

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Why was reform felt to be needed?

A number of factors prompted a review, by an EA Board-appointed Task & Finish Group (the Group), of the existing structure and operation:

- the existing Council structure has remained unchanged since EA was established in 2004-5, despite numerous changes in both the strategic direction and operational structure of EA.
- a concern that we need to improve communications generally throughout the sport and, especially, to create a more effective method of consultation with members, to help EA make, and explain, more informed decisions on important matters facing our sport.
- lack of a clear and consistent view, also shared by some Council members, of what everyone understood and expected of our National and Regional Councils.
- a concern that many members felt disconnected from the Council network.
- a further concern that the current structure placed too great a burden on the Councillors supporting it, which also made it difficult for large numbers of our volunteers to participate in its work, with the result that most Councils have not been as representative of the diversity of our members as they might and, in some cases, have been unable to attract sufficient candidates.

So, why these proposals and why now?

The Group confirmed that the various concerns were legitimate and formulated these proposals as being the most appropriate way of addressing them. They have been considered and approved by the EA Board.

The proposals are being put forward now as there seems no good reason to postpone effecting improvements and there is a scheduled round of Council elections about to take place.

When will these proposals be presented for approval?

To effect the proposals, the Articles need to be changed by a special resolution at a General Meeting requiring at least 21 days notice. The General Meeting will accordingly be on 30th January at 7pm.

Can members vote by proxy?

Yes. We understand that it will be logistically difficult for Members to attend this meeting in person, wherever we hold it, and we want to encourage all our Members to vote.

- We are using the same, well-established proxy process we use each year at our AGM. Details of how to submit proxy votes are included with the General Meeting paperwork.

What consultation process have you followed to get to this point?

- The Group conducted two formal periods of public consultation during March and July 2018 and the EA Board discussed the interim findings at its July and August 2018 meetings.
- The Group itself consisted of two Board Directors (one a director directly elected by the members), three Regional Council Chairs and two County representatives, all of whom have strong club connections and wide involvement in the sport.
- The National Council discussed this subject at its August meeting and ran a workshop at its October Whole Council Conference, which was attended by many Regional Councillors. Feedback from these was important in finalising the proposals approved by the EA Board.
- The existing National Council members were informed, on 4th December, that a general meeting would be held at the end of January 2019. The vast majority support the proposals.

What does this mean for existing Councillors?

- They will continue to serve for the balance of their term on their new Regional Forum.
- They may stand for re-election subject to the overall term limits.

How will the Regional Council election process be affected?

- Elections will continue to be held every two years. The nomination process has been simplified to encourage more volunteers to stand.

Why have you introduced a “fit and proper” person test?

What is it? Who has to meet it ?

- Society’s approach to standards expected of those involved in positions of responsibility has changed substantially in recent years driven by numerous safeguarding and governance scandals in the charitable and sporting sectors as well as in local government and commerce.
- Not only are we now expected to make sure that we have in place reasonable measures to protect our members, especially those who may be considered vulnerable, and our reputation, but it is quite clearly the right thing to do.
- Board members have for some time been required to meet minimum skills requirements, provide declarations of good character and obtain an enhanced DBS clearance. We believe that it is appropriate that National Councillors and Regional Forum Members should go through similar, though less onerous, processes commensurate with their responsibilities.
- There will thus be different tests for different roles and the EA Board Nominations Committee has been delegated the responsibility of producing the criteria for these ahead of the election process.

What is the status of the terms of reference for Regional Forums and National Council?

- The EA Governance Committee has been delegated with the responsibility to revise the existing documents to meet the new requirements. These will then be sent to the National Council for comment. The intention is to have them finalised in time for the election process.
- Job descriptions for both Regional Forum and National Council members will also be produced for candidate guidance ahead of the election process.
- The basic roles and responsibilities of both Regional Forums and National Council can be found in the draft Articles of Association.

Do you see any potential downside to these changes?

- We believe the proposed changes are beneficial to everyone involved in the sport and there is no discernible downside. That said, implementing the changes and getting used to the new system may impose some additional, temporary burden on some employees and members, but this is no different from any other change process.
- Some might argue that the proposals do not go far enough but we believe that evolution and enhancement is the correct approach and we shall continue to monitor performance.

What will happen if these proposals are rejected by the EA membership?

- Nothing changes. The existing council structure continues as do the identified concerns.

How will Regional Forums operate?

- Each Regional Forum will have the responsibility to establish local forums whenever it considers these will assist it to communicate and consult with members. There is, intentionally, no prescribed form as what works best will depend on the nature of the topics to be considered and the circumstances of the Region concerned.
- There is provision for the Board to develop guidelines if these would be helpful, but the intention is to create a flexible and inclusive system which can be adapted to encourage participation from all interested members.