

## ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION DRAFT STRATEGY STATEMENT 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.
- Embedding and continuing the development of online 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

Our ambition is to increase participation in chess among women of all standards to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within three 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.

We welcome the ongoing growth in online chess and the increasing level of participation amongst English players. We will continue to develop the ECF's support for this area including organising online events, providing a rating service and supporting leagues and congresses that move online.

At the same time we understand the central importance of over the board chess and the need to support a safe return to over the board congresses, leagues and events when the time is right, and we will continue to provide support and advice to organisers as the Covid-19 situation develops.

Our biggest asset is our membership. We will continue to improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings for all forms of chess. 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 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, the Women's English Championships and our various ECF online club events and National 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, whether physically or remotely. 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.

- Ensure that the ECF's finances are sufficient to enable the ECF's infrastructure to be maintained while the Covid-19 pandemic lasts, and rebuild the necessary financial strength thereafter.
- 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.
- Develop and 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.
- Continue to improve the presentation of financial information to directors and to members.

## **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.
- Develop a code of conduct for Board members to underpin effective Board operation.

## **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 and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in its support for the British Championships and a range of other junior initiatives.
- 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.
- 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.

## 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 three 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 October 2020 Council meeting.

## Home

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

- 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.
- Continue the development of official ECF online chess events, widening participation among junior, female and social players in particular.
- Support initiatives that encourage the return to OTB chess during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Provide more effective support and advice to independent event organisers.
- Provide effective support, advice and training for new and existing arbiters.
- Maintain official anti-cheating procedures for ECF-organised events. 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 and effectiveness of the membership system and ensure that it is maintained and improved as necessary.

- Put in place special offers for ECF members with third party companies as a membership retention/acquisition initiative.
- 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.
- Continue to develop the main monthly rating system's functionality.
- Integrate the online rating system into the main monthly rating system.
- 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 arrangements for bulk membership renewals by corporate members following the abolition of the Membership Organisation scheme.
- Promote the use of the ECF League Management System by affiliated leagues, and consider enhancements to the system, including those necessitated by its increasing use for online chess.

## 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.
- Develop England's presence in online international events.
- 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.

## Online

- Continue to develop and grow our ECF online members clubs with regular events on the major online platforms.
- Support and develop English online community clubs including junior and women's clubs and events.
- Continue to run online National Championships and competitions including the English Online Blitz, Rapid and Bullet Championships, the Online Counties Championships and related competitions, and the English Chess Marathons.
- Develop a programme of ECF online affiliated leagues and clubs to support non-ECF online events and allow these to be rated.
- Continue to develop the online rating system including integration of the rating process with the new monthly rating system and production of a combined listing showing OTB and online ratings along the lines of the USCF model.
- Organise and publicise participation of English teams in online international events.
- Promote daily chess at international level including participation in World and European online daily leagues.

## Office

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

- Complete the transfer of the library from the Office to the De Montfort University Special Collections facility.
- Continue the development of the yearbook as an annual news digest.
- Complete the project to diarise all key Office internal and external deadlines.