

## SMALL SOCIETIES ENHANCEMENT

### CONSULTATION 2<sup>nd</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> JULY, 2020

### ENGAGEMENT REPORT

#### Summary of Consultation Process

A Communication inviting contributions was sent to Council Members on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and the invitation was extended to all ringers through an article in the Ringing World (p647) on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

All those responding with questions or concerns were contacted and a number of enhancements were made to the proposal in the light of the suggestions made during these discussions. In particular the Standing Order (S2) setting out the procedure for the admission of small societies was significantly revised, with the majority (though not all) of those contacted expressing satisfaction with the enhanced proposal.

#### Text of Initial Responses

##### RESPONSE 1

I wouldn't normally partake in CC matters, but having read Linda Garton's letter in this week's RW, I am fully in support of all the concerns she raises - I am sorry to have to say  
Regards,

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##### RESPONSE 2

I have received the notification of the motion for the proposal for Registered Small Societies membership, and welcome the invitation and opportunity to comment. Thank you.

I appreciate this proposal may afford the opportunity to broaden membership and affiliation, however my biggest concern is the potential fragmentation away from the Affiliated Societies.

The critical question for me is why are small, fragmented groups arising?

Given the geographic coverage of Affiliated ringing societies across the UK, and organised branches and districts within those societies, I should have thought there is broad church, and ample opportunity to

welcome all into the existing structures, and better meet the needs of communities within the existing Affiliated Society organisation.

This proposal seems to promote fragmentation, rather than push for a joined up collective mutual support for bell ringing and its aims locally and the national level, with administration costs for CCCBR membership likely to escalate.

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## **RESPONSE 3**

There is a debate to be had about whether letting smaller societies participate in CC meetings etc. By common consent, it is IMPOSSIBLE to hold a debate via Zoom, especially if tens (if not hundreds) of people are participating.

So this motion cannot be fairly discussed this September. It needs delaying by at least 12 months.

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## **RESPONSE 4**

The CCCBR rules on membership were blown apart when allowing the Barrow and District to become affiliated. No sunscription paying members and ringers banned from ringing in 'their towers'.

We need to be more careful with this.

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## **RESPONSE 5**

I will start by saying that I believe that the CCCBR should be moving more quickly towards a direct membership organisation, especially as the recent structural changes have reduced what affiliated societies can do to influence decision making.

The size of the AGM should be getting smaller, not larger as this proposal would do. I cannot see why my Guild should potentially face four expenses claims to get to a meeting with so little for the reps to do. Could a small society afford those of even a single, non-voting, rep?

I won't repeat what Linda Garton has written, but I must say I find nothing within her article with which I have reason to disagree. I am particularly concerned that the deadline for feedback will come before a large percentage of Ringing World Subscribers have had their printed copy containing Clyde Whittaker's response to Linda's article. The haste seems unseemly.

This is a significant change and time is needed for proper debate. I urge you to delay this proposal until this debate can properly take place.

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## RESPONSE 6

As a member of the Central Council, who spoke at the meetings in Edinburgh and Lancaster in support of the proposals to change the structure of the Council, and indeed was delighted to second the proposal of Simon Linford as President at the meeting on London last September, I have been reading with great interest Simon's articles on the Strategic Priorities of the Central Council. I have also read carefully the excellent document sent to Council members in February ('Strategic Priorities 2020 and beyond'), which gives further details of each priority. It is clear that a huge amount of very good work is going on which will undoubtedly be of huge benefit to ringing.

However, having said this, I do have questions and concerns about Simon's latest article on the proposals to introduce a new Central Council membership category of "Registered Small Societies" (3 Jul, p.647).

I appreciate the value of this category of membership for a currently affiliated society whose membership may have fallen so that they no longer reach the membership requirements, and perhaps smaller university societies or others who do not fall within the traditional territorial structure. However, what about those groups who do fall within the current territorial structure? We know, for example, that Worcester Cathedral have requested affiliation to the Central Council (22 May, p.508), which is perhaps where the impetus for this proposal has come from?

Surely they are already represented by their own territorial association, who certainly already contribute to the work of the council - one representative of that association has been a workgroup lead for some time. Presumably this proposed category of membership could apply to every tower in the country which is "properly constituted"? Really?

We're considering whether the band from All Saints, Campton might apply? But what would be the benefit? Simon gives reasons such as wanting to support the work of the Council, but one of the main aims of the reformed Council structure was to enable anyone with an appropriate skillset, whether or not an elected member of the Council, to make a contribution, as many already are doing – the membership of workgroups is by no means confined to council members. Another reason given is to be able to benefit from safeguarding guidance and support.

Can we not do that already? Very clear and comprehensive guidance is readily available to anyone via the Council website, with a direct email address to the Council's Safeguarding Officers. We could enjoy other benefits of council membership such as sending someone to speak at Council meetings. The meeting is an open meeting, centred around a wider programme of events, and it is already the case that anyone can attend. The representatives of the Bedfordshire Association (of whom I am one) already communicate appropriate matters for discussion in advance to our membership, and reflect their views at Council meetings. If non-council members wish to raise an issue they already have the option of asking their representatives to speak on their behalf or watching the live stream of the meeting and commenting on social media if they wish to do so, which would be picked up by delegates at the meeting.

The proposal to introduce the "Registered Small Societies" category of membership seems to have appeared suddenly from nowhere. I cannot see this specifically mentioned anywhere in the strategic priorities already in the public domain. In the document 'Strategic Priorities 2020 and beyond' under Strategic Priority 2 (That no ringer should hit a barrier to their own progress), one of the current issues listed is that towers and territorial associations are struggling to fulfil the aspirations of many ringers. This is certainly the case in many areas and rightly needs to be addressed. However, is the way forward really to enable towers to declare UDI, as might be perceived to be the case if this proposal is passed? Instead, should we not be finding ways to encourage successful towers to positively engage with local associations and assist struggling towers within the wider local area?

This proposal raises a lot of questions. It has implications which need to be thought through carefully and debated properly. Although the views of existing affiliated societies are sought, these need to be received by

19th July, which does not allow much time (particularly at the moment, when ringers cannot meet easily) for representative responses. It is the intention to put the proposal to the Council's meeting in September, which will be held wholly or largely virtually. As Simon himself writes on the Council website, "even the best virtual platform will impose some constraints, so we are also planning how best to conduct our formal business. A key element of our preparation will be to ensure that business is limited to what is essential and that any concerns or issues raised by Council Members are addressed in advance, as both debate and voting will be more difficult than in a normal setting."

This is not essential business, and given the timescale and importance of this issue, which is a fundamental change, I would urge that this should not be rushed through and that any discussion and voting should be delayed until the Council is able to meet as normal and we can debate properly. In the meantime, Simon the Executive and workgroups have plenty of excellent initiatives to keep them busy

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## RESPONSE 7

We need to know more about exactly where this proposal has come from and why it has assumed such prominence. I simply do not believe that droves of young ringers' groups and embryonic university societies are clamouring for such an arrangement, much less that it would give the Council greater 'clout' with the Church authorities in relation to safeguarding (or anything else). If such groups do exist, then it would be preferable to hear from them in person. (I am aware of the "problem" that arose with the Liliputters Guild and have seen the letter that went out to dioceses).

The Central Council currently has well over 200 voting representative members entitled to attend and speak at its annual meeting. Even in the course of a very long day it is sometimes difficult for members to get a word in edgeways on important topics. The fact that some of the larger and founding societies have up to six representatives each exacerbates the unwieldy nature of the gathering, which clearly begs further reform. To add a new category of 'speaking, but non-voting' participant to represent very small societies seems like a ludicrous complication at this stage of its evolution.

Far better for the Council to now pursue with vigour the CRAG aspiration of introducing a form of personal membership for individual ringers; one that will give them a direct line to all the excellent services offered by the Council, including safeguarding advice.

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## RESPONSE 8

Our feeling was that, whilst there may be merits associated with widening the diversity of ringers and ringing groups that are affiliated to the Central Council from the Council's perspective and possible benefits to those ringing groups and how their aims may be represented, the rationale behind the proposal was unclear and thus it would be difficult to say that if implemented whether it would achieve something of value. We also thought that the implementation was being rushed and looks like it could result in unnecessary complexity for the Council's Rules and, without knowing the numbers involved, could actually impact the work and operation of the Council.

We suggest the following approach is taken. We have provided a commentary on each of the numbered points in the following pages of this response to help you appreciate our concerns and uncertainties about the proposal. These are not exhaustive. We would be happy to help with any ongoing work to address them. Please see attached document for the full response. I have only included the overview here below.

We feel there would be significant benefits to understanding and helping the Central Council decide on the desirability of the proposal, if the following actions were performed before progressing with the current proposal and its suggested implementation:

1. Clarifying the Benefits any Ringing Society gains through Affiliation with the Central Council
2. Clarifying the Requirements a Ringing Society has to satisfy to become (and remain) an Affiliated Society of the Central Council.
3. Clarifying how and when Ringers (and others) can contribute to the Work of the Central Council
4. Exploring Risks, Threats and Rewards (of relaxing the rules for Affiliation to the Central Council)
- 4.1. One Risk is the Possible Increased Complexity for Central Council Meetings

We feel that it would be better to wait until these actions had been performed before putting together how “something” might be implemented.

However, as there is a proposed implementation, we have commented on a number of aspects of the proposed changes to the rules to implement the requirements:

5. Some Comments on Proposed Implementation

In particular we comment on one aspect of the widening of Affiliation to the Central Council that may be of significant concern to existing Affiliated Societies:

- 5.1. Control over Representative Membership of the Central Council

To reiterate: our main concern is that the proposal seems to be rushed and unclear in purpose and it (and indeed the Central Council) would benefit from more preparatory work to be able to better appreciate the requirements and ensure the desired aims are achieved. We therefore would urge the proposers to consider the actions we have suggested above before proceeding further with the implementation and presentation of this or another proposal to the AGM. It would also give us time to consult more effectively in the Guild (which we have not been able to do in formulating this response).

#### DETAILED STATEMENT

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Kind regards

Response to the CCCBR Registered Small Societies Proposal Page 2 of 3

#### 1. Clarifying the Benefits any Ringing Society gains through Affiliation with the Central Council

The preamble to the proposal and some subsequent comments from Simon Linford, refer to the benefits of affiliation that some of these societies would like to obtain and that with which some of these smaller societies would not have recently faced significant challenges, however these benefits are not clear.

With a clear statement of the benefits of affiliation to the Central Council, it would be possible to test and ensure that these smaller societies will actually gain the benefits they feel they need. It will also help clarify and justify the importance/relevance of the Central Council amongst its stakeholders.

NB: It would also be useful to state which of these benefits a non-affiliated ringing society would not have, or not be able to take advantage of, as we are unaware of anything that the Central Council does which is totally restricted to affiliated societies and their ringers.

#### 2. Clarifying the Requirements a Ringing Society has to satisfy to become (and remain) an Affiliated Society of the Central Council.

Putting aside the membership size constraint, we feel it would be useful to clarify and simplify the requirements a Ringing Society should satisfy to be eligible for Affiliation to the Central Council.

Rule 4.2(b) is quite specific that an Affiliated Society shall confirm that its “purpose is to promote the ringing of bells by a group or association of bell ringers”. We feel that not all the new Ringing Societies will have this as their primary purpose, as some may only exist to pursue specific social and/or technical aims within the Worldwide Ringing Community.

Rule 4.2(c) goes on to require an Affiliated Society to “undertake to abide by the Council’s Rules and Decisions”. We feel that it is actually quite hard to determine what this actually means; in the DG we’ve recently accepted that this means that the Guild has to apply the same rules for expenses as those given to people working for the Central Council. This is probably an unexpected consequence of the formulation of the rule and not something a small ringing society might be able to bear.

Therefore, we feel that it would be useful to put together a Statement of Principles and a Code of Conduct (or the like) that all Ringing Societies should be required to confirm that they will and do adopt/uphold as Affiliated Societies of the Central Council. This can cover issues such as Equality, Safeguarding, Fairness, Diversity, Conflicts of Interest, Health and Safety, etc. without necessarily stating how all these principles are or should be implemented in a Ringing Society’s Constitution and Rules.

These documents should also state what an Affiliated Society shall not aspire to achieve and ways that it shall not behave where these would be seen as detrimental to the aims of the Central Council, its existing Affiliated Societies, and others involved with the Worldwide Ringing Community.

#### 3. Clarifying how and when Ringers (and others) can contribute to the Work of the Central Council

There is an implication in the preamble to the proposal that it is necessary for someone to be a member of an Affiliated Society in order to support and contribute to the work of the Central Council. We are not sure that this is the case. The recent restructuring of the Council into Work Groups has opened up the opportunity for

anyone to participate in the work of the Council (whereas previously participants in the main work of the Council were expected to be drawn primarily from the Representative Members of the Affiliated Societies). It might be useful, however, for the Central Council to clarify if and how anyone may participate in its work.

#### 4. Exploring Risks, Threats and Rewards (of relaxing the rules for Affiliation to the Central Council)

We feel there should be a reasonable examination of the Risks, Threats, and Rewards associated with the proposal (to allow these additional Ringing Societies to Affiliate to the Central Council) and the Risks and Threats associated were we not to do so.

Response to the CCCBR Registered Small Societies Proposal Page 3 of 3

A clear analysis of these aspects will help Representative Members judge whether or not to support the proposal.

##### 4.1. One Risk is the Possible Increased Complexity for Central Council Meetings

The detailed approach to implementing the proposal accords these small Ringing Societies each a member who can represent their Society at Council Meetings. This does not appear to be clearly stated in the requirements and we feel there is a significant risk of complexity with this approach.

There is no analysis of the number of small Ringing Societies who might currently seek Affiliation with the Central Council, nor any thoughts about how this might develop in the future. If each such Society were to be granted a representative at all Council Meetings this could increase the size of the Council greatly and could impact the administration, management and effectiveness of its meetings and operation.

We feel that this requirement should be clarified and given more thought as to whether or not it is desirable. Currently it does not feel essential to the core proposal.

#### 5. Some Comments on Proposed Implementation

The proposed change to the Rules introduces the class of Registered Small Society alongside the existing class of Affiliated Society. This seems unnecessarily complex and will require that much of the existing rules are duplicated or adapted to refer to both Affiliated Societies and Registered Small Societies. The proposed change has a go at doing this but doesn't go far enough (see for example the definition of Society Contact).

It seems to us that it would be simpler to remove Rule 4.2(a) which specifies the minimum size for an Affiliated Society, and introduce a lower limit to Rule 5.5(a) that specifies when an Affiliated Society gains a Representative Member on the Central Council so that it reads something like: "5.5(a) Society Membership of at least 50 and up to 150 members = one Representative Member;"

This would allow small Ringing societies to become "Affiliated Societies" of the Central Council and to gain the benefits of being so (given we've clarified them as above) which is after all seemingly the core requirement. Rule 4.4(a) should also be removed as an Affiliated Society whose membership fell to below 50 would still qualify as an Affiliated Society (albeit now "small"), it would just lose its Representative Member on the Central Council, and there would be no need to then worry about adding yet more Rules for transitioning between an erstwhile Affiliated Society (whose membership has fallen) and a [new] Registered Small Society...

##### 5.1. Control over Representative Membership of the Central Council

There is a concern about the Executive being able to grant affiliation to [small] Ringing Societies without the full approval of the Central Council at a Council Meeting, especially if after their affiliation they were then to announce an increase in their membership size and thereby gain one or more Representative Members on the Council.

We feel though that the Central Council (here we mean the set of Representative Members from the Affiliated Societies who have been granted them) should still have the right to both ratify the Affiliation of any Ringing Society to the Central Council and to give their (now separate) approval as to when and if a [small] Affiliated Society is granted at least one Representative Member on the Council due to an increase in that Society's membership.

This approach may help counter any worries about "dilution" of the Council by this proposal.

It also allows for the granting of Affiliation to the Central Council for any new Ringing Society (i.e. larger as well as small) by the Executive in between Council Meetings.

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## RESPONSE 9

First of all may I say that in principle I am very supportive of this motion. As you may possibly know, there used to be a scheme like this and I can't remember what it was called or how it worked but a bit of research would turn it all up. So there is some precedent. I can't recall that it ever did any harm but I can't really recall hearing much about it once it was set up so maybe it was never really much use either. I wonder why that was and whether it got missed in the transfer to the new rules. I have a vague idea I may have said something about it in commenting on the proposed new rules, but I can't exactly remember that either I'm afraid, without a great deal of research that would threaten my desire to respond "immediately"!

I do have two slightly connected concerns about the proposed new scheme, which I will try to explain, although it's a bit complicated and not even completely clear in my own mind just yet!

There are some ringers who will have no truck with their local associations, which will be CC-affiliated. These individuals might be from one tower or a group of towers in one area, or might just be a mixed group from around the association area who are fed up with the association. Now if I was a member of some associations I might be pretty fed up with them for being moribund, not organising much for me or doing any training etc. So in some ways this could be a good way for moribund associations to get side-lined and/or killed off. But it does rather beg the question of, if there are enough people to start a new small association, why don't they just join the moribund one and improve it the way they want it?

I remember when the Dorset County Association applied for CC affiliation, a long time ago, there was objection from the Salisbury DG. They said, in effect, this area is our area and we don't want a new association carved out from our area, depriving us of this part of our diocese. The objection was overruled and the Dorset County was admitted.

And I am aware of other areas of the country where some leading ringers will currently have no truck with their local association for reasons that I am not aware of but I rather suspect have more to do with personality clashes than anything else. Does the Central Council want to be in a position to encourage people to start break away groups within existing affiliated societies? For example, would a single tower be able to register? Does the Council want to be seen as encouraging ringers to ditch their existing local association to start something else? If it doesn't, I must say I am not sure how the changes you are proposing could be amended to prevent this, but you need to be aware of this risk.

Second, I was interested to see your comment "This approach will enable smaller societies to connect with the Council without waiting too long and would have helped at least one small society overcome some significant challenges during the past year." It is hard to imagine how any small society could encounter significant challenge on account of not being affiliated to the Council! But I wonder if it was the Lilliputters. Our vicar sent me the March safeguarding newsletter from the Southwark Diocese which contained information about this group. It said:

"Important information relating to Bell Ringing Group - The Lilliputters Guild

We have been given the following information by the Provincial Safeguarding Adviser at Lambeth Palace.

The Lilliputters Guild is a church bell ringing group with no home tower or County. It is made up of a collection of young ringers from several associations across the country with many of the members under the age of 16. The Guild falls under the Winchester and Portsmouth Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers, however, they travel extensively round the country to various churches and cathedrals to use their bell towers. This has necessitated overnight stays.

There are some serious safeguarding concerns that have been raised. If your church has been visited or may be visited by the group please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team prior to any visit taking place and we will liaise with the National Safeguarding Team."



So clearly something has gone wrong with this group at some point. I have no particular desire to know what (although I'm always curious!) But putting this with my earlier comments makes me think of what might be the answer all round:

Is something needed somewhere about how applications to be registered as affiliated Small Societies will be assessed? Such an assessment could take into account views specifically sought out from already-affiliated societies in the nearby geographical area, if it is to be geographically based. It could also ensure that the society had a safeguarding officer and proper safeguarding procedures in place – this might or might not apply only to societies primarily made up of young people. I can't see anything in the rules at the moment about how applications to affiliate are assessed, so maybe it isn't appropriate to be in the rules, but maybe the Executive could give some guidance on what they might be looking for? Or what they already look for in new applications to affiliate? I think this would really help get this motion agreed and is actually quite important.

Finally, and rather trivially, I think Rule 2.1 will need amending to refer to the addition of these new rules in September.

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## RESPONSE 10

I had a look at the draft Rules which I thought might be more easily put within existing Rules 4.1 to 4.4. but since the latter are specific to "Affiliated" societies probably best dealt with separately.

My comments are therefore as follows:

There seems to be a split of requirements of Registered Small Societies between Rule 4.6 and Standing Order S2.1. Surely these should be together for clarity. I am also a bit nervous of requirements being left in SOs which can be changed more easily than Rules.

One particular item is S2.1.(b) relating to Safeguarding, the principle of which I would of course endorse. However, to my knowledge we have no such written requirement of Affiliated Societies or have I missed a new requirement? We could certainly do with something since the approach to the subject is variable across the country.

There does not appear to be any reference in either revised rules or standing orders to the fact that small societies will not qualify for either a Representative or voting rights?

Finally, there is no mention of the "Annual Fee" of £20 – presumably this needs to be wrapped up Rule 4.5 relating to "Subscriptions"

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## RESPONSE 11

What I have read so far about allowing small societies to be affiliated to the CCCBR seems to be an excellent idea. I can envisage a situation where our tower might well feel it worthwhile. This is not due to any dissatisfaction with the local association, but something that we might be keen to do in addition.

The recent work by the CCCBR in respect of the pandemic shows that a strong national association is important. Initiatives like this allow groups to show their support and thus strengthen the CCCBRs hand when dealing with the church and government (as would some form of individual direct membership).

It would also help 'grass roots' ringers to feel that the CCCBR is relevant to them, as it can appear distant as their current link to it is 'second hand'. The plan for groups to have to meet a standard in order to join will also be a good thing, ensuring that smaller groups are well run.

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## RESPONSE 12

I understand that you are considering the issues raised by registering small societies with the CCBR.

It is worth noting out that a number of towers and ringing groups (including Worcester Cathedral) are comprised of ringers that are not necessarily resident in the location. A number of the regular ringers and paid-up members of the Worcester Cathedral band are not resident in the Diocese. They have no particular allegiance to the local territorial association but feel closely associated with Worcester Cathedral.

The Worcester Cathedral ringers have skills and expertise that are used (in my opinion) to the benefit of ringing both locally and nationally.

Rather than "declaring UDI" we seek to bring our experience to the CCBR and the wider ringing community. This is a solution that may be of relevance to other areas of the UK.

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## RESPONSE 13

We are one of those small Guilds whose membership has dwindled over the last 20 years or so, and which has tended more recently to hover between the 50 and 60 mark. It was always a concern when the triennial system existed to make sure we had sufficient numbers to maintain our affiliation. The change to having to provide an annual return has put more pressure on us.

I am concerned that with the pandemic a considerable number of our current members may not renew their subscriptions next year, particularly if we get to our AGM in March and we have not returned to full ringing (I have doubts that we will do so by then). That will mean we would lose our affiliation and I think it is too much to expect us to get our numbers up to 75 subsequently. Our membership is drawn from those members of the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Associations who ring in the area around East Grinstead (the Guild has been going for 93 years), and many of us are in the over-60's vulnerable category. We don't provide any training (this is amply provided by the Kent, Surrey and Sussex Associations), but have met monthly at various towers within a 16 mile radius of East Grinstead and have an annual dinner. You could say we are just a bunch of very keen ringings who like to get together to ring some pretty decent stuff now and again, and have a convivial evening in the pub afterwards.

Your proposal would therefore be very welcome indeed to us, and I would recommend our membership to support it.

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## RESPONSE 14

Excellent. The right balance of inclusivity with the necessary caution. I'm already thinking of applying for the Devon Monday Ringers to join if it goes through.

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## **RESPONSE 15**

"I'm no expert on the workings of the CCCBR but this looks to me to fit into my view of how ringing organisations should exist – it provides an umbrella to speak for all ringers, encompasses any good ideas from smaller outfits and it cannot be blown off course by lots of smaller (campaigning) organisations."

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## **RESPONSE 16**

Thanks – very interesting. My immediate reaction is that this is an interesting suggestion which I'd be very happy to support. However, that's a personal view – I'll circulate your email to our Guild Committee and let you know of any reaction I receive from other members.

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## **RESPONSE 17**

As you may or may not know, we've run into a few difficulties this year, and the support from the Council - in particular Simon Linford - has been outstanding. I am minded that - had we been affiliated to Council before now - many of these problems could have been avoided or mitigated. That said, we have already benefited enormously from Council's support, resources and expertise - and we should hope to have this resource on hand, should we ever need it in the future.

I believe we support and contribute to the Council's objectives and values - in particular, the recent strategic initiatives around the promotion and retention of young ringers, and offering opportunities (both to meet and ring with other ringers of their own ages, and to progress their own ringing, breaking down social, territorial and ability-based boundaries that exist and can hamper an individual's progress).

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## **RESPONSE 18**

I think this is an excellent idea and I would support it.

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## **RESPONSE 19**

Many thanks to Clyde Whittaker for the very clear and well-argued article about small societies affiliating to the CCCBR.

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## **RESPONSE 20**

As the concerns raised by Linda Garton have been addressed that's no problem by me.

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