**Minutes** **of the 143rd Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation**

**Friday 19th March 2021**

**Zoom Meeting**

**2.30- 5.00 pm**

**Members:**

President, Dominic Lawson APOL DL

Chief Executive, Mike Truran MT

Director of Finance, Adam Ashton AA

Director of Women’s Chess, Chris Fegan APOL CF

Alternate Director Women’s Chess, Aga Milewska AM

Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak APOL AH

Director of International Chess, Malcolm Pein APOL MP

Director of Home Chess, Nigel Towers NT

Director of Membership, Rob Willmoth RW

Non-Executive Chairman, Julian Clissold JC

Non-Executive Director, Natasha Regan NR

Non-Executive Director, Stephen Woodhouse SW

**Invited: Observers and Guests**

Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern RS

Chairman, Finance Committee, Nick Faulks NF
Meetings Secretary, Danny Rosenbaum DR

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were noted as above.

1. **Agenda**

The agenda was approved with a small correction that item 9 (‘BCC 2021 and 2022 Update (MT)’) should read ‘BCC 2021 and 2022 Update (NT)’. It was also agreed that NT’s request for matters relating to online voting would be discussed at this Board.

1. **Minutes of 142nd Board Meeting and Outstanding Actions**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved nem con and it was agreed that DR would obtain updates on the action points outside the Board meeting with the relevant directors.

1. **April Finance Council Meeting (AA)**

AA presented the Finance Director’s report. He noted that membership renewals had started to slow down and unsurprisingly, given the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic, income would be significantly down on the previous year.

Taking a cautious view, the Board agreed to ask Council as with last year for permission to run the ECF’s financial matters should the financial position deteriorate significantly against the budget to be presented to Council. If the ECF’s financial position deteriorated to an unacceptable degree, approaching the PIF for support would be considered.

The anticipated loss for 2020/2021 was around £5,000, which was better than expected and was due to grants and government support and rigorous cost control.

Looking forward AA suggested a cautious outlook. Costs were set to rise because of events having been pushed back including the European Championships and the Olympiad (which were now likely to fall in the same ECF financial year), and there would in all likelihood still be an adverse effect on income resulting from Covid-19.

AA reported that the ECF had put on hold any requests for membership fee increases because of Covid-19, but we would now seek Council approval for membership fee increases in 2022/23 to help repair the ECF’s finances. 2021/22 membership fees were proposed to remain the same apart from a slight increase in Supporter level fees. The Board would revert to Council in due course.

It was suggested that in future the Board should meet on a two virtual/one face-to-face meeting rota to save costs.

AA reported that we were progressing with moving the accounts away from Excel to Xero, thereby improving management information and simplifying processes.

RS confirmed that the agenda for Council had to be published by 31 March and it would be good practice for the papers including finance papers to be distributed at the same time.

On that basis it was agreed that if any directors had relevant comments they should be fed back to AA by 24 March.

AP 143/01 AA and MT to finalise finance papers for the Council meeting.

The Board recorded its thanks to all ECF members for their financial support for the ECF during a very difficult period. It was very grateful for the high proportion of renewals (nearly two-thirds of paying members on an annual like-for-like basis).

AA also recorded his thanks to the Directors for their understanding and support.

1. **Membership Renewals/ New Member Update (RW)**

RW noted that membership levels were creeping up but renewal numbers were slowing.

The membership shortfall had occurred mainly in the Bronze and Silver adult levels.

RW reported that the ChessKid affiliate scheme was ready to go live.

AP143/02 RW to set up a meeting with NT, AM, and JC to explore the best way to implement and organise the ChessKid Scheme.

1. **Arrangements for Return of OTB Chess (NT)**

NT said that following the Government’s ‘Covid-19 Response – Spring 2021’ statement, the ECF had issued further Covid-19 guidance.

Preparation for OTB was taking place, with a team looking at collating best practice and looking at the approach of various organisations such as the English Bridge Union.

The British Chess Championships have been moved from Torquay in the summer to a variety of venues (probably four) in October.

There would be a second Online British Chess Championship event in July / August with a similar format to the first one. It would also provide some of the qualifying places for the OTB British Championships.

AP143/03 NT to publish the entry forms for the Online Championships by the end of March and to make another announcement about the British OTB Championships in mid- to end- April.

Discussions had been taking place on whether to run an OTB County Championships event.

AP143/04 NT to send papers to the Board by 24 March with suggested proposals to put to Council regarding the County Championships.

1. **New ECF Registered Coaching Scheme Update (NT)**

NT said that the new scheme had been published with 42 coaches signed up. It was being run by Andrew Martin drawing on the help of JC and the Safeguarding team. There had been a lot of positive feedback about the scheme. JC commented that we had a backlog of applications to work through as many of the 93 applications so far had not been completed fully and required further work. Once the backlog had been cleared it was hoped that many more coaches would sign up.

1. **Safeguarding Report: Guidance to Clubs, Leagues and Congresses (JC) and Purchase of Sync Software to Store Safeguarding Reports (JC)**

JC reported that the safeguarding team had met four times since the last Board meeting and had developed guidance notes for clubs, congresses and leagues. While JC and the team were commended for their work on the guidelines, the Board felt that they would benefit from more detailed accompanying supporting material and guidance to assist clubs, congresses and leagues who needed to develop or overhaul their safeguarding policies.

AP143/05 JC to consider developing more detailed supporting material and guidance to accompany the guidance notes for a future Board meeting.

The safeguarding team had identified appropriate software called Sync that could be hired on a monthly basis for securely holding reports of safeguarding incidents. The Board supported the decision to hire Sync.

1. **Events Director Role (MT)**

It was proposed to create the role of Events Director as a new Board position. MT had discussed with Shohreh Bayat (SB) the possibility of taking over the role if the Board were to approve it, and she had expressed enthusiasm for the idea. There were various reasons for creating the post, including: (a) To help alleviate the workload of the Home and Junior directorates in particular where the amount of work involved was becoming untenable; (b) To improve coordination and consistency across the various events organised by the ECF; (c) To provide extra scope to increase the diversity of the Board. There would be an initial period of transition where AH and NT would operate together with SB before she acted independently as Events Director. MT had liaised with NT, AH and CF, all of whom were happy with the recommendation.

The role would start off with SB focussing on OTB events.

The Board agreed nem con to create the post of Events Director.

The Board also agreed nem con to invite SB to take on the role with immediate effect.

AP 143/06 MT to speak to SB and offer her the post of Events Director.

AP 143/07 MT to get the ECF website updated accordingly.

The Board agreed nem con to amend Regulation No. 2 by updating the relevant directorates’ responsibilities and amending the rota such that the new post would come up for election in 2022 and every third year thereafter.

AP143/08 MT and RS to update Regulation No.2

RS confirmed that if SB accepted the position it would initially be a casual vacancy until the AGM in October when she would put herself forward formally for election alongside another other candidates who wished to be considered.

**10. AOB**

a. NT put forward a proposal for a resolution for Finance Council 2021, which was aimed at giving more recognition to organisers of online events in terms of voting rights.

The Board approved nem con to put forward the resolution to the Finance Council.

b. The Board noted that the Governance Committee would be putting forward two resolutions to Council concerning directors’ terms and a resolution concerning Council voting rights and the voting register.

c. MT outlined his exchanges with Mark Jordan (MJ) and the Board agreed nem con that MJ should be given approval to draft an equality and diversity policy for the ECF. MT confirmed that MJ would be consulting closely with the Board and seeking input from direct members. Once the policy was drafted it would be brought back to the Board for review and approval.

AP 143/09 MT to speak to MJ regarding developing an equality and diversity policy.

Date and time of next Board meeting: 2.30 p.m. Friday 21st May 2021 by Zoom call.