

Chris Fegan
750 Word Election Statement
Chair of Governance Committee Election

I have been the Director of Women's Chess for 3 years and in that time I have overseen a massive improvement in the situation of women's chess in England.

I am now standing down from that position as I promised at my election in 2018 as we now have a woman ECF Member who is prepared to do the job.

The improvements in the situation of women's chess in the UK include the following:

- A huge increase in the ECF Budget for Women's Chess-it was £5000 per annum when I took over and the 2021/22 Budget is expected to be £20,000
- A 5 year development programme for Women's chess which was given a wide and long consultation and which has been approved by ECF Council
- The most successful collaboration ever between the ECF, FIDE and the ECU in 2019 by staging an International Education Conference entitled "Chess and Female Empowerment" which was held in London and included many senior international women speakers including Judit Polgar.
- A massive increase in the number of women in powerful political positions on the ECF Board and ECF Council.
- A massive increased participation in and prize fund for the English Women's Championships
- Support for grass roots women's chess through financial grants to chess clubs and congresses
- Financial and other support for English women to play in events at home and abroad
- A successful search for replacement and crucially female Director of Women's Chess and a unique delivered succession plan and shadowing process.

I am proud of these achievements and delighted to be leaving my successor a strong legacy on which to build and to take Women's chess in England even further.

However my 3 years on the ECF Board have proved to be very disappointing in other ways as I have watched how the ECF Board has grown increasingly dysfunctional and how normal UK norms of democracy have declined to a very low level.

The reasons for this are complex and some are due to individual error and lack of the required skill sets and other reasons are at a more structural level. There is a general feeling that the ECF Constitution, which involves volunteers taking up important positions, often leads to "square pegs in round holes" and I have seen this at first hand over the last 3 years. It is unfortunately the case that we have seen a massive increase in the number of Official Regulation 5 Complaints in the last few years (one individual has been the subject of at least 3 formally submitted complaints) and the current system has proved unable to deal with this in a satisfactory manner.

The Governance of the ECF Board and thus the wider ECF itself has proved chaotic and frankly has failed over the last 3 years.

The Governance Committee has, for whatever reason, not seemed to be up to the job of handling this situation.

It is incomprehensible to me that the Governance Committee does not seem to have any published standards of procedure or Standing Orders and this needs urgent fixing as a bare minimum.

If elected then I promise to change all this and bring a full report on proposed changes to the April Council meeting for ECF Members deliberations. Democracy is a precious thing and the ECF needs much more light shining on its internal working for the benefit of members and an end to the current situation of "opaque darkness".

A proper whistleblowing system and procedures need to be designed and introduced to expose wrongdoing and it is quite extraordinary that no such system is currently operational and this root and branch review of ECF Governance will also include a complete review of the role of the NED's, as part of a wider full constitutional review to include a look at all aspects of ECF Governance.

I tried to raise these matters at the April 2021 ECF Council meeting but we ran out of time and events since then have only reemphasized the need for urgent review.

The ECF can be a force for good in English chess but currently that positive future is being held back by outdated structures and lack of due process and accountability, this needs to change and the ECF must urgently review its Governance structures and inputs/outputs and the first essential step is a change in the Governance Committee system.

Chris Fegan
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