

Election Address For Non-Executive Director

Candidate: Julie Denning

My first involvement in competitive chess was while still at school in Guernsey in the 1960s, including 3 appearances in the Island team in annual matches against the mortal enemy (Jersey). I continued playing at Manchester University, serving as club secretary in my final year. I then played club chess for a few years, but took a 25 years break due to career commitments. Having retired early, I took up chess again in 2002, joining Horsham Chess Club. Recognising the need for volunteers with a bit of spare time, I have since taken on a variety of responsibilities:-

Horsham Chess Club

- Team Captain

Mid Sussex League

- Fixtures Secretary (2007 -)
- Web Editor (2007 – 2014)

Sussex County Chess Association

- grading secretary (2005 -)
- SCCU Delegate (2010 -)
- ECF Delegate (2011 -)

Southern Counties Chess Union

- President (2015 -)
- ECF Delegate (2015 -)
- Grading Secretary (2011 -)

ECF / BCF Council

- Minutes Secretary: 2014 Finance Council
- Chairman: 2014 AGM

I play regularly in club and county chess, have played briefly in a 4NCL team and have entered a small number of weekend congresses.

Following graduation with a degree in Aeronautical Engineering, my professional career was largely in the public sector. This was initially with the MoD where I undertook specialist training in flight testing, then continued working in this field. This continued for several years following a move to the civilian world. Progressing to a management role in later years my responsibilities included chairing an international working group tasked with development and international harmonisation of technical requirements in my specialist area.

Outside of my professional career, I served for some years as a trustee of a small charity.

I see the role of a non-Executive Director as overseeing and questioning. From my professional background, asking “what if ...” questions with persistence comes naturally! I would approach the task as a supportive critical friend. That is to say, I respect the enormous voluntary effort that goes into keeping the ECF running and value the existence of an effective body to represent and promote chess at the national level, but as my voting record would attest to, I am not an unwavering supporter of all that gets proposed. My natural instinct is to avoid confrontation and I would aim to

be a calming influence – which just might not go amiss in some Board matters. However, life has also taught me that there are occasions where determined defence of what you believe is right should not be avoided.

I understand I was the only representative of a Union to take up the invitation of a face – to – face meeting with the Independent Constitutional and Governance Review team. I look forward to seeing their report and the challenge of responding to, and implementing, recommendations that they might make. I'm particularly interested to see whether they have things to say about the independence of, and working inter-relationships between, Board and Council – if indeed they advocate the on-going existence of Council in anything like its current form.

The chess playing community is extremely diverse. It encompasses almost the entire spectrum from cradle to grave. It has many formats from blitz to correspondence, and expanding possibilities through digital clocks and the internet. For the vast majority, it is a pastime, not a career. I wish to see an environment where this diversity can flourish, recognising that one-size-fits-all will not always be appropriate. While I take pride in teams performing on an international stage, with my all-time highest grade being 140 I am unlikely ever to trouble national team selectors. However, I believe my background in grassroots chess will enable me to represent those interests, from wherever in the country they exist, and that this fulfils a vital responsibility of a non-executive director.