

## Support for Grassroots Chess Development

The recently announced funding for developing English international chess by HM Government gives us the opportunity to allocate some of the funds previously earmarked for the international chess budget to other initiatives.

This paper suggests some programmes that in the Board's view would benefit grassroots chess in particular. As yet they have not been costed pending ongoing discussions with HM Government about their expectations as to how funding should be used. The Board welcomes input from Council delegates, both before and after the AGM (but ideally not at the meeting, in the interests of delegates being able to get home before midnight...).

All the proposals are based on the principle that HM Government money should be used for developmental initiatives and not to subsidise reduced ECF membership fees. The Board believes very strongly that using HM Government money rather than membership fees to fund the ECF's year-on-year core expenditure is a dangerous path to follow; the difficulties that arose from the loss of the DCMS grant many years ago is a lesson in that regard.

We need to bear in mind that we have over 500 active clubs across England, and we should target any funding/grants towards areas/clubs which need most support and/or where there is the most value for average players in the demographic we are trying to reach. Ideas include the following:

1. Support packages for new/ startup clubs, for example templates/ guides for setting up a new club (we get asked for this a lot), ECF publicity, and funding for new clubs with financial support in exceptional cases. This could be targeted in areas where we know the number of over the board clubs is low in proportion to the population; this would need some research.
2. Financial support for clubs to run social/community chess events using non-club venues. This could have a big effect on making over the board chess more visible and mainstream and on attracting more players to join clubs and play in leagues and congresses. This could maybe be linked to the Tables in Parks initiative in partnership with local authorities. The funding could go either direct to the clubs or via leagues/associations to help run the events and maybe pay for some top level players to appear.
3. Grassroots coaching/education. This is a area with big potential, and there is a real demand for affordable/top level coaching for players attending club evenings. This could maybe include a fund for clubs to engage ECF registered coaches at club evenings. We could also put funding into the ECF's Certificate of Excellence scheme, which now gets a lot of interest but has had no investment for a long time. We also need to progress the

National Curriculum, which has had a lot of work done on it already but which needs following through.

4. Development Pathway. There is a big demand for more junior clubs run on days and times that work for younger players and their parents. We need to publicise the Development Pathway more effectively, but we should also target more practical/hands-on support for those wishing to setup a junior club, for example by providing funding for coaching support, help with safeguarding (see below), and advice/guidance on finding venues, maybe working with local authorities and with libraries, which generally work extremely well for junior clubs.
5. Online/streaming. This could include a weekly online question and answer lecture for ECF members with a grandmaster, and more financial support for the online commentary for ECF events that we already do well. Regular online masterclasses for ECF members could also be considered; Lorin D'Costa's, Keith Arkell's and Danny Gormally's masterclasses have gone down very well, and there seems to be a big market amongst grassroots players for more of the same. As well as more funding for online commentary, we also need to build up our base of content on YouTube, as well as perhaps having some exclusive educational/ coaching content for ECF members.
6. Grants to clubs for safeguarding training.
7. Grants to clubs for a costed PR campaign to increase interest and attract new members.
8. Grants to clubs for costed plans to develop their websites.
9. Two clubs in each union to get an annual GM simul and lecture.
10. Attracting more of our top level players to ECF-organised events, and also improve their visibility, in order to attract more grassroots players to engage with them, whether by playing or by watching.
11. Support for Unions in encouraging the recovery of county chess.