

## Development of Women's Chess Progress Plan

### **Background**

1. This paper builds upon the paper "*Development of Women's Chess*" which was supported and its recommendations agreed by the ECF Board at their meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019.
2. The paper outlines proposals for the planned course of action to be taken by the ECF to achieve the seven aspirational objectives which were outlined in Section 4.4 of the original paper.

### **Overview**

3. Chess is a male dominated activity in England. This reflects chess demographics globally, albeit with national variation and is reflected in the published analysis conducted by David Smerdon .
4. There are a number of implications which flow from this:
  - Achieving change will require fundamental changes to the way chess is played.
  - The changes needed are not fully understood and the understanding of what is needed will evolve.
  - That change cannot be achieved simply by edicts from the ECF Board. There will need to be cultural change at all levels of chess in England which will require engagement from clubs, counties, unions, schools and individual members.
5. Equally, achieving these changes will offer opportunities for transformational change which could secure the future of chess.

Benefits could include:

- Increasing chess participation and the variety of opportunities for chess playing.
- Broader family participation.
- Embedding chess as the leading mind sport in England.
- Encouraging and facilitating chess as a social and competitive activity.
- Encouraging juniors to continue playing chess as they move into adulthood.

## Objectives and Proposals

6. Consistently with this, the Board has developed a series of initial aspirational objectives. This paper sets these out with initial proposals for plans to achieve them.

### ***25% female representation on the Board within 3 years.***

7. Julian Clissold as Chair of the Board is leading an initiative to increase the level of female Board representation.
8. It is expected that this will include a number of actions:
  - Reconsidering the nature of the roles within the Board and the availability of female candidates.
  - In particular, encouraging one or more non-executives with broader skills than represented on the Board today, without a requirement for specific chess knowledge or background.
  - Consulting with external experts on recruiting directors of voluntary organisations on the approach to broadening the diversity of candidates for Board positions.
  - Developing a systematic plan for identifying those Board positions which are likely to become vacant in order to target suitable recruitment for consideration by Council at an early stage.

### ***Increase female membership of the ECF (including ECF Supporters) to 15% within four years.***

9. This aspires to an increase in female members and supporters of a minimum of 1,000 people of all ages to include both competitive chess players and social chess players. It is likely that this increase would be mostly achieved by an increase in junior players as currently over 80% of female ECF Members are aged under 21 and the total female membership of the ECF is only currently 7.5%. That said, retaining a higher proportion of junior girls as adult members is critical to achieve a stable growing female member/supporter base in the longer term.
10. A number of measures will be needed:
  - Active co-operation between the Director of Women's Chess other Board members and active engagement with other key members of the English chess community including the Development Officer when appointed.
  - Encouraging parents of chess playing children to become ECF supporters.
  - Seeking expert marketing advice on making participation in the ECF more attractive to women, particularly teenagers and young adults.

- Encouraging and developing social chess.
- Providing support to clubs and other chess organisations in developing their female membership.

***ECF Membership income from women of at least 15% (i.e. women represented at Gold and Silver level and not just Bronze or Supporter)***

11. On a detailed review of existing female membership – and the proportion of females who are juniors – it is suggested that this is redefined as an absolute rather than percentage target, to avoid the difficulty of reaching a percentage of a figure which itself is increasing.
12. The revised proposal is to seek annual income from female members of £20k, reflecting approximately 10% of current total membership receipts.

***15% female representation at Council within four years.***

13. The first steps will be taken by encouraging female presence at the ECF Council AGM in October 2019 by and by working with member organisations to encourage greater female representation at Council.
14. In addition, it is proposed that a new role of Female Members’ Representative is created (see paragraph 21).

***Achieve an additional WGM within 4 years***

15. This will be targeted through the existing plans of the International Director in conjunction with the Board, identifying potential candidates and investing resources accordingly.

***To improve our women’s squad to get a rating of 2300 over the top six and always field a team of average 2250 or above in International competition***

16. This will similarly require coordinated activity by all Directors through identifying potential candidates and then targeting resources accordingly.

***Obtain regular funding in addition to further membership fees payable by women members of around £30k per year.***

17. A number of initiatives will be taken with a view to achieving this level of finance:

- Working with external experts to make a Lottery fund application in 2019 or 2020.
- Seeking sponsorship aimed specifically at developing women’s chess.

- Increasing membership income from female members. *See above.*

### **International Action and Support**

18. A major Women's Conference will be held by the ECF in partnership with FIDE, ECU and CSC in December 2019 to discuss this paper. It is intended that this conference will be used to develop the detailed action plans needed to deliver the proposals in this paper in partnership with conference attendees.

### **Reciprocity**

19. For the plans to be successful, there needs to be support for the development of the women's game and participation from all parts of the ECF. The Board cannot deliver this paper's outcomes on its own. The Board therefore asks for the support and commitment of all Council members in working towards the outcomes in this paper.

20. It is also proposed that Council be asked to approve the creation of a role for a Female Members' Representative to attend and have a vote at Council meetings.