



LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN

ECF Mission Statement

- *‘To promote the game of chess, in all its forms, as an attractive means of cultural and personal advancement. To foster the highest level of achievement in the game. To make chess available without discrimination on grounds of colour, creed, disability, impairment, occupation, race, religious or political affiliation, or sexual orientation; and to promote equal opportunities in a positive manner.’*

In summary the objects of the ECF are:

- To encourage the study and practice of chess in England.
- To institute and maintain British Chess Championships.
- To promote national and international chess tournaments in England.
- To secure the interests of English players in foreign chess tournaments and matches.
- To support the Braille Chess Association and other chess organisations whose jurisdiction includes England.
- To secure the interests of English problemists in foreign tournaments and tourneys and to encourage English problem composers and solvers by instituting tournaments and tourneys.
- To arrange such contests, meetings, etc., as may be deemed desirable and provide and present trophies for competition to suitable organisations in England.
- To provide assistance in relation to chess to British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, which are not for the time being members of Federation Internationale des Echecs, if requested to do so.
- To maintain and increase a fund, known as the 'Permanent Invested Fund', to be permanently invested in the names of the trustees in accordance with an approved trust deed.
- To maintain a system for grading the results of games of chess players participating in its own competitions and in the competitions of member organisations.
- To make the Company's services available without discrimination on grounds of colour, creed, disability, impairment, occupation, race, religious or political affiliation, or sexual orientation and to promote equal opportunities in a positive manner.

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

SCOPE

The ECF publishes annually:

- a) a long-term Strategic Plan;
- b) a one-year Business Plan;
- c) a report against the one-year Business Plan.

The function of the Strategic Plan is to identify the long-term objectives of the ECF. An overview of the ECF business planning process is given in Section 2.

The ECF is a company limited by guarantee, whose members are regional chess organisations. The regional activities of member organisations are not addressed within this Strategic Plan.

CHANGES SINCE 2005

The previous version of this Strategic Plan was issued in October 2005 and covered the long-term planning of the ECF. The following major decision was made in June 2006: to replace the Northern Membership Scheme with a scheme that could be offered to any Union, County or league. That scheme provides that, in exchange for using best endeavours to sign players up to a membership scheme, those players would be exempt from Game Fee. The first membership organisations will be signed up shortly.

The ECF(BCF) had established itself as an agency for CRB clearance, such that chess players could seek CRB clearance for chess related activities through the ECF. However, the regulations governing CRB agencies have been changed and the ECF now handles too few CRB applications to continue to act as a CRB clearance agency. Consequently, in future the ECF will make use of the expertise of another organisation with strong links to the CCPR (Central Council of Physical Recreation).

SECTION 2 BUSINESS PLANNING

Annual ECF/BCF Business Planning Cycle

Historically, the BCF has tended naturally to react opportunistically to events at the expense of the pursuit of longer-term goals. To some extent, that is inevitable and will continue to be so. However, the ECF does want to achieve greater clarity about where the ECF is going as an organisation and, perhaps, in consequence not allow ourselves to be side-tracked into paths that may appear to be attractive in the short-term but have no real relevance to our long term goals. The ECF intends; therefore to give a greater priority to planning and measurement – to this end an annual business-planning cycle has been established.

- June: Meeting of Management Board at which any shortfalls in achievement against the previous year's annual Business Plan are discussed and any necessary amendments to the current long-term Strategic Plan are discussed.
- July-August: Preparation and agreement of Report of achievement against Annual Business Plan for previous year and new long-term Strategic Plan.
- September:/
October Long-term Strategic Plan is submitted to ECF Council for approval.
Report of achievement against Annual Business Plan for previous year is also submitted to ECF Council for approval.
- October:/
November The approved Strategic Plan is submitted to the DCMS.
The approved Report of achievement against Annual Business Plan for previous year is also submitted to the DCMS.
- January: Meeting of the Management Board devoted to Strategic Planning. This formulates top-down overall aims for the next operating year (May to April) to be captured in the Annual Business Plan. The planning process takes into account the existing Strategic Plan.
- February: Preparation of Annual Business Plan.
- March: Management Board agrees Annual Business Plan for that year and the associated financial budget.
- April: Annual Business Plan for that year and Budget submitted to ECF Council for approval.
- May: The approved Annual Business Plan is submitted to the DCMS.

SECTION 3 WHERE THE ECF IS TODAY

3.1 ECF Organisation

The ECF is the governing body for chess in England and some other British areas that do not have a national organisation (e.g. Isle of Man and Gibraltar).

Currently, the ECF is primarily a Federation of Member Organisations. There is the (voluntary) individual membership scheme, the numbers of which are increasing.

Chess is not recognised as a sport at present; discussions with Government and Sport England on recognition are ongoing.

The ECF is not eligible for charitable status at present. It is possible that changes in the law will relax the rules on eligibility. These changes are being monitored so that the ECF can benefit should the opportunity emerge. In addition, the ECF should make any necessary changes to its organisational structure to ensure eligibility for charitable status.

The 2012 Olympics provides an opportunity for support for Mind Sports events in London. This avenue is being followed up.

3.2 ECF Current Activities

Annual competitions run by the ECF include: British Championships (with events for everyone from Under-8 to veteran), National Club Championships (Open, Major, Minor, u100 Grade and Handicap Rapidplay), Grand Prix, Counties and Minor Counties Championships, Schools Chess Tournament, County & District Correspondence Chess Championships, English Seniors Championships, English Young Masters, and English Junior Individual Championship.

The ECF is responsible for the selection of English teams and individual representatives to all FIDE or European Chess Union events, including: European and World Team Championships, Chess Olympiads for Men and Women, World Championship Zonal Tournaments, World Junior Championships.

Other activities include: Junior Training Scheme, with a nation-wide network of trainers, the National Grading System (publication of the annual list and individual printouts) and appoints arbiters and finally organisation of teams for the World and European Youth Championships, U16 Olympiad, Glorney and Faber Cups (u18).

The ECF also provides Rating and Title application services for ECF members and registration services for FIDE rated events for Member Organisations.

Services provided by the ECF include Chess Insurance Schemes, Starter Pack for Beginners and general chess information leaflets. The ECF is now offering chess equipment for schools and clubs at greatly reduced rates.

The ECF also operates

- a Certificate of Excellence Scheme (sponsored by the Institute of Actuaries);
- a Chess Master Points System. This allows club players to win the title of Club Master, County Master and Regional Master.

3.3 Significant Activities Outside Of The ECF

Chess at a regional level is run by local organisations rather than by the ECF. Additionally, there are several organisations outside of the ECF that organise chess events at a national level as follows:

- a) 4 Nations Chess League. This is one of the success stories of recent years. The 4NCL is a Member Organisation of the ECF.
- b) UK Chess Challenge. This event involves 66,000 pupils and nearly 2,000 schools. It is the largest chess event nationally.
- c) EPSCA (English Primary Schools Chess Association), which organises the National Primary Schools Chess Competition, Inter Association Team Competitions (U9, U11 and Girls) and select the England Under 11 team. EPSCA is a Member Organisation of the ECF.
- d) NYCA (National Youth Chess Association), which organises inter-county tournaments for U13, U15 and U18s. NYCA is a Member Organisation of the ECF
- e) NCJS - National Chess Junior Squad; this started as the BCF Junior Squad, now incorporated as a charity. They provide coaching, competitions and foreign tournaments for the best 20 or so in each age group from U11 to U21.

3.4 Level of Chess Activity Nationally

The level of chess activity nationally (based on the last five years Grading Master lists) is as follows.

No of Results	Standard Play	Rapid play
2000/2001 season	203, 686	71, 128
2001/2002 season	208, 500	71, 651
2002/2003 season	207, 019	86, 741
2003/2004 season	206, 295	96, 043
2004/2005 season	208, 369	64, 088
2005/2006 season	201, 539	69, 066
2006/2007 season	207, 964	62, 581
Number of players with published Grading		
1999/2000 season	12, 572	
2000/2001 season	12, 488	
2001/2002 season	12, 261	
2002/2003 season	12, 468	
2003/2004 season	12, 812	
2004/2005 season	12, 237	
2005/2006 season	11, 873	
2006/2007 season	11,823	

It is difficult to determine with any confidence whether chess playing is in decline, since there is a year-to-year fluctuation of events (re)entering or dropping out of the Game Fee/Grading systems. It is possible that the numbers show an underlying annual decrease of about 1% over the last six years. Note that chess activity and number of games graded were much higher circa 1993-4 at the time of the Short boom and prior to the time when Yorkshire ran its own Grading system.

3.5 Chess and Schools

Over the last thirty years there has been a decline in the number of schools in which chess is taught. This inevitably impacts on the number of adult players. There are several initiatives that could help reverse this trend. Firstly the UK Chess Challenge (see above). Secondly, the number of schools in EPSCA's Primary Schools Championships is increasing every year. The ECF's own schools championship is encouraging secondary schools to put second teams in and primary schools to enter with greatly reduced entry fees. Finally, a 'Chess in Schools Project' initiative was run in co-operation with the Department of Education & Skills. Coming out of this exercise the ECF needs to prepare information on the educational benefits of chess.

3.6 ECF Successes at International Level

One of the main challenges is to arrest the decline in our national team's performance. Is it only ten years ago that our men won the European Team Championship? There are signs of progress.

At 16, David Howell became the youngest Englishman to gain the grandmaster title when he secured his final norm at the Rilton Cup in Sweden. David is receiving additional support from the Federation via the John Robinson Fellowship.

20 year old Gawain Jones also became a grandmaster this year, obtaining his title at the final 4NCL weekend. Gawain has claims to being England's most rapidly improving player:- for example, his recent success at the Staunton Memorial included wins against Dutch stars Jan Timman and Loek van Wely.

It must be many years since three Englishmen qualified for the GM title. Stewart Haslinger had a great run over the summer months culminating in success at Great Yarmouth.

We also saw successes amongst our women players, most notably Jovanka Houska who had an excellent result at the Monroi Cup, arguably the most prestigious women's event of the year. We have a new recruit to the English ranks, Women Grandmaster Dagne Ciuksyte, who has decided to transfer her chess allegiance from Lithuania to England.

Top class chess returned to England with the UK vs. China summit match, held in Liverpool as part of the city's European Capital of Culture celebration. The magnificent setting of St. George's Hall augurs well for next year's British Championship, which will take place at the same venue.

The Federation supported a strong team of ten players at the European Team Championships in Dresden in April. Whilst none of our competitors managed to secure qualification to the next stage of the World Championship cycle, there were several creditable results and much experience was gained.

3.7 ECF Finances

In recent years, the ECF has lost sponsorship of the Grand Prix and the England Team. This shortfall has had to be met from the base income of the ECF. The ECF has three main sources of finance:

- a) DCMS grant: this is the largest source of income and currently provides £60,000 per annum. Increases in the DCMS grant are not expected and so to maintain the same income in real terms it will be necessary to increase other sources of income by more than the rate of inflation.
- b) Game Fee: this is the membership fee paid by organisations. Currently it raises about £50,000 per annum. It is intended to fund the ECF. However, the chess public at large believe that it is a payment for Grading. The fact that Game Fee has increased faster than the rate of inflation is a source of friction within the Federation and some events have disaffiliated for this reason. Given the position on the DCMS grant, there is a risk that this trend could increase.
- c) Membership: Currently the ECF has about 2500 members (Projection for October 2006) and the income from the membership scheme generates about £50,000 per annum. In June 2006 the ECF determined to opt for a system whereby each league, county or union could operate a membership scheme. The fact that ECF membership is required for entrance to British Championship events and for FIDE rating (a requirement imposed by FIDE) means that there is scope for a growth in ECF membership.

Chess is not recognised as a sport. Consequently, the ECF does not have VAT exemption and does not have access to Lottery funding.

The General Reserve is now (April 2006) at a relatively healthy level of approximately £60k.

3.8 Chess and The Media

Many years ago the BBC made chess programs (The Master Game) and provided excellent coverage of world chess championships. Today, there are no chess programmes on TV and the BBC has admitted that they have decided not to cover chess and they have no plans to review that policy. Consequently, even the recent success of Michael Adams was not covered. The lack of media interest in chess has a doubly bad effect because it removes the opportunity to attract players and also means that sponsorship is difficult to attract. The only recent media success was that there was substantial national press and regional radio and TV coverage achieved as result of Chess as Sport debate.

3.9 Internet Chess

Over recent years there has been a growth in Internet chess. A few years ago, the BCF linked up with an independent organisation (GamesParlor) and attempted to provide a service. The attempt to provide a service was not successful and the BCF severed the relationship with GamesParlor. Consequently, the ECF does not currently provide Internet chess to its members. Although, a new initiative for a Schools Internet Chess Championship has been started.

Internet chess poses both a threat in that players may give up over-the-board chess in favour of Internet chess and an opportunity to bring in new players.

3.10 Demographic Issues

Currently league chess is played primarily by adult males (only about 3% of players are female). Chess clubs are frequently unwelcoming to both junior and women players. This reduces opportunities for increasing the player base. A further problem is that chess is often played in rather unattractive venues.

An additional point is that league chess is primarily played in the evening, there is an opportunity to expand the amount of chess played by creating afternoon chess clubs.

3.11 Communications

The ECF communicates with the following chess groups:

- a) With the general public through the website and the email alert scheme (a voluntary subscription scheme).
- b) With its members through ChessMoves (the ECF publication).
- c) With Member Organisations through general communications and through Council meetings.
- d) With the Unions and major leagues. Under the BCF, the Management Board included nine representatives from the constituent units (Unions and the major leagues), one of whose responsibilities was to report back on the operation of the Federation. This function was lost when the Board was reduced in size as part of the formation of the ECF. To mitigate this, six-monthly meetings have been held between the ECF Board and the Unions/major leagues.

As can be seen the ECF does not communicate directly with all chess players and a review of the communication strategy would be appropriate.

SECTION 4 SHORT-TERM ISSUES

4.1 Issues

There are a number of issues that the ECF faces in the short-term as follows:

- The ECF is seen as remote, elitist and profligate. The grass-roots players do not feel that they get value for money from Game Fee.
- ECF message is not reaching local organisations.
- The ECF does not have a clear strategy on Internet Chess and use of Website.
- There is a need to provide more support and better training of organisers.
- There is a need for better recognition for efforts of organisers.
- There is a need to understand cost/benefit issues for the current membership schemes.
- There is a need to understand why the 4NCL and UK Chess challenge are successful and see what lessons can be learnt.
- There is a need to establish a surplus policy to replenish reserves.
- There is a need for a review of the marketing/publicity/communications/sponsorship seeking functions.

4.2 Action Plan

An action plan against all of these points should be included in the next Annual Business Plan. An important aspect of this plan should be to arrange that MB members visit county/league AGMs to present the ECF viewpoint.

SECTION 5 LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE ECF

The long-term vision for the ECF includes the following key aspects:

- a) Chess taught in all schools;
- b) 100% Membership;
- c) Access to lottery funding;
- d) Sponsorship;
- e) Chess on TV;
- f) Improved image of chess and chess players;
- g) An ECF organisational structure that allows the Board to act effectively;
- h) An increased proportion of income that comes from non-governmental sources;
- i) Inclusive communications with all chess players and chess organisations.

SECTION 6 ROUTE-MAP FOR CHANGE

These long-term aspects should be considered in the formulation of the next Annual Business Plan, but need not necessarily result in specific actions.

6.1 Chess in Schools

It is hoped that through the current schools initiatives (see section 3.5) the number of schools playing chess can be grown. Additionally, it is to be hoped that if compelling evidence can be provided of the positive educational benefits of chess; then a change in government thinking can be obtained.

Other measures to encourage chess in schools are providing free chess sets and finding people to set up clubs in schools.

6.2 Membership

In June 2006, the ECF decided to progress along the road to mandatory membership. Consequently, it is planned to rely on growth of membership through requiring membership in ECF competitions (as currently happens with the British championships), FIDE rated events and membership agreements with local organisations.

6.3 Access to Lottery Funding

The ECF is working with our parliamentary contacts to get the rules on Lottery funding changed, such that the ECF can access funding. Note that this issue should be tackled independently on the issue as to whether it is desirable to get classified as a sport.

6.4 Sponsorship

The ECF needs to find new long-term sponsors.

6.5 Chess on TV

A campaign should be mounted to persuade the BBC to change their views on chess.

6.6 Improved Image of Chess and Chess Players

There is certainly a need to improve the image of chess. Does anyone have any ideas?

6.7 Improved Organisational Structure

There is a need to develop the ECF organisational structure along the lines of a 21st century company (e.g. where Council sets strategy and the Board runs the organisation) to permit more innovative operation.

6.8 Environmental policy

The ECF is an organisation that takes its environmental responsibilities seriously. From 2007, the ECF has sought to replace board and management board meetings, wherever possible, with conference calls and e-mail decisions. During 2007 - it is estimated that some 4,000 miles of road, rail and air travel by the directors and other officers, which would otherwise have been undertaken, have been avoided.