

October 2019 Consultation Summary

Background

At the 2017 England Hockey AGM clubs and associations were invited to vote on a motion put forward by member clubs (and supported by the England Hockey Board of Directors) to review the structure of the sport. A full history of the resolution and the work done prior to this point is available here: www.englishockey.co.uk/agmresolution

This paper sets out the summary of the feedback received via surveys and letters after sharing the initial proposals for the 2020 England Hockey AGM.

Whilst this paper focuses on the survey responses gathered between July and October 2019 after the 10 Roadshows (plus a number of other meetings) held by England Hockey the feedback also takes into account a small number of letters received directly relating to the proposals.

Executive Summary

There was a good but not excellent number of responses to the survey. The open text responses extended to c2000 comments and 65,000 words of feedback from respondents on the proposals from a range of perspectives.

Based on the spread of respondents and the quantity, the results can be considered to represent a fair spectrum of views of the proposals across England. Comparing attendance at the roadshows and the survey it is clear that there are many clubs (perhaps as much as 50%) who still have, at best, a passive interest in the proposals or, at worst, a lack of awareness of the proposals. In a few cases there are also some fundamental misunderstandings that need clarification through further stages of the process.

The surveys indicated strong support for the following aspects of the proposal:

1. Simplified structures – clubs, in particular, and many associations see the benefit of fewer bodies to deal with or pay money to. There was a lot of reference to technology being a significant issue for club administrators who are frustrated by much of the current provision.
2. Good governance – clubs support the ability to influence decision making and expect greater transparency and better governance from some of the bodies that they currently work with.
3. A common league rules framework has strong support from a large majority of respondents.
4. The concept of a ‘fairer, more equal’ structure in terms of opportunities to progress is supported.

More work is required on some elements of the proposal:

1. Umpiring structures require more work given the scale of change proposed and the wider challenges facing umpiring bodies that handle independent appointments.
2. Balancing travel v competition standards
3. Greater definition is required in terms of the proposals related to junior competition. Current structures are far more variable than leagues with some excellent practice in

some areas and large gaps in others. In particular, the split of responsibilities between Areas and Sub-Area needs to be clearer.

4. The governance of the Areas and Sub Areas needs to be carefully considered to strike the right balance between accountability and local direction versus national alignment.
5. Whilst the initial scope excluded school's hockey the process for aligning the school's agenda with the proposal needs to be clear with appropriate associated timescales.
6. Assets in existing organisations that are absorbed or dissolved need managing properly to ensure it is retained appropriately in the sport. In some bodies the amount in reserves is not known and this is a concern to clubs.

In terms of the change process the following points were made:

1. Loss of voluntary resource is a concern in existing organisations. The change needs to be managed to encourage the retention of as many people as reasonably possible. Many respondents from clubs also referenced that delivering improvements in working practices (conference calls/technology) might help to attract them to other roles.
2. Previous attempts to improve the use of technology by England Hockey were criticised by many respondents. A clear, deliverable, long-term plan needs to be demonstrated here.
3. This is a significant change management exercise and needs to be well led with a clear implementation plan that is well managed.
4. England Hockey's capacity and capability to lead the change was questioned by some (but also supported by others). England Hockey needs to be honest about some previous failings and demonstrate that these have been taken on board in the approach.

Critical requirements for final proposal for clubs

1. The detailed geography of league areas is required to help many clubs make a final decision.
2. An implementation plan must be provided to convince people that the changes are deliverable in the time period.
3. Financial information needs to be provided to convince many clubs that there is not an increased cost from this revised approach.

When asked what the respondents voting intention was the overall picture was 61% in favour and 19% against the proposals. The majority of abstentions referenced the need for more detail rather than disagreement with the principles behind the proposal. Clubs have significantly the largest share of vote at the AGM and 73% of respondents from clubs were in favour with only 15% against at this stage. The view of associations was more of abstention at this stage as more consultation was undertaken with 45% abstaining, 32% in favour and 23% against the proposal.

The level of support for the proposal in its current format, subject to further details in some key areas, indicates that the membership would like England Hockey to progress with the proposal.

The England Hockey Working Group will therefore work up a final proposal for consideration at the England Hockey AGM on 17 March 2020.

Clubs and associations will be able to vote electronically as well as attend the AGM in person.

Survey Summary

The survey conducted by England Hockey was made available from July 2019 to the end of October 2019. It took the form of two pages of questions that were largely open text in format.

The survey was made available after over 330 people from various clubs and associations attended the roadshows in the summer of 2019.

Total People (not staff/Board) attending the 10 Roadshows	334
Clubs represented	150
Regional HAs represented	5
Regional HUAs represented	5
County HAs represented	23
County HUAs represented	22
Regional Leagues represented	5
County Leagues represented	3
Junior Leagues represented	1
Miscellaneous other groups represented	5

All affiliated clubs and associations were informed of the survey via email, the 'Club Together' mailing and via other traditional communication methods such as cascaded information from Regions as well as through social media posts.

ANALYSIS PART 1: Respondents

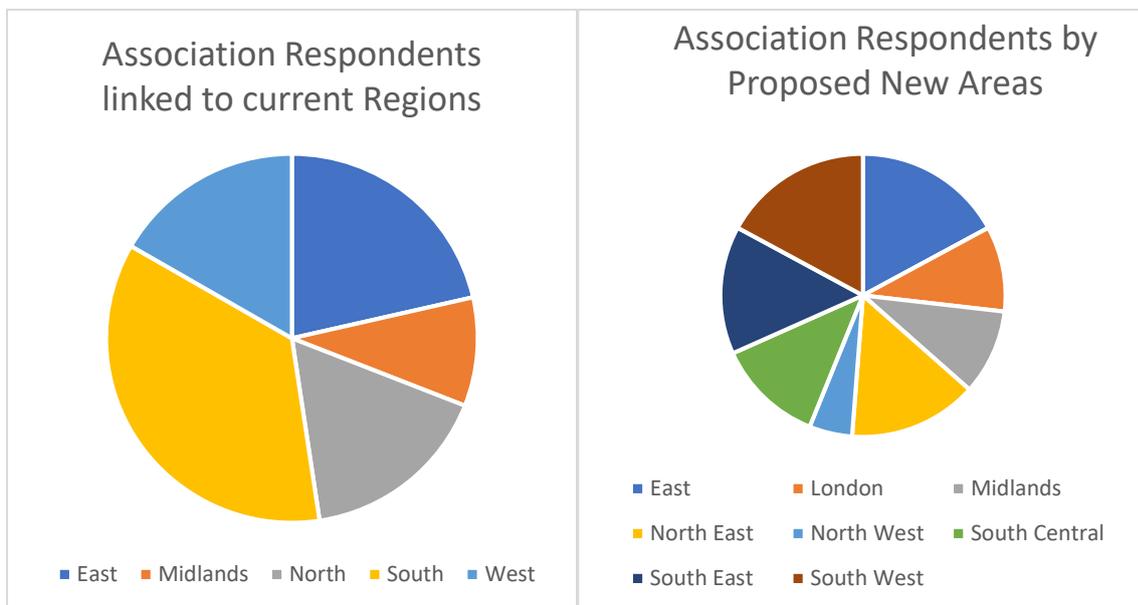
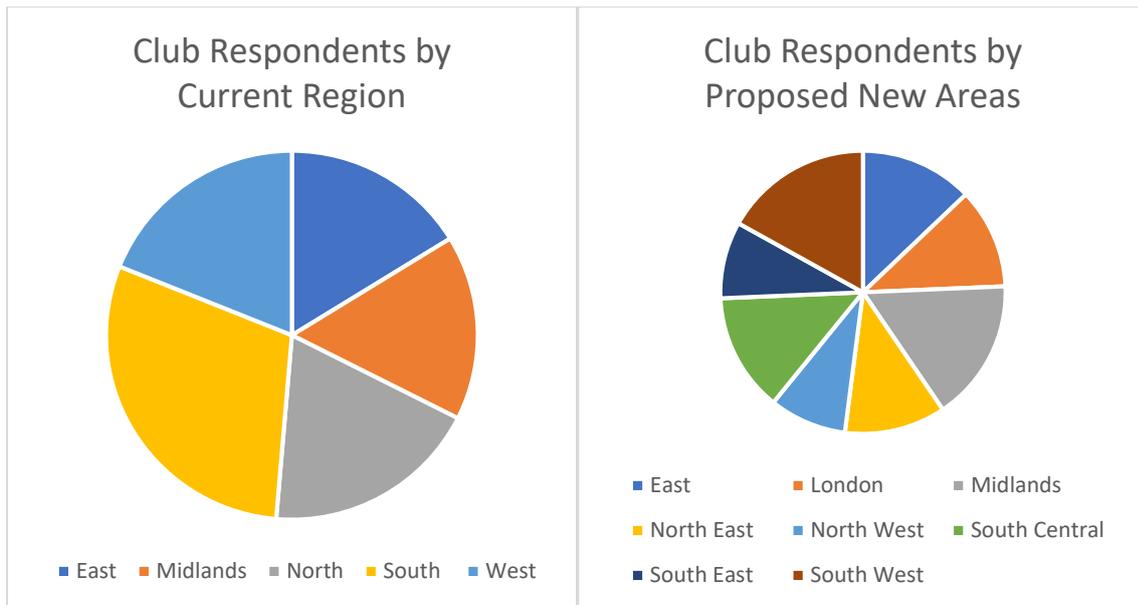
As with all surveys promoted by social media about a complex topic, the survey invited a lot of respondents that had not read the paperwork sufficiently. Hence the survey attracted 553 partial responses that did not provide any more than a name or email address. As these were incomplete they have been discounted.

355 full responses were received split as follows:

Value	Percent	Count
Club	41.7%	148
Organisation	10.7%	38
Neither - These views are my own	47.6%	169
Totals		355

Many of those who responded ticked the box titled 'these views are my own'.

Of the full respondent of clubs there was the following regional split and split against the proposed new areas:



Based on the four charts above the balance of respondents fairly reflects the geographical split of the country.

ANALYSIS PART 2: Closed and Quantitative Questions

The following section provides a summary of the questions that were either closed questions or quantitative answers.

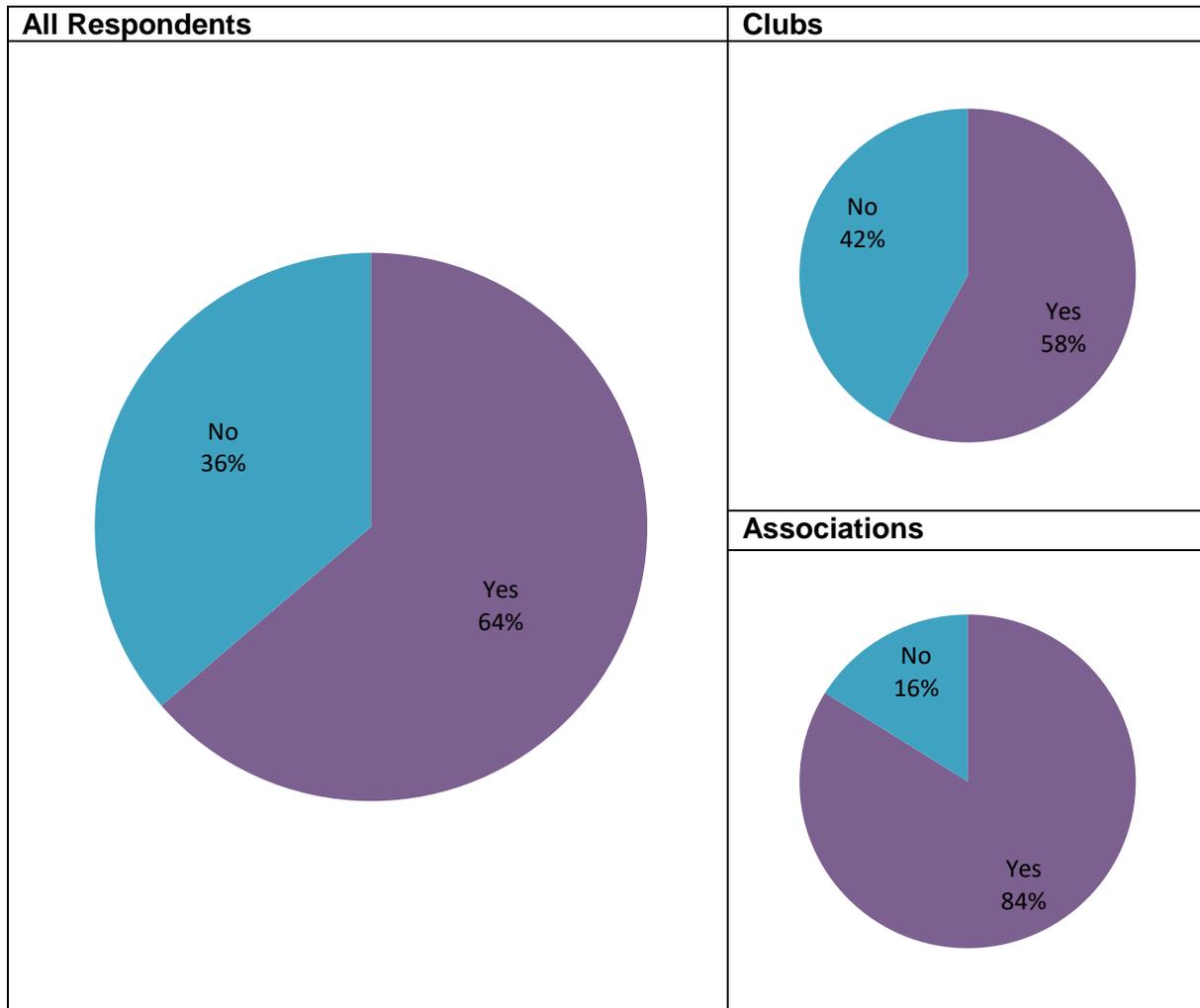
Question 5. Are these the formal, agreed views of organisation?

152 (43%) of respondents said yes. Many commented that at this stage their organisation did not yet have a formal view. This was not unexpected at this stage of the process.

Question 6. What role do you hold?

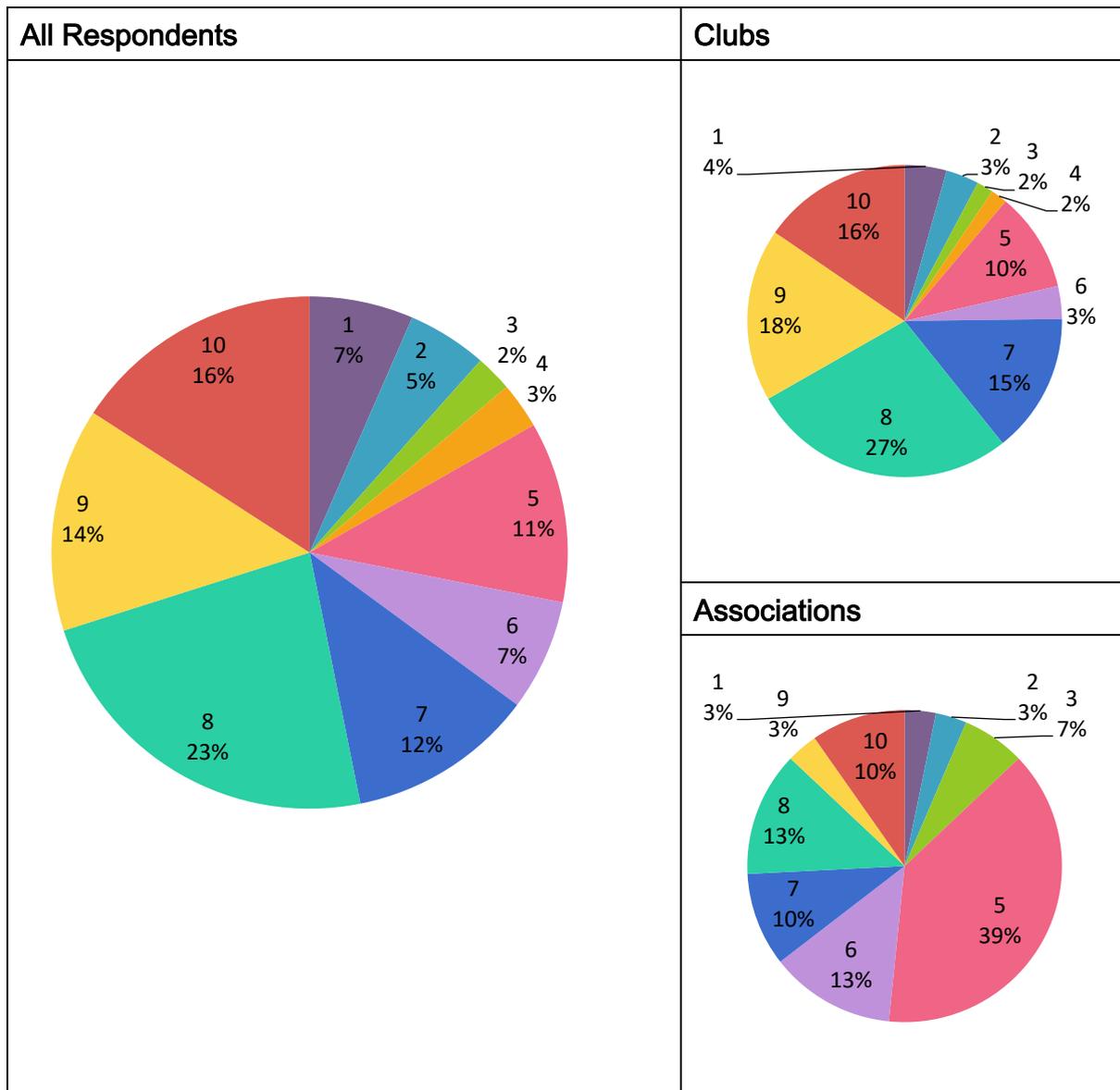
Most respondents held committee roles in organisations particularly Chair, Secretary or Treasurer roles and other significant roles such as Club Captain. This was an open text answer so a full list is not provided in this report.

Question 7. Did you or anyone else from your club/organisation attend an England Hockey Roadshow?



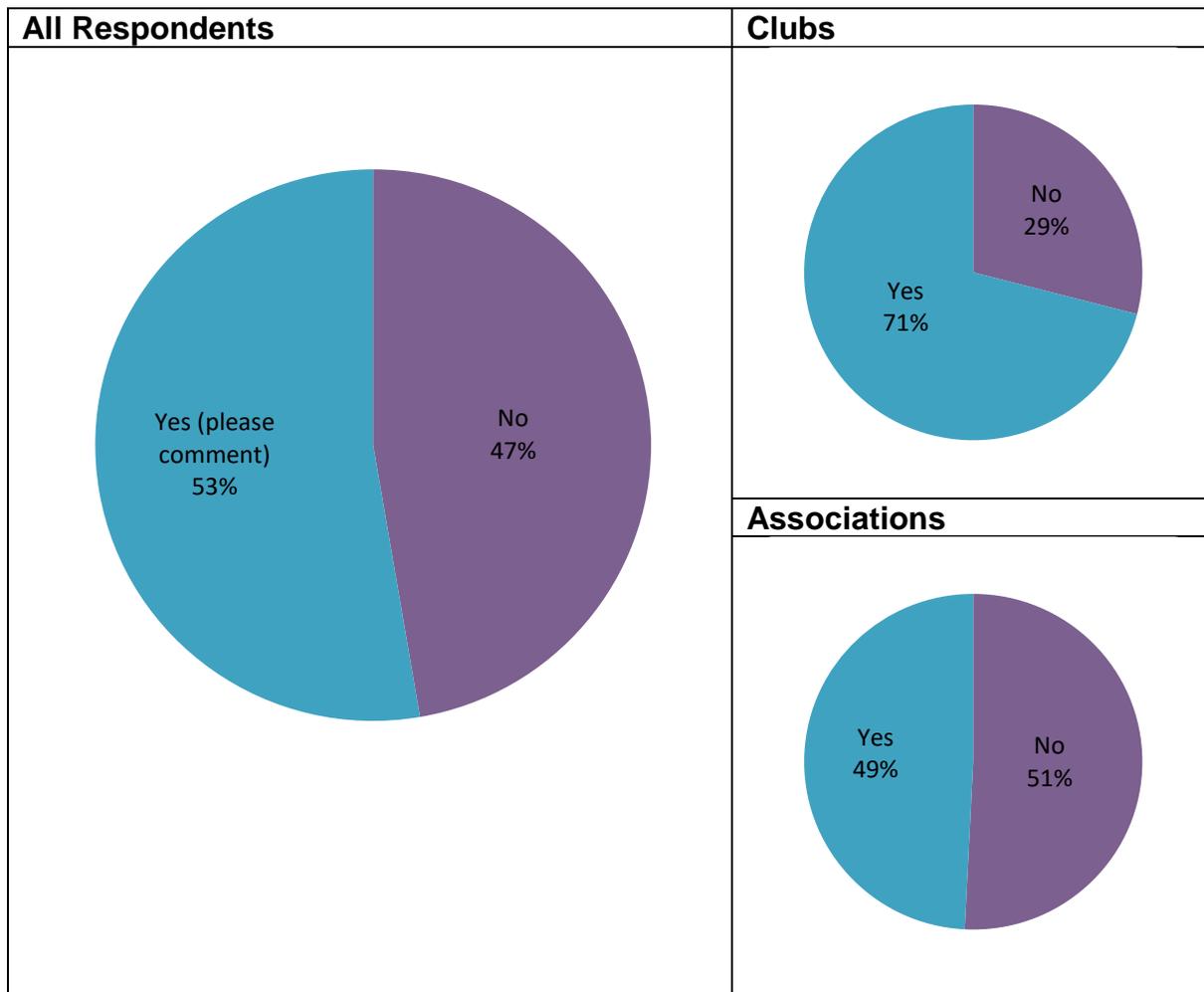
This indicates that there are many clubs and associations that are now aware of the proposal and considered the implications enough to attend roadshows and respond to the survey. Equally there are still many clubs that have not engaged so directly with the proposals at this stage. This will need to be addressed as we get closer to the AGM.

Question 13. On a scale of 1-10, how much do you support the current proposal (with 1 being totally opposed to and 10 being fully supportive of)?



In general clubs are more strongly supportive of the proposal than associations at this stage. Many association respondents scored a 5 requiring more detailed information of the implications for their specific association.

Question 14. Is there anything that would stop your club/organisation from supporting this?

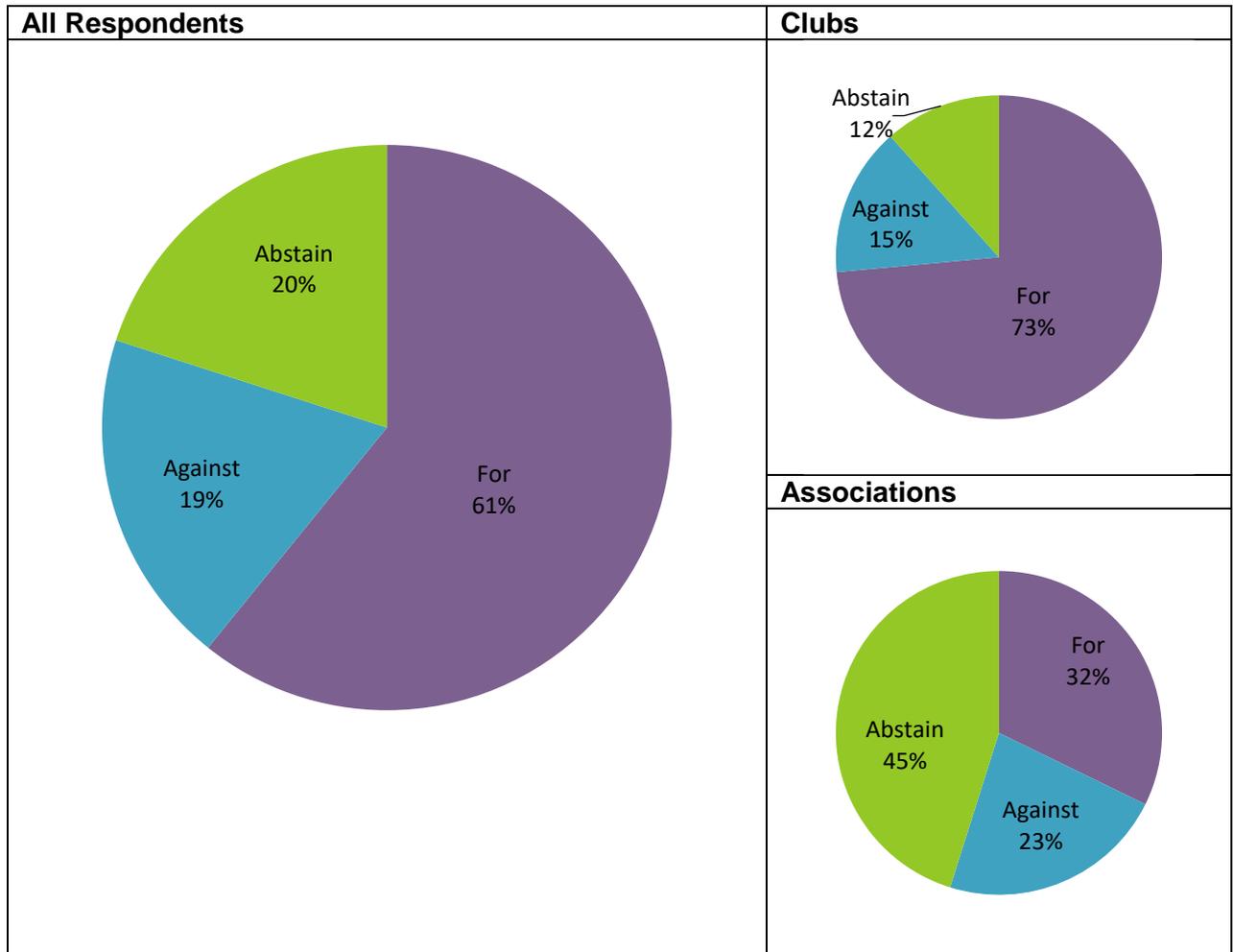


Clubs largely referenced that league and specific geographical information was required before making a final decision.

Associations largely referenced the need for more detail, specific implications for their association or in some cases that they did not wish their organisation to be changed as a result of the proposals.

Overall this reinforced the point that there is more required for the proposals to have enough detail and clarity for many respondents.

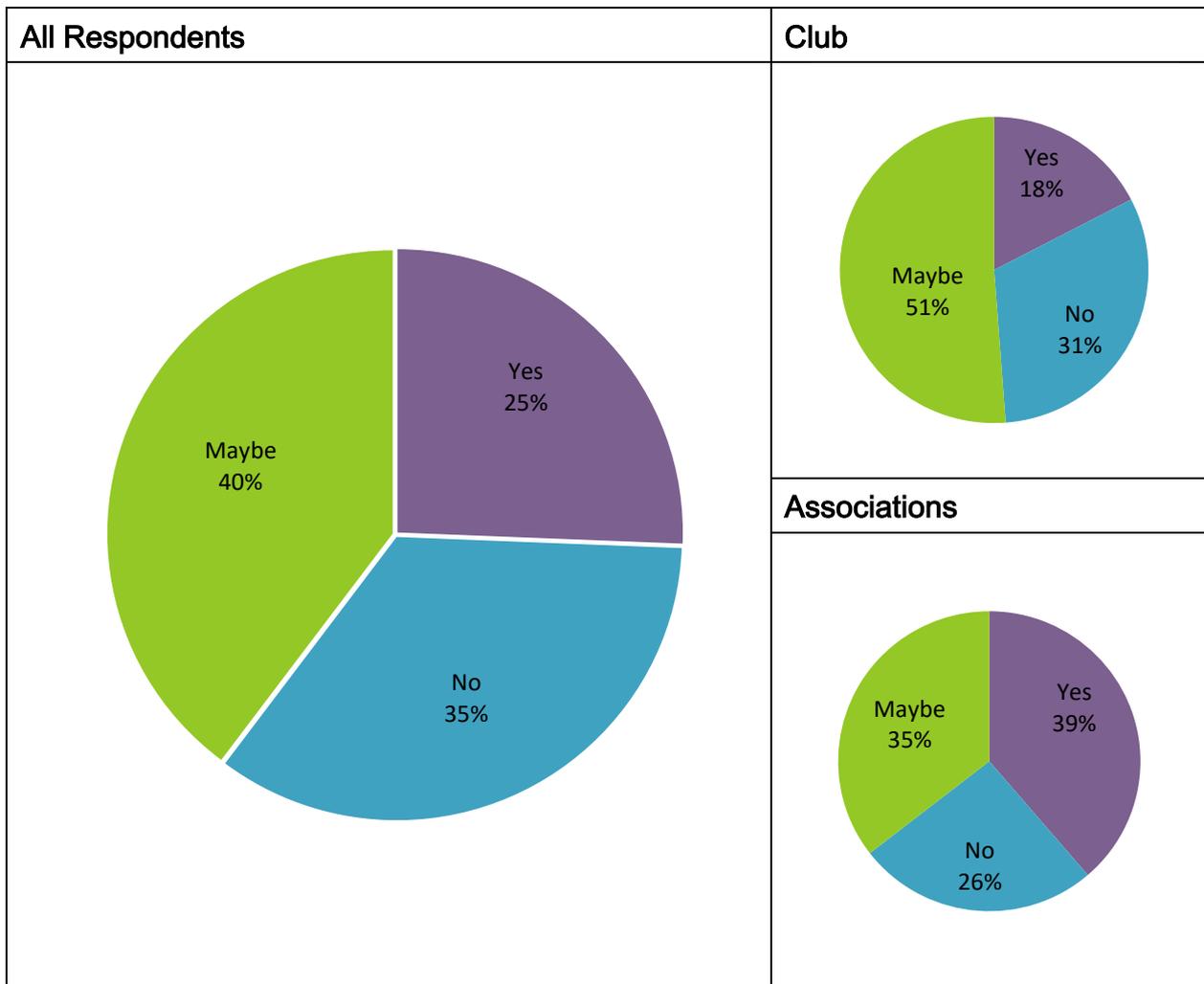
Question 15. On the basis of what you understand so far, what is your club/organisation voting intention for the proposal at the 2020 England Hockey AGM?



Taking into account that this was based on the information provided so far it is clear that there is support for the proposal. Many organisations that abstained, and some that indicated voting both for and against, reiterated the need for more detailed information before making a final decision.

Clubs are more strongly in favour than associations.

Question 16. If the proposal is passed, would you be interested in contributing to the running of an Area or Sub-Area in the new structure?



This question aimed to understand the appetite for people to be involved in the future administrative structures. The number of club respondents was significantly higher than association respondents and many club respondents already have busy roles in clubs, so it is recommended this is only taken as indicative.

The potential loss of volunteers in existing bodies is a risk for the proposal and needs to be carefully considered.

Question 17: Are there particular skills (e.g. finance, legal etc) or a particular type of role that you might be interested in (e.g. Adult leagues or discipline)?

All Respondents
 <p>A word cloud for 'All Respondents' with 'adult leagues' as the largest central text. Other prominent words include 'league', 'finance', 'coach', 'development', 'role', 'umpiring', 'club', 'hockey', 'umpire', 'management', 'secretary', 'years', 'discipline', 'member', 'project', 'junior', 'administration', 'county', 'treasurer', 'involved', 'committee', and 'development'.</p>
Clubs
 <p>A word cloud for 'Clubs' with 'junior leagues' as the largest central text. Other prominent words include 'development', 'officer', 'club', 'county', 'planning', 'developmental', 'accountant', 'coaching', 'amp', 'analysis', 'appeals', 'centre', 'east', 'marketing', 'competitions', 'centrally', 'discipline', 'considered', 'cup', 'exec', 'cda', and 'eh'.</p>
Associations
 <p>A word cloud for 'Associations' with 'adult leagues' as the largest central text. Other prominent words include 'organizational', 'hockey', 'involved', 'detail', 'managed', 'commonality', 'lot', 'management', 'development', 'general', 'interest', 'finance', 'grass', 'area', 'committee', 'admin', 'chair', 'players', 'experienced', 'league', 'coach', 'elite', and 'member'.</p>

There was a good range of skills available amongst those that offered skills in future with one notable difference being the focus on junior provision within the club responses.

Finding ways to utilise these skills in ways that suit modern volunteering trends (more episodic and more technology based) is key for the future administration of hockey.

ANALYSIS PART 3: Summary of Responses to Open Text Questions

This section covers the open text answers in the survey. The respondents took the time to provide over 65,000 words across around 2000 comments in response to the proposals which have all been read, categorised and then summarised into the topics and themes beneath.

Question 8. What do you see as the benefits of the proposal?

328 opinions were provided in answer to this question.

The main topics were as follows:

- Streamlining is positive with a reduction in the number of bodies welcomed.
- Simplification is necessary as the current structure is not well understood by many people in the sport.
- Clarity and consistency of structures will help to ensure that competition and opportunities are fair.
- Transparency of/better governance is an expectation, something that a reasonable number of existing organisations are not seen to be demonstrating.
- League structure and rule alignment is desired. This includes the removal of some rules seen as over the top for the level of play and more up to date league management systems (e.g. the use of technology for match cards/teamsheets)
- More appropriate travel is desired by many participants and any new structure needs to ensure that that is balanced with an appropriate level of relative competitiveness in any league.
- Respondents could see benefits for umpiring at club level through the alignment of expectations (particularly between the men's and women's games) and in the consolidation of Hockey Umpiring Bodies in some areas.

Specific quotes from the feedback included:

- "Simplified and standardised governance with greater accountability in a structure fit for the 21st century".
- "Sets out a much more coherent and streamlined approach to the administration of the game"
- "Consistency & transparency across the country".
- "Clear lines of responsibility and communication will remove the need for excess meetings in a more formalised structure".
- "It will require the whole sport at all levels to examine itself and will force necessary, long overdue, change".
- "A more even distribution of clubs into regional leagues with improved travel for teams and officials".
- "Bringing together umpiring associations will help provide a larger pool of better trained umpires, with clarity over progression".

Question 9. What are the things that you would most like to see improved in the proposal?

260 opinions were provided in answer to this question.

The main topics were as follows:

- Greater clarity was requested in a number of key areas:
 - o League structures
 - o Junior competition provision
 - o Other competitions such as mixed leagues
 - o Alignment of Masters hockey

- The timeline for the changes needs to be carefully considered with the dependencies and timing of decisions required properly thought through. Linked to this there was a desire to better understand the implementation plan and not rush the implementation if it risked making mistakes.
- Associated to the timeline respondents wanted to be sure that the resources to support the change were available both to England Hockey and to the new administrative bodies.
- More clarity on the detailed responsibilities between Area and Sub-Area on some specific issues such as junior competitions and umpiring.
- A risk and impact assessment and cost benefit analysis was requested by some respondents and a few mentioned an assessment of the structure in terms of how future proof it will be.
- More engagement with voluntary structures as the proposals progress including focusing on retention and recruitment of volunteers to the new structure.
- The specific arrangements for some organisations need to be finalised in terms of their interaction with the new structure for example Welsh clubs, Islands (Channel Islands, Isle of Wight, Isle of Man)
- Clarity on the timeline – particularly the arrangements for school competitions in the new structure
- Financial models and winding up arrangements need to work out properly and be reasonable in the eyes of clubs.
- A proper technology review and approach is required and needs to deliver to benefit administrators in clubs and associations.
- A few clubs referenced the need to be able to play across Area boundaries within some levels of play in their club. Two wrote to England Hockey specifically on this matter.

Comments include:

- “would like a detailed plan to be produced, with resources, schedule and quick wins to ensure that it is deliverable and timely”.
- “the timescale to implementation seems tight to achieve a smooth transition. What contingencies are in place?”
- “How can sub-areas deliver activities that they will not be responsible for?”
- “England Hockey should give clear guidance to existing bodies to ensure their funds can be used appropriately going forwards”
- “If paid roles are required how will they be financed?”
- “Whilst focussing on clubs is good, many areas have strong schools and universities and they need to be considered as equally important organisations. Need to ensure that provision aimed at the needs of hockey today/tomorrow does not become a fixed system that cannot support growth in areas of England where hockey is weak today”.
- “Role of IT and communications needs to be seriously looked at”
- “..there is no clarity around either proposed umpiring structures or HUAs that will be needed to support new leagues....concentrate on getting the poorer HUA's up to standard..”

Question 10. Are there any gaps that you feel need to be addressed?

184 opinions were provided in answer to this question.

The main topics were as follows:

- The following have already been covered:
 - The lack of an implementation plan
 - More detail, financial specifics,
 - More clarity on league standardisation,
 - More clarity on umpiring structures,

- The following were additional from this question:
 - There needs to be consideration of different sized clubs, particularly in local travel and league rules.
 - The risks of the loss of volunteer experience and how that can be mitigated.
 - A strong communication plan will be required and England Hockey needs to lead this effectively.
 - Clubs would like to see the local geography and understand the travel implications, particularly in the London boundaries
 - The governance structures and relationship between the new areas and England Hockey needs to be appropriate to ensure that there is a proper balance of alignment nationally on some issues but local flexibility and decision making where necessary.

Comments include:

- "(in London) Multi-modal transport analysis needed, rather than just purely road/crow flies distance analysis"
- "Acknowledgement of areas where England Hockey need help – acknowledgement from regions and counties that they need to engage and promote the proposals to enable EH to lead and take forward the game"
- "we would like to understand more as to critical paths and project management of the transition process from current arrangements to the new structure"
- "When we get to the end of this proposed change, how will we know it's been successful? What is EH looking for in terms of 'success'?"
- "a more detailed study into the impact on Masters hockey"
- "the impact on junior hockey is not clear in terms of delivery."
- "The effect at National level: while the proposal clearly relates to the regional level and below, we'd need assurances that the membership rights of the regions or "areas" are not significantly changed. For example, we'd need to know that areas will maintain voting rights at England Hockey general meetings, and that clubs won't be the sole membership".
- "travel time rather than distance should be a factor"
- "...more reassurance that it's not a top down imposition would help get more engagement".

Question 12. Is there anything that would stop your club/organisation from supporting this proposal?

153 opinions were provided in response to this question.

Many respondents referenced back to previous answers when responding to this question.

The main topics were as follows:

- A lack of detail
- A poor or no implementation plan
- A significantly changed proposal
- Excessive costs
- Not recognising or providing information on Mixed Hockey or schools
- If proposal doesn't benefit my club or being forced into a new Area
- Additional volunteer work

Other general comments

Criticism

Within the open text answers there was also criticism for the proposals on some topics. The Working Group needs to consider these when taking into account the approach to progressing the proposals.

The comments were as follows:

- The proposed umpiring structure change was seen as potentially too removed from local issues as some local Umpiring Associations were seen in a positive light.
- Some questioned the introduction of a fourth EHL Conference (although others criticised the existing conference geography)
- Some challenged the need to break down the South/North regions
- Some questioned England Hockey's grasp of loyalty/volunteers
- The Masters proposal may not work initially as some regions are not able to get teams out at all ages currently.
- Some wanted to understand the risks of a loss of funding to England Hockey
- Is some of the proposal trying to fix things that aren't broken?
- There was also some criticism from some non-affiliated bodies on not being consulted

Specific Issues

There were also a number of specific issues that were raised that warrant further consideration.

- Expansion of London Congestion Charge. Did Llamasoft take into account travel times with the 2021 extension of the ULEZ (to North and South Circulars) in London
- No recognition of Channel Islands in proposal. Inclusion of island teams in the EH league structure. Also Isle of Wight travel.
- Junior player registration should capture school name using a dropdown menu
- No Tube links into Kent
- Position of national affiliated organisations e.g. Civil Service Hockey Association

Unrelated issues:

Finally, some respondents took the opportunity to provide other feedback not related to the proposal in the survey. These have not been included as were not related to the proposal but were shared with the Working Group for information.