

**Minutes of the 126th Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Friday 11th January 2019
11.30a.m. – 5.00p.m.
Ibis Hotel, Birmingham**

Members:

President, Dominic Lawson	Apologies	DL
Chief Executive, Mike Truran		MT
Director of Finance, David Eustace	By dial-in	DE
Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak		AH
Director of International Chess, Malcolm Pein		MP
Director of Home Chess, Adrian Elwin		AE
Director of Membership, Dave Thomas		DT
Non-executive Chairman, Julian Clissold		JC
Non-executive Director, Julie Denning		JD
Non-Executive Director, Stephen Woodhouse		SW
Director of Women's Chess, Chris Fegan	By dial-in	CF

Invited: Observers and Guests

Chairman, Finance Committee, Tim Herring	Apologies	TH
Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern		RS
Office Manager, Gary Willson	Apologies	GW
Secretary to the Board, Nigel Towers		NT

- 1. Apologies for Absence** - Tim Herring was unable to attend. David Eustace and Chris Fegan attended for relevant parts of the meeting by dial-in.
- 2. Appointment of Chair** - Julian Clissold was appointed as chair.
- 3. Approval of the Agenda** - The agenda items were approved.
- 4. Minutes of 125th Board Meeting** - These were accepted unanimously.
- 5. Matters Arising from Minutes not on the Agenda** - There were no matters arising
- 6. Marketing Discussion** - Tracey Barber of Havas gave a presentation on driving membership and participation, focussing on the challenges the ECF faces, potential areas of focus for developing the ECF's brand and offerings, and potential engagement strategies with social players, female players, juniors, and potential members. Tracy drew on, amongst other things, the data researched and produced by Havas for AGON WorldChess in 2013 which was the most comprehensive research ever undertaken into the profile of those who play chess and the numbers participating.



Key points arising from the presentation and discussion were as follows:

- There was agreement on the need to focus on social chess as the route in to competitive games;
- It was pointed out by MP that there were many times more internet players in the UK than the number on the rating list and that outreach or provision for them was something the ECF should consider as a higher priority;
- It was recognised that there needed to be more accessible routes for players to move from playing internet chess to playing regular over the board chess compared with current club arrangements;
- It was felt that there were some clubs which could be more welcoming to new members who were not already competitive players. It was also recognised that many clubs were held in venues or at times which were not always suitable for women, elderly people and children, and that there was a need to look at provisions for these groups;
- It was also noted that there were many examples of club best practice which could and should be promoted and supported;
- The Board felt that it would be helpful to have a list of social sites to play chess to complement the list of clubs on the web site.

Actions arising from the presentation and discussion were as follows:

Investigate the establishment of an English internet chess championship with one of the major platform providers - MT

Follow up on developing the ECF web site reference information for social sites - eg libraries, parks, cafes, pubs etc – MT

Organise follow-on facilitated discussion to progress the offer and engagement strategies - SW

7. Finance Report (DE)

Accounts - DE referred to his finance report and the accounts for 2017/2018 and 2018/ 2019 to date. DE noted that the ECF had made a loss of £15k compared with a forecast of £18k for the year 2017/2018 and that reserves were just under £100k.

He drew Board members' attention to the following action requests for Board members:

Actions by 28th January:

1. Review 2017/18 management accounts and comment back;



2. *Review 2018/19 management accounts and comment back;*
3. *Provide forecast for 2018/19 for their directorates.*

Actions by 7th February:

1. *Provide budget figures for 2021/22.*

DE asked that detailed questions on the accounts be raised with him before the February Board meeting so that they could be dealt with in good time.

PIF Transfer - With regard to the transfer of the Permanent Invested Fund to the Chess Trust, DE drew attendees' attention to the following motion contained in his report:

"The Board authorises the transfer of the PIF No 1 Fund to the Chess Trust. This will be supervised and managed by a subcommittee of the Board comprising Mike Truran, Stephen Woodhouse and David Eustace. The subcommittee will continue to update the Board on progress and any matters that it needs to consider".

MP and SW said that they would like the ongoing debate about the relationship between the ECF and the Chess Trust and how trustees should be appointed in the context of that relationship to be finalised before the full balance of funds was transferred to the Chess Trust.

An action was agreed for SW to email the Board setting out his proposals on how best to address the above points.

It was noted that the ECF has already written to the Chess Trust asking for financial support for the proposed Development Officer role.

MP proposed a motion that an initial transfer of £20k be made from the PIF to the Chess Trust for the sole purpose of funding the Development Manager proposal for the time being.

The motion was passed by a majority vote.

8. Changes to Regulation Number 2 (RS)

RS proposed a change to Regulation Number 2 to reinstate the job description for Director of Women's Chess. The change was agreed unanimously.

Action agreed for Robert to arrange for the necessary changes to be made to the website.

9. Role of Development Officer and KPIs (MT verbal progress report)

The advertisement for the Development Officer role is currently on hold pending agreement for support from the Chess Trust. As noted in the Finance item, the ECF has written to the Chess



Trust requesting that support. The letter includes KPIs for the Development Officer role. A response is anticipated by the end of January.

10.4NCL Request for Financial Support from ECF for Planned GM Norm Tournament (MT/MP)

MT explained that the reason for bringing this item to the Board was because MP, from whose budget any such financial support would come, had no objection in principle to considering the request, but wished the Board to confirm that it was also happy for him to consider the request in the light of potential conflict of interest issues arising from the fact that three ECF Board members were also ECF directors. MT confirmed that no 4NCL directors would benefit financially from any financial support from the ECF.

MP noted that any grant if made was likely to be in the region of £500 to £1,000.

The Board confirmed by majority vote that it was happy for MP to consider 4NCL's request; the three 4NCL directors on the ECF Board recused themselves from the vote, having previously taken no part in the discussion other than to explain the reasons for the request and to answer questions raised by Board members..

Action - MP to consider whether on the basis of the above he was willing to make a grant to the 4NCL.

11. Membership Matters

a) Monthly Grading Requirements:

DT drew the Board's attention to Brian Valentine's paper which raised a number of questions on the requirements for monthly grading. The questions were discussed with agreed positions as follows:

1. Rationale for monthly grading – Key drivers for moving to monthly grading were noted as: more timely processing of congress results in particular, alignment with the rest of the world, response to player demands (particularly juniors), and the risk of other organisations publishing monthly grades if the ECF does not.

The Board noted that monthly grading submissions would most likely be set up on a voluntary rather than mandatory basis, recognising that the Board had no particular mandate to enforce monthly submissions. That said, the Board hoped that player pressure would in due course induce all local leagues to move to monthly grading.

2. Frequency and options for grading methodology – It was agreed that there was no need for a live / real time system, but rather just a monthly grade. The question was asked whether



the current 3 digit Clarke system could continue to be used with monthly grading on the basis of a 12 month/ 30 game sliding window for the grade calculation. *Dave T needs to check the wording please.*

3. Treatment of non-rated player games – It was agreed that all results should be graded including non-rated player games, notwithstanding this is different from the FIDE approach.
4. Monitoring of average grades to avoid deflation – This question was noted but parked for the moment as not requiring resolution for the immediate implementation.
5. Combined grade for juniors – It was agreed that there would not be any combined grades (eg average of standard and rapid) as part of this change.
6. Use of ECF/ Clarke or Elo ratings – There was discussion on the preferred rating system given the need to change the grading system to support monthly grades and the resulting opportunity to change the rating system. The Board had an open mind at this stage as to whether the Clarke methodology should be retained (subject to its ability to deal properly with monthly grading) or whether a move to an Elo methodology should be made. The board's preference is to move from the Clarke system's 3 digit grades to 4 digit ratings, but it was agreed that there should be a consultation process to confirm this would be broadly acceptable to members and supporters, recognising that there may be strong views on both sides.

An action was agreed for DT to initiate and manage the consultation process including a draft note to be prepared by DT/ SW covering the process and the question being put to the membership for publication in the February newsletter and on the ECF site. AH to prepare a supporting note with the pros and cons of the Elo and Clarke systems. The newsletter release should be ready for the February newsletter, and all consultation documents need to be ready by the end of January at the latest to start the process.

It was noted that the move to monthly grading would eliminate the rationale for Junior Bonuses and that this should be recognised during the implementation process.

b) Implementation Options:

DT indicated that the review of implementation options for the new grading system was proceeding in parallel with the clarification of requirements.

DT drew the Board's attention to the technical approach papers provided by Brian Valentine in relation to development of a new ECF custom system to support the change.



DT also summarised contacts with other organisations in relation to what systems they use and what potential there might be for sharing or implementing an existing system which supports monthly rating. This work was ongoing.

An action was agreed for Dave to progress discussions with other UK chess federations and to report back at the next Board meeting with a preferred implementation approach.

c) Members List Access

DT reported that access to the full members list was now restricted to organisers to comply with GDPR requirements. JD asked that access to the list be extended to graders since they also had a legitimate interest in information on the members list which was not available on the grading list.

An action was agreed for DT to arrange for an email to go to all graders inviting them to request access to the members list if they had a requirement for such access in support of their duties as graders.

d) Supporters Arrangements

DT outlined the full list of proposed benefits for the new supporters category as follows:

- Access to the newsletter and the newsletter archive (which will be moved to a members area of the site);
- Offers from sponsors as for members;
- Access to the grading database if this is included in the members area of the web site as part of the move to monthly grading.

The potential for providing a family version of the supporters arrangements was considered including the potential to make such a benefit available to members families without charge. . The Board felt that at present this was not a priority.

12. ECF/ NYCA MoU (AH)

AH reported that he was looking at the potential for NYCA to run the junior county championships, with the ECF taking entries and entry fees paid to NYCA as organisers.

13 Library (MT)

Mike reported that the DMU offer would be to take on the ECF library with the books transferred to the University library, with DMU making the books available to members of the public. The books would be transferred for a five-year contract term with suitable rights of



access and options to extend to a 20-year term. The ECF (or the Chess Trust, if this was considered appropriate) would retain ownership.

An action was agreed for RS to check the relevant wills to confirm that the books in the library had been left to the ECF on an unencumbered basis.

MT proposed that George Jellis should be awarded lifetime membership for his services in support of the ECF library. This would be contingent on approval by Council at April's Council meeting.

Actions were agreed for JC to write to George Jellis confirming his lifetime membership subject to Council's agreement and to ensure that the item was included in the agenda for the April Council.

14. New Member Applications - NT

The board was asked to consider membership applications from four organisations as follows:

- Barnet Knights (Rob Wilmoth);
- Chess Coaching Services (Rob Wilmoth);
- Central London League (Robert Stern);
- Pimlico Summer Tournament (Robert Stern).

The Council Chair had previously indicated that he would support all four applications.

The applications were all accepted nem con and with the arrangements for voting rights to come into force as per the ECF Articles.

Actions were agreed for NT to write to both sponsors with the outcome of their applications as above, and to notify Michael Farthing to update the voting register and calculate voting rights accordingly.

15. Board Reports

Director of Women's Chess:

CF drew the Board's attention to his written report including:

- Arrangements for the ECF Women Championship in September 2019;
- Allocation of grants for new projects;
- Plans for supporting senior women's chess



An action was agreed for CF to report back to the board on grants made to date and arrange for suitable publicity in the Newsletter and on the web site.

Director of Home Chess:

AE reported on progress this month including County Championships, a successful UK Open Blitz final held in December, and the development of anti-cheating measures.

AE drew Board members' attention to his anti-cheating document which he said was still work in progress with comments received from MT and Lara Barnes, and now requested from other directors.

He reported that he had contacted Chess Scotland, USCF and FIDE to understand their approaches to combating cheating. Chess Scotland had not provided a reply. The USCF indicated that they report everyone, publish a list of offenders, and refuse membership where appropriate. FIDE have a reporting system but do not publish a list of offenders. They do however require Organisers to exclude banned members from their tournaments.

AE was asked to consider the potential for maintaining a list of those caught cheating in the organisers area of the ECF web site, subject of course to the requirements of GDPR.

An action was agreed for all Board members to review and feed back comments on the anti-cheating paper.

Director of Membership:

DT reported that his major activities had been in relation to monthly grading, implementation of protected areas of the web site, and launching the new supporters category.

He had also been looking at the potential for using Azolve for ECF congresses and events. It was noted that whilst use of Azolve would avoid the need for members to rekey their details, the system would need significant enhancements to support congress entries.

Director of Junior Chess:

AH drew the Board's attention to his report which covered a number of areas as follows:

- Closing of the accredited coaches Scheme – AH briefed the Board on how he had responded to concerns that had been expressed since the scheme closure. Details of the new scheme had been posted on the website.
- Changes to the junior selection policy – AH briefed the Board on the new junior selection policy for international trips; the new policy had been posted on the website.



- Trip administration – MT reiterated that the ECF Office would no longer be involved in travel arrangements for international trips other than administrative requirements such as player and team registration fees and lists.
- Academy – AH indicated that the tender document for future Academy weekends would be prepared shortly and would include a preference for bidders who offered to run all three of the planned regions. MP asked that chess expertise on the part of the bidder be made a mandatory requirement. There was general agreement on the need for cooperation between the Academy and Accelerator programmes. AH briefed the Board on the temporary arrangements pending appointment of a new organiser/organisers whereby UKCC would run the next two Academy weekends on behalf of the ECF, but with close involvement on AH's part.

Alex also made the board aware of the Academy alumni programme with current plans being to take alumni to an overseas open tournament supported by a coach. It was agreed that the ECF would honour any existing commitments in this area but that the Office would not be involved with arranging flights or accommodation. It was also felt that the alumni programme should not be supported for future years.

FIDE Delegate/ International Directorate:

MP reported on the World Championship in December which had been organised by Agon without input from the ECF with a missed opportunity to use the championships to promote English chess. Having said that, Malcolm recognised that Agon had proved very effective in their media and PR operations and pointed out the huge media impact of the tie-break with a live blog on the games in the Guardian and extensive commentary in other media outlets.

Malcolm also pointed out the highly successful game between Magnus Carlsen and Trent Alexander Arnold which had again generated massive publicity for chess.

The London Chess Classic had been held successfully, albeit with no English norms.

MP raised a few points on FIDE matters. He indicated that he had discussed the World Championships with President Dvorkovich and had offered support from the ECF, and also noted that the ECF now had more FIDE representatives than ever. MP's view was that relations between FIDE and the ECF were cordial, arguably better than ever, with no noticeable negative impact from the FIDE election campaign.

The board recorded its congratulations to AH on his appointment as Qualifications Representative and FIDE arbiter including duties in St Petersburg, and to all English appointees who have taken on FIDE positions.



16. General Action Point Update

The outstanding action points were discussed and updated.

17. Date and time of next Board Meeting (Consideration of 15th February 2019 meeting)

The Board agreed to continue with the board meeting scheduled 15th February notwithstanding the fact that MT will be absent on holiday. MT asked SW or JD to deputise as CEO in his absence.

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