

**Minutes of the 152nd Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Friday 3 February 2023 by Zoom
11am-1pm**

Directors:

President, Dominic Lawson	APOL	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	APOL	AH
Director of International Chess, Malcolm Pein		MP
Director of Home Chess, Nigel Towers		NT
Director of Membership, Rob Willmoth		RW
Director of Events Shohreh Bayat	APOL	SB
Non-executive Director, Stephen Greep		SG
Non-executive Director, Natasha Regan		NR
Non-executive Chairman, Stephen Woodhouse	APOL	SVW

Invited: Observers and Guests

Chairman, Governance Committee, Robert Stern		RS
Chairman, Finance Committee, Nick Faulks		NF

Apologies, Minutes and Conflicts

1. Apologies for absence
As noted above.
2. Minutes of 151st Board Meeting and Outstanding Actions (SVW)
Noted that due to pressure of work, AA and MT had not yet had their meeting with NF and would aim to do this before the next Board meeting.
3. Conflicts declaration (SVW)
No conflicts had been identified.

Directors Reports

4. Finance (AA)
AA's report had been included with the agenda papers. He noted that the ECF credit card had been briefly blocked by the bank due to unusual usage. Stricter controls and procedures were needed and, when the new card was issued, he intended to only give the details to the ECF office.

In response to a reminder from MT, AA confirmed that he aimed to produce the report for the Finance Council by end-February and would be contacting directors regarding their budgets in early February.



MT reaffirmed his view that monthly or quarterly consolidated forecasts would be extremely helpful for budgeting purposes. He also felt that projections for the Home budget would be useful, particularly if losses were projected.

Action: AA to produce report for the Finance Council by the date of the next Board meeting.

5. Home Chess (NT)

NT's report had also been included with the agenda papers. The main points were that the English Championships dates had been confirmed and entries were open, and that the British Championships were confirmed to be held at DMU, Leicester from 20-30 July with entries opening in the next week or so.

NT noted there had been a huge increase in online chess participation in the previous few months with Chess.com now having 4.5m UK-registered players, and this had fed through into ECF online competitions. This represented a good opportunity to encourage more players to take part in over the board events.

In response to a question from MP, NT said that the genesis of the Cambridge International Open had been an approach from The University Arms, part of the Marriott group. The hotel was providing the venue free and also contributing to the prize fund. The hope was to make this an annual event. MP felt it would be useful if the hotel could share its evaluation of the event although it was noted that the accommodation spend would be of limited value as the high cost of rooms meant that few players would be staying there. NF noted that there was a FIDE fund available which provided £2-3,000 per federation towards tournaments which perhaps the ECF could look at applying for should the event be held again.

With regard to the English Championships, AM noted that the entry fee for women had increased by a large amount since the last event was held. There followed some discussion regarding entry fees for women. The Board noted that the women's section tended to be fairly small so a reduced entry fee would give a lower contribution to event expenses and prizes, and women could enter both the Open and the Women's section and therefore had two chances to win prizes. On the other hand, it was important to encourage women's chess to the greatest possible extent. That said, the Board noted that it was too late to change the fees for this year's event. The event did not yet have a sponsor for this year and MP noted that sponsors did like to see women entrants, so this was a point in favour of having lower fees for women. MT noted that the consolidated forecast and budget for 2023-2024 would help the Board in determining whether more funds were available for subsidising entrants for women and for juniors.

6. Events (SB)

SB's report had been included with the agenda papers although she had been unable to attend the meeting. It was felt that she had done an excellent job in organising the Cambridge International and a vote of thanks was in order.

She had mentioned in her report that she felt that attendance by directors at events would be appreciated by the wider membership and AA agreed with this sentiment.

7. Membership (RW)

RW said that membership numbers were looking excellent for the current year and should exceed those for the previous year. NT noted that entries into over the board events had been running at around 60% of pre-pandemic levels, but Brian Valentine believed the number of rated games would be back up to around 100% for January. David Thomas had been asked to provide a breakdown of these numbers between congresses and league events.

MP asked whether it was possible to give a conservative estimate of membership revenue given the huge boom that was being seen in participation in chess. MT noted that the 4NCL was seeing the number of new-to-congress players up by about 25% so was fairly optimistic that membership numbers would carry on increasing.

There was a short discussion about the Queen's Gambit scheme with AA noting that numbers were dwindling. NT agreed that it was time to review the scheme.

Action: AA to include projection of membership income in his budget.

AA/NT/RW to review the QGS.

8. Women's Chess

AM said that there had been much more active participation with women teaming up to join tournaments both in the UK and abroad. The recent European Cities and Towns Tournament had, for example, seen success for the English Women.

Following a short discussion MT said he would ask David Thomas to provide a split in the monthly membership numbers between males and females and by age group.

9. Junior Chess (AH)

AH was not present but his report had been included with the agenda papers. He had separately produced a table reflecting junior chess achievements which indicated that the English juniors were enjoying unprecedented levels of success.

10. International

MP began by acknowledging AM's input in moulding the women's teams together. He then ran through the details for the upcoming match between Michael Adams and Andrei Volokitin which was to be opened by the Speaker of the House of Commons. (see updated agenda papers which include MP's

report). MP planned to use this match as an opportunity to lobby both DCMS and MPs for chess funding, and there would also be a parliamentary question to a DCMS Minister in the following week. His team had done some research into the funding provided to individual sports by Sport England and this would also be used as part of the lobbying process. As an example, Tae Kwon Do received £1 million and only had 1,000 competitive players. He estimated that between the ECF, Delancey, Chess in Schools and Communities, EPSCA, etc there were about 120-140,000 active chess players.

MT was mindful that, in the event that funds were secured, it was important to ensure that they were used for strategic, discretionary funding and not for day-to-day expenses, reminding the Board of the extreme disruption that had been caused when the annual DCMS grant was lost. Even if funding was not received it would be extremely helpful to get the same VAT status that sports enjoyed. MP had been told that the loss of VAT revenue was part of the barrier for the government but in fact, this really did not represent a large amount. MT agreed, noting that even if the other mind sports were included, the loss of VAT revenue for the Government was not of a size that it should represent a barrier.

MP suggested that he might provide a wording that could be used by individuals to lobby their MPs and that this could be in the next issue of *ChessMoves*. MP stressed that he was not hopeful that any funding would be received in the short term.

Action: MP to provide a wording that could be used by individuals to lobby their MPs.

Committee Updates

11. Governance (RS)
RS said the Committee had met and agreed on some changes which included the removal of directors' powers to appoint people to Standing Committees, the removal of the President from the Committees, and a provision that ECF directors could not be members of Standing Committees.

RS also noted that David Eustace had attended the Governance Committee meeting as a guest and would be appointed to the committee at the Finance Council meeting.

12. Finance (NF)
NF had not prepared a report, noting that this was in any event not a requirement as the Finance Committee did not report to the Board.

Appointments/Positions

The Board noted the appointments under items 13/14 and 17 and agreed to the creation of the roles noted under 15/16 and 18.

Special Business

19. Future Membership Scheme Options (MT)

SG noted that this paper would be put to the Finance Council which was the appropriate forum for discussion.

MT thanked those who had provided input. The Board did not need to have a common view on the proposals – that was for the Finance Council to discuss, and Board members would be able to express their views at that time. He felt though that the Board tended toward either one single rate for all members or a combined Silver/Gold rate – he would be happy with either, or indeed with no change. Any further points of substance should be directed to him outside the meeting. He had received costings from David Thomas that he would incorporate into the paper and circulate for one final time before the Council meeting.

The aim was for Council to come up with a couple of options for consideration with further work post-Council if required hopefully resulting in a decision in October.

20. Rating Overseas Games (NT)

NT said that the ECF was looking to reinstate the service whereby the games played by ECF members in FIDE events overseas were ECF rated. Paul McKeown had volunteered to be the Rating Officer for Gold and Platinum members.

21. Preparing for Finance Council (AA)

AA said that in the absence of any specific questions, this would be dealt with at the February meeting.

22. Amend Regulation 3 to replace “Chairman” with “Chair” (SVW)

Resolution passed unanimously.

23. Submit Resolution to Council to amend Financial Bye-Laws (SVW)

NT said that when funds were transferred to Chess Trust it had been done on the basis that the MoU set out how the funds would be used. He felt that the ECF had some duty to ensure the MoU was followed and was not comfortable with the wording of the draft. NF noted that the Finance Committee was happy with the wording as it stood. MT noted that an MoU was not legally binding but the relationship between the Chess Trust trustees and the ECF was such that there was an expectation that they would abide by it as far as possible. It was unlikely that the Chess Trust would have signed up if there had been a legally binding document as there would have been a risk of that fettering the discretion of the Trustees in a manner inconsistent with the

requirements of Trust law and would therefore have risked undermining the charitable status of the Chess Trust.

Action: Update papers for next meeting

24. Trust Funds

There was a discussion about the JRYT. MT had recently spoken to John Higgs and understood that the distribution policy was in the process of being revised in consultation with his fellow trustees and would be presented for consideration at the forthcoming BCF Council meeting. He noted that his conversations with John Higgs regarding distribution policy had been very positive.

John Higgs also intended, with agreement from his fellow trustees, to raise the trust's profile and wished to launch a website to help with this aim. He had indicated that he would be happy for any suggestions of website developers to help with this task. AA noted that there was a very small fund currently available in the ECF accounts to help players who needed financial help to play in tournaments etc., but the amount was not sufficient to extend help to many.

Actions: MT to continue discussions with JH.

NT and AG to discuss the possibility of an ECF bursary with AA.

25. Sponsorships (MP)

Discussed alongside item 27. No specific actions agreed

26. FIDE Policies (MP)

The Resolutions in MP's paper were agreed, and it was further agreed that they should be included in the February edition of *ChessMoves*.

Any Other Business

There was no other business. SVW would confirm the date of the next meeting.

MT thanked all for the productive meeting and the provision of the various director's reports.