

Cleveland Chess Association Annual General Meeting 2026

To Be Held At:

Darlington Chess Club

Cockerton Band & Musical Institute Club

Woodlands Road

Cockerton

Darlington

DL3 9AB

On Wednesday 1st July at 7.30pm (1930hrs) finishing no later than 10pm (2200hrs).

Exec Intentions For The 2026/27 Season

League Ordering

Each Division will be decided by the following categories in order:

- i. Points
- ii. Game Difference
- iii. Aggregate result of the game(s) between the Teams
- iv. By Agreement between the Teams
- v. Play-off (format to be decide if necessary)

Divisions will be populated as below:

A Division (8)	B Division (8)	C Division (8)	D Division (8)	E Division (5)
Great Ayton A	Great Ayton B	Hartlepool C	Hartlepool D*	Thornaby M
Darlington A	Billingham A	Billingham C	Redcar A	Thornaby N
Darlington B	Darlington C*	Thornaby F	Thornaby I	Redcar B
Thornaby A	Thornaby C	Great Ayton C	Billingham D	Thornaby O
Hartlepool A	Thornaby D	Thornaby G	Middlesbrough D	Middlesbrough E*
Middlesbrough A	Hartlepool B	Darlington D	Thornaby J	
Thornaby B*	Thornaby E	Thornaby H	Thornaby K	
Middlesbrough B*	Billingham B	Middlesbrough C*	Thornaby L	

*Thornaby happy to put 2 teams in A division.

*Middlesbrough want 1 team in B division rather than 2 in A.

*Darlington C impose rating cap.

*Hartlepool D impose rating cap.

*Middlesbrough C and E are new teams.

5 Divisions. Suggested structure of 1500 rating cap on D and 1300 rating cap on E. Clubs can enter new teams directly in any of C,D and E division. If any divisions end up with 9 or 10 teams after any attempts to rebalance divisions by discussing with clubs, we would use the mid-season top half/bottom half split we've used before in recent years.

Cleveland Individual

Will remain the same.

Jeremy Burnett Plate

Will have a new grading cap of 1800

Knights Shield

Grading cap will remain at 1500

Tom Wise Cup will remain the same format and will only use Regular Grades rather than Rapid Play grade.

To determine the difference in grade between the two team this will now be done on a board by board basis with any difference greater than 600 being counted as 600.

Team A	Grade	Team B	Grade	<i>Difference (Actual)</i>	Difference (Counted)
Player 1	2200	Player 5	1750	<i>450</i>	450
Player 2	2000	Player 6	1600	<i>400</i>	400
Player 3	1900	Player 7	1400	<i>500</i>	500
Player 4	1850	Player 8	1000	<i>850</i>	600
	7950		5750	2200	2050

And the handicaps will be adjusted as per the below table with an additional handicap in the 1-149 category:

Rating Difference	25/26 Handicap	26/27 Handicap
0-0	0	0
1-149	0	0.5
150-299	0.5	1.5
300-449	1.5	2.5
450-599	2.5	3.5
600-749	3.5	4.5
750-899	4.5	5.5
900-1049	5.5	6.5
1050-1199	6.5	7.5
1200-1349	7.5	8.5
1350-1499	8.5	9.5
1500-1649	9.5	10.5
1650-1799	10.5	11.5
1800-1949	11.5	12.5
1950-2099	12.5	13.5
2100-2249	13.5	14.5
2250+	14.5	14.5

A Reminder About The Touch Move Rule:

☒ **Your Own Pieces:** If you deliberately touch a piece, you must move it to any valid square you choose as long as you haven't released your grip. Once you take your hand off the piece on a specific square, the move is locked in.

☒ **Your Opponent's Pieces:** If you intentionally touch an opponent's piece, you must capture it if you have a legal piece that can do so.

☒ **No Legal Move:** If you touch a piece that has no legal moves, or an opponent's piece that cannot legally be captured, there is no penalty

Agenda

1 Approval of Minutes of 2025 Meeting

Passed without discussion

2 Apologies

Steve	Cole	Billingham
Gary	Leighton	Billingham
Derek	Simpson	Billingham
Peter	McKay	Darlington
Matthew	Allan	Redcar
Nick	Tadd	Thornaby

Present

Nicola	Britton	Billingham
Sean	Cassidy	Billingham
Steven	Clark	Billingham
Paul	Weightman	Billingham
Steve	Halliday	Darlington
Guiseppe	Magazzu	Darlington
Jonathan	Sams	Darlington
Carl	Stephens	Darlington
Nick	Webb	Darlington
Andrew	French	Great Ayton
Kegan	Harrison	Great Ayton
Ray	Honeybourne	Great Ayton
Jim	Rogers	Great Ayton
Peter	Harker	Hartlepool
Ray	Pallister	Middlesbrough
Jake	Pearson	Middlesbrough
Joe	McGinnis	Thornaby
Chris	Swales	Thornaby

3 Treasurers Report

- 4 Prize Giving
- 5 Members' Proposal

5.1a Ray Pallister (Middlesbrough)

2. VOTING AT AGM For the last few years this has been farcical, whereby a club, usually host club, can get rule changes passed by flooding the audience with their own members. My proposal is Every club that sends a representative to the agm is entitled to ONE VOTE. PLUS ONE VOTE for every team (A-D DIVISION) that they fielded last season. It would allow clubs that had the largest membership to be recognised as such but would allow other clubs to win a vote by combining their votes and make attending the AGM worthwhile Regards Ray

5.1b Steve Cole (Billingham)

Voting at AGM

Having one man one vote doesn't really work at an AGM as decisions affect all clubs and clearly some clubs are better represented than others.

Votes at AGM should therefore be restricted to (say) 2 votes per club.

In fact, proposals don't even need to be discussed at AGMs but circulated to club secretaries to allow them to submit votes on behalf of their clubs prior to the meeting with results just announced at the AGM.

Exec Comment:

The problem of block voting at AGM giving a huge advantage to the host club is well known and far from ideal producing results that suit one Club rather than the CCA as a whole. Issues with this and the similar proposal below are:

- i. *If a Club decides how its rep votes prior to the meeting then the AGM debate is pointless.*
- ii. *Why would members bother to go the and AGM if they have no vote and, as per i., no voice.*
- iii. *Can a Club split its vote?*

We think it's important that opinions and positions are heard before there is a vote; a maximum number of votes per club based on teams is more workable and more fair. But if not enough players from a club show up you lose the ones there is no representative for. Of the two proposals the Steve Cole version seems better balanced.

Proposals 5.1a and 5.1b will be discussed at the same time

Ray Pallister – The host club can swamp the meeting with members and win proposals so it is a waste of time. For instance Thornaby have over 100 members and could easily outvote all other clubs so it seems fairer to have one vote per club plus one vote per team in the League or as Steve Cole says 2 votes per club. Does the AGM agree that it is unfair and if it is what system should replace it?

Carl Stephens – What would happen if more club members turn up than the club has votes?

Ray Pallister – Not everyone will have a vote

Carl Stephens – If people turn up but can't vote what is the point

Steve Halliday – If a club decides how it is going to vote before the AGM then why have an AGM discussion?

Jake Pearson – The purpose of the AGM is to decide how the CCA is run and it seems unfair if only the people who turn up can vote but the vote shouldn't be pre-determined

Jonathan Sams – It is members who are the CCA these proposals disenfranchise members in favour of the club

Joe McGinnis – Clubs pay the membership not the individuals

Nicola Britton – Does this refer to the Exec comments in the Agenda

Jake Pearson – The comments are useful

Nicola Britton – Is there another way for people who don't attend to vote

Ray Honeybourne – Sending an apology is a sign of interest in the meeting

Sean Cassidy – You can delegate people to vote in your absence

Nicola Britton – One club does tend to dominate the AGM

Peter Harker – Do we delegate to clubs?

Sean Cassidy – That would need the proposals to be out sooner but this would be difficult

Jim Rogers – There have been problems but these have evened themselves out, we don't need a hammer to crack a nut

Ray Pallister – Has had complaints from his members about the AGMs

Nicola Britton – Has Zoom been discussed?

Jake Pearson – What is the problem with club voting?

Paul Weightman – One vote plus one per team would give Thornaby 13

Ray Honeybourne – If you want 13 votes you would need to get 13 members to the AGM

Steve Halliday – Would delegates be mandated prior to the meeting?

Jake Pearson – Taking away any debate would take away the point of the AGM

Joe McGinnis – Delegates would still need to debate before voting

Chris Swales – There should be a cap of Thornaby's voting numbers

Steve Halliday – Block votes will suit individual clubs

Guiseppe Magazzu – Teams could have 2-3 votes and the members at the AGM decide how to split the votes after debate

Joe McGinnis – Two votes per club is too few, 13 is too many, maybe 3-5 per club

Ray Pallister – There could be split views within clubs

Chris Swales – If you can't send four members to the AGM then you shouldn't get four votes

Jake Pearson – Clubs to get a maximum of four votes (subject to attendance) this avoids the over-representation of the home club

Ray Pallister – One person per team to vote

Jim Rogers – This issue requires more time to consider

Carl Stephens – Have a maximum number of votes per club

Peter Harker – This is too complicated

Joe McGinnis – This should be either the status quo or a maximum of four or five votes per club

The vote was tied at 7-7, the Chairmans vote was in favour so:

PASSED IN PRINCIPLE, SUBJECT TO FURTHER DISCUSSION BY THE EXEC

5.2 Steve Cole (Billingham)

The Exec/Officers need to provide a consolidated front with any proposals

Having disagreements amongst the Exec/Officers during an AGM is counterproductive and having members of the exec/Officers putting in counter proposal should not be allowed.

All counter proposals to exec/officer proposals should only be by clubs or individual supported by 5 members.

Exec Comment:

This is already in place. If a member of the Exec wishes to put forward a personal proposal they must resign from the Exec.

As this is already in place:

NO VOTE TAKEN

5.3 Steve Cole (Billingham)

Proposal to change how proposals are presented and voted on.

The following is a proposal for how future AGMs should be structured in terms of proposals and voting protocols

1. Proposals – currently this seems to be a free for all with any individual being allowed to submit their ideas which in many cases are just their views with very little support.

As the CCA is run for the benefit of the clubs, it should be clubs who support proposals, so I would suggest that proposals should be restricted to.

- a) The Exec (United approach see point 2)
- b) Clubs
- c) Individuals with at least 5-member support

Exec Comment:

This seems a reasonable proposal

Jake Pearson – Does this mean you need five people to put forward a proposal?

PASSED

5.4 Ray Pallister (Middlesbrough)

NOMINATED PLAYERS RULE For a number of years, the league have tried successfully to make the rules more flexible, to enable clubs to field more teams. The nominated player rule has remained rigid. I propose that an element of flexibility be allowed regarding grading regulations. The degree of flexibility, if approved, can be decided at the AGM. Grading difference for matches is currently at 75 which could be used for who is nominated.

Exec Comment:

We assume this means that that, for example, currently the top three players are nominated for the A team, this proposal allows for rather than the 3rd of these being nominated a lower rated player (with 75 rating points) could be nominated in their stead. This has the advantage of allowing some flexibility for player availability/sharing rides etc. Seems a reasonable suggestion.

Ray Pallister – The third nominated player may prefer to help a lower Division team and the fourth can then play up. I will leave it to the AGM to determine how much difference should be allowed. This will only affect the third nominated player.

Chris Swales – Would like it to be the same difference as board order and thinks it is a good idea as it could help Clubs with drivers

Ray Pallister – It gives flexibility to Clubs and 75 works well with board order.

Guiseppe Magazzu – Ask if it was just the third player affected.

PASSED

5.5 Nick Webb (Darlington)

After the last AGM it was decided to change the teams in the A Division from 4 to 5 players.

Darlington CC fielded 2 teams in the A Division (as well as 2 in the Durham A Division, 4 player teams) for the 25/26 season.

While wishing to support both leagues it has become increasingly difficult to find sufficient number of players of a requisite standard to field full teams of the requisite standard.

Can consideration be given to reverting back to 4 player teams for the forthcoming season.

Exec Comment:

This comes under the Structure of the League which is determined by the Exec, and the vote will be advisory only. If is passed we will consult with all Clubs to determine if this is desirable.

Nick Webb – As a captain it is harder to put together a team but believes it should be up to Clubs to decide their own position.

Jake Pearson – Four is easier than Five but fairly neutral on the issue.

Nicola Britton – Billingham have struggled in the A Division.

Chris Swales – With four you should get more surprise results.

Andrew French – When captains say they struggle they mean they can't get five strong players

Joe McGinnis – It is difficult for Clubs with two team to get five for each and it is important to accommodate them.

Ray Honeybourne – Would four players help Middlesbrough?

Jake Pearson – No

Steve Halliday – If three teams play on the same night five can stretch a Club.

Peter Harker – Neutral on issue.

Chris Swales – With two teams in the A Division they will play on alternate weeks anyway.

PASSED

5.6 Nicola Britton (Billingham)

Reinstatement of the D-Division Rating: Following my request to lower the rating cap at the previous AGM, the cap was subsequently removed for the current season without my further consultation, creating unfair matchups. Proposal for 2026/2027: I propose introducing a rating cap of 1400 for the D Division. Feedback collected across multiple clubs indicates strong support for this change. The removal of the cap has led to

significant skill imbalances (e.g., players rated 1500+ competing in the lowest division). Reinstating a cap will preserve a balanced, competitive environment where developing players can enjoy fair games against players of similar abilities. I look forward to an open conversation on this matter during the AGM.

Exec Comment:

The new League structure provides a cap on the D Division (which is not the lowest Division) of 1500, see below. If it were reduced to 1400 then there would only be four teams in the Division and the other four would have nowhere to go; the loss of four teams from the League.

League Structure

5 Divisions. Suggested structure of 1500 rating cap on D and 1300 rating cap on E. Clubs can enter new teams directly in any of C,D and E division. If any divisions end up with 9 or 10 teams after any attempts to rebalance divisions by discussing with clubs, we would use the mid-season top half/bottom half split we've used before in recent years.

This comes under the Structure of the League which is determined by the Exec, and the vote will be advisory only. If it is passed we will consult with all Clubs to determine if this is desirable.

Chris Swales – The idea is to have 1500 for the D Division and 1300 for the E.

Nicola Britton – With no rating cap anyone can play

Ray Pallister – 1500/1300 works well, 1400 is too close.

Chris Swales – No point in having a Division of four teams as would have happened last year if we kept the 1500 in place.

Nicola Britton – Could the cap change before the season?

Chris Swales – Yes

Ray Honeybourne – We should leave it to the match organizer to decide later

Chris Swales – I don't know how many teams Thornaby will be able to enter and I hope that 1500 will work for next season.

Nicola Britton – Lower graded players don't like playing higher graded.

Jake Pearson – Allowing two more teams to play is a good thing and the match organizer should react to the situation before the season.

PASSED AS EXEC'S STRUCTURE OF D U1500 & E U1300

5.7 Gary Leighton (Billingham)

Club/Team captains and chairmans actually enforce rules and less emphasis on relying on individuals to complain. Such as no talking and no eating. Rules must be adhered to; with real world consequences such as defaulting boards or asking players to leave the room. Ultimately the offending team should suffer a defaulted defeat. (As an aside: this season has been terrible for people talking and eating. Particularly one player from Darlington, munching on a pack of sweets every game I have seen that player play, much to the disdain of surrounding players but nothing was said.) -

Exec Comment:

This is already covered by the FIDE Rules on distraction:

Under Article 11.5 of the [FIDE Laws of Chess](#), players are strictly forbidden to distract or annoy their opponent in any manner whatsoever. This comprehensive rule outlaws unsporting behavior, unreasonable draw offers, continuous claims, and the introduction of any distracting noise into the playing area. [\[1\]](#)

The guidelines and consequences surrounding distractions are enforced by tournament arbiters: [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

- **Prohibited Behaviors:** Examples of infractions include making distracting body movements, loudly unwrapping food at the board, hovering over the opponent's space, or repeatedly muttering. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)
- **Unreasonable Claims:** Stopping the clock to make frivolous claims (e.g., repeating illegal claims to the arbiter) can be penalized as a deliberate distraction. [\[1\]](#)
- **Electronics:** Introducing electronic devices—especially unauthorized phones or smartwatches emitting noises—into the playing venue is a major violation of both anti-cheating and anti-distraction rules. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#)
- **Penalties:** Arbiters have the discretion to penalize offenders in various ways. Punishments can range from official warnings and deducting time from the offending player's clock, to forfeiting the game or expelling the player from the tournament entirely

Steve Halliday – Surely an individual needs to bring such matter to the attention of the captain

Carl Stephens – In League situation it would be up the captains to decide on what to do.

Chris Swales – Captain can only resolve issues if asked.

Sean Cassidy – If you are being annoyed it is up to you to say something.

Steve Halliday – The fact is he played three time against Gary Leighton and he never said anything.

Nicola Britton – One of my team had a problem with an opponent eating at the board and had a quiet word with the captain. People must speak up.

Steven Clarke – What if one player annoys another who is not his opponent?

Peter Harker – Talk to your captain.

As this is covered by FIDE rules:

NO VOTE TAKEN

5.8 Gary Leighton (Billingham)

Personal hygiene - please remind members to be mindful of personal odours emitted. It is one thing to recognise, via a small burp, your opponent has had chicken kiev for tea or green fruit pastilles, to full blown halitosis that totally puts you off your game as you can not breathe or triggers your gag reflex. Thanks, Dr Gary Leighton, Billingham Synthonia Chess Club.

Exec Comment:

The proposal can be seen as a reminder

NO VOTE TAKEN

5.9 Nicola Britton (Billingham)

Communication Protocol and Channels: Email delivery should not automatically imply reading or agreeing with. When official confirmation or agreement is required from a member, it should be explicitly established in

writing rather than assumed. Diverse Distribution Channels: As not all members use Facebook, official updates should be duplicated on the main Cleveland Chess Association (CCA) website or directly through club chairmen and secretaries to ensure they are reaching their members.

Exec Comment:

We do not send out emails that require the agreement of members they are sent for information only. It is not and cannot be the responsibility of the Exec to ensure that Members read their emails; this is their personal responsibility. Equally if emails are intercepted by spam filters this is not the responsibility of the Exec but force majeure.

Chris Swales – No-one has the time to check whether or not 32 people had read their emails

Ray Pallister – has had very good communication from Chris Swales and Kegan Harrison and is too old for Facebook. There is not much news on the CCA website.

Peter Harker – We don't have webmaster to do this.

Ray Pallister – There should be more items on the website

Peter Harker – The best place to communicate should be the website.

NO VOTE TAKEN

5.10 Nicola Britton (Billingham)

Clarification is requested regarding why the Cleveland League Chess Association Facebook page appears to host primary CCA announcements instead of the official Cleveland Chess Association page. Please confirm the designated digital channel for official executive communications.

Exec Comment:

Last season the only official communications posted on Facebook related to the AGM. All other communication were emailed to relevant members. The CCA is run by five volunteers in their spare time, which is often very limited, and we endeavour to communicate as well as possible within this constraint. If someone would like to become the Communication Officer, dedicated solely to communicating with members then this should smooth any issues. It is our understanding that Great Ayton, Thornaby, Hartlepool, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Redcar Clubs are happy with the way things are handled currently.

As a general note since 2019 there have been no members prepared to put their names forward at AGMs for the Exec and take on any responsibility.

NO VOTE TAKEN

5.11 Gary Leighton (Billingham)

The CCA website becomes HTTPS compliant, either through self-certification (needed every 6 months and is free) or one bought from the host of the website (lasts several years at a cost of several hundred pounds, typically). It should result in better 'hits' in search engine results. -

Exec Comment:

Currently there is no webmaster any volunteers for this post would be gratefully received and they can look into the viability of this proposal

Chris Swales – As we have an income of £400 a few hundred pounds sounds like a lot.

Joe McGinnis – Can make the money available if someone will do the job.

NO VOTE TAKEN

5.12 Nicola Britton (Billingham)

Timeliness of AGM Minutes :

Last year's minutes were published several months after the conclusion of the AGM. While the immense value of our Exec volunteers' personal time is fully appreciated, a prolonged delay disadvantages members who could not attend and rely on the minutes for updates. I request that a more efficient turnaround timeframe be established for the publication of this year's minutes.

Exec Comment:

Prior to the current Secretary taking office the Minutes of the AGM were published just before the start of the season, late September. At present a summary of which proposals have passed and which have failed is published with a day or two of the AGM. This was not done previously. The actual Minutes take a considerable amount of time to produce but have in most years appeared a month or so after the meeting. Last year was far too late but the Secretary simply forgot to do them with prior to the season starting.

NO VOTE TAKEN

6 Officers Elected

Standing:

President – Francis Batchelor

Chairman – Peter Harker

Secretary – Kegan Harrison

Treasurer – Joe McGinnis

Match Organizer – Chris Swales

Individual Organizer – Peter Harker (stood after the AGM)

Grader – Paul Weightman

Association Fund Manager – Geoff Howsden

NCCU Delegate – Dominic Leigh

Webmaster – Paul Douglass

7 AOB

Chris Swales – There are plans for a Rapid event in September, details will follow (*this was subsequently cancelled*)

Ray Pallister – Having been the Secretary for 20 years I know how much work the Exec put in and would like to offer thanks to all of the Exec and especially Chris Swales for running a smooth ship.

Nicola Britton – After a post on Facebook by Peter McKay which they took exception to both I and Sean Cassidy replied but the post was deleted.

Kegan Harrison – I will have a word with Peter.

Peter Harker – Chess Café will be opening in Seaton Carew:

Grind & Gambit

The website is - <https://grindandgambit.co.uk/>

Address -

Unit 2 Former Schooner Public House,

Warrior Drive,

Seaton Carew,

Hartlepool

TS25 1EZ

The cafe can also be found on various social media platforms.

Peter Harker – We should make more use of our NCCU membership – there should be a second County team

Chris Swales – We have tried to get an U1650 but couldn't get a team together

Guiseppe Magazzu – We could try the Minor Counties who use average grading for teams.