

Chris Fegan
Election Statement
Role of Non-Executive Director

The future of chess in England is looking stronger than it has for many years and there are many promising new initiatives. Ongoing discussions with Parliament may bring about significant improvements in our long-term prospects. Furthermore, the official recognition of chess as a sport is being considered in the High Court. Major educational projects are bringing a new generation of children to chess. Charity status has been achieved through the Chess Trust and the ECF structure is being modernised. The Independent Constitutional Commission has set a solid template for governance for the next few years to support the expansion of chess activities.

The ECF is a complex voluntary organisation of competing views, opinions and wish lists, some people want change, some others resist change. The pace of change is fast BUT change is essential if the ECF is to keep up with the realities of the chess world and indeed also to sort out some previously neglected areas. This change can be disconcerting for some people.

The role of a NED is to monitor the Board individually and collectively on behalf of the ECF members. I would be the “eyes and ears” of the wider membership ensuring that the Board is operating efficiently in line with its objectives.

The ECF Board are volunteers. There is no financial incentive to serve on the Board. These high-level positions require considerable sacrifice of time. These factors make it difficult to attract capable professionals. This does not mean that excellent people do not come forward. However some people may be elected who do not possess all the necessary management and project skills to match the role. Individuals can find themselves overstretched, out of their depth and lacking the personal or communication skills to make progress.

The NED can try and help and support such people as part of the role and also try to assist Board unity. I believe that some of the current individual responsibilities (in the Regulation 2) as presently written are unbalanced and should be fundamentally reviewed. There are some roles that would benefit from better team working and less power invested in individual post holders. Some of the current delegated powers would present difficulties for professionally appointed people working in the “real world”, yet volunteers, who are essentially amateurs, are struggling to carry out their role. In the past, people were often elected because nobody else wanted the job and the only competition for the role was an “empty chair” posing as “none of the above”.

More collective Board decision-making allied with the support and guidance of the NED’S would greatly improve the workings of the ECF for the benefit of its membership and would also help to avoid the possible worry of individuals decision makers who may be unduly drawn to satisfy the requirements of a narrow range of constituents.

I strongly believe in better communication with ECF Members on a regular basis throughout the year. Some people do not agree with this and state quite openly that they are only accountable to the ECF Council once a year in the election process. These

people either refuse point blank to engage with the membership or, in the most extreme cases, try to abolish the official mechanisms for such communication.

If I were elected as NED, I promise to fully engage with the members who fund the ECF through their annual membership fees. I would commit to provide regular reports about what is happening on the ECF Board to inform the membership. The contempt that some individuals seem to show for “Joe public chess player” because “Joe public chess player” does not have a vote on Council is deplorable. I would like the ECF to have an election system of “One Member One Vote” for elections to all ECF posts and I proposed this in my personal submission to the Independent Constitutional Commission earlier this year.

If elected as NED, I promise to scrutinize what the Board does on behalf of the whole ECF membership and to try and address current Board disunity and would report back regularly to inform and empower the chess players of England who fund the ECF.

Chris Fegan

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