



English Chess Federation

ACHIEVEMENT REPORT AGAINST BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2011-2012

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 the Federation's services and membership available to all, without restriction; and to promote equal opportunities in a positive manner.'

The Objects of the English Chess Federation [“the Company”] are:

- To encourage the study and practice of chess in England and for the purpose of these objects England shall be deemed to include such part of North Wales as is within the jurisdiction of the Cheshire & North Wales Chess Association for so long as it shall so remain.
- To institute and maintain British Chess Championships.
- To promote national and international chess tournaments in England.
- To secure the interests of English players (being those players who are entitled to represent England under the statutes and regulations of Fédération Internationale des Echecs [FIDE] for the time being in force) in foreign chess tournaments and matches.
- To support the Braille Chess Association and other chess organisations which are members of the Company and whose jurisdiction includes England unless and until in each such case separate equivalent English organisations shall be established which are members of the Company.
- 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 and for these purposes support of the British Chess Problem Society shall be within the scope of this object unless and until a separate English Chess Problem Society shall be established which is a member of the Company.
- To arrange such contests, meetings, etc. as may be deemed desirable and provide and present trophies for competitions 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 FIDE, if requested to do so.
- To maintain and increase a fund, known as the “Permanent Invested Fund”, to be permanently invested in the name of 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: OBSERVATIONS OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON ACHIEVEMENT REPORT

The ECF had an ambitious business plan in 2011/12 and, whilst there were some successes, a number of goals were not achieved, and the overall results may perhaps be considered as evidence of consolidation or, at best, ‘steady progress’.

Since the ECF exists to support and promote the playing of chess, it is satisfying to see that last year’s increase in the number of graded players – the first for several years – has continued and, indeed, accelerated. From a more inward-looking perspective, the number of ECF Direct Members also rose substantially. With the rollout of the new membership scheme, this figure will, of course, be dramatically higher by the next report.

The statistics also show a marked increase (9.5%) in the number of graded results. We have grown used in recent years to anecdotal reports of reduced entry numbers at congresses and struggling leagues and clubs – and some congresses have ceased entirely over the last few years – but the figures show that this has been more than offset by the positive effects of new events entering the calendar. It is worth noting that rapid games now account for 29% of graded results – up from 25% in 2009/10. As an organisation, it is important that we are mindful that the chess landscape is evolving.

Executive Highlights:	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2011/12 v 2010/11	2010/11 v 2009/10
Number of Direct Members	1,810	1,889	2,082	+10.2%	+ 4.4%
Number of players in Grading list	11,627	11,873	12,381	+4.3%	+ 2.1%
Number of graded results	273,291	281,787	308,600	+9.5%	+ 3.1%
% of standard results	75%	73%	71%	-2%	-2%
% of rapid results	25%	27%	29%	+2%	+2%
The sustainable income of the ECF	£169,999	£168,256	£187,663	+11.5%	- 1.0%

The majority of business-as-usual objectives were delivered, in addition to which particularly pleasing progress was made in the following areas:

- Grading – The improvements to the online grading database have been exceptionally well received;
- Membership scheme – Whilst not welcomed by all, this is a significant development and shaping it, getting it agreed and implementing it is something to be proud of;
- Junior chess – The establishment of a larger team supporting the director, with a new policy allowing for larger squads representing England, has in general proved to be positive;
- Growth in membership – This was on an improving trend even before the new scheme started to influence behaviours;
- Charitable status – There has been positive progress in preparing the ground for this; and
- Business Continuity – The ECF’s finances appear to have achieved stability, the ending of the Government grant notwithstanding.

As an organisation with a significant reliance on volunteers, it is important to note there is a finite level of resource. If the ECF is to achieve its potential, it is vital that this resource is channelled in constructive directions. At Board level, it cannot be denied that considerable time, energy and focus were consumed by the aftermath of the incident at the 2011 British Championships prize-giving and of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) legal action, among others. Simply put, in addressing these matters there was, quite understandably, less resource to take forward certain items in the business plan. These were not the priorities that I would have chosen, but sometimes events dictate otherwise.

Whatever the rights and wrongs – and the arguments continue – these matters sapped all members of the Board of both energy and morale, diminishing their capacity to focus on new initiatives. Given the strategic and marketing (press, PR, branding, etc.) impact of these issues, it is unsurprising that the Management Services and Marketing areas suffered shortfalls against their targets.

Despite this, it is important to note that 7 of our 11 Key Performance Indicators demonstrated positive year-on-year trends, 6 of which increased for a 2nd year or more; 4 of these doubling or tripling the growth of the previous year (see Section 4). A number of Directorates also matched or exceeded their 2010/11 results (see Section 5) in certain areas, which, against the backdrop of an ambitious plan, is also pleasing.

Going forward, building on this solid platform will continue to require energy, enthusiasm and a shared sense of purpose. Once again, I should like to thank my fellow Board members, the office team and the dozens of ECF officials – almost all of whom give so generously of their time for no financial reward – for their hard work and support.

Andrew Farthing
Chief Executive

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

Each year, the ECF publishes:

- a Long-Term Strategic Plan (or update thereto);
- a one-year Business Plan; and
- an Achievement Report against the one-year Business Plan.

The function of the Achievement Report is to delineate the extent to which the previous year's Business Plan was achieved. The Business Plan itself identifies the key objectives from the long term Strategic Plan that are targeted for achievement in a 12-month period from May to April. **This Achievement Report covers the year May 2011 to April 2012.**

The ECF is a Federation of independent organisations, including Constituent Units, County Associations, Leagues and Congresses. The regional activities of these organisations are not addressed within this Achievement Report.

This report includes:

- Achievement against Strategic Objectives in *Section 3*. This section describes the ECF's achievements during the year against the backdrop of the objectives in the Long-Term Strategic Plan. This serves as a useful reminder of the context within which the annual Business Plan sits as well as making it easier to judge the adequacy of progress towards longer term goals. Whereas previous years' reports have tended to comment by exception, i.e. discussing only those planned actions which were **not** achieved, this section attempts to present a more balanced picture, with appropriate weight given to the year's positive achievements;
- Achievement against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in *Section 4*, including a comparison with previous years – to facilitate trend analysis; and
- Achievement against the 2011/12 Business Plan in *Section 5*. The analysis is presented in terms of the overall percentage achievement of planned actions. This section has been simplified considerably compared with previous reports, to avoid duplication with the new *Section 3*. A comparison with prior-year performance is included.

SECTION 3: ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The achievements of the ECF during 2011/12 should be assessed in the context of the Long-Term Strategic Plan and with reference to the planned actions set out in the Annual Business Plan.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: “Short-term focus on improving the ECF’s value to members and the English chess community as a whole”

- The cessation of the DCMS grant, which necessitated a reduction in expenditure, meant that it was challenging to invest in this area. This being said, one acid test of delivering value is the number of direct members, which rose 10.2% in 2011/12 compared to + 4.2% in 2010/11; more than doubling the rate of growth.
- The enhancements to the online grading database were delivered to considerable acclaim. This website is used by an ever increasing number of individuals and, undoubtedly, delivers significant value to the chess community.
- A more unified approach to our websites and associated social media channels, has led to increased users, page views, etc. Often, these are harnessed to generate awareness for tournaments, clubs, events and other chess-related matters.
- Once again, the Certificate of Merit delivered (at best) mixed results. If demonstrated at events, it receives positive feedback from younger users; in commercial terms, though, it has proved challenging to turn this into sales.
- The objectives for targeted focus to increase chess activity within specific groups, such as – older people, disabled, chess in prisons, chess clubs – also yielded mixed results. On the whole, this reflected a lack of capacity for new initiatives in a period when financial and strategic matters took precedence. This being said, a number of chess clubs do receive the support of being advertised through our website, either directly though a hyperlink or indirectly through a player profile on the grading database.
- The diary and yearbook were both produced on time and on budget and continue to fulfil a need.
- ECF members now receive a 10% discount on British Chess Magazine subscriptions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: “Early prioritisation of action to improve the ECF websites significantly so that they become a generator of value and an attraction to non-members”

- A marketing-led review of the ECF’s digital footprint was completed in 2011/12, the results of which led to various enhancements in front-end design and back-end function, which included the following items:
 - The identification and selection of a compatible Membership system;
 - A more unified approach to social media, including de-duplication of accounts / pages, and more regular updates on Facebook and Twitter; and
 - A continuing project to focus on ‘content management’, ensuring important documents, announcements, articles et al., become ever easier to find, access, download, etc. This is work in progress, and is an evolutionary, iterative process.
- The enhancements to the online grading database were delivered through the grading website.
- To reflect the growing importance of social media, interaction is actively encouraged through Facebook and Twitter. In addition, the contact details of officials are published online, to enable dialogue on an as needed basis.

- A link remains between the (entirely independent) English Chess Forum, and about half of ECF Board members post there. This being said, such participation is at the sole discretion of the individuals.
- At present, there is no official ECF presence on YouTube. This being said, a number of ECF members' videos are available through a hyperlink from the EnglishChess.org.uk homepage.
- No progress was made in developing the online ECF Shop, although this is used in conjunction with the Certificate of Merit and various ECF products.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: “Action to address existing communication and organisational issues”

- In absolute terms, the ECF as an organisation has probably been more communicative in the last two years than at any other time. Yet, despite the sheer volume of discussion papers, forum posts, email responses, social media activities, and website articles - a clinical, objective assessment would be that we took several steps backward.
 - The various controversies following the 2011 British led to a worsening of the relationship between the Board and the wider chess community. Trust has clearly suffered. Given the regrettable oversight when it came to disclosing to the ECF Council the decision to take the CAS legal action against FIDE, some will conclude that transparency also took a step back in 2011/12.
 - In these matters, the ECF Board has endeavoured to be open and honest; but there has been an ever increasing pressure for ‘more to be revealed’ in this respect, and the reduction in trust meant that even open and honest statements were not believed in some quarters. More work is clearly needed to rebuild trust.
- There has been a continual effort to consult – and be seen to consult – on important issues, e.g. the development of proposals for future ECF funding, charitable status, etc. The inclusion of several major consultation papers at the 2012 Finance Council meeting and the long dialogue with members over the funding proposals are evidence for this.
- There has also been considerable effort behind the scenes to develop, improve and maintain relationships with key individuals and organisations in the English chess community. This is ongoing although progress in some areas was limited by the various ‘controversies’.
- The EnglishChess.org.uk website and its associated Facebook and Twitter accounts continue to provide the chess community with regular, bite-sized stories. The ECFgrading.org.uk website receives hundreds of grading enquiries a day and remains an invaluable resource in the dissemination of grading information.
- These points notwithstanding, it is accepted that there remains considerable work to do in addressing cultural and organisational issues.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: “Cost/benefit review of activities and services to create capacity for revised focus”

- In 2011/12, after the previous year’s cost reduction programme (which saved c. £35,000 per annum, with headcount reduced by 40%), the focus has been on consolidating these efficiency savings. The scope for additional savings is limited, although we continue to review alternative suppliers to ensure all costs are minimised.
- A number of volunteer posts remain vacant, as a result of which our paid staff – or existing volunteers – often take on additional duties outside of their role. If said vacancies were to be filled, this would assist in ‘creating capacity’ to focus on new initiatives. This, whilst not being a cost / benefit item *per se*, is something under constant, ongoing review.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: “Continued delivery of current range of services and activities”

See *Section 5* for a quantitative assessment of performance against the detailed Ongoing Business Plan. What follows is a brief summary of selected highlights in certain areas; it is not intended to be exhaustive:

❖ HOME CHESS

- A strong, financially successful British Championships was held in Sheffield; this was, arguably, the strongest field ever assembled for this tournament.
- The following scheduled championships were organised: County, National Club, National Counties Rapid Play, British Rapid Play. The National Club Rapid Play and County & District Correspondence events did not take place.
- The ECF related Facebook page and Twitter account were updated on a regular basis, and continue to gain users, followers, etc.

❖ WOMEN’S CHESS

- 1st Women’s Rapidplay event held, at St Paul’s Girls’ School in London.
- Limited scope for coaching related grants, due to budget limitations.

❖ INTERNATIONAL CHESS

- The World Juniors are now under the stewardship of the International Directorate.
- In England, as at August 2012, there were 4 male players with 2,650+ ELO: Adams = 2,722, McShane = 2,713, Short = 2,698, Jones = 2,653, all of whom are also in the Top 100 active players (Adams = 26th, McShane = 32nd, Short = 45th, Jones = 96th). In contrast, there were 2 female players with 2,400+ ELO: Hunt = 2,450, Houska = 2,406, with Hunt being the only player in the world Top 50 (Hunt = 36th).
- Stewart Reuben continues to be Secretary of the FIDE Rules and Tournament Regulations Commission, and a Councillor of the Qualification Commission, but remains a Councillor: he has substantial influence in both organisations.

❖ JUNIOR CHESS

- 16-year-old Yang-Fan Zhou gained his IM title.
- A 50% reduction in entrance fees was made, to encourage juniors to participate in the British.
- In 2011, 11 English players competed at the World Youth and 30 at the European Youth.
- Ravi Haria and Yang-Fang Zhou finished in the top 10 of the World Youth (2011)
- The responsibilities related to World Juniors transferred to the International Directorate.
- The team for the U16 Olympiad finished 9th from 26 participating teams.
- The official ECF teams participating in international events usually received coaching on a 4 players per coach ratio basis.
- English teams participated in the Glorney, Faber/Gilbert, Stokes and Robinson Cups.
- 330+ players took part in the U18/U13 County Championships, held at Eton College
- As in previous years, the ECF worked closely with the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust and is grateful for the financial support that it provides to junior chess in England.

❖ FINANCE

- The process of invoicing improved in 2011/12, but further enhancements are required. A detailed review of source documents was also undertaken, to establish debtors, creditors, et al.
- In general terms, all Directorates kept tight control of their budgets, whilst transactions such as invoices (raising, settling), payroll, expenses et al were processed within normal timelines.

- The ongoing financial duties were performed, including production of the annual budget, preparation of the accounts, liaison with auditors, etc.
- A need was identified for additional training support in financial management among the office team, and a plan for delivering this was prepared.
- Shortcomings were identified in the documentation and accounting of the allocation of sponsorship monies for the 2011 British Championships. This required detailed investigation, which satisfactorily established the use to which the funds were put and enabled a correct accounting to be produced.

❖ MARKETING

- The Director of Marketing inherited aims, objectives and actions from his predecessor.
- There was substantial Marketing input into the communications and public relations aspects of the ‘controversies’.
- There was substantial Marketing input into the identification and selection of the online Membership solution, alongside consideration of a wider re-design of the ECF website (to be decided).

❖ STRATEGIC PLANNING

- The Long-Term Strategic Plan was prepared and published (October 2011).
- The Achievement Report for 2010/11 was prepared and published (October 2011).
- The annual Business Plan and associated Supplements were both prepared and published (April 2012).

❖ MANAGEMENT SERVICES

- The reduced team of three full-time staff continued to support the administrative needs of the ECF, its directors, managers, officials and members.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6: “Longer term focus on organisational change (e.g. membership scheme) once the perceived value of the ECF is enhanced”

- The Membership scheme, including its conception, development, agreement and implementation, has been a long-term organisational change. At a macro level, this member-generated income provides financial independence from the Government and/or commercial sponsorship - to provide support, infrastructure and event organisation. However, this level of income should be seen as a foundation; other sources of revenue are required if we are to grow the game in England and achieve greater success.
- The work towards a far-reaching reorganisation of the ECF – to split the ECF into two distinct bodies, one charitable, the other not – continues to make progress. This is a complex change, with issues to resolve in respect of taxation and funding (particularly of the non-charitable body dealing with professional chess). As things stand, the ECF has received encouraging feedback from the Charity Commission on the planned application for charitable status. A further update is to be provided at the forthcoming AGM (Oct-12).
- In addition to the ongoing and medium-term benefits as mentioned under strategic priorities 1, 2 and 3, the use of IT and Internet technologies remains of central importance going forward. In 2011/12, we continued to harness these to eliminate or reduce expenditure, increase communication, and generate operational efficiencies. The IT manager position is vacant, and has been throughout 2011/12; it remains of critical importance to full this position.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7: “Preparatory work to allow medium-term investment in chess development with a greater chance of sustainable success.”

- In 2011/12, after the cessation of the DCMS grant, and the previous year’s cost reduction programme (saved c. £35,000 per annum, headcount reduced 40%), the natural focus has been to consolidate these efficiency savings. This has been a necessary precursor to enable medium term development to begin in earnest.
- Much of the website-related progress listed under objective 2 also acts as a solid platform upon which commercial Internet activities can be based (e.g. charging 3rd parties for advertising, adding commercial widgets to monetize traffic).
- The Membership Scheme proposal has been approved and should place the ECF’s finances on a sound, sustainable footing. The inclusion of a “Platinum” level of membership for those who wish to provide additional financial support for the ECF’s activities offers one route by which funding for medium-term investment may be generated.
- In the meantime, the ECF continues to look for external financial support for its activities. The potential financial benefits of charitable status are one such source; a consultation paper on this topic was presented to Finance Council, in April 2012.

SECTION 4: REPORT AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The ECF monitors its performance using eleven Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). It reports its achievement against them on an annual basis. To facilitate trend analysis, the following table shows the KPIs for 2011/12 and the previous five years.

	KPI	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2011/12 v 2010/11	2010/11 v 2009/10
1	Number of Direct Members ⁽¹⁾	1,474	1,647	1,795	1,810	1,889	2,082	+10.2%	+ 4.4%
2	Number of players in Grading list ⁽²⁾	11,846	11,824	11,703	11,627	11,873	12,381	+4.3%	+ 2.1%
3	Number of female players in Grading list ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	534	528	493	465	546	654	+19.8%	+ 17.4%
3a	Number of male players in Grading list ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	11,312	11,296	11,210	11,162	11,327	11,727	+3.5%	+ 1.5%
4	Number of graded results ⁽²⁾	268,471	270,163	271,387	273,291	281,787	308,600	+9.5%	+ 3.1%
5	Number of titled players ⁽⁴⁾	99	102	110	124	128	121	-5.5%	+ 3.2%
6	Number of FIDE rated players ⁽⁵⁾	665	629	638	756	835	985	+18.0%	+ 10.4%
7	Number of county teams in county championships ⁽⁶⁾	44	43	58	58	59	58	-1.7%	+ 1.7%
8	Number of teams in National Club Championships ⁽⁶⁾	51	45	42	42	42	37	-11.9%	=
9	Number of schools in the National Schools Championships	93	140	156	165	153	114	-39.9%	- 7.3%
10	The sustainable income of the ECF ⁽⁷⁾	£157,591	£161,686	£160,095	£169,999	£168,256	£187,663	+11.5%	- 1.0%

Notes:

- (1) The figures quoted exclude Basic and Basic Junior members, i.e. those who are members of the ECF under the auspices of a Membership Organisation. As at April 2012, there were 981 Basic members (including Juniors), plus a further 511 individuals registered under the membership schemes who had not signed the Member's £1 guarantee form.
- (2) The Grading list is used as providing the best available source of information on the level of chess activity nationally. It only includes events submitted to the ECF for Grading, so variations in the submission of specific events may distort trends. In addition, the reporting window for the Achievement Report is May to April, whereas the Grading year runs from June to May, and the Master List on which statistical analysis is done is not generated until August. Consequently, the Grading data presented above are those generated in August of each reporting year based on the previous season's grading results.

The provision of gender information is optional, so Male / Female splits are 'best estimates'; the figure for Female players is calculated as Total minus those specifying themselves as being of Male gender. Please be aware 2011/12 represents a 13-month season, for the reasons outlined - <http://www.ecfgrading.org.uk/help/#season>; the number of graded results has been adjusted to reflect 12 months, other data are unaltered and might therefore be inflated.
- (3) The figures for the seasons 2006/07 and 2007/08 were corrected and restated in 2009 to put them on a consistent basis with the latest year.
- (4) This is based on the following titles: GM, WGM, IM, WIM, FM and WFM.
- (5) This is based on the number of 'active' players in the rating list. Inactive players are also listed by FIDE. In 2007/8, the number of active players dropped despite there being more events. It was apparent that FIDE had, without explanation, changed the criteria for determining 'active'/'inactive', since the number of inactive players increased from 463 to 629.

- (6) The measure relates to participation in the national stages. If the size of the team is changed to encourage more teams, some analysis will be necessary to assess whether this resulted in more people playing chess. The Junior county competition is excluded from these figures.
- (7) One-off windfalls are excluded from the KPI, because they can mask overall trends.

SECTION 5: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST BUSINESS PLANS

Directorate (Activity)	No. of Actions	No. Achieved	% Achieved 2011/12	% Achieved 2010/11
Home Chess (National Chess Activities)	10	6	60%	90%
Home Chess (Congress Chess)	9	8	89%	89%
Home Chess (British Championships)	8	7	88%	88%
Home Chess (Grading & Rating)	19	16	84%	95%
Home Chess (Women's Chess)	16	10	63%	81%
Junior Chess & Education	18	13	72%	95%
Junior Chess & Education (Coaching)	10	6	60%	71%
International Chess	16	11	69%	75%
Finance	13	10	77%	85%
Marketing	12	5	42%	69%
Chief Executive (Strategic Planning)	8	8	100%	91%
Chief Executive (Management Services)	19	12	63%	75%