overview of SCCA Correspondence Chess, an activity not impacted by COVID-19 and one that, perhaps, might attract more interest because of that

b)     To take soundings on clubs’ latest opinions in respect of OTB chess and the practicality of restarting given the current ECF guidelines

c)      To discuss the structure of potential SCCA online friendly club competitions

It should be noted that, because OTB chess has not restarted, we will go through the process of opening and then immediately adjourning both the Finance and League Composition meetings, which is just a procedural matter. Those meetings will be resumed only when the restart of OTB chess is imminent, if this is in time for the 2020/21 season.

OTB chess and COVID-19

The Board discussed this matter at its last meeting in light of the current ECF guidelines <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/chess-clubs-and-covid-19/>

There was a large majority within the Board who felt that, as club officials who might be expected to implement the measures, the requirements were onerous. The reasons for this included: -

·        Ventilation of venues being virtually impossible during the colder months

·        Impracticability of thoroughly sanitising shared venues before and after matches

·        Managing access and egress at shared venues in a safe manner

·        The impracticality of having junior sessions before adult sessions if equipment is required to be “quarantined” ahead of matches

·        Financial impact on a club if only a fraction of members return to OTB

·        Practicality of getting teams to away matches where the previous modus operandi had been giving lifts to multiple players in cars

·        Concern about players potentially not complying with social distancing requirements

·        Concern about the burden of the work falling upon a very small number of people, especially as some current club officials are classed as vulnerable

·        Reluctance to invite potentially vulnerable people back into such an environment

·        Legal liability of club officials

For the above reasons the Board is NOT asking clubs at this time if they are ready to restart OTB chess. However, we would like to test with our clubs what their sentiments on this subject are and also, understand better their current status. We would appreciate it if club secretaries would feedback answers to the following, as far as they are able: -

a)      What are your club officials’ opinions on the practicality of complying with the ECF OTB chess COVID guidelines?

b)     What proportion of your players would return to OTB chess under the conditions in the guidelines?

c)      Has your venue reopened?

d)     If applicable, will your venue allow 3rd party use?

If you would be kind enough to send your responses to the SCCA President, Paul Shepherd, at tv1div1@surbtionchessclub.co.uk **by August 25th** that would be greatly appreciated as it would facilitate production of a status summary for the EGM.

Online friendly club competition offering

Discussions have been taking place with the relevant SCCA officers as to how to manage matches and results reporting for a potential online event for clubs. Some aspects, such switching anti-cheating software on and off, are still being investigated. The format currently being considered is a time control of 45 minutes + 15 secs increment from move 1. The divisional structure in principle will be designed to create the best team match ups. Team sizes will be determined when interest levels are understood.

There will be a significant effort to implement this and so now is the time to canvass clubs as to their interest. We therefore ask club secretaries to provide an indication of: -

i)                 How many players in your club would take part in an online SCCA friendly club competition?

ii)               Please give an indication of the playing strength (use ECF July list) of said players

Kindly send your responses to the ICTD, Huw Williams, at huwie35@sky.com **by August 24th.** Assuming there is sufficient interest, that will facilitate the production of a first pass online competition league structure for discussion at the EGM.

***Paul Shepherd –President***

***Huw Williams –Interclub Tournaments Director***

***For and on behalf of the Board***

***08 August 2020***