

**Minutes of the 148th Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Friday 27th May 2022 by Zoom
2.00pm. to 4.30pm.**

Directors:

President, Dominic Lawson	Apologies	DL
Chief Executive, Mike Truran		MT
Director of Finance, Adam Ashton		AA
Director of Women's Chess, Aga Milewska		AM
Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak		AH
Director of International Chess, Malcolm Pein		MP
Director of Home Chess, Nigel Towers		NT
Director of Membership, Rob Willmoth	Apologies	RW
Director of Events, Shohreh Bayat	Apologies	SB
Non-executive Chairman, Julian Clissold		JC
Non-executive Director, Natasha Regan	Apologies	NR
Non-executive Director, Stephen Woodhouse	Apologies	SW

Invited: Observers and Guests

Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern		RS
Chairman, Finance Committee, Nick Faulks		NF
Meetings Secretary, Danny Rosenbaum		DR
ECF Council Chair, Michael Farthing (part)		MF

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Agenda

The agenda was approved. It was agreed that MP would add an item on international news under AOB.

3. Minutes of 147th Board Meeting

The minutes of the 147th Board meeting were approved nem con.

4. Finance and Membership Reports (AA)

AA presented the Director of Finance's report and the ECF Accounts for 2021/22.

He reported that membership figures were encouraging. As of 26 May, income from membership for 2021/22 stood at £204,570, significantly higher than the £170,966 which had been budgeted for the entire membership year. Membership income in a 'typical' year (based on 2019/20) would be around £205,000.

AA reported that the donation of the PIF assets (including The Chess Centre Ltd) to the Chess Trust was underway, with David Eustace having agreed to play a significant role in the process. The Chess Trust would maintain an emergency fund of no less than £100,000, to be called on should the ECF's financial position require it, in accordance with the MoU between the ECF and the Chess Trust.



AA reported that the August 2021 accounts had been filed at Companies House.

The Director of Finance's report was approved nem con.

6. Matters Arising from the April Finance Council (MF)

MF reported that the Finance Council had gone well, although face-to-face attendance was disappointing. NT commented that he was impressed with the draft minutes, which had been circulated by MF, and it was agreed that they would be published on the website very shortly. MT thanked MF for his report on Council which had appeared in the May 2022 issue of *ChessMoves*.

AP148/01 MF to ask Andrew Walker to post Finance Council minutes on the ECF website.

7. Rolling Membership Implementation (MT/NT)

MT and NT presented an update from Dave Thomas (DT) on the plans for rolling membership. In the update, DT reported that he remained confident that the transition to rolling membership could be made by 1 July 2022.

8. Student Membership Proposal Implementation (NT)

NT reported that the student membership implementation would hopefully be executed once rolling membership had been administered to avoid offering a package that would expire within just a few months. Implementing student membership would involve putting three new products in the ECF store and was expected to be relatively straightforward. NT said that the ECF Office had worked hard on preparing a university contacts database so that the new offering could be publicised more effectively.

9. Format of Future Council Meetings (RS & MF)

MF canvassed the opinions of the Board regarding whether to hold Council meetings face-to-face or remotely or a mix of the two (hybrid). RS reported that the Governance Committee had discussed the matter and believed that there should be an option for remote attendance. Those Board members who expressed an opinion all thought that the Finance Council should be held remotely, and the AGM should be a hybrid meeting. There was a strong view that there should be the option of attending remotely for both the Finance Council and the AGM given the long distances involved for many Council members.

10. Home Directors Report (NT)

NT reported that the recent Chessable English Seniors and the Chessable English Open and Women's Championships had all taken place successfully.

The Chessable English Seniors was very well attended with a strong field and had generated a lot of positive feedback.

The Chessable English Open and Women's Championships also went well. However, the Women's Championships suffered a number of late withdrawals due to illness which affected the number of players taking part.

NT reported that Chessable's Events and Brand Manager Irina Lomperi attended the English and English Women's Championship, where NT had been able to personally thank her and Chessable for their support.

NT reported that the Counties Championships final stages were going well, and the final day had been scheduled for 2 July in Market Bosworth.

NT reported that entries for the British Championships were approximately 50% up on the equivalent stage in 2019.

NT reported that the British Championships would start only three days after the Olympiad finishes as the latter had been rescheduled and so some of the top players might now be unavailable to play in the British Championships.

NT reported that the number of over the board games around the country was continuing to increase steadily, with activity levels currently at about half of pre-pandemic levels for standard and rapid. NT was hopeful that these would return to pre-pandemic levels next year.

11. Junior Director's Report (AH)

The Board congratulated the English junior players on their recent excellent performances in the European Schools Championship and the World Cadets and Youth Rapid and Blitz Championships. The English squad came second in the medal table in all three of the above events.

AH reported that the response to the Junior Development Pathway proposal had generally been positive, and that the proposal would be adjusted in light of some of the feedback. The new system that had been proposed would start in September. AH was in the process of appointing a group to handle the applications to each level. There would be three members of the group including a place for one of the ECF Office staff, who would process applications.

AP148/02 AH to finish appointing the group to handle applications and to implement the new pathway system.

12. ECF 2022 Priorities Update (AA)

It was agreed that the main priority for spending was IT. The Board confirmed that NT should use funds from the strategic development reserves so that necessary improvements to systems such as Azolve, LMS and the rating system could be progressed.

AP148/03 NT to investigate hiring suitable IT resource before 31 August 2022.

13. AOB

13.1 ChessMoves Proof-reading Proposal (DR)

DR informed the Board that he might have found a suitable person to fill the *ChessMoves* proof-reading role at no cost, but asked the Board to confirm its agreement that funds could be disbursed on paying a proof-reader if needed. The Board gave its agreement.

On a general note, The Board noted that it seemed unnecessarily onerous to have to go to tender for relatively small financial amounts such as this as required by Regulation No. 1 ('The Bids Regulations') and agreed that there should be a de minimis amount (probably £5,000) below which there was no need to invite tenders.

AP148/04 RS and MT to draft a proposal to the Board for the implementation of a de minimis amount for tenders to cover annual spend and one-off payments.

13.2 Revisiting the Ban on Russian and Belarusian players In County Matches (MP/NT)

Paul Shepherd submitted a paper on behalf of Surrey County Chess Association, inviting the Board to revisit the rules on Russian and Belarusian players in ECF-organised county matches, The Board decided nem con to continue with the ECF's policy unchanged given that the stage of the competition to which the rules applied were already well underway and so it would be unfair to change them in effect retrospectively.

AP148/05 NT to communicate the Board's decision to Paul Shepherd.

AH mentioned that in January 2022 he had accepted an invitation for an England team to play in the 6th Chessmates Tournament. However, as circumstances had subsequently changed with the Russian invasion of Ukraine he proposed withdrawing from the tournament as taking part would have meant playing against Russian teams. The Board agreed nem con with AH's proposal.

AP148/06 AH to withdraw the England team from the 6th Chessmates Tournament.

The Board also agreed with NT's suggestion that the various posts on the ECF website relating to policy on Russia, Belarus and Ukraine should be collated into one item.

AP148/07 NT to liaise with the office to collate the posts on Russia, Belarus and Ukraine on the ECF website.

13.3 Update from Director of International Chess (MP)

MP reported that the England team for the Olympiad had been selected and would be announced shortly. He had secured £8,000 in sponsorship for the event.

There was a large number of English players due to play in the World Senior Teams Chess Championships 2022, including a very strong first team which had good hopes of taking first place. MP put on record his thanks to Nigel Povah, whom he said had put in an invaluable amount of effort, time and resources into the event.

AP148/08 MP to arrange for the names of the English team for the Olympiad to be posted on the ECF website.

13.4 Timing of Board Meetings (JC)

JC noted that some Board members had difficulty attending meetings in the daytime and canvassed opinions on the best time for Board meetings. Some members expressed a preference for virtual Board meetings to be held on Wednesday evenings.

AP148/09 JC to draft a proposed calendar for forthcoming Board meetings.

Date of Next Board meeting: TBA