

Interview with Adrian Elwin, Director of Home Chess, ECF

Congratulations on winning the election for the ECF Director of Home Chess position. Why did you choose to stand for this post?

Thank you. My opponent ran an excellent campaign and the final result was very close.

Over the past few years, I have become more involved in organising at the national level, arbiting at the British Championships, County Championship Controller, Platinum rep, and standing for the board was the next logical step. My decision to stand as Home Director was the obvious one as this covered the areas with which I have been most involved.

For members who do not know you, please give us some background on your chess career both on and off the board.

My chess career over the board has not been spectacular. My grade has hovered around 180 for the last 7 or 8 years and that is good enough to put me at the top end of my county team – Bedfordshire. At the National County level, Bedfordshire competes in the Minor Counties and we have succeeded in winning it 4 times. I have been a regular member of the county team ever since I moved to the area over 30 years ago and was a member of all the winning teams except the last, when I was County Championship Controller.

Individually, I have won the Bedfordshire County Championship once and I also won the Norfolk Open in 2008 where I qualified for the British Championship for the first time.

I played in the World Amateur Championship when it was still being held at Hastings and came 4th= in the 1999-2000 event.

I became an ECF arbiter in 2000. When the British Championship came to Great Yarmouth in 2007, I put myself forward to be part of the control team and I have been part of the team for most years since then, taking time off when I was lucky enough to qualify to play. I was accepted as a FIDE Arbiter in 2016 and hope to qualify as an International Arbiter next year.

What personal qualities do you bring to the role?

I like to think that I am seen as hard working, conscientious, with an eye for detail. But I prefer that people see me in action and then draw their own conclusions.

In the election hustings at the AGM, you highlighted the British Championships, County Championships and a shortage Arbiters' assessors as your main focus. Why are these issues particularly important to you?

These are the areas that I have previously been involved in.

The change in the British has persuaded more Grandmasters to play. This has allowed more opportunities for GM norms but I feel that more can be done for those players at IM and FM level, possibly in the Major Open.

I was County Championship Controller for 2010-11, a post I gave up when I realised that the job that I had at the time was stopping me from carrying out the role to a level that I found acceptable. I have been concerned with the slow but steady decline in the number of teams entering the competition. Some investigation work has already been done but this needs to be continued and hopefully we can improve the situation.

As an Arbiter Lecturer, I have succeeded in getting a lot of people through the exam only to find that there are not enough opportunities for them to get the practical experience to become Level 2 Arbiters. This has in turn highlighted the situation that there are even fewer opportunities for Level 2 Arbiters to become Arbiter Assessors and Lecturers. Of course, many people will be happy to get the Level 1 or 2 qualification and then use it to run competitions in their local area, without advancing any further, and that is perfectly normal. My role is to ensure that the structure is in place for those that do wish to advance.

How will you approach working with ECF stakeholders, the membership, board and council?

For the board and the Council I shall be using the usual methods for remote working - email, phone and the occasional face to face contact. This, of course, has already started and will continue on a regular basis.

With the membership, this is more difficult owing to the number of people involved. For some specific items (eg County Championship), I shall be approaching interested parties and asking specific questions. I will also be monitoring various chess forums to see what people are commenting on, and, of course, I can always be contacted using the Home Directors email contact on the ECF website by anybody with specific enquiries. Not surprisingly, some people have already taken advantage of that.

What is your vision for chess in England during your tenure?

My task as Home Director is to put in place the infrastructure to allow the headline events to shine. A significant amount of this structure is already in place and my task is to maintain, improve and enhance that infrastructure to allow chess to be played as people wish. Where the structure already exists, I will be reviewing the current situations and practices and putting forward improvements. I have already received a few comments from interested parties

The internet is a large and important part of our lives, and the opportunities in web-based chess have previously been overlooked by the ECF. I expect to be putting in place a structure to allow competitions to be played over the internet. This will be for formal matches as others have already set up many websites for informal chess.

I hope that I shall leave the post with the existing organisations and structure in an even better state than they are now and that new, hopefully exciting, opportunities will have been added to those that already exist.