



**Minutes of the 156th Board Meeting of the English Chess Federation
Thursday 26th October 2023 at 11.30 a.m. by Zoom**

Directors:

President, Dominic Lawson	APOL	DL
Chief Executive, Mike Truran	APOL	MT
Director of Women's Chess, Aga Milewska		AM
Director of Junior Chess, Alex Holowczak		AH
Director of International Chess and External Relations, Malcolm Pein		MP
Director of Home Chess, Nigel Towers		NT
Director of Membership, Rob Willmoth		RW
Chair, Stephen Woodhouse		SVW
Non-executive Director, Sarah Longson		SL
Non-executive Director, Stephen Greep		SG

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 156th Board Meeting (SVW)

The minutes were approved.

3. Conflicts declaration (SVW)

No conflicts had been identified.

Directors Reports

4. Finance

Finance matters were discussed later in the meeting.



5. Home Chess (NT)

NT confirmed that there is a shortlist of two venues for the 2024 British Championships with MP looking into a further option. The aim was to have a decision in principle in November so that an announcement could be made by the end of the year. It would be helpful to have a small committee to agree the selection.

Whilst reconciling the accounts from this year's British it had become apparent that the accounting process would be improved if separate nominal codes / categorisations were allocated for each year of an annual event and NT recommended that this practice be followed.

NT reported that the 2023 ECF National Clubs Championship had completed successfully in Hull over the weekend of 20th to 22nd October. This has successfully re-established the competition which was last run in 2018. Thanks are due to Stephen Greep and the arbiting team who ran the event very effectively and to Visit Hull, and Hull and East Riding Chess Association for their support.

6. Membership (RW)

RW noted that the historical record for paid memberships had been 14,159. Paid membership numbers had now reached 12,643 and were increasing weekly.

7. Women's Chess (AM)

There was nothing to report under this section.

8. Junior Chess (AH)

AH reported that Bodhana Sivanandan had won the World U8 girls' championships with 11/11. This followed on from her winning the blitz and rapid competitions with 11/11 in each of those sections. The Board wished to congratulate Bodhana on a historic achievement in winning a World Youth title and being the first English player to achieve this feat in the last 25 years. The other England players had suffered some disappointments affected by the under rating of juniors from other Federations.

9. International (MP)

MP would be circulating an updated version of his report and reiterated the importance of completing the appointment of a Finance Director. He would also like to see a financial controller appointed to assist in providing oversight of the DCMS funds. With regard to the DHULC funds he would be checking regarding the relative costs of giant sets and chess tables to ensure the best use was made of the funding. He would also be contacting the DfE to ensure

that full use was being made of the allocation of £200,000 for chess in schools. He also wanted to ensure that tournaments were being promoted to the schools in question. It was noted that one problem with schools' chess was a lack of tutors and CSC was increasing the amount of training courses that it ran to help with this. He also confirmed that CSC had a pack available for schools which outlined how to set up a club.

MP was pleased to say that, with the aid of Dominic Lawson, a sportsman's visa had been secured for Nikita Vitiugov. His aim was to have the ECF authorised as a sanctioning body that could recommend players for sports visas to the Home Office.

Finally, he was happy to tell the meeting that Shreyas Royal was playing in the Isle of Man tournament and had beaten a Spanish player rated at 2650.

Special Business

10. Appointment of ECF Manager for Chess Accessibility (NT)

This was an item to note as it was a level three appointment. NT said that Owen Phillips had been appointed to this position which had been vacant for some time. Owen had worked with the Braille Chess Association and would be looking for ways to make chess more accessible to those with disabilities as well as building relationships with the various disabled player associations. The government funding included £5,000 each for the associations for blind and deaf players.

11. Management of Conflicts (SVW)

This was an issue that had been raised at the AGM. SVW reported that he had discussed conflicts concerns with Sarah Longson who understood that she would have to recuse herself from any monitoring of Alex Longson.

SVW noted that with the resignation of Shohreh Bayat from the Director of Events position the Board had 11 directors out of a possible 12. He proposed the appointment of a further NED which extended the NED group to four, allowing for sufficient cover should an NED be conflicted on any matter. It would also result in a better balance between executive and non-executive directors.

During further discussion it was agreed that the Directors and Officers Responsibility Regulations should be updated to delete the Director of Events, amend NEDs to four (including the Chair), and update the NEDs responsibilities.

It was resolved unanimously that the Board would appoint KT as a NED on a casual vacancy basis with there then being a vote at the next Council meeting. It was also agreed to discontinue the role of Events Director.

Following the discontinuance of the Director of Events position, NT suggested that that the ECF establish a group of organisers/event managers who could be asked to run ECF national events on a case by case basis reporting to the relevant director

12. Appointment of Finance Director (SVW)

Following the appointment of an NED, the position of Finance Director was discussed.

There was no question about them competence of Alex Longson for this post. It was agreed that potential conflicts could be managed, as for other directors.

It was unanimously resolved to appoint AL as Finance Director for the period ending immediately prior to the Finance Council.

13. Membership Fee Reform (MT/RW)

Council had voted on the membership system and a merger of gold and silver had been the outcome. RW would discuss the implementation process with MT with an initial target date of 1 September 2024.

It would be necessary to consider any wider implications of the change such as an increase in entries to FIDE-rated tournaments producing an additional workload for rating. There were already fairly frequent requests for information on how to make an event FIDE rated and AH would draft some guidelines which he would circulate to RW and NT for comment.

14. Future of the BCF (SVW)

The BCF had been kept in existence for three main reasons:

- Concern about potential legacies to the BCF and ensuring that they could be duly received.
- Some ECF members still paid their fees to the BCF account.
- Facilitating decisions relating to the John Robinson Youth Trust.

The BCF is an unincorporated association which could be structured to continue in existence in a dormant state but having the ability to receive payments and meet as required to make recommendations in relation to the JRYT.

SVW agreed to prepare a paper outlining the steps required to achieve these objectives, with the objective of having the restructuring approved by the BCCA at the time of the ECF Finance Council meeting in April 2024.

15. Location of Next Meeting

SVW would circulate an updated schedule for meetings reflecting the availability of new directors.

SVW then declared the meeting closed.