[Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=nf)

Firstly, it would seem that our beloved KCPA have omitted to post the fact, or update the website, to advise that I am no longer a member of the Judge's Panel. Back in November I decided that I really needed to cut down on my photographic commitments if I was going to really enjoy my retirement and neutralise the threat of a diet of tongue and cold shoulder from Obersturmbanfuhrer Elizabeth. The Judge's Panel was not, after 8 years or so, an area that I particularly enjoyed, or where my involvement and somewhat dubious talents were best utilised. The downside of this is that I can no longer officially influence policy. The upside is that I can now be much more frank in what I say. I may actually be able to achieve more by being a loose cannon, despite the inherent dangers. Basically, I feel I must expect a fatwa from the KCPA sometime in the future.

I'm in the habit of holding an inquest into my performance as a judge during the drive home. So, during the 90 minutes it took me top get home from Hailsham last night from what turned out to be one of the most enjoyable evenings I experienced in my 23 years on the circuit, I had plenty of time not only to consider the evening just past, but also the standard of photography in Kent as a whole. As far as the former is concerned, the standard of work presented to me at Hailsham was very high indeed, with the top prints being of , or close to, international exhibition standard. The same can be said of the work I judged at Eastbourne last month. Unfortunately, the work presented at both clubs represented the exception, rather than the rule, which begs the question, why?

For some years the quality of the best work seen at KCPA events has been in decline when compared with that of other Federations. I speak from both first hand experience and from listening to comments from other out of county PAGB judges who, like me, travel extensively and have noticed the gap between federations widening. The question is, why is it happening and what can be done about it.

I believe our judges can play a vital a roll by ensuring that they use a wide range of marks, thus ensuring the best get rewarded, while the lesser images are marked in such a way that the photographer concerned has an incentive to improve. Of course, lower marked images must have sensitive and informed critique to be effective. Judges have up to 20 marks (mostly) to award to each image, but so often we see a range of 16-20 used, which is an insult to the top images and gives the photographers receiving 16 of 17 little incentive to improve by giving out a false message.

Kent should be up there with the best, but until our judges do their bit and use a wide range of marks (9-20?) coupled with an honest critique, we will remain at the bottom end of the also rans.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Thank you for posting this [Richard](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773), as it is something that had to be voiced. I have been a member of Folkestone CC for 3 years, and I have enjoyed the critiques that I have received from judges like yourself, in fact you once gave me a 10 for a poor image. The

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Good judging is firstly about education and encouraging excellence. Marking sets the standard for all to see and is the only real measure of achievement.

 [Tracy Hughes](https://www.facebook.com/tracy.hughes.3192?fref=ufi) I totally agree it would be good to hear more judges score from 9-20. However, while some club members would be horrified at receiving low scores, IMO it should just encourage them to do better next time round. I know if I have received a score on the low side, and critique on how to improve an image, I have gone home and tried what the judge has suggested, I don't always agree that it improves the images, but many times it does.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Frankly, 12 or 13 shouldn't be regarded as a bad mark. Rather, it should be regarded as a base from which to work upward. Why would you worry about giving a low mark if it's deserved?

 [Tracy Hughes](https://www.facebook.com/tracy.hughes.3192?fref=ufi) I think as well as seeing how their own images do, it is human nature to want to know how others in your club do. I think from speaking to a lot of other clubs that many have a yearly competition, where the scores are added together over each of the competition rounds to find the top 3 winners at the end. Without scores this would not be possible.

improve his work.

 [Sue Chapman](https://www.facebook.com/SueChapman?fref=ufi) I do like our method at APS where we take the top 8 scoring images out of the total 12 images submitted in a season. That way if a person feels hard done by with one particular judges marks those lower scoring marks will not be needed anyway by the end of the season...... Interested to hear what methods other clubs use .......???

 [Lorraine Grey](https://www.facebook.com/lorraine.grey.5?fref=ufi) All very interesting. I know my Uncle in Wales told me his club does critique only with top 3 images and it works extremely well for them. Do we need marks simply because we are used to it? How often does the critique not match the mark?

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) A lot of the time recently [Lorraine Grey](https://www.facebook.com/lorraine.grey.5)

 [Mik Jones](https://www.facebook.com/mik.jones.906?fref=ufi) To me a 20 implies that the image is perfect. Yet every judge gives at least one 20, if not more. If there isn't a perfect image then don't give a 20.   
As Richard says we don't really need 20 points anyway. Most judges could do the job with 1 to 6, the equivalent of 15 to 20.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) [Mik](https://www.facebook.com/mik.jones.906) - most clubs actually insist that at least one 20 is given to the 'best image on the night.' I've been criticised for only giving one 20 on several occasions. After all, we are there to comply with the club's established rules which are, one would hope, the view oif the majority.

 [Roy Morris](https://www.facebook.com/roy.morris.792?fref=ufi) I'm a member of Eastbourne and Hailsham - the former uses scores, the latter doesn't. Both work but one advantage of scoring doesn't often get mentioned. Whatever words are used to critique, praise or damn an image, the only time you can be really sure of what most judges think is when the score is given.

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) …………………..I agree with [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773) we should be there to give encouragement and education. Most clubs ask for at least one 20 so we are obliged to give one, I rarely give more than 2 20,s in one class. I have said before it is not just the judges that have to change but clubs need to look at their own competitions and try something new,encourage the members to put the in new work not the same old things as mentioned earlier in the thread. Give me an image that I have to really look at to understand something that stops me makes go wow or some I don't like, a recent club comp had that I even said I don't like it but then that image has worked to have that impact on me did it score low, no it didn't as I could see the input from the photographer and it had a strong impact on me. So yes the judges need training but the clubs need to think differently as well

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Despite all the comments on this thread, I still firmly believe that much of the problem lies with those few judges, some of whom are quite experienced, who insist on marking within a very narrow range. Spoils the whole concept of club competition on so many ways. Don't be too quick to blame club culture.

 [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe?fref=ufi) Agree with your point Paul about clubs needing to encourage members to put in new work but from the other side of the coin I have often heard comments such as “only put something in that the judge will understand” from members of my club. Seems that there is an underlying idea that judges will only give good marks or comments to tried and tested compositions/subjects.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Cherry - that's where training comes in. The trouble is, there's an arrogance issue, as many volunteer judges think they can walk on water and don't need training, which many certainly do. I good photographer does not necessarily make a good judge. This is borne out by the lack of interest in previously organised training days. It will be interesting to see how many and who turn up to the May training day, and of those that do, how many take on board what they hear. Unfortunately, I shall be on holiday on the set date, so can't be there, but no doubt I'll hear about it's failure or success in double quick time after the event!

 [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe?fref=ufi) Couldn't agree more Richard with regard to the training. Maybe I should say "what training?" I don't want to upset any apple carts but since I started judging about two year's ago I haven't had any training. It was certainly a surprise to me that after a personal recommendation letter to the KCPA from my club Chairman I was not asked - or should I say be obliged to attend - at least some sort of information/training meeting before I was let loose on clubs to judge their competitions. I would say that surely clubs would have more confidence in judges if they knew they had at least had some sort of training and guidance on such things as marking first! Maybe this is going to change. I will be there in May and am interested to see what I will learn.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Well [Cherry](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe), that does explain a lot. Maybe there needs to be some structural training to help guide potential judges?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Wrong, Paul, but it isn't formalised. Speak to [Kirsty Ralfs](https://www.facebook.com/kirsty.ralfs) about it's effectuality.

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773) this is not the place for big disagreements I asked for it but never got a reply much like [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe) I was left to fend for myself the last training day I went on was lack luster with no real help.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Sorry [Richard](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773), I had in my head that training would involve some workshops occasionally, as well as mentoring?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) There have been workshops, [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52). That's where the lack of interest lies.

 [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe?fref=ufi) To be able to be "Accredited" as I have just reached (and I am proud to have got it) I had to attend a personal assessment and prove to some premier judges that I was to that standard. So in my mind it is not unreasonable to think that everyone starting out from scratch as a provisional judge, however keen, would be required to go through a similar process to assess that they are suitable and to receive some guidance, especially as to marking,

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773) what are thoughts on the form that judges have to sign and return?   
I would disagree with about having less judges if needing to attend something first southern have have had about 20 new judge's in about 2 years doing that way, to the point that when a day is listed it fills very quickly. I have also had several Kent provisional judges ask when and if they can attend sxpf workshops.   
But until the j.p change nothing will change

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Out of interest, are KCPA judges advised to judge in a particular fashion?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) No, they're not. However, like the rest of us, they've seen the more experienced judges perform, so that should help them understand what is generally acceptable to most clubs.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Thinking about the Judge's Panel for a moment, if there's perceived to be a problem with it now, imagine what it will be like in a few years time when the current members retire. There are currently no potential replacements who have gained much significant experience judging the big federation level competitions, PAGB events and major exhibitions. This could present a problem in the future even at club level.

 [Kirsty Ralfs](https://www.facebook.com/kirsty.ralfs?fref=ufi) I would like to confirm that there IS a mentoring system in place within the KCPA and I took full advantage of this . How did it happen? simple ... my first ever judging was at Invicta in where Richard Walton & Glynn Bareham were present ( a definite baptism of fire!) At the end of the evening I was told by both that I was welcome to accompany them on their bookings , so that's what I did . It does entail the provisional judge making the effort of looking at the Premier Judge's bookings & going out several times a week to honour all commitments but boy it is worth it . Whilst judging alongside a Premier judge ( who will correct you if you're wrong! ) is an intimidating process initially it certainly makes you grow a pair!!!   
Please don't think for a moment that the judges panel have no idea how the provisional judge is performing ... trust me ... they have eyes & ears in every club you visit , and are supporting you every step of the way . Without the support of Richard Walton & the other Premier judges I would not have made Accredited judge within my first 6 months on the circuit . Proof that the system is in place & works effectively , however one does need to make the effort to ask!

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) In reply to the essence of what [Richard](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773) had to say at the beginning of this conversation; surely every club in every district or county will go through peaks and troughs with the quality of their work? I accept the view that the quality of the work in Kent may have declined compared to other federations, but it may be a trough that we're going through rather than thinking it's some kind of underlying deficit - and I certainly wouldn't attribute much of that to the quality of the judging. IMHO the culture that exists within club photography just simply isn't moving enough with the times, and is unable to inspire enough younger talent to come through and replenish and change things accordingly. Speaking as a 54 year old, we all know how tough it is to change and learn new things as you get older, but if you are paying your membership and providing most of the bums on seats - why should you have to change or learn new things?! Sadly, I think club photography will either metamorphose into something that reflects our rapidly changing times (flickr, 500px, instagram, etc), or it will die along with it's patrons!

 [Tracy Hughes](https://www.facebook.com/tracy.hughes.3192?fref=ufi) The main thing I have noticed is that internal competition judges score very differently to those in external competitions, mainly due to the full range of scores being used by others, and only a few KCPA judges. Thus, some club members think their images would do well else where, like for example BPE's and Salons, distinctions etc and get a shock when they don't. It is also unfortunate that full critique cannot be given by many of our judges mainly due to no thought of their own, ie lack of time to judge so many images in a 1-2 hour period.

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) Kirsty Ralph I asked for 12 months about judging never got a reply, asked about mentoring again nothing, I also judge at invicta early in my first year with [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773) & Glyn in the audience but I was not offered anything. We also have to careful what is written here as things can Easily be miss read and I think the general feel is all good.   
Again Richard aluds to why he left, run out of bricks fortunately I live near brick a manufacturer so should be OK for a while, at the last delegates meeting the members asked for judges forum day, this meet huge resitence from certain parts of the committee, the clubs at the agm have to ask and it should be the job of the committee to carry that out. Also a proper debate could carried out with things being understood we can't read the body language on Facebook to see the context of what was meant

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) Tracy Higher 4 years no training from KCPA, sxpf trained now also assist in training @ sxpf and southern counties, but in the eyes of the j.p I don't have experience

 [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe?fref=ufi) I do have to ask that if there is a 'KCPA Mentoring Scheme" then how do new provisional judges find out about it? There is nothing on the website and there is no "information pack" or introductory phone call telling you what is available. Kirsty was lucky to have two premier judges offering this to her and I am pleased for her that this helped her, although maybe the approach would not suit everyone. Just think that if there is such a scheme available to all new judges then this information should be made available.

 [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14?fref=ufi) Anyone got ideas on mentoring that doesn't involve the Premier judges so much as they justifiably say they are too busy? But equally are not so willing to involve others, there must be a way forward to direct and enthuse new prospective judges. They does need to be a plan, not just be told to read the Judges Procedure.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52) - yes, SOME clubs go through peaks and troughs, however most don't to any great degree. [Paul](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall) - [Kirsty](https://www.facebook.com/kirsty.ralfs) was 'spotted' as a rapidly rising talent way after you first came to Invicta and also had the advantage of living within easy travelling distance of where we both live. Also, she was very much the guinea pig for us to see whether a mentoring system was feasible. It was a resounding success with her, but the next provisional judge I offered mentoring to told me they didn't need it! BTW, that same person is still a provisional judge.

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) I have been told on more than one occasion I am not qualified to do any thing and as you know [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14) we have already had one idea bulked at but your comment is spot we need a plan

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) BTW, there was no help of any sort when most of us started judging, which begs the question, why is it so desperately important now.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) It's desperately wanted now, because too many judges are not very good. New judges need all the help they can get! lol

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Yes, the KCPA needs a plan. That shouldn't be too much of a problem. I suggest a good place to start would be to look at how other federations manage their judging schemes. However, the question must first be asked as to whether they are suffering the same problems that we are. My guess the answer will be yes.

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) Sussex clubs are part of the KCPA but on more than one occasion the clubs have meet with that type of comment "why are Sussex clubs in kent" and while I don't take your comment as a personal dig I judge a lot in Kent so the travel would not be that bad.   
So how do I become a premier judge when next year i have lots in West Sussex.   
Maybe the sxpf should go alone?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Finally, why is it that the KCPA receives so few official complaints about judges through the established channel? I'm out, but will continue to read any future posts that may occur. Bye!

n the audience listening to the judges' critiques and took on board what they said, even when they were discussing other people's images. Not every judge was great but I would say 90% were very good in those 2 years. This year, I sat through the first few judges and thought along with other more experienced members how awful their judging was. Their inability to critique properly, on occasions stating how an image had a multitude of faults but still scored it 17+ points and on one occasion declaring it the winner. I wrote to [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14) about my feelings, and fair enough she instituted a feedback mechanism for the following judges. Unfortunately, these events coincided with a house move, and I no longer had the same drive to submit images for competitions (other than one that was judged by Glyn) and stopped attending. I am not sure how other clubs function, but Folkestone CC is heavily weighted towards competitions with the odd guess speaker, and a few practical evenings. The only way its members learn and improve their photography is through the critiques they receive, and as of this year there is no division which may or may not put added pressure on the judges to critique without being harsh. From my own personal view point, bad judges can only result in poorer standard of photography and may also be detrimental to recruiting and maintaining active club membership.

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) I think most of us agree that there is an issue with the standard of judges at present, there are a few really good judges and their names are known by every club and they are booked up well in advance, unfortunately not every club is able to fill their competition calendar with them, and has to take a chance on those that are available. I can imagine that in a few years time when the small pool of good senior judges depletes and replaced by an even smaller pool of good upcoming judges, Kent will be in a situation where most club competitions will be judged by at best mediocre judges. My question is how long will the club members maintain their enthusiasm for competitions? And if their enthusiasm declines, how long will they continue to be members? To maintain adequate membership, will the clubs shift their emphasis away from competitions altogether?

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Correct me if I am wrong. The KCPA has an obligation under its constitution to " providing and maintaining a high standard judging and lecturing service" If enough membership clubs write to them and express their concerns about the current level of judges and their fears of future impact, do they not have an obligation to at least investigate and review?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) The Judge's Panel receives a continuous update on the performance of judges from many sources. However, it is powerless to act without official complaints from (I believe) at least 2 clubs.

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Each judge logs which clubs they have judged at through the year to the KCPA who then sends out a standardised satisfaction questionnaire to the clubs. The judge also completes a reflective assessment on what they thought went well, and when things didn't go too well and what their aims are for the upcoming year. A meeting is then arranged with a premier judge, who then goes through the feedback from the clubs and the judge's own. This will give the judge an idea of where they have been good and what areas of improvement they could make with the support of the premier judge. This will also serve to give the KCPA quality assurance about their judges.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Providing feedback is only one facet of the problem though. As it has already been pointed out; if potential judges are not taking full advantage of any training, workshops or mentors along the way - how are we supposed to get good judges? From what I've read on this page - what motivation will anybody have ( apart from a love of photography) to become a judge?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) I comes down to the old chestnut. Who's going to do it? How are you to monitor a judge's performance during the year, and who's going to do it.? What's the cure for apathy?

 [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14?fref=ufi) Richard Walton states earlier in his thread he wasn't given help when he started judging, what has changed, why do people need help now? I would suggest that it's possibly the camera club member that is undergoing a metamorphosis! They are more demanding, vocal and vote with their feet, less tolerant of mediocrity. In our own home we now have the ability to fast forward the boring bits, switch channels and turn off our entertainment at the press of the button on our remote if we so desire. Without a remote control how do we keep our club evenings "fresh"? Prevent newer members from pressing the button and never coming back? How do we attract eloquent, knowledgeable prospective Judges to the circuit? What is the future of our Camera Clubs? There is dissatisfaction out there in some of our Clubs and in the wider community of the KCPA, vocalised at club level and at present with the discussion on Facebook. At the start of Richard's discussion he asked how we could raise the quality of Photography in the KCPA. How can this be achieved? There are great suggestions out there on how to improve the assessment of Judges. Lots of "Talk" but how, can all this start to be implemented, in a sensible time frame. As Richard knows there are "Brick Walls", things do move slowly. But what should we prioritise on in the KCPA ? And how can we bring about change? All sensible suggestions will be considered. But just to put things in perspective the KCPA committee is made up of regular Club members, Judges, and Premier Judges who volunteer and work to control things within the wider community of Associate Clubs. We have limitations, and we work democratically which means sometimes when some of us try to implement change we are outvoted.

 [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14?fref=ufi) Chicken and Egg very apt for today! So ideas please how to raise the standards. As discussed earlier in the thread some put images before judges to get the points for "Gongs" Put safe images in that they think the judge will like and score higher. The adoption of Critique and Assessment of images with verbal involvement from the photographer, of what he/she was trying to achieve may go some way to inspire photographers to try new things, to see things differently and to improve aspects of their photography, to showcase risky images perhaps. There will be resistance to this in FCC as the competitive instinct is alive and kicking in the club, I know it's human nature to bask in the glory of a twenty, and to be slightly demoralised by low points, so take away this element of dissatisfaction with marking, would we all be "Happy Bunnies" The judges too may enjoy the removal of the worry of matching points to comments possibly the biggest criticism there is of their performance. I will propose it at the AGM, undoubtedly heated discussion will ensue. At whatever level we can never please everyone but our hobby is meant to be fun too!!!!

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) A decent judge will not have a problem matching comments with marks. The issue is that when many judges mark, even if they know their commentary has merited a 12 or less, they are too worried about whether their kudos as a judge may be compromised so give a 17 or even 18. I've seen it this season from one experienced judge who frequently criticises narrow marking, yet doesn't seem to be brave enough to put his money where his mouth is. There is not a judge ANYWHERE who doesn't get slagged off equally as much as he/she gets praised. It goes with the territory. If you crave being liked by everyone, you shouldn't be judging, because there will always be someone in the audience who thinks you're a twat whatever you say, however you mark. Believe it!

 [Nigel Jones](https://www.facebook.com/nigel.jones.77985?fref=ufi) A very polarising discussion. There is one Premier judge that when I see that person's name down for a competition I have serious doubts about entering as I am convinced that this person is bored of looking at the images and the comments reflect that, and the scores this person gives bear no relevance to the critique on many occasions. Others think the sun shines out of this judge's backside. And therein lies the problem, you simply cannot please all the people all the time and the task of a judge is a thankless one (in many cases)……………….  
  
[Paul Davison](https://www.facebook.com/paul.davison.1044?fref=ufi) Have just spent the last hour or so going through this debate from OP to latest post.  
I have no desire to become a judge but have found the thread an ‘interesting read. Putting the mentoring / training issue to one side, two of our visiting judges this year have echoed Richards thoughts regarding the difficulty of score distribution. It’s easy to work out those at the top of the pile and deserve the 20s. It’s easy to work out those that should be at the bottom. But how to distribute the scores in the middle? What is the ‘real’ difference between a 16 & 17 or 17 & 18?  
We do not differentiate between members so in the same competition we’ll have a new members first ever competition entry pitted against someone who has been involved in photography for 40+ years. I’m sure many judges err on the side of caution, where they know there is no distinction, and therefore don’t want to put people off from what can be a fulfilling pastime.  
But it’s a competition – not everyone can win – many should be prepared to be disappointed.  
Our most recent judge commented that – if I score an image 7/10 then the member will be happy thinking that’s quite close to the top. But if I score then image 14/20 then the image is seen as a failure – when in fact both scores are the same!  
I’m sure many judges would be happy to award just 1st, 2nd and 3rd but it’s the clubs that insist on a score being applied for league and aggregate competitions, ours included. Clubs use the leagues to permit the more consistent photographer to succeed as opposed the member that submits just one or two stunning images in a season.  
Perhaps we should adopt the trends of social media. Invite the judge to appraise the image then ask the attending membership: Do you ‘Like’ this image, can I have a show of thumbs up? The image with most ‘likes’ wins! (This is not a serious proposal).  
We’ve held critique evenings over the last few years (inviting a few of the premier judges) and have been somewhat bemused with the outcome. Being an ‘informal’ evening there is opportunity for appraiser-photographer interaction – yet many members don’t want to own up to the image being theirs!  
Some members take on the advice and when putting the image forward into competition you see how the edits have improved the image, the critique and score reflects the improvements.  
Other members ‘know better’ and flatly refuse to make any edits, receive similar feedback and leave unhappy after receiving a score at the lower end of the range that evening.

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) A many great comments and thoughts on the whole topic, a few things I have picked out while away. The TV now has painting competitions but have you noticed that offer a critic then pick a winner no score attached? I would agree with [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?hc_location=ufi) (not on everything) the standard in the KCPA is not high at all clubs, club members need to go the county events, Ross Cup, Diamond Jubilee and even the exhibition selection this year to see the standard from other clubs and its members. But they the same old excuses to far, didn't know, it classes, we need to find a way to change this as well. I have a workshop that is free to all clubs about getting the PAGB awards which also shows the standard and how to achieve this but the again the clubs need to book it to see it. So with the comments and suggestion how many of you will be at the agm to raise these questions? I already sit on the KCPA committee and want it to change but at the moment I feel that the committee make some decisions that the clubs didn't want, I want the clubs to say we want ................... then it is the job of the committee to make it happen. We need workshops not just on judging but on Awards for merit, I also think we should have a programme secretary's workshop to help clubs not just with information but how to run an club evening and yes I would run or assist in running these.

 [Tracy Hughes](https://www.facebook.com/tracy.hughes.3192?fref=ufi) Totally agree with you [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?hc_location=ufi), however getting members to go along to events like the Ross Cup & Diamond Jubilee is often met with resistance, a lot are just not interested however much encouragement they get. Why? Well who knows maybe they just see competitions as internal events, where they are happy to get their 16-20 scores and don't want to see what standard of photography that is out there and put forward by other clubs.

 [Lorraine Grey](https://www.facebook.com/lorraine.grey.5?fref=ufi) [Nigel Jones](https://www.facebook.com/nigel.jones.77985?hc_location=ufi) it could be just critique. This may help to encourage some to take on board the advice given to improve their images ready for external competitions? We all know we have a blind spot when it comes to our own work and lots just feel their work is not of a standard for external competitions.

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Judging is a thankless task, and I admire those that choose to give their free time to it, and each judge will have their own motivation for doing it. Surely, if their motivation is good, then it would be in their best interest to openly welcome training/mentorship at the beginning and regular appraisals to help further their knowledge and skills. The most knowledgeable person may be an awful public speaker and vice versa with every combination in between. Everyone can benefit from feedback and personal development, this is where the KCPA should act, giving clubs reassurance that the judge they have booked is of the expected standard.

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Like most things that are meaningful, it will be difficult to get going until one has created mass. The first step would involve the KCPA to write to each member club/association informing them of the issues, and the potential steps needed to rectify and ensure future viability. Get each to sign up to the plan. Collect a list of all judges active in the region, and those that would like to become one. Utilise the experience of premier judges and those on the panel to formulate a standardised curriculum for new judges for accreditation for new judges and the appraisal process for current judges. Collect annual feedback from membership, and tweak system as needed.

 [Vince Winter](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?fref=ufi) Speaking as an inexperienced judge(Coming to the end of my second season). If clubs are happy to invite a particular judge to their club on a regular basis does this not indicate their approval of level of judging the judge is giving. I for one have had a very busy season, driving long distances to clubs after a full day at work. Judging is something I really enjoy even though comments and scoring of images is always under the microscope. One other point I would like to raise is, does that the continuous subject of the level of judging undermine judges. Making them question their motivation to carry on :~)

 [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe?fref=ufi) n my experience it is not the difficulty in getting the horse to water, its the lack of water! The forthcoming training day is the first that I have heard of (unless I have missed hearing of any!? in the two years since I started judging). If clubs want judging standard to improve then rather than complaining about them, why not lobby the KCPA for regular, effective, training and monitoring - not just relying on Chinese whispers. Provisional judges should move on when ready to be accredited (but not be allowed to stay as provisional indefinitely) and eventually they may make premier so it makes sense to me to put as much effort as possible to get things right at the beginning i.e. I don't think that just a character reference letter from a club is enough.

[Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Well said [Cherry Larcombe](https://www.facebook.com/cherry.larcombe?hc_location=ufi), it is imperative that clubs formalise the process with the KCPA, this will enable new judges to see a clear progression pathway. To improve where we are at present will take investment. Those who have decided to become judges like yourself and [Vince Winter](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?hc_location=ufi) should have clear support and training from the get go, not when you are 2 years into it. I am hoping that those who have voiced their opinions in this discussion will take it up with the KCPA and not let it drift, so that we find ourselves having this same discussion in a year or 2 time.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Very quickly, [Paul](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?hc_location=ufi) made a point that "club members need to go to the county events, Ross Cup, Diamond Jubilee and even the exhibition selection", which is good advice. However, a real eye opener would be for those same people to visit similar events in other federations to realise just how far behind the KCPA is falling.

 [Sue Chapman](https://www.facebook.com/SueChapman?fref=ufi) An idea other clubs might like to think about: - there are several people at Ashford who regularly enter the Nationals and Internationals and as such between us we get quite a variety of CD's and catalogues supplied which we have agreed to bring in and share with our members. This, we hope, will inspire, stimulate and encourage them to a) experiment themselves with new ideas and b) perhaps consider competing at something wider than just the local / KCPA events. Having said that most of these are all on-line to view anyway but it's a bit like having a book beside you and picking it up to browse occasionally as opposed to sitting and looking at a computer screen for even longer than we do now.......... Hoping that we can raise Ashford's game by doing so. We have also been running various workshops in photography techniques, Photoshop and Lightroom so we are attempting to push ourselves onwards and upwards......

 [Chris Philipson](https://www.facebook.com/chris.philipson.9?fref=ufi) Phew, I've read and speed read most of the comments here:-  
Marks. We had a judge from SPF recently who spread the marks out and gave honest critique such as picking up on over sharpening etc. marks ranged from 12 to 20. the judging split opinion in the club and one member was incredibly rude in his post completion comments to the judge. I and quite a few others thought that the judging was a breath of fresh air!  
Seeing other Federations work. I've many times said at our committee meetings that I have a red spot on one of my walls with the slogan underneath "beat Head Here!". Trying to get members to get to SxPF or KCPA competitions or going to see judging is met with blank stares as if to say "now why should I do that?". I have always maintained in my 13 years as external comp secretary that it is more than good for the soul to go to such competitions and see other club's, federation's etc work. I've attended the PAGB national 3 times in the past 4 years. I'd recommend it to anyone even just once: go and see what Wigan 10, Inn Focus, Smetwick, Carluke etc are doing and get a feel for the standards achieved.  
Get your club to organise SIGs (special interest groups) to help with digital processing, portraiture etc, etc.  
Club Competions: I used to be chairman of a local swimming club before joining my photo club. There is a similarity: many swimmers were happy to stay "in club competitions" where they knew that they'd get a podium place but try getting them into the KCPA Ross Cup equivalent of swimming at County, Southern Counties or National Level... Beat head here! And so it is at my club as far as entering or submitting work for external competitions. Self interested stagnation rules ok!  
Marks or just critique: we used to operate a different system altogether. Gold, Silver and Bronze. The system used to confuse judges who were accustomed to points systems so when we switched from SPF to KCPA we adopted what we understood to be the industry standard. We have had arguments recently of going over to critique only with no marks and it's not seen as the preferred method. We have had an annual members judging evening where a Competions is judged by a panel of 3 judges. It was quite a good idea as it mirrored at club level what happens at higher level in the KCPA exhibition.   
Judges comments: fully aired in the previous posts and it is clear that a system such as Kirsty Ralfs went through is needed on a formal basis. Both Kirsty and Richard Walton came to our club and it was refreshing to see a "trainee" being mentored. But why does the KCPA seem to be agreeing that there might be a problem and yet at the same time appears to sit on its hands?  
International Catalogues, CDs etc: Encourage clubs to set at least one club night a year to view some of the CDs or set up SIGs to view outside of a club night and discuss the content.  
Organise club trips to see national and internationally rated exhibitions of photography and art for inspiration.  
I could go on.....  
Finally, coming back to judges. I personally love all sorts of genres in photography and will have a crack at any subject. Steam is one of my genres that I work in and recently I assisted on a Permajet Train to Print weekend. However, a judge at our club the other night wrote off a steam picture ( not one of mine) with the statement that steam pictures are not really for photographic clubs but should be better shared within groups that are only interested in it. This judge comes regularly to my club and says the same thing every time: hence I always put a steam image in just to wind him up!!

[Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Actually [Tuan](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?hc_location=ufi), it's a tried and tested method that has brought a lot of success to our club. We have a few members who use the same subject everytime, but consistently do well in our internal competitions and do well in external competitions. They could be considered somewhat prosaic subjects, but they are images that can easily be identified with - especially by our older members. The problem can be when you introduce subjects such as abstract or contemporary architecture, and sometimes people are not able to identify with it so easily - so it is quickly dismissed without any real engagement taking place. I have found that this happens with some of our judges as well. It' s usually the 'safe' images that usually win.

 [Duncan Armour](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?fref=ufi) If any club wants to change the way scoring is done by judges at their club the solution is probably quite simple..... provide the judge with some guidance as to your expectations, preferably in written form. If you want the majority of the marks to be in the range of 13-15 (insert your own numbers ) then tell the judge and I suspect that you get what you ask for! If you want a score of 20 reserved for ,an international/national/county standard image then most judges would attempt to comply. At the moment though we have a culture where lower marks are met with sharp intakes of breath and occasionally the expression of horror verbally or by email later. It is a very rare club though that gives me any indication of what they want though, and it would be easy for clubs to give guidance as to their aspirations for the scoring. Without that why should you be surprised that some judges will try and please the audience?

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) I don't agree with that at all, and one of the major problems we have in club photography. The judge should be completely independent and not be swayed by the club at all. In fact judges should get together and agree that they will mark images as they see fit. Clubs would soon get use to it. The present system is painful to watch (see my previous post 13x 17, 11x 16 marks out of 31 images).

[Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Your theory is possibly right, [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?hc_location=ufi), but one bad experience and the the judge in question will simply not be invited back. Also, you contradict yourself with your final sentence. No club I know of would sanction such ridiculous marking.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) If all judges stuck to the same rules, clubs would have to invite you back because you would all do the same. If a judge is explaining the reasons as to why he giving a poor mark, and still using the kiss-slap-kiss method - then the member should have the good fortitude to go away and learn from his experience. As for the last sentence: l fail to see how giving 24 out of 31 images more-or-less the same marks (probably because the judge didn't want to upset anybody) is contradictory?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) So, you're suggesting that the a tight marking judge should use his own discretion and give a result such as that in your last sentence, whereas most clubs wants a range of marks? Surely, that's a contradiction? You're also suggesting that all judges should be clones of each other. I don't think so!.

 [Duncan Armour](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?fref=ufi) Well Roy I'd be equally happy to see a KCPA directive to judges suggesting a harmonised scoring system but would clubs agree? But for the time being clubs could at least promote the fact that they would welcome a wider range of scores. Any club could achieve that quite quickly. Personally I don't see that as being any different to getting advice before a competition as to what the individual club rules are for their nature/pattern/creative etc competitions. If a club really told me they want all the scores between 17 and 20 I'd suggest they need a different judge for the evening and everyone will be happy!

[Chris Philipson](https://www.facebook.com/chris.philipson.9?fref=ufi) This discussion seems to have gone "off piste". Richard Walton was remarking on his feelings about standards at two Sussex members of the KCPA: Hailsham and Eastbourne and was wondering why the KCPA as a whole seems to have fallen behind national trends and wondered whether it was anything to do with marking by judges; i.e. To either judge with a range of marks from 9 to 20 or to play safe (with a club audience) and mark between 16 and 20. If you had attended the Diamond Jubilee recently you would have seen the former in action! Some old hands may not have liked it but 16 to 20 marking range is not separating the wheat from the chaff.  
Get club members off their sofas or away from their iNac screens to see what other clubs, federations etc are doing.  
If not, then don't blame all the judges all of the time. Change has also to come from the grass roots:- the affiliate club members of the KCPA.

 [Sue Chapman](https://www.facebook.com/SueChapman?fref=ufi) I gave a 12 last year to an image at a top rated club and yes,as per comments above it was greeted with a few gasps of horror. A few people came up to me at the end of the evening and said how "brave" I was giving such a low mark and that they totally agreed with the score, but that very few judges would have marked it as such.... In some ways I felt really awful about it but in other ways I thought why shouldn't I? The image wasn't sharp, the composition was poor, it was more a day out "snap shot" type image etc etc. etc. imho. I still feel justified in marking it a 12, in fact if I was feeling really brave I might have even given it a 10 BUT one of the reasons I tend at the moment not to go lower than a 12 is because of the "norm" type expectancy within club culture and because I have only been judging for a couple of years. Hummmmm..... I havent been invited back ....as yet!......

 [Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) Over the last few days we have read a lot about judges and our own expectations of them and the KCPA, we seem to forget that the club has an equally important role to play in expectation management. If the club collective feel that the club ethos is less about photography but more about getting out and socialising with photography as an enabler, they should make this clear to the judges along with their expectations. If a club wants to be competitive and are actively seeking to improve their photographic standards, they should explain this to their members that they will receive high scores if merited but to also expect low scores if does not, and advise the judges of this. When you have an audience of vastly differing expectations is when the unfortunate judge can become unsettled.

[Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) As said previously [Sue](https://www.facebook.com/SueChapman?hc_location=ufi), judging is a thankless task, the least a club can do to help is to manage member's expectations. As you attend both Ashford & Folkestone, those expectations are completely different, but we still expect the judges to do the same job at both.

[Tuan Nguyen](https://www.facebook.com/TuanLightReflex?fref=ufi) An ego boosting 20 points lasts the evening and may prolong into the night when it is proclaimed on FB or other social media. A good critique with tips on how to improve or do things differently can initially sting but will stimulate the mind to ponder way after the 20 point winner's FB message has disappeared lost amongst other inane streams.

 [Vince Winter](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?fref=ufi) Having read all the posts about judging over the last couple of days it seems to me the system is best left alone with maybe a little bit of honing. For our less experienced judges(in which i include myself), a probational period with mentoring with a more experienced judge which would help the less inexperienced have more creditability to the clubs. Photography is an art and so can be interpreted in so many different ways. We all have our favourite judges when they come to our clubs and more often than not its because we like the way they judge or the way they see the world. I disagree with giving low marks such as 12 as I would hate to be the judge to demotivate a person from entering further competitions. Constructive and positive critique on how to improve an image is more important. I normally say to the audience at clubs to take away one thing you have learnt about either your own photography or someone else's rather that the score. This is own opinion which everyone my judge as wrong and why I have to admit I'm struggling with my future judging aspirations because threads like this make me feel unqualified.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) [Vince](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?hc_location=ufi), having seen you judge at Invicta a couple of weeks ago, you certainly are not 'unqualified'. You did a splendid job in terms of both critique and marks given, and that is a general view and not just mine. Expect a return invitation before long. Please bear in mind, Invicta are one of many clubs who prefer a judge to give a wide range of marks. It really is important and puts everything into perspective. Unfortunately, we've suffered from narrow marking on a couple of occasions this season which completely mucked up the middle ground of our leagues meaning that, other than those at the top end, nobody had a clue as to what level there photography was at.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) While most judges are photographers, judges should be seen as a completely different entity and respected as such with their own authority concerning what they can and cannot do. This would include the remit of using a scoring system of their own choosing - and would not be under the auspice of the clubs. If a judge feels that a standard at a club would require a 0-20, rather than a 0-10, he/she makes the decision to do that. If a club's standard is not so high, the he/she could use 0-10 with half marks. After all, if 4 or 5 becomes the minimum standard, it may not seem as offensive as a 12 out of 20. If a club realises that a judge is using a 0-10 system, l would like to think the club would realise that their club needs to up their game and raise it accordingly. Clubs would know where they stand as far as their standard is concerned and judges would gain more respect.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Gonna put the cat amounst the league tables. Out of 10 one week and 20 the next? I really feel that is unworkable for both clubs and judges, especially the less experienced, as swapping from one system to another can be very confusing in ones formative years.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) You say, "If a judge feels that a standard at a club would require a 0-20, rather than a 0-10, he/she makes the decision to do that. ". So this week, Eric Knobtwaite thinks the club is worth of being marked out of 20, but next week, Fred Gutbucket thinks the club's only worthy of 0-10. So, it would result in total confusion for all concerned, surely?

[Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Ok, lets say Tonbridge is one of the best clubs in the county. It is well recognised within the KCPA that Tonbridge nearly always produces outstanding images and they win many awards - as well as international. If many experience judges recognise that, you may all think it right that it merits using the 0-20 system because generally, photographers will score high there, and photographers will appreciate the 17's, 18's, 19's and 20's. If you know of a club where usually the standard is not great, you might not feel so good about giving a justifiably low mark, but instead of giving them higher mark because you don't want complaints - you use the 0-10 system, and maybe give them a 5. You may say 'it is broad as its long', but you are more likely not going to get gasps of horror from the audience. Its all about perception. They use it in the advertising industry all the time. It's not necessarily about fooling people, but giving them something that is more palatable!

 [Paul Dunmall](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?fref=ufi) This has gone off track a touch the OP was about image standard and now we are talking about scoring club comps. Judging is always a hot topic where ever it appears, always lots of thoughts and ideas, again it has been mentioned more than once on this tread we need solid ideas with a willings for the people to be involed. I went judging becasue of the all the above issue as I felt I couldnt complain while sitting in the crowd but now I judge I feel I can complain. So who is going to have some thing of a structure that can be presented at the AGM for the committee to work on, with or with out the J-P on board

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Have to disagree with you [Paul](https://www.facebook.com/paul.dunmall?hc_location=ufi), scoring at clubs and the roles that judges play have a big influence on image standards. If a judge gives a high score for a mediocre image (because they were worried about giving it a low mark); the photographer will walk away with the impression that the image was better than it really was! So when he/she next gets a bad mark, and he/she thought it deserved better - we're back in the loop where people are always complaining about judges.

 [Duncan Armour](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?fref=ufi) Speaking personally, I don't aim to judge using any sort of standard scale. I judge what I see on the night relative to the other images that are presented. So a weak image at a club where the average standard might be lower could well do better than it would at a club with more experienced photographers. Scoring for me is about indicating a relative preference. Which means that if I am judging at a club like Tonbridge for example, my hands aren't.tied to the 17-20 range - I'll still aim to spread the scores out. Reputation and history doesn't count for much anyway - the last couple of years have seen several of the big clubs challenged by others, and that is how it should be.

 [Graham Miles](https://www.facebook.com/graham.miles.96?fref=ufi) I have to say Richard that I don’t agree that judges improve the standard of club photography. If photographers really want to get on and improve their overall standard of photography they will see what is being done nationally and set about reaching that standard irrespectively of various judges’ comments. You know as I do this same old subject was talked about in the early 1980’s and probably many years before that. Very seldom do judges agree with each other on any particular picture. What you can say about judges is that if they all agree that a picture is good and keeps scoring highly then that picture probably makes the grade and the same goes for the pictures that constantly score very low.

[Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) There's no one thing that contributes to your standard of photography. Even those who claim they are completely self-taught probably read loads of photography manuals. So neither can judges be attributed to solely making or breaking a photographer. But some photographers will put images into a competition just to get some feedback from a judge - or even win the competition! So how much influence do you think a judge has if he actually wins the competition, or fails miserably and complains about the judge? I'd like to think that my standard of photography has had a multitude of influences, of which l can honestly say - no judge has had, but those who rely on competing against others for that illustrious first prize just might!

[Kev Bell](https://www.facebook.com/KevBellPhotos?fref=ufi) Just to get back on track, Richard’s main points are (I think):   
1) “….the gap between federations (is) widening. The question is, why is it happening and what can be done about it.”  
2) “…..our judges (should) do their bit and use a wide range of marks (9-20?) coupled with an honest critique…..”  
I really don’t wish to undermine the KCPA or criticise all the hard work that the KCPA committee does, but the answers to Richard’s questions must partly sit in their quarter which I will come back to.  
Richard makes a valid point that good judges do help to improve the standard of photography in camera clubs. However, I don’t believe using a full range of marks and giving lower scores for poor images has much to do with why KCPA clubs are falling behind. BTW, I’m not suggesting that using a wide range marks is incorrect. Put yourself in the position of a novice/intermediate club photographer who has entered an image that has little to offer in terms of composition, impact, quality etc. The ideal outcome for the photographer is if the judge points out what has been done well, points out what could have done better and how this could have been achieved at the time of capture and in post capture editing. If this is done correctly then the whole audience should understand the image presented is not a good example and hopefully many will have learnt a little from the comments. Let’s say the next image to be shown has plenty of merit in all departments; surly the judges role is now to point out (mainly for the sake of the lesser talented members) what makes it a good image so that others have an understanding of what is required to make a good image. IMO this is the main area where judges can make the contribution in improving standards. If I was a novice photographer and my score of 10 informed me I am 7 points away from the better photographers in the club without being told how to improve, it would simply discourage me from entering again. Correct scoring (if there is such a thing) is important but careful and thoughtful comments are far more important. Probably the most frequent complaints I hear about KCPA judges (including premier judges) is inconsistent marking. This might be highlighted by the judge’s comments not matching the score given, or as perceived by several in the audience. Often I’ve heard statements like “X image was clearly better than Y image but X received a lower score!”. Unfortunately a lot of this is down to individuals’ perception but I can’t help feeling that a lot of judges are overwhelmed with the number of images presented and find it difficult to remember all the images and keep a clear ranking of images in their head. This usually results in good scoring for the best images and also for the lower merited images because they are easier to place correctly in the ranking, e.g. either in the 12 to 14 range or in the 18 to 20 range. I have witnessed this on countless occasion and those in-between images appear to receive completely random mid-range scores. This simply frustrates members and puts them off being part of club competitions and from ever reaching the standard required at county and national level. I believe Richard is referring to inconsistent scoring when he talks about lack of scoring strategy.  
So, the main question is what can be done about this. Getting back to the KCPA role in all this – my personal opinion (I realise will make me unpopular with many) is that the KCPA should have much greater input in bringing judges together so they are able to learn from each other. The KCPA should be more willing to look further afield other than a once a year judges’ training day that has followed a very similar format for many years, and which IMO, does little to maintain judges’ development. I have attended a judges training day run by the Sussex Photographic Federation; this was headed up by Ken Scott and I must say he did a fantastic job and I came away thinking I had learnt something. I genuinely think that the KCPA could make an improvement in the standard of Judging if they can persuade Ken Scot to head up a project to bring together judges for well organised regular judges’ workshops and also open up communication between judges, perhaps with local meetings in pubs etc. or by closed social media groups. I have the greatest respect for the KCPA judges’ panel and I have learnt a great deal from them and other judges. When it comes to training I believe it takes more than being a good photographer or a good judge, it also requires skills in training. Ken Scot is unique in being good in all three areas.  
My second suggestion is for clubs to think about asking judges not to mark out of twenty for one off club competitions. It’s very clear that a lot of judges either get this wrong or are unfairly accused of getting it wrong. IMO the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, highly commended and commended method used by some non-KCPA clubs allows the judge to concentrate on giving useful/meaningful comments (as Richard says should happen). This also allows the better images to get a second airing during a completion so that the lesser photographers understand what they should be aiming for. This system also does away with the humiliation of receiving a 10 or11while still giving these members valuable and individual comments on how to improve and what to aim for. This scoring system can also be used for club league competitions, take a look how Rod Wheelan’s club does things: [https://www.facebook.com/.../permalink/387655894648055/...](https://www.facebook.com/groups/UKPhotography/permalink/387655894648055/?comment_id=388617121218599&offset=0&total_comments=46&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R4%22%7D&hc_location=ufi)  
Thirdly I think individual clubs have a big role in improving standards as well. Things like arranging good speakers on how to improve; this might mean aiming talks for members at various levels, e.g. basic camera tips and compositions skills at one end of the scale to the other end where you might invite speakers on specialist photography, composite work, or on developing a photographer’s style. Clubs should also set aside some club evenings for workshops to cover things like editing, awards, print mounting etc., etc. Club secretaries could also seek out judges that are prepared to preview images (just look in the KCPA handbook, these judges can be identified there). If judges can find the time to study images in the comfort of their homes I feel certain it will result in much more helpful comments being given.  
Finally, how about the KCPA organising some big speaker events that the average club can’t afford to organise. Perhaps also some workshops of how to improve generally - how to output to achieve better quality print including differences in papers- how to optimise image highlights and shadows, colour spaces etc. for digital projection – I’m sure there’s lots more that can be added to this list.   
Having said all that, let’s remember that the KCPA committee, Judges and club committees give up their valuable free time so that we can enjoy our hobby – so we can hardly complain if things aren’t to our liking. I like Paul Dunmall’s approach – if want to see changes “get involved” - and there no doubt he is doing exactly that.

[Kev Bell](https://www.facebook.com/KevBellPhotos?fref=nf)‎[UK Club Photography](https://www.facebook.com/groups/UKPhotography/permalink/387655894648055/)

Does anyone have an opinion on ‘off the cuff’ scoring for club level competitions?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) ALL Accredited and Premier Judges should be able to judge off the cuff and score appropriately as a matter of course. The preview before the actual judging is critical for ALL competition. Marking 'as you go' is a big no no, although at least one Kent club have asked me to do so recently. I refused to do it for the simple reason that it is quite impossible to give accurate marks before you've seen all the images. Marking must ALWAYS be done at the end of the commentary. Arrogant though it may sound, this really isn't a subject worthy of further discussion.

 [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14?fref=ufi) Thank you Kev Bell some good and comprehensive points made and some suggestions for how to go forward, this is appreciated by the Committee. We have had more ideas posted here over the weekend than in five years of Delegates meetings! I don't believe Richard Walton realised the impact his" cannonball" would have.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) [Kev](https://www.facebook.com/KevBellPhotos?hc_location=ufi) - I agree with most of your points. However, previewing at home is not as easy as it may sound. Firstly, few judges have digital projectors and viewing on a computer screen is not a lot of use. With prints, it's a time and space issue. I will preview for the really big events, like federation competitions, but not for club stuff. The other issue with previews is that it can become very confusing, especially when you've a busy schedule. It's so easy to forget points unless you make notes, and reading from a crib sheet on the night doesn't inspire confidence from an audience.

 [Kev Bell](https://www.facebook.com/KevBellPhotos?fref=ufi) Richard, I haven’t said scoring off the cuff is a main factor contributing to the problem you have highlighted re poor standards from KCPA clubs. I certainly would not want to hear a judge trying to recite from their preview or read from notes as you have suggested. Some judges do offer to preview images in the KCPA handbook – if they are willing to do this it should make them better prepared to give valid comments on the evening. I also appreciate that premier and accredited judges should be able to score off the cuff but that doesn’t account for why many judges are inconsistent with their scores as per the complaints we hear regularly. For experienced busy premier judges I realise that previewing is out of the question for the average club competition due to their extremely busy schedule.

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Again, [Kev](https://www.facebook.com/KevBellPhotos?hc_location=ufi), I pretty much agree with you. Until fairly recently, we did have an accredited judge who read from a script, which was fascinating when the lights were out and he'd forgotten how to interpret his own shorthand! 'Off the cuff preferred' I can live with for accredited judges, but not 'preview preferred'.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) I think there should be a programme of more workshops, but also seminars to enable new judges to feedback what's good and what is not working, but l don't see this happening without the commitment and guidance of the experience judges. I know how busy you are [Richard](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?hc_location=ufi), but it's simply not going to work without the likes of you bringing your valuable experience to the table!

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) In principle, I agree, [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?hc_location=ufi), but despite now being retired, with all my photography commitments plus family and other interests (such as my own photography), I simply do not have the time to do any more. If anything, I'm trying, with little success, to lessen the burden. I've been offering one-to-one help in my own home for the RPS distinctions for the past 14 years, as over 140 current LRPS and ARPS achievers can confirm. (I have 8 on the go currently) This I can fit in during the day and the occasional evening, but I can't do that with judging because, quite simply, I need to have some R&R. I will mentor on occasions and, as previously mentioned, have done so in the past, but newbie judges can't be expected to fund their own expenses (although a few will) and clubs are, understandably, reluctant to pick up the tab. As you quite rightly say, workshops and seminars are the way forward, but this takes me back to the 'you can take a horse to water' issue. Also, workshops have to timed to suit the delegates as well as the tutors, which inevitably means the weekends. Mostly, when I'm not out of county doing things for other federations, I leave weekends free for my family most of whom work and only have those 2 precious days free. I don't think I'm in a unique position by any means as I'm sure other experienced judges have similar issues. Big problem!

[Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) Well then here lies the nub of the problem! We have a judging system that is bordering on being not fit for purpose, and respectfully; the experienced judges are going to be too busy to guide and teach potential judges. From what I understand; some new judges are not always able to make workshops (we all have busy lives) or refusing mentorships. As these are voluntary roles, it might also be a lack of real commitment, if people have something on that is more pressing. What gives?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) None of the current Premier Judges, and the majority of Accredited Judges had any form of training, yet there are some very competent individuals among them. This is borne out by the fact that these judges get the bulk of the repeat bookings from the clubs. What needs to be remembered is that ALL federations have a judging problem today, just as they did when I started over 20 years ago and, no doubt, since the dawn of photographic competition. There will always be good judges, those that think they're good, bad judges and, arguably the most important and most dangerous, those who believe the votes of thanks they receive and shout about the it. The Holy Grail of judging is still to be discovered. As you say, [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?hc_location=ufi), they are voluntary rolls, but commitment to judging and photography in general can take many equally important directions.

 [Vince Winter](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?fref=ufi) As a new judge you have to be committed. Coming to the end of my second season after a demanding day at work I have travelled for over an hour judged a competition and returning home by midnight. This is done for the love of photography. What is hard is when you are criticised for not being "qualified". Every time I judge I learn something. What is great when you arrive at a club and you have two circuit judges who are on hand to give you advice . Such as what happened at invicta a couple of weeks ago. Or a judge that visits your own club who is happy to spread the knowledge. Like other new judges you watch experienced judges that visit your club and take from their practice and add it to your own :~)

 [Vince Winter](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?fref=ufi) One further thing. Maybe the KCPA could capture some talent of its audio visual world. Put together. a video and post on the official website or dvd giving tips on what a premier judge looks for in images , how pictures should be marked. Showing good practice and pit falls. That way this could be given to new judges when they start out. This way training can be more convenient to access :~)

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Excellent idea, [Vince](https://www.facebook.com/Vincewinterphotography?hc_location=ufi). [Melanie](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14?hc_location=ufi) and [Tracy](https://www.facebook.com/tracy.hughes.3192?hc_location=ufi), please put this forward to the committee at the next meeting. Probably the best and most innovative suggestion to come out of this thread.

 [Melanie Chalk](https://www.facebook.com/melanie.chalk.14?fref=ufi) Totally agree Richard, all is being noted by both Tracy and myself.   
Just to lighten the mood! Auditions will be taking place for a Premier Judge to be "The Face of the KCPA 2015" please apply via Facebook!!!!!

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Melanie - not worth entering for that. I wouldn't stand a chance against the obvious bookies favourite..........

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) [Richard](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?hc_location=ufi), what proportion of the judges that we have on circuit in Kent would you honestly say are good judges?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Dangerous question, [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.morris.792?hc_location=ufi). In all honesty, I wouldn't want to put a figure on it, partly because there are a few I've not seen in action.

[Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) We are dealing with opinions here not facts - just a rough percentage?

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) From what I have seen; 30-40% are good, while the rest range from bad to above average. So the method of bringing new judges through up until now has not been a great success? It seems a bit like sending kids to school where there are no teachers (probably going to happen soon anyway), and telling them to learn in anyway they can. Some of kids will be very resourceful and excel, whereas some will struggle! So why should we complain about those kids that struggle. Is that fair?

 [Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Sorry, [Roy](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?hc_location=ufi), but I think it would be wrong to put a figure on it. Far too subjective.

[Duncan Armour](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?fref=ufi) As a percentage of the photographers who are members of KCPA affiliated clubs the numbers who have commented here are very small, and it should be remembered that these photographers may well have a very different agenda to the majority of the membership. Most do not want to compete at County, National or International level and are not greatly fussed which KCPA club gets stuffed at Warwick each year. They do like getting some ideas on how to make their photography better and they do like bit of praise now and then in competitions. They may be very happy with the current standard of judging (apart from that mean sod who gave them a 14 last week) but generally they turn up most weeks and pay their subs. And it is the majority that keep the camera club system running by paying their fees each year. Which is why I'll always argue that it is the role of individual clubs to say what they want and give a bit of honest feedback. So if you thought there were too many scores in the 17-19 range tell the judge and rebook them a second time. If they do it again don't rebook them!

[Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) My estimate was based on the judges I've seen so far - but of course, is not indicative or representative of all judges in Kent - just a snippet of what I have witness. [Duncan](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?hc_location=ufi), you also have to take into account those who have seen this thread and not commented. Those who might have wanted to comment, but were not aware of this thread, and those who may have issues with judging, but are happy enough with what they get at their clubs without bothering to comment. I wouldn't assume that the majority of the membership in Kent would not complain about judges - based on the consensus of this thread. Maybe the KCPA could raise a questionnaire for all club members to answer this question, and how else their experience of club photography could be improved. I think that would be useful? And why do you think a judge giving a '14' was mean - what would be your minimum score?

 [Duncan Armour](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?fref=ufi) Well [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?hc_location=ufi) I'll quote myself from an email I wrote to some of the committee at Tonbridge after my last judging session in January this year. "Perhaps if I had more time to talk at the beginning it would have been useful to explain my philosophy when it comes to marking...... essentially most clubs expect us to mark out of 20 yet also expect most marks to fall between 16 and 20 making a bit of a nonsense out of the scores. So I think a bit of recalibration is required. As I am a teacher I note that 70% gets an A grade in most exams and that of course corresponds to 14 out of 20. So for an image that is competently composed, in focus and correctly exposed that is my basic starting point. So to score more than 14 there needs to be additional elements that I find pleasing - storytelling, great light, timing, action etc. Equally if there are elements that I don't like I go lower! I hope that spreading the scores out like this more clearly identifies the images that are stronger in my opinion. Certainly the scores were not substantially lower than those I have given at other clubs.  
  
Note I used the words "pleasing", "like" and "opinion" in that paragraph so this is very largely subjective, and all judging should be taken with a pinch of salt.  
  
I would much rather that your photographers spend time thinking about the comments rather than the scores. We both try very hard to explain why we think some images work better than others and is the main reason why we both prefer slightly fewer images in an evening to give us time to do it properly. There are positives and negatives to every image, but sometimes when you are commenting at a gallop it can feel more negative than desired. However, the thing I've valued the most in my time as a photographer is the frankness of the critique available.  
  
One of my favourite quotes about photography was by Ansel Adams - "There is nothing worse than a sharp image of a fuzzy concept." He was very concerned that the development of new-fangled lightweight film cameras was allowing photographers to take pictures very quickly without thinking hard enough about composition, light and emotion. So I certainly do believe that all of us as photographers need to think very hard about the question "Why am taking this photograph?" Equally, you can only get better by taking more pictures!" This was written because the view was expressed that I obviously hadn't been very impressed with the standard of images that night.

 [Duncan Armour](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?fref=ufi) And I wrote the above email as the view was expressed that I obviously hadn't been that impressed with the standard of photography that night - I did give a lot of 14s and 15s and a few 13s from memory and only a few higher scores - which is what you'll usually get if you book me! It was really good to have honest feedback from the club though as to how they interpreted the scoring on the night - and very rare in my experience.

 [Roy Smart](https://www.facebook.com/roy.smart.52?fref=ufi) I basically agree with everything you said [Duncan](https://www.facebook.com/duncan.armour.1?hc_location=ufi), especially 'photographers spend time thinking about the comments rather than the scores', but I'm still a bit confused as to why we don't have 0-10, when 0-20 has become meaningless? Even your starting point is 14 for images that have to have something extra that has additional elements. Is it unkind to give lower scores for images that have wonky horizons, flat tonality or neglected sharpness? Can a judge not explain why a he/she has scored an image lower for any one of these reasons and still maintain respect? IMO this is an obstacle we need to get round if things are going to improve.

[Richard Walton](https://www.facebook.com/richard.walton.773?fref=ufi) Human nature being what it is, I would venture to suggest that this is one obstacle we'll never get round. Even a 9 is acceptable if the judge can honestly justify it. 0-20 isn't broken anymore than 0-10 is. There's nothing to be mended. They're both the same, with 0-20 being the more common around the federations from my experience.