

The ECF is the national governing body for chess in England. As such, it leads the development and organisation of chess for all players in England and internationally.

In order to develop chess in England, we need to focus on the existing membership, recognising that this is the bedrock of our organisation and its defining characteristic. Equally, we have a responsibility to develop chess more widely to reach new members. Our focus areas are set out below.

Focus Areas

Membership

We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future.

We will continue to improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings for all forms of chess that make joining or staying with the ECF an attractive proposition independently of playing rated games.

In addition, we will keep the operation of the membership system under review, ensuring that the system is well maintained and remains fit for purpose.

Rating

We will maintain and develop our world-class rating system to ensure that games played in English events can be rated on a common basis including club, leagues, and congresses.

Events

We will organise and run a programme of ECF national competitions, including the British Championships, the UK Open Blitz Championships, the County Championships, the English, English Women's and English Seniors Championship and our various ECF online club events and National Championships.

We will continue to provide support to chess organisers and arbiters, and also encourage the development of new events operating consistently with our wider objectives.

We will maintain and develop the ECF's League Management system as the basis for clubs, leagues and associations to setup fixtures, records results and have their games rated.

Women's Chess

We aim to increase participation in chess among women of all standards, with a target of 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) by 2028. We will do this by running events which are attractive to women and helping to develop a community of female players of all ages.

Junior Chess and Education

We will continue to support top level junior chess, building on the recent successes of our junior players. This will include support via the Accelerator programme and also developing a wider pathway for chess learning and development, including a national curriculum for chess, working closely with junior coaches across England and in collaboration with schools.

International Success

We will build on the financial package from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to maintain and improve our support to elite and professional English players taking part in international competitions, with the aspiration of re-establishing England as a top-level force in the chess world.

Online Chess

We welcome the growth in online chess and the increasing level of participation amongst English players. We will continue to organise online events, providing a rating service and supporting online leagues and congresses. We recognise online chess as a natural entry point for competitive over the board chess and will seek to publicise over the board clubs and events within the online community.

Chess in the Community

We will build on our current programme to help develop chess more widely, including making chess more accessible for disabled players, chess in prisons and chess in social settings, working closely with Chess in Schools and Communities.

Communications

We will work to increase the profile of chess in England via the ECF's website, social media platforms, monthly magazine and broadcast channels covering major over the board and online events and other forms of chess content.

Appendix - Business Plan

The Board will produce an annual business plan that will set out how we propose to deliver the priorities set out in this statement.

The Board

Directors will work collegiately both within the Board and with other chess organisations. We will encourage a transparent culture where we actively invite comment and feedback. We will ensure our governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose, and will continue work on achieving more effective Board operation.

In order to achieve these objectives while taking into account the intended appointment of a new CEO in October 2025, the Board is proposing to review its composition and structure and present proposals for managing the resulting changes for consideration at the Finance Council meeting in April 2025.

Funding

Our core activities will continue to be funded through membership fees.

Commercial sponsorship generates additional income that can help us to make extra investment in areas such as junior, women's and international chess. We will seek out new sponsorship opportunities and build on our relationship with existing sponsors, and support them to build their brands.

We will use sponsorship and donations/bequests to support strategic and developmental projects and initiatives, ensuring that sponsors' own objectives are addressed.

We will avoid the use of external funding as a substitute for core activity funding.

We will work closely with the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, in particular regarding funding for strategic and developmental projects and initiatives.

Office

We are committed to maintaining the central functions of an ECF Office. The Office endeavours to provide a high quality and efficient service to ECF members and other chess organisations, and gives support to ECF directors and officials as required. Staff will be offered opportunities for professional development on an individual basis.

Communications

We will increase the profile of chess in England via the ECF's website, social media platforms, monthly magazine and broadcast channels covering major over the board and online events and other forms of chess content.

Initiatives such as introducing our monthly *ChessMoves* magazine, developing our social media presence, overhauling the website, and direct emailing of members and Council have helped to improve communication to members and need to be improved further. We want stronger

partnerships with chess players and chess organisations, and will continue to develop communications across a range of platforms and seek greater engagement with members to help shape our policies and plans.

BUSINESS PLAN BY FUNCTION

Finance

Objective: Support the overall objectives of the English Chess Federation and the agreed plans of the Executive Directors.

- Ensure that the ECF's finances are sufficient to enable the ECF's infrastructure to be maintained and developed.
- Grow income in such a way as to enable the Board's plans to be achieved, taking into account funds received from donations, sponsorship and other sources.
- Use membership income to fund ongoing operational expenditure, using sponsorship, bequests and donations for new initiatives and developments.
- Maintain a reserve of £50,000 over the five year planning cycle.
- Seek to achieve an annual break-even financial position over the five year planning cycle.
- Ensure that all finance activities are performed transparently, efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure an appropriate division of financial processes between the Office and our external bookkeepers.
- Continue to develop our use of Xero functionality.
- Ensure that accounting records and accounts are maintained in an accurate and timely manner.
- Simplify the overall financial structure of the ECF and related organisations.
- Promote our direct debit facility for the membership scheme.
- Continue to improve the presentation of financial information to directors and to members.

Governance

Objective: Ensure that the ECF's governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose.

- Maintain compliance with most appropriate governance practice.
- Keep constitutional documentation under regular review.

Junior

Objective: Improve participation levels in and the profile of junior chess in England and reduce the current rate of attrition in the transition to adulthood.

- Develop and embed the Junior Development Pathway to create a structured and formal progression plan for junior chess players which incorporates existing coaches, junior clubs, associations and programmes.
- Support the Chess Trust as it continues to develop its Accelerator Programme for our elite junior players and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in its support for the British Championships and a range of other junior initiatives.
- Develop and embed the Certificate of Excellence scheme as a basis for a clear learning and development pathway.
- Encourage junior chess organisations' activities in England and promote the development of collaborative working.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve the quality of support to junior players.
- Develop competitive chess in schools with a particular emphasis on those pupils aged over 11.
- Develop chess playing opportunities that encourage girls to continue playing chess in adulthood.
- Encourage adult chess clubs and leagues to integrate, support and develop junior players.
- Identify and work with top junior players to increase participation in non-ECF events, in particular FIDE-rated tournaments.

Women

Objective: Work towards delivering our ambition to increase participation in chess among women of all standards to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) by 2028.

- Increase participation in the English Women's Championships.
- Work with independent organisers to increase female participation in non-ECF events and in particular FIDE-rated events.
- Increase the profile of women's chess so that girls/teenagers/women have something to aspire to.
- Reach out to non-chess women's organisations to encourage female take-up of and participation in chess.

Home

Objective: Support the Board in its goal of increasing the perceived added value that the ECF provides to its members.

- Continue to run a programme of ECF national competitions including the British Chess Championships, the County Championships, the English Women's Championships, the English Seniors Championships and the UK Open Blitz Championships, with additional competitions added where there is sufficient demand from players.

- Maintain and develop the National Coaches Register.
- Improve support to clubs.
- Continue the development of and support for the ECF's LMS (League Management System) as a core system for club and league organisers who run over the board or online events.
- Continue the development of official ECF online chess events at national and international level, widening participation among junior, female, student and social players in particular.
- Provide more effective support and advice to independent event organisers.
- Provide effective support, advice and training for new and existing arbiters.
- Maintain official anti-cheating procedures for ECF-organised events. Extend take-up of the Supporter category across the student/casual/social/online chess playing population.

Events

Objective: Plan, manage and run the agreed programme of ECF national over the board events including British and English Championships, women's events and junior events to a consistent standard of delivery, building on best practice both nationally and internationally.

- Take overall responsibility for the operation of ECF events, working closely with event organisers.
- Ensure best practice approaches are deployed across all ECF-organised events.
- Monitor and review how events have run and identify and address improvement opportunities.
- Consider bidding for FIDE online events at youth level.

Membership

Objective: Oversee the operation and effectiveness of the membership system and ensure that it is maintained and improved as necessary.

- Review whether JustGo is still the most appropriate membership system for the ECF.
- Extend special offers for ECF members with third party companies as a membership retention/acquisition initiative.
- Improve communication to and facilities for consultation with corporate and individual members.
- Improve the documentation of the requirements for the administration of membership and of the operation of the new system.
- Identify selling points which might make membership attractive to individuals who are not themselves competitive players.
- Continue to develop the monthly rating system's functionality.
- Review junior membership arrangements, including the effectiveness of our free first year membership offer, with a view to improving junior membership retention.
- Complete the move to a full membership organisation and review whether game fee and pay-to-play fees can be replaced with a flat fee per event approach.

- Promote our Supporter category.
- Promote the use of the ECF League Management System by affiliated leagues, and consider enhancements to the system, including those necessitated by its increasing use for online chess.

International

Objective: Improve the performance of our international teams and encourage the development of our top players.

- Work with the Directors of Junior and Women's Chess to identify and nurture top talent.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve conditions, training etc for international players.
- Develop England's presence in online international events.
- Review how the ECF can better capture the views and insights of top players in England.
- Funding permitting, organise more norm events for our players who have potential to reach GM/WGM or IM/WIM level.
- Seek to foster an environment that supports our leading players to develop a career in chess while also supporting others to maximise their potential while developing a career outside chess.

External Relations

Objective: Increase public recognition of and funding for chess.

- Build on the engagement with HM Government and other organisations to further recognition of and funding for chess, including if possible recognition of chess as a sport, so that chess can be developed more effectively in England.

Online

Objective: Continue to build on the strength of our online presence developed during the pandemic.

- Continue to develop and grow our ECF online members clubs with regular events on the major online platforms.
- Support and develop English online community clubs including junior and women's clubs and events.
- Continue to run online National Championships and competitions including the English Online Blitz, Rapid and Bullet Championships, the Online Counties Championships and related competitions, and the English Chess Marathons.
- Continue the development of the ECF's programme of online affiliated leagues and clubs to support non-ECF online events and allow these to be rated.
- Continue to develop the online rating system including integration of the rating process with the new monthly rating system and production of a combined listing showing OTB and online ratings along the lines of the USCF model.
- Organise and publicise participation of English teams in online international events.

- Promote daily chess at international level including participation in World and European online daily leagues.

Office

Objective: Continue to provide a high quality service to stakeholders.

- Continue to develop the Year Book as an annual news digest.
- Continue the development of *ChessMoves* content to reinforce it as the ECF's main communication vehicle to members.
- Maintain and develop the ECF's website and our social media and broadcast channels.
- Develop office processes to cope with development initiatives, changing demand from members, and new staffing arrangements and work patterns.
- Continue to provide a responsive service for member and player enquiries via telephone, email and online forms.
- Fully document all important Office procedures.
- Complete the project to diarise all key Office internal and external deadlines.