

# Improving decision-making in the WCF

## Summary and Rationale

For long-term success of the WCF it is essential Members are fully engaged in decision-making. This is what was envisaged when the Statutes were drawn up, but does not work effectively now. This proposal is aimed at altering the voting process of Council to make it more effective and Members more engaged.

Recently, the MC revised its operation to take full advantage of universal email access, and now operates on weekly discussion or decision cycles. Two or 3 such cycles allow the MC to close off most issues within 4 weeks (e.g. Initial Debate; Revised Proposal; Formal Vote – each cycle taking a week).

The MC wishes to inform and consult Members on a regular basis and to involve them more in the decision process – but the current Council process is actually a barrier to this.

The following proposal is for Council to be transformed into a body of Member associations which operates primarily by email and is active throughout the year – rather than at occasional Council meeting. This will allow all Members to see comments and ideas from fellow Members and to respond to them, as discussions proceed – allowing real engagement of Members before a formal vote on a topic.

Instead of a meeting every one or two years, with a 60 day voting cycle, 40 day amendment cycle, and little opportunity for active debate between Members, we are proposing a flexible model based around managed email communications. Members can discuss and develop proposals and vote on them, in a series of 21 day cycles. This will allow Members to wield their constitutional authority over the business of the WCF in a 7-10 week decision process.

It is proposed the President and Secretary-General (S-G) assist Members by chairing and managing these email cycles (much as the S-G is now doing for the MC) – though of course with no voting rights.

The first section of this document is concerned with this decision-making process. In 2009 a consultation exercise was held on “Division of Power and Duties”, which looked at the split of roles between the Council and the MC. The second and third sections of this document draw on this to propose a model for consultation that integrates with the new decision-making process, and then looks at a revised set of responsibilities for Council and the MC.

While the bulk of day-to-day affairs will continue to be handled by the MC, the following decision-making process and WCF structure will make it easier for the MC to involve and consult Members.

Once a decision-making process and management structure has been approved, the MC will begin the process of drafting revised Statutes and Standing Orders to reflect the new approach, and bring these back to Council for consideration and formal approval. We would like to involve a few volunteers from Members in the drafting process.

The MC recommends the following proposals to the Members – green boxes at the end of each section summarise the recommendations to help structure feedback.

## SECTION 1 – DECISION-MAKING AND ENGAGEMENT

### What are the top-level problems to be solved?

#### 1. slow end-to-end decision making

*MC discussions and decisions can take 4 weeks or more, and if that then leads to an issue requiring a formal vote of Council with a 60 day notice period (and perhaps a Consultation exercise before a vote), it can take 3 to 6 months to reach a binding decision. This extended timespan encourages the MC to “get on and act”, rather than engage with the Members. The 60 day voting period is a legacy of the days before universal email access (which also now allows much faster discussion within each Member association). By fixing this, we can make it much easier for the MC to work with Members to reach good decisions promptly.*

#### 2. lack of transparency

*The WCF is fundamentally a volunteer organisation. When people are giving their time freely (and devoting a couple of hours every day), it is difficult to insist they spend additional time communicating outcomes and explanations to others in the organisation. It has become a vital part of the S-G role to fill this gap - as without better communications, mistrust creeps in and undermines attempts to move forward. More involvement of Members and increased visibility of what other Members think will further aid transparency.*

#### 3. ineffective Council discussions

*Face-to-face meetings should be important in such a globally-distributed organisation. But, in practice, attendance at Council meetings has been very patchy and often more about who is playing in a related event than to whom from each Member is best able to represent their views on each topic. The lack of pre-meeting discussions between Members and the long notice period for resolutions and amendments all contribute to unsatisfactory discussions in these meetings.*

Taken together, these make it difficult for Council to wield the effective overall control of WCF activities envisaged in the Statutes - one result is dissatisfaction with the WCF itself. The following proposal will help all Members become better informed about what is being considered, and more engaged in the decision process.

### What was considered and rejected

- We believe there is no need to make fundamental changes to the entire structure, for example collapsing the MC and Council to make a new single-level decision-making body. The MC does a great deal of work to develop and refine proposals (as well as running day-to-day matters) and this could be lost in one larger body.
- Change for change’s sake. When something is working badly, it is often tempting to create a new organisational structure rather than fix what’s wrong – but if the new structure or process is implemented no better, problems persist.
- There is no great advantage in replacing the S-G role with a CEO or COO. It is more important what the S-G does than what the post is called. Having more “executive powers” given to one individual is at odds with our stated desire to engage Members

more in the process. It also reduces the ability to delegate tasks to and draw on the experience of the other members of the MC, who would be less involved.

Having considered the responses to the Power and Duties Consultation, discussions at Council and suggestions received since, we now propose the following changes.

### Proposed new decision-making process

The essence is to have a number of 21 day cycles during which an idea is debated, matures and is voted upon. Managed by email (and each topic numbered for ease of tracking), all Members will see what other Members are thinking and be able to respond.

Step or Cycle	What happens
1	An issue is raised to the S-G in the form of a proposal, question, motion, a complaint or a suggestion – from either the MC or any Member
2	S-G gives each topic a number (such as “01”, “02”...) used to identify each email on the topic and sets out a proposed timetable for debate
<b>Cycle 1</b>	<b>Initial debate</b> – The first 21 day cycle of discussion on the topic, getting Members’ opinions and ideas, and trying to formulate potential solutions.
4	S-G then summarises the key points and main contenders for best way forward – perhaps in the form of a revised proposal.
<b>Cycle 2</b>	<b>Revised proposal</b> - A second 21 day cycle is given for each Member to respond with their comments on the revised proposal.
6	S-G then updates the proposal in the light of comments received
<b>Cycle 3</b>	<b>Formal vote</b> - If a clear majority of the Full Members support the proposal or the same option from Cycle 2, with few comments raised, all of which can be incorporated without changing the nature of the proposal, then this will be taken as a decision of the WCF “by consensus” (and the process moves straight to Step 8). However, where there remains a range of views or substantive comments that change the proposal materially, the S-G will update the proposal and circulate again for a further 21 day cycle, calling this time for a formal vote of Members.
8	<b>Outcome</b> - S-G then reports the decision to the Members, or (exceptionally) the need for a further cycle of debate if no clear decision is reached. Where a formal vote was taken, the actual voting will be shown in the record.

The number of iterations through Cycle 2 and Step 6 depends on how easily agreement is reached between Members –the whole process may take between 7 and 10 weeks typically (and of course, the S-G may take a week or so to revise and re-circulate the proposal between cycles). This is very similar to the MC process, but with a longer cycle time to allow Members to consult internally.

All email cycles will involve all Members, although only Full Members have the power to vote in Cycle 3, each with the number of votes as currently calculated. Full Members with multiple votes may split their votes on any issue if they choose.

The MC recommends this new process to Council as it will:

- Involve Members in the decision-making process
- Engage Members and let each Member know the attitudes of others
- Make it easier for the MC to consult with Members.

## What does it mean for Council Meetings?

While the prime focus of Council business will now be this email process, the WCF should continue to hold face-to-face Council Meetings when the opportunity arises (much as in the past). These can be used to develop and test ideas - but with no binding voting being conducted there. All formal voting will be outside these meetings via the 2 or 3 cycle process above, so all Members are fully informed, whether or not they were present at the meeting.

## What does it mean for the 3 categories of Members?

At present, all Members can send a number of participants to a Council meeting and they can involve themselves in the debates – but only the Full Members can vote. To clarify, if Council is operating via an email distribution list managed by the S-G, then it is not intended to change this, just to make it all easier. It is recommended:

- All Members (Full, Associate and Observer) will be included in the email distribution list and will see and may respond to all debates – just as they currently can at Council meetings
- Only Full Members may vote in Cycle 3, and according to the existing numbers of votes to which each is entitled
- The email discussions of Council might need to be ‘chaired’ from time to time if a debate is moving off-topic or becoming dominated unhelpfully by any particular Member

## Council of Delegates

In considering these major changes to the decision-making process, the MC formed the idea of a “Council of Delegates” where each Member nominated a single person to be their contributor to these email discussions. How a Member selects this person, the extent to which they have to consult internally, and their ability to commit their association is totally a matter for each Member. In the end, we have not made this aspect a major part of this proposal to Council – although we believe it has merits. For example, it would probably make email discussions operate better if each Member had a single email address recipient and only one person who made contributions to the discussions. If behind the scenes, this one delegate is fanning out the discussions to a wider group and collating their responses, that would be very sensible.

We leave this as a question to Council – would you like to formally reconstitute yourselves as a Council of Delegates? In the remainder of the document we have continued to talk about “Council” but it could equally well apply to a “Council of Delegates”.

### **Summary box 1 – Decision making**

Recommendations for your approval:

- 1.1 the email-based decision making process based on a number of 21 day cycles
- 1.2 formal decision-making being taken out of Council Meetings
- 1.3 Full, Associate and Observer Members all involved in the email discussion process but only Full Members may vote, exactly as at present

Soliciting input:

- 1.4 Should Council be re-formed as a Council of Delegates – do you have a clear preference?

## SECTION 2 – CONSULTATION

The Council elects individuals to form a Management Committee, led by a President also chosen by Council, to undertake the bulk of the work on behalf of Council. At the top-level, Council should set policy and the MC should implement policy. But a key role of the MC is considering issues, exploring alternatives and presenting to Council clear proposals on how to move forward. So how does Consultation fit with the new decision-making process?

Regular Consultation will help all Members be more engaged in the WCF and build trust in what the MC is doing. Two benefits of better consultation are:

1. to avoid missing something obvious, perhaps that MC members were unaware of (and so spotting the infamous “unintended consequences”)
2. to ensure Members are aware of what is being planned and so avoid making decisions which conflict with a particular Member’s concerns or needs.

We can pick out 4 situations to consider:

**1. Business as Usual:** the MC has discussed an issue through its normal processes, an issue which concerns implementation of an existing WCF policy. A decision is reached and implemented –Members are advised either directly by email or via the monthly Newsletter. No specific Consultation is required, although of course Council is perfectly entitled to question any MC decision or suggest alternatives at any time.

*The bulk of activities covered by the MC are probably in this category. Examples: accepting entries, and allocating places and wildcards for an event; deciding how to structure MC work into a number of working groups or committees.*

**2. Recommendation for Ratification [RfR]:** the MC has discussed an issue and has made a specific recommendation to Council. This may be to extend or change policy, for example. The recommendation, together with some supporting material, is put to Council for a vote starting at Cycle 3 in the process (if there were a clamor of problems raised, the recommendation can of course be revised and taken back to Cycle 2 in our flexible, iterative process for more consideration).

*Most proposals which extend or alter WCF policy will be in this category, and the MC’s aim is to provide a clear recommendation to Council as often as we can. Issues in this group will include ones where the MC has been able to come to a strong majority view on the topic. Examples: the MC has produced new Financial Regulations and is asking Council to ratify them; the MC presents Council with a revision to the draw seeding process having taken expert advice on the details.*

**3. Recommendation for Consideration [RfC]:** the MC has discussed an issue and has a recommendation ready for Council. There might be some alternatives to consider on aspects of the recommendation, or the issue might be contentious with a range of views held by MC members. The recommendation and options, together with supporting material, is put to Council for consideration, starting at Cycle 2 in the process. After this cycle, the MC will use comments received to put a revised proposal back to Council for a decision in Cycle 3. If all responses in Cycle 2 favour the same option, then it can be approved immediately “by consensus” without the need to run through Cycle 3.

*Larger proposals, or those where there is less certainty on the best option, will be in this category. The MC's aim will be to limit the number of these Consultations. Issues in this group will include ones where the MC has been more split on the topic and has perhaps a couple of equally valid options to put to Members. Examples: the set of proposals on events in the 10 Year Schedule consultation; a proposal to revise how the WCF makes decisions.*

**4. Initial consultation:** the MC has discussed an issue and shaped a number of questions to ask the Membership. Perhaps this affects Members particularly, or the WCF as a whole, rather than day-to-day operation through the MC. Or it may be a new area where input from Members will help the MC consider all the options. Council is given supporting material and asked to submit their thoughts and inputs on the topic, ahead of the MC formulating a proposal.

*This category of Consultation will be reserved for cases where early-stage input will help guide the MC to develop a specific proposal and recommendation for Council. It is likely to be used only for issues where new policy areas have to be created or where the best way of understanding the wishes of Members is simply to ask. Examples: the Consultation in 2009 about revising the Statutes and the split of power and responsibilities; an outline for some alternative formats for the proposed GC World Team Championship together with some questions to Members about time, size, preferred duration and format, and their likelihood of sending a team.*

It is anticipated that the bulk of matters dealt with by the MC will be Business as Usual or RfR. Council has elected the MC from within the croquet community to manage the WCF for them on a day-to-day basis and indeed this is what they are expected to do, without consulting with the Members on each and every little issue.

The MC will decide through its normal decision process which issues will be handled in each of the above 4 ways. With a shorter Council decision-making process, more MC proposals will be put to Council for consultation and approval.

This model of consultation dovetails neatly with the proposed decision-making process.

#### **Summary box 2 – Consultation**

Recommendations for your approval:

2.1 a model for consultation that integrates with the decision-making process

## SECTION 3 – THE STRUCTURE OF THE WCF

To guide the revision of the Statutes and Standing Orders, we need to clarify the split of responsibilities between Council, the MC, and various specific roles. We also need the views of Members as to whether Council should be formally restructured as a Council of Delegates.

### Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles on how the WCF is to be managed were set out in the Consultation in 2009. They were generally well received with some specific suggestions for improvement. We have incorporated these comments from Members in this updated form:

- the WCF is constitutionally run by its Members, through Council. As such Council is responsible for:
  1. approval of the future programme of WCF events, including the general policy of how often they should be held, and express approval of any new event type
  2. approval of an annual budget
  3. approval of policy and priorities for the MC to implement, in part via an annual business plan
  4. ratifying new or revised Regulations
  5. dates of WCF Council Meetings.
- the WCF is in practice run by the MC implementing agreed policy, i.e. making things happen. This includes playing a significant role in proposing policy, budgets and resolutions for approval by Council.
- the MC needs to be able to act day-to-day with delegated authority, but must consult with Council on issues where it is unable to come to a clear decision. The MC will always be accountable to Council for its actions and Council is always entitled to debate and challenge any decision made by the MC.
- Sub-committees and individual members of the MC (elected, *ex-officio*, or co-opted) have key roles to play and need to act with delegated authority from the MC. The MC is responsible for ensuring each such role has clearly defined terms of reference, and that these are followed. These subcommittees and individuals are accountable for their actions to the MC.

### Terms of Reference for Council

1. To set and approve WCF policy
2. To approve amendments to the Statutes
3. To ratify or make amendments to any Regulations proposed by the MC
4. To approve the annual reports of the MC
5. To respond to Consultations raised by the MC
6. To confirm the Minutes of Council Meeting
7. To approve the accounts of the previous financial year and the budget for the following year
8. To appoint an auditor

9. To approve the International Sporting Calendar, for the year(s) ahead, on proposal from the MC
10. To approve proposals for new event types that would expand the International Sporting Calendar
11. To consider proposals and vote on resolutions
12. To approve applications for Membership
13. To approve revisions of Member status
14. To approve confirmation, revision or removal of any penalties imposed under Statutes 206 or 207.
15. To elect for 4 year terms the President and members of the MC
16. To appoint or dismiss a Treasurer

*Note: the International Sporting Calendar is the part of the 10 Year Schedule that is populated with confirmed bids – the Calendar is the list of actual events, the Schedule is the proposed future structure.*

### **Terms of Reference for the President**

1. To chair Council email discussion and voting cycles
2. To chair Council Meetings
3. To chair and steer the MC
4. To be responsible for driving the MC to deliver WCF policy
5. To be the outward senior face of the WCF - the figurehead at international meetings

### **Terms of Reference for the Secretary-General**

1. To manage the activities of the MC according to the Administration Regulations
2. To manage the MC email process for discussing and agreeing proposals and actions
3. To assist Council by operating the email decision-making process for discussing and voting on proposals and resolutions, preparing and circulating proposals as necessary
4. To communicate the activities of the MC to Council, and alert Council promptly to contentious or novel issues
5. To manage Consultations with Members through Council
6. To receive ideas and proposals from Members and ensure they are appropriately handled
7. To communicate the activities of the WCF to Members and the wider croquet playing public through channels such as regular Newsletters, the WCF website, etc.
8. To support Council and the President in the preparation for, and holding of, Council Meetings; to record the Minutes of these meetings
9. To manage the WCF website, in person or by directing the WCF webmaster.

### **Terms of Reference for Treasurer**

1. To manage the finances of the WCF according to the Financial Regulations
2. To prepare the annual budget for approval by Council
3. To guide Council and the MC in all financial matters ,and propose finance policy
4. To maintain a record of the non-financial assets of the Federation
5. To prepare annual audited accounts
6. To manage the WCF's investments according to an approved investment policy.

### **Terms of Reference for the Management Committee**

The MC shall settle urgent questions and have general administrative powers to carry out the work of the WCF and manage its financial affairs on a day-to-day basis, subject to the

direction of Council. In the new decision-making process, the role of the MC includes condensing issues into a manageable size in order to facilitate Council considering them efficiently and in reasonable timeframes. Its terms of reference are:

1. To implement policy and actions in pursuit of the agreed direction given by Council
2. To present to Council an annual plan for the following year including a budget
3. To manage the operating funds according to the budget
4. To inform Council regularly of progress, activity and issues
5. To prepare proposals and make recommendations as part of formal Consultations to Council
6. To distribute to relevant sub-committees the tasks they are to execute, to oversee their activity, to take decisions concerning the reports of these sub-committees, and to forward them to Council
7. To present to Council recommendations for the admission and the striking off the rolls or expelling of Members, as well as for any sanctions which might be imposed
8. To monitor the Statutes with a view to identifying possible modifications for proposal to Council
9. To maintain and approve all WCF Regulations, subject to ratification by Council
10. To manage a rolling 10 Year Schedule of events, to solicit bids against this plan once approved by Council, to assess bids and reach formal agreement with the host Member, and to ensure the event is organised according to Statutes and Regulations
11. To publish the International Sporting Calendar for the year(s) ahead
12. To gain Council approval for any novel event types not already included in an approved 10 Year Schedule, before soliciting bids
13. To promptly alert Council should the MC consider that the sporting interests of the WCF are not adequately defended in a particular territory
14. To appoint or dismiss a Secretary-General

**Note:** *In the 2009 Consultation responses from Members, there were suggestions that both the Treasurer and S-G be elected by Council or by the MC – rather than the Treasurer by the Council and the S-G by the MC. The rationale for the current situation is that the Treasurer must be someone Council is absolutely happy to take financial guidance from, while the S-G must be someone the MC are happy they can work closely with on a daily basis. However, if it was felt better to change the current situation, this is not an issue with the MC.*

### **Summary box 3 – Structure of the WCF**

Recommendations for your approval:

- 3.1 The Guiding Principles for how the WCF should be organised
- 3.2 Terms of Reference for Council, President, S-G, Treasurer and Management Committee.