

The ECF has continued to engage actively with the Sports and Recreation Alliance during the year:

1. The AGM and two divisional meetings were attended by some ECF board members in addition to the SRA representative.
2. The ECF signed up to the SRA's Voluntary Code of Governance.
3. We took part in SRA discussions on the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)'s consultation document "A new strategy for sport".
4. We took the opportunity of meeting representatives from the English Bridge Union and the British Go Association and co-ordinated our responses to the above consultation. The ECF response is contained in the appendix (below).

The British Go Association has received a five figure legacy with the express purpose of opening a centre in central London where go (and other mind sports) could be played. The sum is adequate to rent cafe premises and pay for a manager for 5 years or so. Is someone from the chess community would be interested in the position of manager, please contact me.

Mike Gunn.

11th October 2015.

APPENDIX

DCMS consultation: "A new strategy for sport":

Response from the English Chess Federation

Our basic point is that the government can meet many of the objectives it identifies in its consultation paper by widening the current definition of "sport" to include mind sports such as chess, bridge and go.

In summary the consultation paper identifies a number of advantages that would accrue from an increased level of participation in sport:

1. improved individual health
2. improved personal skills leading to increased employability
3. improved social cohesion

We summarise the contribution that chess can make in these areas below:

Improved individual health

- a) Competitive chess game lasts several hours (usually up to 7 hours in the case of international tournaments and 3 hours for an evening league game) and this requires a level of stamina and concentration that is impaired by a lack of physical fitness. Thus (indirectly) competitive chess encourages an active and healthy lifestyle.
- b) Although further studies are required for definitive proof, many scientists believe that mind sports activity, such as chess, may delay the onset of Alzheimers.
- c) Many children on the autistic spectrum and those with Aspergers Syndrome enjoy playing chess. This means they are able to join in and integrate with other children.

Improved personal skills leading to increased employability

- a) Chess at amateur and professional levels it is an extremely competitive activity which requires concentration and emotional self-control for success.
- b) Success at chess is based on individual skills (particularly thinking skills) which are enhanced by practice and training/ study.
- c) Several studies have shown that teaching chess in schools leads to increased individual performance on other subjects, such as mathematics.
- d) Chess playing is governed by a set of rules/ etiquette which encourages good social behaviour (respect for ones opponent, winning or losing with good grace).

Improved social cohesion

- a) Chess can be played by anybody irrespective of age, race, language or gender. Chess can be played by people with physical disabilities. For example, blind people play chess using specially adapted second boards on which they are permitted to touch the pieces.
- b) Chess is a social activity. Although it is possible to compete as an individual (in local or international tournaments) it is also widely organised as a team activity. Chess is administered in a similar way to other sports: the basic unit of organisation is the local club but there regulatory bodies at county (league), regional, national and international levels which have existed for a hundred years or more (the international body, FIDE, was founded in 1924). Thus chess promotes co-operation and inclusion at the international level as well as the local and national levels.
- c) Another example of the use of chess for promoting inclusion is its use in one of Germany's largest refugee camps (in Munich) which has been teaching refugees chess to promote their rehabilitation and integration since 2011. Similar initiatives exist in Sweden and the Netherlands.

While chess can contribute to many of the objectives identified in the government's consultation paper, its development is held back by its lack of recognition as a sport. Chess is recognised as a sport in 24 out of the 28 member states of the European Union (the exceptions being the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium and Sweden). Altogether chess is recognised as a sport on over 100 countries around the world and this figure continues to grow. Recognition of chess as a sport would give us the tax advantages that other sports enjoy, allow us to apply for funding from sources currently denied us (e.g. the national lottery) and give us access to shared facilities but most importantly it would give us the status in the eyes of the public that our sport deserves.

Phil Ehr
Mike Gunn

(on behalf of the English Chess Federation)

2nd October 2015.

[Note: The following addendum was also submitted. It was based on the President's judgement of points that should resonate with the Government.]

DCMS Consultation: "A new strategy for sport"

Response from the English Chess Federation
Addendum

The Physical Training and Recreation Act 1937 was a government response to the need to make our young people fit for a possible war against Germany.

But what was in fact Britain's greatest contribution to the defeat of Nazism? Not military muscle but the breaking of the German military codes at Bletchley Park. And which group of men contributed more than any other? Chess players—almost the entire English chess team worked at Bletchley, chief among them CHO'D Alexander, who was Alan Turing's boss there.

The national strategic reasons for supporting chess are stronger than ever, in the software age when the military has more need than ever of mental as opposed to physical attributes.

Dominic Lawson
President
English Chess Federation

Phil Ehr
Chief Executive

2 October 2015