The BSF Executive held its first monthly conference call meeting of 2020 on the evening of 9 January. Below is a journalistic report on discussions and decisions.

**Attendance**

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

**Apologies:** Stella Ackrell (General Officer).

**2020 AGM**

The Executive discussed final preparations for the 2020 BSF AGM, to be held on Saturday 29 February at the Hough End Centre in Chorlton, Manchester.

The day will begin with the annual League Heads Forum meeting, to be held from 10.00-11.45 am, followed by three workshop sessions from 12.00-1.00 pm on NSL Play and Rules, Inclusive Rules and Safeguarding.

The latter workshop will be chaired by BaseballSoftballUK Safeguarding Officer Mark Caress, and will cover safeguarding requirements for leagues and teams, particularly where players aged under 18 are playing in adult competition, plus insurance risk assessments and incident reports.

After a lunch break, the formal AGM will convene at 1.45 pm, and will include the presentation of the BSF’s annual awards. Coaching awards made to softball recipients at the BSUK Coach Summit on 25 January will also be noted at the AGM.

**Financial matters**

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt told the meeting that accounts for 2018-19 were about to be finalised and would then go to the auditors, with the expectation that they will be ready for approval at the Executive’s next conference call meeting in February.

The budget for 2019-20 was approved and will be included in the AGM Pack that will be available for download from the BSF website at the beginning of February.
International matters

- **European Slowpitch Super Cup.** Mike Jennings told the meeting that a potential host for the 2020 European Slowpitch Super Cup had emerged but had then withdrawn, and no bids have currently been submitted to the ESF. Unless a bid comes in before or at the start of the ESF Congress in early February, the tournament will not be held, which would be a shame as a record number of 16 teams had entered by the December 31 deadline, including the three qualified teams from GB: Windsor Knights, Chromies and the defending Super Cup champion Pioneers.

- **European Men’s Slowpitch Championship.** Mike also told the meeting that no formal bid has yet been submitted to host the European Men’s Slowpitch Championship. Eight countries have signed up for this tournament. Again, for the tournament to go ahead, a bid will need to be submitted before or at the ESF Congress.

- **Slowpitch World Cup.** With regard to the World Baseball Softball Confederation Slowpitch World Cup for national teams due to be held in late 2020 or early 2021, Mike reported that due to the Christmas holidays, there had been no recent progress by the WBSC on drawing up hosting requirements for the tournament, a necessary first step to find a host. Mike will check in with the WBSC on this shortly.

- **ESF Congress discussion.** As a result of pressure from several European countries, there will be a discussion at the ESF Congress in February about whether the number of dual nationals in national teams that take part in ESF Championships and in club teams that take part in ESF Cups should and can be restricted. While no decisions will be made that would affect the 2020 competition season, it will remain to be seen whether this proposal gains traction for the longer term. One difficulty is that it would put the ESF out of step with WBSC and International Olympic Committee regulations and practice, which could present legal difficulties. The matter is obviously of great concern to the GB fastpitch programme given the number of dual nationals in all GB fastpitch teams.

- **Money recovered from ESF.** The BSF has been repaid £500 by the ESF for money paid for umpire travel in 2019 in fulfillment of our requirement to send at least as many umpires to European competitions as the number of tournaments we enter. The money was owed because we actually sent (and paid for) more umpires than we were required to.

Registration for 2020

Liz Graham, who doubles as the BSF’s Membership Officer in addition to her role as Competitions Officer, told the meeting that registration information for 2020 will go out to leagues and teams soon after the BSF AGM at the end of February.
BSF website refurbishment

BaseballSoftballUK Head of Operations Tim Stride, who is carrying out the main work on refurbishing the BSF website, sent through a number of Home Page design mock-ups for the Executive to consider and Jenny Fromer will get back to Tim with reactions.

Nationals and tournaments

- **Single-Sex Slowpitch Nationals.** The BSF has made a reluctant decision to cancel the Single-Sex Slowpitch National Championships for 2020, for two main reasons. One is that there are no dates left on the 2020 Tournament Calendar when the tournament could be held, with a late Easter in April and the London Series in June removing two weekends that could otherwise have been used for tournaments. The other reason is that the BSF is struggling to find volunteers to deliver the competition. The issue will be discussed at the League Heads Forum on AGM Day and the BSF may approach some leagues about hosting Regional Single-Sex Championships.

- **NSL3 Championship.** The 2020 NSL3 Tournament, which will determine two teams to be promoted to NSL2 for 2021, will be held in conjunction with the BSF League Slowpitch Nationals on the weekend of 8-9 August at Farnham Park. The competition will consist of a full round-robin to produce a league table, but no playoff games or final. Entry forms will be available in June.

- **Promotion and relegation between NSL1 and NSL2.** Competitions Officer Liz Graham reminded the meeting that two-up, two-down between NSL1 and NSL2 will begin in 2020 (previously, promotion and relegation between these divisions was one-up, one-down).

- **Venue for Softball World Series.** The Softball World Series will need a new venue in 2020, and after checking out a number of possibilities, the BSF has decided to hold the tournament on the weekend of 19-20 September at Farnham Park. However, only BSUK’s four dedicated pitches will be available (grass fields revert to football in September), and this means the tournament will need to be reduced in size from its current 18 teams. Other venues that could have hosted the tournament in September and provided the required six pitches were either too expensive or would have presented major transport issues for the overseas-based teams that attend each year.

- **Entry fees for BSF Nationals.** In view of increasing costs at Farnham Park and to give the BSF the possibility of webstreaming more events in 2020, the Executive has decided to raise the entry fee to BSF National Championships to £300 in 2020.

National Teams

The Executive approved the appointment of Mary Murray to the vacant position of Team Manager for the GB Under-15 Women’s Team.
Mary is an American college pitcher currently working on a Master’s degree who spent most of 2018 in the UK and helped coach at Academy and HPA sessions, and who may be returning to the UK this September to continue her degree. Last summer, she pitched for the GB Under-22 Women’s Team at the Canada Cup and for The Mix in the European Women’s Cup, helping them to reach the final.

A number of other national team issues on the agenda were put forward to a special Executive subcommittee meeting that will be held on 22 January.

**BaseballSoftballUK Board and Committee meetings**

A standing item on the BSF Executive meeting agenda is reports from recent BaseballSoftballUK Board and Committee meetings attended by BSF representatives.

However, due to the holiday period, there had been no such meetings since the BSF Executive had last met on 5 December.

**BSF Technical Officer**

The Executive has agreed that the position of Technical Officer, which has hitherto been an appointment made by BASU, will henceforth be open for nominations, beginning at the 2020 AGM.

Candidates must be qualified for the role, which in most cases will mean they must be a qualified umpire.

**Next meeting**

The next BSF Executive conference call meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 13 February 2020.

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