The BSF Executive held its latest conference call meeting on the evening of Thursday 5 December. Below is a journalistic report on the main discussions and decisions.

**Attendance**

**Present:** Jenny Fromer (President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Bob Fromer (Administrator), Liz Graham (Competitions Officer), Alexis Markham-Hill (National Teams Officer), Mike Jennings (General Officer), Chris Moon (Technical Officer).

**Apologies:** Stella Ackrell and Jana McCaskill (General Officers).

**Finance**

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt presented draft accounts for 2018-19 and a draft budget for 2019-20. The budget will need to be finalised by the Executive in January before final approval by the membership at the BSF AGM in Manchester on 29 February.

All league affiliation fees were received in 2019, but membership income was around £4,000 less than forecast, perhaps due to in part to a smaller number of independent teams this past year.

Nevertheless, the BSF will probably wind up with an operating surplus of around £10,000 in 2018-19 as a result of underspending against projections. The largest underspend was in the salary that the BSF pays to fund a Fastpitch Development Manager in conjunction with BSUK, since the post was meant to be filled in July but was only taken up in October.

Other major underspends came in the money that the BSF sets aside for national team programmes.

The draft budget for 2019-20 projects an overspend of around £15,000, though this could go higher and would still leave the BSF with sufficient reserves. Cash flow has not been a problem in recent years.

Additional spending is projected to go on Insurance premiums, which have increased sharply for next season, as well as on a full year’s costs for the Fastpitch Development Manager, the cost of attending the recent WBSC Congress in Japan, the costs of redeveloping the BSF website and possibly more web-streaming from BSF events.

**Insurance**

The BSF has been very disappointed with delays in the insurance renewal process for 2019-20 and particularly by a 28% increase in the cost of civil and public liability insurance, apparently due to an
increase in the number of incidents reported. However, most of these incidents refer to injuries and would not result in public liability claims, so the BSF feels the increase is unjustified.

The BSF will keep a closer eye on incidents reported during the 2020 season so that a stronger case can be made against any future increases.

**National Teams Levy**

After a brief discussion, it was decided to retain the current system of using the National Teams Levy (NTL) to provide set amounts of money to national teams competing in official tournaments each year. The NTL is made up of £10 set aside from each BSF adult team affiliation fee.

While this may mean that the amount of NTL money received may be overspent in one year and underspent in the next, this should more or less balance out across two-year cycles. However, it was noted that with the number of national teams having increased recently, the BSF may in future be spending additional funds over and above the money ring-fenced by the NTL.

**2020 BSF AGM**

Plans for the 2020 BSF AGM, to be held on Saturday 29 February in Manchester, were discussed.

The AGM day will consist of a number of different meetings, with the annual League Heads Forum taking place in the morning, followed by a round of workshop sessions, a lunch break, and then the formal AGM in the afternoon.

While final decisions on workshop sessions are still to be made, the current plan is that hour-long workshops will run concurrently on the following topics:

- Safeguarding and Safety
- NSL Rules for 2020
- Inclusive Rules for Slowpitch Softball

Another possible workshop is a Slowpitch Scorers Clinic.

An amendment to the BSF Articles will be put to the AGM for approval concerning the number of Directors required by BSF Ltd and who is eligible to be a Director.

The afternoon AGM will include a ceremony where BSF awards for 2019 will be presented.

**WBSC Congress**

The World Baseball Softball Confederation’s biennial Congress was held in Sakai, Japan from 19-22 November 2019. BSF President Jenny Fromer attended to represent British softball and Mike Jennings was also present to lobby on behalf of the WBSC’s promised Slowpitch World Cup.

One of the BSF’s main concerns in attending the Congress was to find out what progress had been made by the WBSC in organising the promised Co-ed Slowpitch World Cup, a new world championship competition involving national teams that was originally announced for the autumn of 2020.

Although the WBSC is still committed to getting this new and important slowpitch competition off the ground, indications are that the spring of 2021 may now be a likelier date, as it is a less pressured time in the WBSC’s global competitions schedule. The probable venue is Clearwater, Florida, although an official host for the tournament will need to be identified.

Before that can happen, the WBSC will need to draw up regulations for organising the competition, and this process is now under way. The WBSC appears sympathetic to the idea that the tournament can be organised with “light touch” regulations regarding the number of officials required and other cost-heavy items in the hope of attracting a host organisation.

Based on discussions at the Congress, there is interest in this tournament from around the world, but no clear indication yet about how many countries might want to attend and whether the WBSC will want to limit overall numbers and/or the number of countries from each of its world regions. More information is hoped for soon.

**BSF Development Grant**

The Executive approved a development grant of £500 to Bracknell Baseball and Softball Club to help support an extensive and well-planned programme to get more young girls playing fastpitch softball.

The programme will start in April 2020 with additional support from BaseballSoftballUK, and will involve visits to local schools and clubs, a teacher-training course and a Young Leaders Course.

**Hosting the European Men’s Championship**

The BSF had been discussing the possibility of hosting the European Men’s Slowpitch Championship in 2020 to ensure that the tournament could place, despite the financial implications, since no bid had been received by the ESF.

However, Mike Jennings told the meeting that there was now a strong likelihood that there would be a bid to host the event, which would be a relief on two fronts: the BSF wouldn’t have to try to find a large sum of money, and more teams are likely to sign up if the tournament is in central Europe.

Mike reported that there may also be a bid to host the European Co-ed Slowpitch Super Cup, though this is much less certain. Hosting a tournament of that size would be beyond the BSF’s resources in any case, but if there is no host, it will deprive the Windsor Knights, Pioneers and Chromies of a major competition opportunity next summer.
Next meeting

The next BSF Executive conference call meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 9 January 2020.

Anyone with items or issues to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer (bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org).