

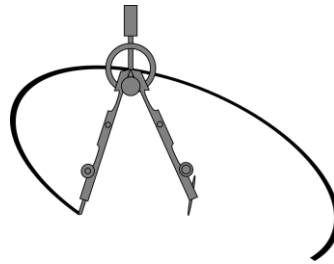


THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS
UK Registered Charity No. 270036

Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Registered Small Societies

Briefing for Council Members



Edition 1

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A. The Proposal and its Benefits

1.

What is proposed?

The proposal establishes a *Register of Small Societies* to which smaller societies with a membership up to 100 may belong. An admissions policy (set out in the Standing Orders) ensures societies applying to register are fit for inclusion and that each application has the assent of Affiliated Societies. Whilst Registered Small Societies do not have votes, each can send one *Small Society Representative* to participate at Council Meetings.

Once a small society's membership reaches 75, it may apply to become an Affiliated Society in the normal way and, if accepted, its Small Society Registration will end.

Likewise, an Affiliated Society whose membership has declined may elect to become a Registered Small Society at any time after its membership falls below 75..

2.

What are the benefits of the proposal?

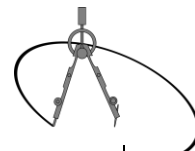
To a small society

In return for registering and agreeing to abide by the Council's rules and policies (as they affect the conduct of ringing), smaller societies will be able to :

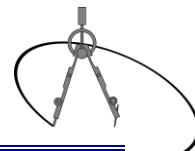
- Strengthen their connections with the Council and larger guilds.
- Influence the Council's thinking (their representative may submit motions and speak at Council Meetings)
- Demonstrate adherence to best practices (eg. safeguarding)
- Benefit in the event that the Council's support is required (the Church of England will only permit the Council to intercede on behalf of its member societies).

To the Council

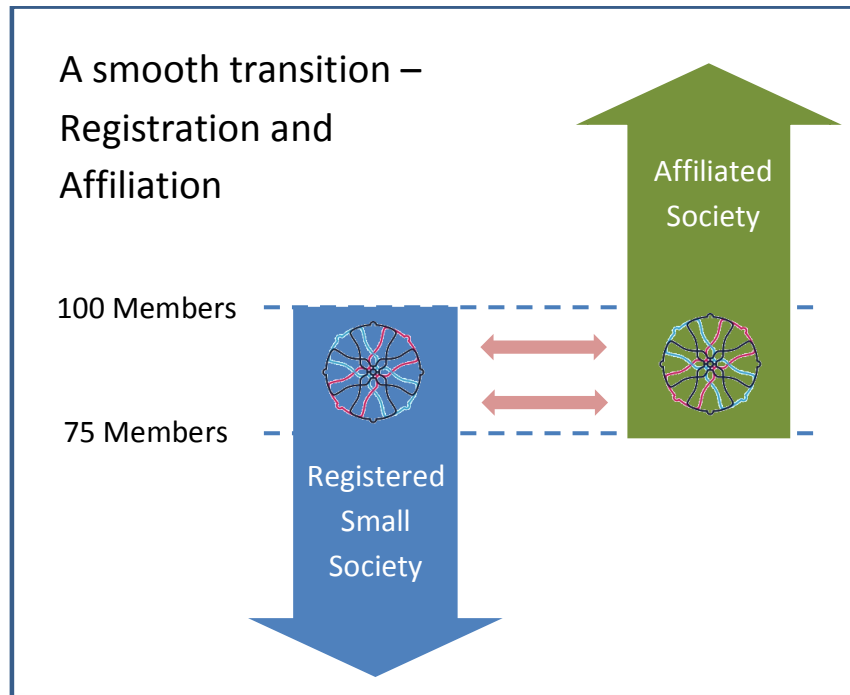
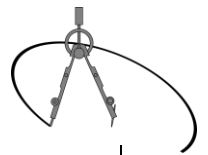
- Opening access to smaller societies makes the Council stronger by virtue of its broader and more diverse membership. To meet its charitable objects and deliver on its strategic plan, the Council needs to become as representative as possible of all ringers and ringing societies. Currently of around 130 bell ringing societies less than half are affiliated to the Central Council.
- A more diverse membership will contribute to the quality of the Council's strategic planning.
- The Church of England values the Council's role in promoting a network of strong, interconnected societies.
- Recognition of smaller groups contributes to the Council's aim to promote the recruitment, training and retention of young ringers, including through university societies.



	<p><i>To Affiliated Societies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Better integration of smaller non-territorial societies will strengthen their connections with the larger guilds and demonstrate the value of closer association.➤ Registering will also be open to any Affiliated Society in danger of losing their affiliation through declining numbers, maintaining their connection with the Council until their membership revives <p><i>To the ringing community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ A stronger and better connected Council is more able to serve the interests of the ringing community.➤ Higher standards and closer links between all societies can only serve to enhance the reputation of ringing and serve the interests of all ringing societies. Bringing small societies into the organisational family of ringing makes ringing stronger in the eyes of the Church and the other external bodies on whose support it depends.
<p>3.</p>	<p>Has the proposal been written with any specific small societies in mind?</p> <p>No. However, since publishing the proposal in July, the Council have heard from members or officers of five small societies who have expressed an interest in registering and one existing Affiliated Society which feels that a declining numbers might make this an attractive option. Those associated with other societies such as Singapore have also expressed interest.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Why should this change be adopted in 2020 rather than 2021 or 2022?</p> <p>In view of the limited opportunity for debate at the September Council Meeting, the Trustees undertook advance consultation with Council Members between 2nd and 19th July to assess whether the Proposal would receive support. As a result of the feedback received, the admissions process has been substantially revised and the final proposal includes a number of other enhancements which have been requested.</p> <p>Based on the feedback received, the Trustees are satisfied that the benefits of proceeding substantially outweigh the risks. Further delay would bring no material benefit as the Proposal presented in 2021 or 2022 would be substantially the same.</p> <p>Conversely, delaying would mean that little or no progress would be possible in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Currently, the Central Council only represents a proportion of ringing societies and until this is addressed neither the Council nor territorial guilds have influence over the way in which many small societies operate.➤ The Church of England has indicated its reluctance to engage with the Central Council regarding any bell ringing society which is not one of its members. It was made clear that the Church's preference is that all societies should be members of the Council either direct or through an established territorial guild. There has already been one case during 2020 when the Council was not able to act because a society in difficulties with the church authorities was not connected with the Council.



5.	<p>Does the proposal fit with the Council's objects and strategic plan?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>The Proposal is designed to support the <i>Council's strategies for 2020 and Beyond</i> published in March 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ It promotes the development of youth and university societies, which forms part of the Council's first strategy.➤ It encourages adoption of strong governance frameworks by all societies, even the smallest, which is necessary to secure the Council's third strategy.➤ It demonstrates to the Church of England the Council's commitment to the highest standards of governance and safeguarding and therefore contributes to the Council's sixth strategy. <p>In doing so it promotes the second and third of the Council's charitable objects to :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ represent the interests of bell ringing and ringers through promoting the development of strong relationships with the church, stakeholders, the media and others outside the bell ringing community; and➤ facilitate communication and cohesion amongst ringers and bell ringing societies to assist ringers in supporting each other and achieving their bell ringing objectives
B. Operation	
6.	<p>How does the new scheme cater for both growing and declining societies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ A small society whose membership is below 75 and which meets the admissions criteria can apply to register and (if accepted) may remain on the register until its membership rises above 100.➤ A Registered Small Society whose membership reaches 75 or above may apply to become an Affiliated Society in the normal way and if accepted its small society registration would cease.➤ Existing Affiliated Societies whose membership falls below 75 have the option of registering as a small society instead.



C. Regulatory Compliance

7. Do the changes meet Charity Commission requirements?

The Proposal meets Charity Commission requirements as it involves no change to either the Council's structure of control or its charitable objects.

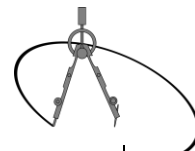
D. Territorial Guilds

8. Could individual towers be encouraged to 'go it alone'?

The scheme is designed for university societies, youth societies, small district societies, special interest societies and 'clusters' of towers in towns, and the admission requirements built into the application process will ensure that applications will only be made by properly constituted societies for the right reasons.

Whilst neither the Council or territorial guilds have control over individual towers, the risk that an individual tower might wish to register with the Council at the expense of its relationship with its local territorial guild is very small:

- The strength of existing affiliated societies lies in their knowledge and ability to promote ringing at local level and the Council could not and would not wish to



replicate this.

- Most tower bands could gain the same benefits through membership of their existing territorial guild at lower cost. Their guild membership also offers a share of voting rights which would not be available to them through registration as a small society.
- The admissions criteria, including the requirement to have a constitution, duly appointed officers and a safeguarding policy is designed for small ringing societies and not individual tower bands.
- The level of scrutiny built-into the admissions procedure, including the requirement for notice and the power of affiliated societies to “call-in” an application, all act as a disincentive for individual towers who wished to register for the wrong reasons.

In most cases, registering with the Council will make small societies closer to and not more remote from their local territorial guilds. As voting rights will remain exclusively with Affiliated Societies, the only opportunity for a small society to exercise control the Council’s direction will be through membership of a territorial guild.

9. Have the interests of territorial guilds been protected?

Yes:

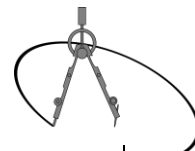
- Affiliation will continue to require a membership of at least 75 and approval by Council Members at a Council Meeting, as it has always done.
- It will not be possible for smaller societies to become Affiliated Societies “through the back door”. To affiliate, a small society must apply separately for affiliation and its application will be determined by the representatives of Affiliated Societies in the normal way.
- Each application to register as a small society will be handled using published admissions criteria, using a process protects the interests of existing territorial guilds:
 - Two months notice of each application must be sent to Affiliated Societies
 - A ‘call-in’ procedure similar to the existing process for new Standing Orders operates, enabling Council Members to call-in any application for determination at a full Council Meeting
- Following registration a small society must abide by the Council’s rules and decisions and keep to the admissions criteria. Both the Executive and Council Members have the power to remove a small society from the register in the unlikely event that it fails to meet its obligations.
- Voting rights remain strictly restricted to Affiliated Societies.

E. The Registration Process

10. Who decides whether a Small Society is registered?

Council Members will receive two months’ notice of each application

- Where ten or more Representative Members (Council Members representing Affiliated



Societies) judge that the application should be determined at a Council Meeting, it will be held over for consideration at the next Council Meeting.

- In other circumstances (ie. where an application has the assent of the vast number of Representative Members) it will be determined by the Executive in accordance with the admission criteria.

F. The Admission Criteria

11. What are the Admission Criteria?

Like Affiliated Societies, a Registered Small Society must undertake to abide by the Council's "rules and decisions". The Council's Decisions are policies governing the art of ringing, its conduct, or the conduct of ringers or ringing societies.

In addition, a small society wishing to register must meet the following conditions specific to Registered Small Societies. It must have:

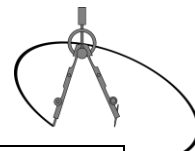
- a written constitution and duly appointed officers;
- a policy dealing with the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults which complies with any requirements published by the Council from time to time
- supplied details of its objects, membership and activities
- demonstrated that its activities will not unreasonably frustrate any other Affiliated Society or Registered Small Society; and
- satisfied any other conditions stated in the Council's Standing Orders and policies.

When approving an application, the Trustees **must** satisfy themselves that these criteria have been met and a Registered Small Society must adhere to them **throughout** its registration.

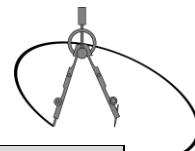
12. Should individual tower societies or those below a minimum membership be prohibited?

The Trustees have considered imposing restrictions on the types of small society which can register, but have concluded that robust admissions criteria represent a stronger control for the following reasons:

- How a society is constituted and operates are more important than the absolute number of its membership. The admissions criteria focus on how a society is governed, which in turn encourages the best standards.
- Numerical restrictions (on the number of people or the number of towers in a society) focus attention on 'meeting the numbers' rather than demonstrating that a society has the necessary governance and organisation.
- The smallest non-territorial societies are likely to be those which can derive most benefit from registering.



13.	Should societies have existed for a number of years before being able to register? Rather than imposing delay, the best outcome can be secured by encouraging new societies to implement sensible governance arrangements sooner rather than later and to consider registration whenever they feel ready.
G. Council Representation	
14.	Will opening the Council to small societies lead to multiple representation? No. Multiple representation occurs where a ringer, who is a member of one Affiliated Society, with a voting Council representative, is also a member of another Affiliated Society, with its own representative and therefore acquires a share in two or more votes. This situation will not occur in the case of Registered Small Societies as they do not exercise a vote.
15.	Will the proposal lead to over-representation of small societies? No. Registered Small Societies will not be able to exercise a vote or nominate trustees, so the Council's existing structure of representation is unchanged.
H. Direct Membership	
16.	Will the Proposal delay the objective of introducing a Direct Membership channel or converting the Central Council into a direct membership organisation? No. Whilst the Council remains keen to pursue the option of a direct membership scheme, and is committed to this objective by its Standing Orders, ringing is primarily a team activity performed by groups and achievement of the Council's strategic objects also depend on its success in promoting a network of strong, well governed and interconnected societies. Implementation of a direct membership channel would involve no changes to the current proposal for small societies to register.



I. Alternative Options

17.

Could the Proposal's aims be better addressed by removing the "floor limit" of 75 members for a society to Affiliate?

No. Whilst this option was initially considered, a range of safeguards would be required to address the concerns of the larger territorial societies, making it more complex:

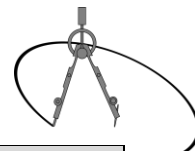
- Reducing the minimum membership for affiliation would dilute the control of the Council's existing Affiliated Societies. A key objective is to avoid disturbing the current structure of voting.
- A partial "workaround" might be to give Affiliated Societies with less than 75 members a Representative Member, but no vote. However this would require extensive surgery to the rules, which frequently refer to a "majority of Representative members". Further work would be needed to preserve the current arrangement that a society must have 75 members to affiliate, but its membership may reduce to 50 before it loses its affiliation.
- There would be concern that societies could gain voting rights "through the back door" by joining the Council without a vote and then acquiring voting rights "on the nod" once they grew larger. The only solution to this would be for a society to be approved twice, once to join and once to receive a vote. This would create a problem if a society joined, but existing Affiliated Societies refused to "promote" it by giving it a vote once it had grown in size. The rules would need to provide for this event to avoid the society being 'in limbo'.
- It would still be necessary to provide for a lower annual subscription for smaller societies.
- Appropriate admissions criteria for small societies would still be required as these do not currently exist for Affiliated Societies, together with a means of redress in the event that a small society failed to meet them.

Given the above, removing the existing floor limit would prove significantly more complex. The benefit of the proposed approach is that there is a clear distinction between Registered Small Societies and Affiliated Societies and no implication that registering as a small society automatically leads to affiliation.

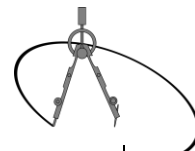
18.

Are Registered Small Societies in effect "Associates" of Council?

Whilst Registered Small Societies will in effect become 'associates' of the Council, in a similar way to Associate Members of the Association of Ringing Teachers, the term "associate" has not been used as it is sometimes perceived to mean "half-in, half-out" or "second class".



J. Council Meetings	
19.	<p>What roles may Small Society Representatives play at Council Meetings?</p> <p>The Council currently welcomes visitors to observe at Council Meetings, but they do not participate or speak (unless specifically invited).</p> <p>The representatives of Small Societies will enjoy the same rights as other Council Members to speak at Council Meetings and to submit motions for consideration, meaning they will be able to influence Council thinking.</p> <p>However, they are not able to exercise votes or nominate candidates for election, meaning that the existing structure of control remains entirely unchanged.</p>
20.	<p>Could the proposal result in large numbers attending lengthy Council Meetings?</p> <p>No, this risk is most unlikely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ For various reasons, the number of Representative Members attending Council Meetings has fallen substantially below its peak of 207 in 2009. The number attending in 2019 was 138, the lowest level of attendance since 1965. There is therefore sufficient headroom to accept those non-voting representatives of Registered Small Societies who wish to attend.➤ During 2021, the Executive is due to consider ways to avoid the need for larger guilds to send multiple representatives to Council Meetings and if taken forward these changes will further reduce the numbers attending.➤ Each Registered Small Society may only send one Small Society Representative to participate in Council Meetings and the number of Registered Small Societies is unlikely to exceed 50.➤ In the past Council meetings have lasted for the best part of a day and sometimes extended over two days. In future, formal Council Meetings will be shorter and will focus on essential business, becoming more aligned with the Annual General Meetings of most other charities including the Association of Ringing Teachers.➤ At the same time, other events over the Council's annual weekend, including Workgroup presentations, debates, displays and speaker events, along with the fellowship and networking opportunity provided by the social events, will prove an equal if not greater attraction to those attending. <p>The Trustees have therefore concluded that the presence of one person from each Registered Small Society at Council meetings does not represent a material risk.</p>
21.	<p>Will voting at Council Meetings become overly complex with both voting and non-voting attendees in the same room?</p> <p>No. The Council is already used to welcoming non-voting visitors and observers at Council Meetings and this is a key part of transparency. At the 2019 Council Meeting</p>



just under one fifth of those seated in the hall were visitors and a further seven were ex-officio Council Members who do not vote.

The Trustees considered the approach adopted by the Association of Ringing Teachers, which permits both Associate Members and Full Members to attend its AGMs, although only Full Members exercise a vote. This is achieved simply by issuing each Full Member with a coloured voting card on registration.

K. Conduct of Small Societies

22. Can a Small Society be removed from the register?

Yes.

The Trustees have the power to remove a small society in the unlikely event that it no longer meets the admissions criteria. The Trustees are empowered make such decisions at their absolute discretion, but a decision made by the Trustees will lose effect unless ratified at the next Council Meeting.

In practice this power is unlikely ever to be used. Any issue caused by a Registered Small Society is more likely to be quickly resolved through other channels.

The Representatives of Affiliated Societies also have the power to remove a small society from the register by a simple majority at a Council Meeting.

23. Will the Council be “policing” small societies?

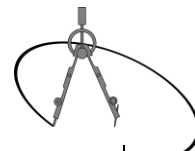
No. The Trustees or Council Members will only act where a complaint or other report is received that a small society has not kept to the admission criteria. This is equivalent to the approach taken by other confederations and professional bodies, who maintain standards for their members.

L. Risk Assessment

24. How extensive are the changes proposed?

The changes are not extensive, because the existing structure of affiliation and voting is unaltered. Registered Small Societies will be able to participate in Council Meetings, but will not be able to vote or submit nominations. These powers remain reserved for the Council’s existing Affiliated Societies as at present.

25. What potential risks have been considered how have these been managed?

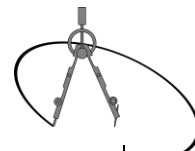


	<p>There is no material risk because the Council's rules on affiliation and voting remain unchanged. As Registered Small Societies will not exercise a vote, the Council's accountability to its existing Affiliated Societies will remain undiluted.</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>There is a very small risk that a smaller society which lacks good governance might fail to meet acceptable standards and risk bringing ringing into disrepute.</p> <p>This risk is mitigated by a clear admissions policy, which gives both Trustees and Council Members ample powers to remove a small society from the register where it fails to meet its obligations. This discipline can be expected to raise rather than lower standards, as societies will wish to ensure they maintain their registration.</p> <p>Council Business</p> <p>There is a theoretical possibility that a small society might attempt to take up Council time with unnecessary or frivolous business.</p> <p>However, the cost to the society in terms of its reputation would make this highly unlikely.</p> <p>The Standing Orders already provide for a "guillotine" on debate if two thirds of Council Members agree. Therefore any attempt to take up Council time unnecessarily would not be possible.</p>
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M. Decision-making Process

26.	<p>What were the main suggestions made during the consultation ending 19th July? Have changes been made in response to the feedback received?</p> <p>The main points of feedback received during the consultation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The need to publish clear admissions criteria to give assurance that a consistent decision-making process is being followed. These have been included in Standing Order S2.1➤ The need to inform Council Members of each application in advance. This has been incorporated into Standing Order S2.2➤ The need to provide effective controls to permit a small society to be removed from the register in the event that it fails to comply with the admissions criteria. This has been provided in Standing Order S2.3.
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27.	<p>Will sufficient opportunity exist for debate at the next Council Meeting?</p> <p>The Trustees are satisfied that the opportunity for debate and discussion will be sufficient for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ The Proposal involves limited changes to the Council's rules and has no bearing on its organisation, decision-making or systems of voting.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ A consultation exercise was undertaken between 2nd and 19th July, as a result of which a number of useful suggestions for improvement were made which have been incorporated. Based on further discussions with those who responded, the Trustees are satisfied that the Proposal as finally submitted incorporates the wishes of majority of Council Members.➤ Publication of the final Proposal and motion in early August will be accompanied by release of a comprehensive Briefing Document (this document).➤ A further opportunity to ask any further questions will be provided via SmallSocieties@cccbr.org.uk during August 2020.➤ Shortly before the Council Meeting on 5th September, expressions of interest from any Council Members wishing to speak will be invited to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to their views.➤ The Proposals will require a two-thirds majority at the Council Meeting, meaning that they will need to command the strong support of Council Members present.
28.	<p>Will it be possible to amend the admissions criteria in future?</p> <p>Yes. The admission criteria are held in the Standing Orders, so the Trustees will be empowered to publish amendments to them in future. As with all changes to the Standing Orders, changes must be given with three-months prior notice and are subject to the existing 'call-in' procedure, meaning that they can be referred for approval by Council Members if required.</p>
29.	<p>What will happen if the Proposal is approved? or not approved?</p> <p>If the Proposal is approved at the Council Meeting on 5th September, no action will take place until the accompanying Standing Orders come into effect. From this point the Council will be able to receive applications from small societies wishing to register.</p> <p>If the Proposal is not approved, the Trustees will revoke the Standing Orders in good time so that no change will take place.</p>