

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT: 15 FEBRUARY 2018

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly conference call meeting on the evening of Thursday 15 February. Below is a journalistic account of discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Jenny Fromer (President), Stella Ackrell (Administrator), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions Director), Mike Jennings (General Officer), Chris Moon (BASU Representative).

Guest: Bob Fromer (BSUK).

Finances

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt presented accounts for 2016-17 and a budget for 2017-18 for approval by the Executive.

As previously reported, the 2016-17 accounts had planned for a substantial deficit but instead the BSF wound up with an operating surplus of just over £5000 due to underspends in various areas.

So the budget presented to the AGM for 2017-18 will project a deficit of close to £24,000, which will still leave the BSF with healthy reserves, and the Executive is determined that this year the money will be spent as intended and reinvested in the sport.

In her President's Report for the BSF AGM Pack, Jenny Fromer has said: "Being careful is one thing, but with our planned reserves in place, we are proactively looking to reinvest that money into the sport and have identified Nationals enhancement, safety education and equipment, international support and development support as areas we want to do more in. We will also look to improve or replace our website with something more useful to our members and develop new events such as a proposed GB v Ireland showcase tournament."

The Executive is also determined to monitor spending as the year goes on to ensure that if money is not being spent as planned, it can be reassigned to other areas or carried forward for spending in 2019.

The accounts and budget were approved unanimously by the Executive members present and will now be included in the BSF AGM Pack and offered for the approval of the membership at the 2018 BSF AGM on 24 February in Manchester.

Development grants

The Executive approved a BSF Development Grant of £250 for the South Wales Youth Baseball and Softball Club, which plans to deliver sessions to an all-girls school in the area that is keen to develop a girls' fastpitch team.

The money will be used primarily to buy equipment, and will be match-funded by the club. The plan is to develop the school programme into a team that can compete on a national level.

The Executive also considered the question of whether university softball clubs who are not affiliated to the BSF could be considered for development grants. No decision was made on this, and Jenny Fromer will talk to Luke Stott at BSUK, who has been one of the key figures in developing softball and baseball in universities over the past few years. The university sector is thriving, and development grants to help university softball clubs could be seen as an investment in the increasing number of players making the transition from university to BSF club softball.

Finally, the Executive will ask for follow-up reports on BSF Development Grants awarded in 2017 to see what these grants have achieved.

Insurance and affiliation for dual baseball/softball clubs

British Baseball Federation President Gerry Perez has told the BSF that a number of baseball clubs are developing softball sections, but the resultant teams will not be covered by BBF club insurance if they play in BSF competitions.

The answer might be some kind of Associate Member fee that could provide insurance cover for these players, and that could equally be applied on a reciprocal basis to any softball clubs or leagues developing baseball activities. Jenny Fromer will explore the possibilities with Gerry Perez.

National Championships

Competitions Director Liz Graham told the meeting that she has responded to a number of enquiries about the link between AGM attendance and qualification to play in National Championships.

The BSF has already announced that there will be an inaugural "NSL 3" tournament played alongside the NSL National Championships at Farnham Park in September. A round-robin will be played among the eight teams that have signed up and the first-place and second-place teams will be offered spots in NSL2 for 2019, replacing the two teams demoted at the end of NSL2 league play. This will continue for a couple of years, and then the BSF will make a decision on whether there is a basis for establishing a fully-fledged NSL3 league competition.

Liz proposed – and the meeting agreed – that teams need to qualify for this NSL3 tournament either with a league team roster or a tournament team roster, but players will not be allowed to cross over. The teams concerned will need to notify the BSF about which route they intend to take before the start of the season.

BSF AGM

Final arrangements for the 2018 BSF AGM, to be held on Saturday 24 February in Manchester, were discussed.

It was noted that while tea and coffee will be available at the venue, no food will be served, and so those attending the AGM will need to either bring lunch with them or get something from food outlets nearby during a scheduled hour-long lunch break.

European Slowpitch Super Cup

The European Slowpitch Super Cup, the ESF's biennial competition for slowpitch club teams, was originally scheduled to run from Tuesday 31 July through Saturday 4 August this summer.

Three British NSL1 teams are taking part in the competition – H2O as defending champions and Pioneers and Chromies as NSL National Championship winners in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

However, to the surprise of everyone, including the ESF, the European Super Cup has had its highest-ever number of entries, currently standing at 19 teams -- though some teams may yet withdraw before 1 March, the deadline for doing so without penalty. Assuming that anything close to 19 teams remain in the competition, however, the ESF will have to start the tournament on Monday, with the Technical Meeting on Sunday evening, and has already announced that this will happen.

European Cup competitions – including the Slowpitch Super Cup – tend to be assigned to fixed weeks on the ESF Calendar, unlike Championships, where dates are often determined by the organisers. The Slowpitch Super Cup is generally played during the first week in August, and thus immediately after Diamond 3, which has created some problems. For the future, the BSF will see if Diamond 3 can be scheduled earlier in July to avoid problems that have arisen this year and in the past.

However, the fact that so many teams have entered the European Slowpitch Super Cup means that slowpitch is continuing to expand on the Continent, something the BSF has always promoted.

Slowpitch World Cup

The World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) is changing all its World Championship tournaments to World Cups (see: <http://www.britishsoftball.org/news/view/changes-planned-to-softball-championships>) and this raises the issue of what will happen with the Slowpitch World Cup, which has been running annually in Plant City, Florida since 2014.

At this point, the Slowpitch World Cup has no nationality requirements and is not a world championship competition, though the intention has always been to move in that direction. Now that the WBSC is calling all its world championships "Cups", the Slowpitch World Cup will need a different name if it is to continue in its present format.

But Mike Jennings told the Executive that this may also present an opportunity to develop a road map for the competition to become a genuine world championship contested by national teams, which will allow it to readopt the title of a “World Cup” competition.

The BSF has been asked for input on this, and will consult with the GB Management Committee and others before putting suggestions forward. One essential will be to get enough countries to agree to take part on a World Cup level so that the competition can survive and grow.

Reports

The meeting heard brief reports from Jenny Fromer and Mike Jennings on the Softball Europe (formerly ESF) Congress held from 8-10 February in France and from BASU Representative Chris Moon on the BASU AGM held on 10 February in Slough.

Full reports on both meetings are on the BSF website:

<http://www.britishsoftball.org/news/view/softball-and-baseball-united-as-wb-sc-europe>

<http://www.britishsoftball.org/news/view/basu-agm-reviews-successful-2017-and-looks-to-the-future>

BSUK Committee meetings

Members of the BSF Executive attend meetings of the BaseballSoftballUK Board and its various Committees, and reports from these meetings are a standing item on the agenda at BSF Executive meetings.

In this case, the only relevant meeting was a recent meeting of the BSUK Board, where two new independent Directors were welcomed, and where BaseballSoftballUK CEO John Boyd delivered a kind of “State of the Union” message.

Because the most recent Sport England funding award to BSUK was only for two years rather than the usual four, running through March 2019, BaseballSoftballUK staff will need to spend time this year drafting a new submission for funding to take the organisation through 2021.

Next meetings

The BSF Executive will hold a face-to-face meeting immediately following the 2018 AGM on 24 February in Manchester, and the next BSF conference call meeting will be on the evening of Thursday 15 March.

Anyone with items to submit for consideration at either meeting should contact BSF Administrator Stella Ackrell on: stella.ackrell@britishsoftball.org.

