

Minutes of the 139th Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Friday 28th August, 2020
Zoom Meeting
2-30 to 4-00 pm

Members:

President, Dominic Lawson	Apologies	DL
Chief Executive, Mike Truran		MT
Director of Finance, David Eustace		DE
Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak	Apologies	AH
Director of International Chess, Malcolm Pein		MP
Director of Home Chess, Adrian Elwin		AE
Director of Membership, David 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		CF

Invited: Observers and Guests

Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern	RS
Chairman, Finance Committee, Nick Faulks	NF
Chair of Council, Michael Farthing	MF
Secretary to the Board and Minutes Secretary, Nigel Towers	NT

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Appointments

JC was appointed as Chair with SW running the Zoom meeting.

3. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved.

4. Minutes of the 138th Board Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were approved with no amendments.



5. Minutes of 138th Board Meeting and Outstanding Actions

The action to agree KPIs was discussed and it was agreed that the full set of Board level KPIs should be referenced from a single web page.

139/01 – NT to organise web page with references to KPIs where available.

139/02 – CF to organise Women's Community web page.

There was some discussion over ECF guidance and support for a return to OTB chess as restrictions are lifted.

AE suggested that the web site and newsletter should be used to share experience of returning to OTB chess including hybrid events.

139/03 – MT/ AE to organise suitable newsletter/ web site text.

6. Financial Position/ Membership Renewals/ New Member Update - DE and DT

DT summarised his paper on the renewals position as follows as at 22nd August. This showed an overall renewal rate of 19.4% to date for members and 23.7% for supporters as at that date. As a comparative figure, DT indicated that by end of August last year approximately 50% of Gold and Platinum members (adult and junior) had renewed, roughly 40% of adult Silver, and nearly 30% of adult Bronze.

NT asked if there were any plans to send reminder emails. MT confirmed that further 'calls to action' would be made in future newsletters, and MP suggested a direct mailing later in the year.

139/ 04 - An action was agreed for DT to arrange reminder emails during September and a further mailshot in the new year to members who had not renewed.

139/ 05 - An action was agreed for NT to continue with Facebook advertising including links to suitable landing pages for renewals and new members.

The Board expressed its thanks to MP for the Chess and Bridge discounts which had been provided for renewing members up to 13th September.



DE presented a finance update including management accounts for 2019/2020. The financial position for 2019/2020 to date included the following points:

- Membership income for the year was much as expected with a few late Bronze renewals of about £900
- Game fee income was being forecast at £12k which was considerably higher than previously included in the June management accounts
- Income from Supporters seemed to be lower than previously predicted, but increasing
- Expenditure had generally been restricted to supporting online events
- The largest expense for the Online Olympiad was covered by sponsorship/donations raised by the International Director
- If the outstanding Game Fee income was collected there should be a surplus for the year of about £10k supported by government and council grants of £21k.

DE provided a summary of the outlook for 2020/21. As of 14th August, £42K of membership income had been received and it was expected this would increase to £50k to £60k by the end of September. It was not envisaged that this position would improve until over the board chess returns. If the current situation persisted and there was no return to over the board chess, then the budget presented to Finance Council would have to be revised to reduce spend further or alternative funding sought.

Cost reduction actions highlighted to the Board previously were as follows:

- Staff reduced to two in the Office (with Christine Carcas finishing on Thursday this week)
- Move to a smaller physical office/ home working (decision as to which one, or a combination of both, outstanding)
- Reduction in Council and Board expenses – more video/tele-conferencing (ongoing)
- Bringing in-house the company secretarial services
- Bookkeeping costs reduced
- Grading system administration costs under review (administration contract for renewal in October)



- Commitment to expenditure by Directors to be agreed up front with the CE and FD
- Tentative change made to broaden the Development Officer Fund to cover strategic and developmental activities, subject to approval of the change by the Chess Trust

DE explained that the total cash available as at 25th August was around £105k. The total administration/fixed operations cost for the ECF was £11.9k per month which would cover about eight or nine months' activity with no further income.

Directors would still be able to spend funds designated for specific purposes from sources such as the Chess Trust's funding. The ECF will receive further funding from the Chess Trust in September for those designated purposes previously agreed.

DE said that the outlook would change if more membership income were received.

139/ 06 - An action was agreed for JC to arrange for company secretary duties to be carried out in-house and to contact Bruce Wallace at an appropriate time to cancel the current arrangements.

139/ 07 – MT to discuss broadening the purpose of the Development Officer fund with the Chess Trust.

DE asked all Board members to submit any expenses up to 31st August so that these could be provided for in the year end accounts.

7. Nominations for Board Positions – JC/ MT

MP advised that Adam Ashton would be standing for the Finance Director position.

There was some discussion of the vacant NED position and how gender imbalance on the board could be addressed.

8. Preparation for AGM – MF

MF confirmed that the meeting would be held via Zoom on 18th October.

MT advised that he would produce a draft Strategy Statement/Business Plan and Board report to Council for comment and it was noted that the agenda and papers needed to be distributed 24 days before the meeting, namely on Wednesday 23rd September.



RS noted that the total number of votes would be reduced as a result of the reduction in OTB activity and asked who would be counting the votes cast at the meeting.

In relation to the first point, there was some discussion of the need to make an allowance for additional votes to reflect online activity. It was noted that this was an action for the Governance Committee and the Chair of Council, not the Board. RS said that the Governance Committee were looking to table a suitable proposal for the April Council meeting.

With reference to RS's second point on counting of votes, MF explained that he was happy to continue as Voting Register Officer and would be supported by the Office team to count the votes at the meeting. He explained the proposed arrangements for hand and card voting which would be as for this year's Finance Council. MF also indicated that he had booked the ECF Zoom facility and would be managing the Zoom meeting on the day.

9. Monthly Grading/ Rating – Go Live Plan, Dates and Cutover Implications – DT and NT

NT summarised his report as follows:

The core monthly grading/ rating system has been system tested with historical grading submissions, and the results compared with the current Clarke grading system. The player screens for the new system were available here:

https://www.ecfrating.org.uk/v2/new/list_players.php

The plan was to put the system live during week commencing 31st August. The go-live was to be based on an initial grading list data load from the current system with the August revisions.

All results and revisions submitted from start of September onwards will be processed in the new system only.

There are a number of post go-live enhancements and infrastructure changes planned for the new system for the remainder of the year including: standard events setup, event registration system, various reports including game fee calculations, online rating system migration with an additional set of online grades, and infrastructure replatforming to cope with our obsolete grading server.



10. ECF Online Report – NT

NT summarised his report as follows:

ECF Online Club memberships have continued to increase steadily over the period since go-live in January, with current levels around 5,000 members across the three main clubs on chess.com and lichess. AH also runs an England Junior Club on lichess and Jo Hutchinson runs an England Women's club with Jovanka Houska also on lichess.

We are currently running around 12 online events per week across the various clubs and continue to run regular National and Championships. We have entered English teams in a number of International Online Leagues including the chess.com Nations League (where we are a founder member), the lichess Nations Cup (which we won in March) and the lichess World Series team battle events.

In addition to the above we have arranged for a number of amendments to LMS to support online competitions and are developing a programme of affiliated leagues, clubs and events intended to support leagues and clubs in moving their events or parts of their events online, with a rating service to have their competitions and events ECF online rated. There are currently 3,000 to 4,000 players appearing in the August list and around 5,000 games rated per month.

Plans for the remainder of the year include:

- Continuation of club events including online Grand Prix awards
- A North v South of England match to be held on chess.com on 5th September
- One or more national events per month
- Continuing participation in the various internationals including the second season of the Nations League and the various lichess events.
- Development of the affiliated clubs and league scheme to continue to grow participation

11. Ecforum – MT

MT proposed that in line with previous guidance Board Members and ECF Officers reporting to the Board or to a director must refrain from posting on Ecforum on ECF-related matters. Any exceptions should be agreed with MT.



The proposal was approved with 7 in favour and 2 abstentions.

It was noted that MF and NF were not officers reporting to the Board and that as such neither of them was within the purview of the resolution.

AP 139/08 – MT to consider how the proposal for board members and relevant officers to refrain from posting on ECF-related matters should be implemented.

12. Safeguarding Update – JC

JC explained that he had not received a response from Samantha Ali in relation to the Safeguarding lead position. CF agreed to provide an alternative email address for JC to make contact with Samantha.

13. British Championship Update - MT

MT explained that one of the sponsors for the Hastings Congress was unwilling for the event to host an event including the title 'British Championships' and as a result the offer had been withdrawn.

14. Directors' Reports

- a) Finance – DE had already provided a report earlier in the meeting.
- b) Home Chess – AE noted that some venues were now opening up and a section had been added to the tournament rules in relation to playing under social distancing conditions.

AE indicated that the decision as to whether a chess club should open must be made at club level by club itself. The ECF would continue to provide guidance on the latest HM Government announcements and the criteria which would need to be complied with.

AE noted that Kevin Staveley has produced a provisional schedule for the 2021 British Chess Championships. This could not yet be finalised as the dates of the British Chess Championship itself could not be determined until the dates for the Olympiad were known.



- c) Women's Chess – CF provided an updated version of the women's chess development plan which was to be submitted to Council at October's AGM. The plan was supported unanimously by Board members.
- d) Junior Chess – There was no report from Junior Chess.
- e) International Chess – MP explained that there had been a successful round of fund-raising to support the England team's participation in the online Olympiad with junior coaching funded by the Chess Trust and John Robinson Youth Chess Trust. Although the draw was unkind to us, we still had chances to qualify on the third and final day – but two winning games turned to losses in the space of 30 seconds and we were eliminated. AH had been appointed as Chief Arbiter for the event in line with England's increasing profile and level of participation within FIDE. There had been some issues with teams withdrawing over issues with disconnect and an action was agreed for NT to discuss the situation with chess.com.

139/ 09 – NT to discuss handling of disconnects with chess.com.

- f) Membership – DT had already provided a report earlier in the meeting.

15. Awards Committee Recommendations – MT

MT presented the Award Committee recommendations as follows:

Club of the Year:	Oxford University Chess Club
Small Club of the Year:	Bude Chess Club
Online chess contribution of the Year:	Aloysius Lip (through Scorch Chess)
Congress of the Year:	Hull 4NCL International
President's Award for Services to Chess:	Graham Bromley, Ian George, Harry Lamb

Further President's awards were proposed for Nigel Towers, Alex Holowczak and Peter Hornsby and an additional online chess contribution award was proposed for 4NCL Online.

The awards were voted on and agreed unanimously by the Board.

16. Calendar 2020-21 – JC

The updated meetings calendar was provided for noting by the Board.



17.AOB

RS explained that he wanted to seek authority for BCF general meetings to be held remotely.

139/ 10 - An action was agreed for RS to organise a vote of eligible Council members to make the necessary changes to the BCF constitution.

There being no further items the meeting closed at 16-45.

