

# **ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION**

## **DRAFT STRATEGY AND BUSINESS PLAN**

### **STRATEGY**

#### **Furthering the Cause of English Chess**

The ECF will lead the development and organisation of chess for all players in England and our international teams. This will encompass:

- Extending the number of active competitive and social chess players.
- Increasing the number of juniors playing competitive chess and transitioning to becoming adult competitive players.
- Encouraging the development of women's and social chess as part of a wider commitment to increasing the diversity of participation in chess.
- Increasing the awareness of chess and its wider social benefits outside the existing ECF membership.
- Building the financial strength of chess and chess organisations.
- Developing the number of elite players and individual players of exceptional talent.

#### **Priority areas**

A Director for Women's Chess has been appointed to the Board. Our ambition is to increase participation in chess among women of all standards to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within four years, and to facilitate the transition from junior, to adult, to senior.

We have already begun, and we will continue to develop and refine, programmes to encourage participation among junior players and to help them achieve their potential.

We will continue, and improve, our support to English players taking part in international competitions, with the aspiration of re-establishing England as a force in the chess world.

Our biggest asset is our membership. We will continue to improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings. We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future. The Board will continue to focus on these targets.

We will work with member organisations, supported by the Development Officer, to grow chess activity at all levels across England, focussing in particular on junior, women's and social chess.

We will keep the operation of the membership system under review, ensuring the system is well maintained, remains fit for purpose and provides additional benefits to members.

We will continue to provide support to chess organisers and we will keep under continuous review all competitions organised for which we are responsible, including the British Championships, the UK Open Blitz Championships, the County Championships and the Women's English Championships.

Commercial sponsorship generates additional income that can help us to make extra investment in areas such as junior, women's and international chess. We will continue to seek out new sponsorship opportunities and build on our relationship with existing sponsors, and support them to build their brands.

We will actively engage with other chess organisations in England and elsewhere to improve coordination, efficiency and knowledge-sharing across English chess.

We will continue to develop a set of key performance indicators in order to monitor our progress against our objectives.

## **Business Planning**

The Board will produce an annual business plan. That will set out how we propose to deliver the priorities set out in this statement. As part of the business planning process we will refine our strategic intentions and financial planning in consultation with Council and in accordance with prevailing circumstances.

## **The Board**

Directors will work collegiately both within the Board and with other chess organisations. We will encourage a culture where we actively invite comment and feedback. We will ensure our governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose.

## **Funding**

Our core activities will continue to be funded through membership fees. We will use sponsorship and donations/bequests to support strategic and developmental projects and initiatives, ensuring that sponsors' own objectives are addressed. We will avoid the use of external funding as a substitute for core activity funding. We will work closely with the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in particular regarding funding for strategic and developmental projects and initiatives.

## **Office**

We are committed to maintaining the central functions of an ECF Office. The Office endeavours to provide a high quality and efficient service to ECF members and other chess organisations, and gives support to ECF directors and officials as required. Staff will be offered opportunities for professional development on an individual basis.

## **Communications**

Initiatives such as introducing a monthly e-newsletter and press releases, developing our social media presence, overhauling the website and direct emailing of members and Council have helped to improve communication to members. We want stronger partnerships with chess players and chess organisations, and will continue to develop communications across a range of platforms and seek greater engagement with members to help shape our policies and plans.

## **BUSINESS PLAN**

### **Finance**

Objective: Support the overall objectives of the English Chess Federation and the agreed plans of the Executive Directors.

- Grow income in such a way as to enable the Board's plans to be achieved, taking into account funds received from donations, sponsorship and other sources.
- Use membership income to fund ongoing operational expenditure, using sponsorship, bequests and donations for new initiatives and developments.
- Maintain a reserve of £100,000 over the five year planning cycle.
- Seek to achieve an annual break-even financial position over the five year planning cycle.
- Ensure that all finance activities are performed transparently, efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure accounting records and accounts are maintained in an accurate and timely manner.
- Simplify the overall financial structure consolidating funds into the ECF and the Chess Trust. This will remove the requirements for the active use of the BCF, Chess Centre Ltd and the Permanent Invested Fund.
- Promote our direct debit facility for the membership scheme.
- Improve the presentation of finance information to directors and to members.
- Complete the reallocation of Office roles and responsibilities between financial- and administration-related tasks.

## **Governance**

Objective: Ensure that the ECF's governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose.

- Continue to review compliance with most appropriate governance practice.
- Undertake a detailed review of the articles of association.

## **Junior**

Objective: Improve participation levels in and the profile of junior chess in England and reduce the current rate of attrition in the transition to adulthood.

- Continue to develop the ECF Chess Academy in partnership with our chosen partners as the development route of choice for our top juniors.
- Support the Chess Trust as it continues to develop its Accelerator Programme for our elite junior players.
- Encourage junior chess organisations' activities in England and promote the development of collaborative working.

- Understand why so many girls stop playing chess in school and put in place actions accordingly, liaising closely with the Director of Women's Chess and junior organisers.
- Understand the core issues which make girls stop playing when they go to secondary school, liaising closely with the Director of Women's Chess and junior organisers.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve the quality of support to junior players.
- Develop competitive chess in schools with a particular emphasis on those pupils aged over 11.
- Develop chess playing opportunities that encourage girls to continue playing chess in adulthood.
- Encourage adult chess clubs and leagues to integrate, support and develop junior players.
- Review and improve junior financial management processes.
- Identify and work with top junior players to increase participation in non-ECF events, in particular FIDE-rated tournaments.
- Extend take-up of the new Supporter category among parents of juniors.

## **Women**

Objective: Work towards delivering our ambition to increase participation in chess among women of all standards to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within four years.

- Increase participation in the English Women's Championships.
- Work with independent organisers to increase female participation in non-ECF events and in particular FIDE rated events.
- Increase the profile of women's chess so that girls/teenagers/women have something to aspire to.
- Reach out to non-chess women's organisations to encourage female take-up of and participation in chess.
- Extend take-up of the new Supporter category among girls and women.
- Implement the proposals in the paper "Development of Women's Chess: Progress Plan" to be presented at the April 2020 Finance Council meeting.

## **Home**

Objective: Support the Board in its goal of increasing the perceived added value that the ECF provides to its members.

- Continue the roll-out of the new League Management System.
- Keep the format of competitions organised by the ECF, in particular the British Chess Championships, the County Championships, the English Women's Championships and the UK Open Blitz Championships, under review.
- Develop official ECF online chess events.
- Provide more effective support and advice to independent event organisers.
- Provide effective support, advice and training for new and existing arbiters.

- Introduce and maintain official anti-cheating procedures based on similar organisations' best practice elsewhere in the world.
- Extend take-up of the new Supporter category across the casual/social/online chess playing population.
- Increase use of social media.

## **Membership**

Objective: Oversee the operation of the membership system and ensure that it is maintained and improved as necessary.

- Improve communication to and facilities for consultation with corporate and individual members.
- Improve the documentation of the requirements for the administration of membership and of the operation of the new system.
- Identify selling points which might make membership attractive to individuals who are not themselves competitive players in order to increase the ECF's potential membership base.
- Complete the move to monthly grading once the investigation into detailed requirements (currently in progress) is completed.
- Review junior membership arrangements, including the effectiveness of our free first year membership offer, with a view to improving junior membership retention.
- Complete the move to a full membership organisation and review whether game fee and pay-to-play fees can be replaced with a flat fee per event approach.
- Promote our new casual/social chess player Supporter category.
- Review the operation of the Membership Organisation scheme with a view to augmenting or replacing it with facilities for managing club membership which exist within the Azolve membership system.

## **International**

Objective: Improve the performance of our international teams.

- Work with the Directors of Junior and Women's Chess to identify and nurture top talent.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve conditions, training etc for international players.
- Review how the ECF can better capture the views and insights of top players in England.
- Seek to foster an environment to support top chess players to maximise their potential while also developing a career outside chess.

## **Office**

Objective: Continue to provide a high quality service to stakeholders.

- Complete the reallocation of Office roles and responsibilities between financial-and administration-related tasks.

- Work with De Montfort University Leicester to manage the transfer of the library from the Office to the DMU Special Collections facility.
- Complete the evolution of the yearbook from a paper-based directory to an annual news digest, transferring all information about clubs, leagues, associations etc onto the ECF website in an easily accessible and updatable format.
- Complete the project to diarise all key Office internal and external deadlines.