

REPORT OF THE BOARD TO COUNCIL: OCTOBER 2018

Approved by the Board September 2018

Introduction

This report has, as last year, been prepared in accordance with the recommendation of the Independent Constitutional and Governance Review Commission that “instead of individual Directors reporting to Council, there should be a single report of the Board, approved by it beforehand”. The report focuses on what has been achieved during 2017/2018. The Board has reviewed the Strategy and Business Plan document, also included in the papers to Council, and has made a few relatively minor changes. The Board is happy that the document sets out the Board’s proposed direction of travel over the coming years and the objectives that the Board has set itself for 2018/2019 and beyond.

2017/2018 Achievements

The Board has:

- Continued to work hard to establish a cohesive and stable Board.
- Presided over a very successful British Championships in Hull, with the new regulations working as intended. Our thanks are due to the volunteers of the Hull and District Chess Association for working so hard to provide a very comprehensive and enjoyable social programme. The Board has also been able to confirm the Riviera Centre, Torquay as the venue for next year’s event.
- Launched the new UK Open Blitz Championships, which achieved a total of 333 entrants in its first year including 33 female players in total, about one in ten of the total field - an excellent ratio compared with most weekend tournaments or rapidplays.
- Held a successful County Championship Finals Day, and started the process of securing a new venue for next year’s Finals Day.
- Held the most successful English Women’s Championships to date, with an increased prize fund and no fewer than 30 entrants, the highest by far of the three Championships run so far.
- Implemented a new membership system (Azolve) to improve the service and options (including direct debit) available to members. The initial options have been implemented for the 2018/19 membership year. User reaction suggests that the majority of members feel that the system is a great improvement on its predecessor. The system includes modules for administering events and qualifications for such as coaches and arbiters, which we are not utilising at present, but which will provide significant benefits to the ECF and to members once implemented.
- Continued to roll out the League Management System, which has been used with great success in 2017-18 by a number of leagues.

- In partnership with the 4NCL, set up a national repository of digital clocks and live transmission boards and sets that can be accessed by non-ECF/4NCL event organisers as well as by ECF and 4NCL events.
- Completed a comprehensive review of the County Championship structure and format, with recommendations for change made to Council. Although Council rejected the substantive recommendations, that does not invalidate the value of the exercise.
- Supported our international efforts in what has been an exceptionally good year for English international chess, with plenty of success for our leading players, as well as a number of norms and titles for our younger players. Highlights include:
 - We are currently ranked twelfth in the world by FIDE, and six players in the world's top 100, something we have not had for some time.
 - The England over-50 team came second at the World Senior Championship in Radebeul, with Keith Arkell winning individual gold for his performance on board 5. We should also mention Nigel Povah's superb 7/8 for the over-65 side, as well as the bronze and silver individual medals won by Sheila Jackson and Petra Fink-Nunn respectively for the women's over-60 team.
 - Luke McShane and Gawain Jones both played at the European Individual, both qualifying for the World Cup. Gawain also made a strong impression at his first ever elite event as he played in the Wijk aan Zee A tournament and had Magnus Carlsen on the ropes. David Howell also enjoyed tournament success and went above 2700 briefly.
 - Luke McShane claimed the silver medal in the European Blitz Championship in Katowice.
- Continued the development and expansion of the International Programme at the ECF Chess Academy. 25-35% of attendees on the study weekends are female. The Elite programmes were removed in August, but the success of the participants supported in gaining FIDE titles this year is worthy of note.
- Continued the expansion of the National Schools Chess Championships, and increased the number of girls entering the individual and team competitions.
- Supported the Chess Trust in setting up the new Accelerator Programme for our elite junior players.
- Worked with organisations such as UKCC to roll out free first year junior Silver membership. The interface between this process and the implementation of the new membership system has unfortunately not been without its problems, although these should be resolved in the near future.
- Brought the accounts for the ECF and BCF up to date. The past six years' tax affairs, which were outstanding for all entities, have also been brought up to date.
- In accordance with Council's approval, worked with the trustees of the Permanent Invested Fund to donate the PIF No 2 Fund (John Robinson) to the Chess Trust. This fund provides a yearly contribution along with the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust to support the British Chess

championships in accordance with John Robinson's wishes. The transfer will allow the fund to be more tax efficient and avoids any future capital gains liability.

- With the approval of Council, implemented the changes from charging game fee for leagues and club chess to a new membership arrangement in line with the original plan when the membership scheme was established in 2012.
- Implemented the process of issuing bi-monthly management accounts to the Executive Directors.
- Addressed the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and also provided advice and recommendations to chess organisers on how to address GDPR requirements for their own organisations.
- Put proposals to Council in April clarifying and simplifying the provisions in the articles of association relating to the voting register.

Conclusion

The pace of change has continued to be rapid, and a lot has been achieved, although much remains to be done. The Board would like to take this opportunity to thank the many unsung volunteers of the ECF who do so much for English chess, at times with precious little recognition. In particular, we would like to thank Traci Whitfield, who is not seeking re-election as Junior Director, and to Alex Holowczak, who is standing down as Director of Home Chess, for their sterling efforts in the service of English chess over the last few years.

The Strategy and Business document continues to give a good idea both of where we hope the ECF is heading and of what is needed to take us towards that aspiration.