

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

11 DECEMBER 2023

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Monday 11 December. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Lesley Morisetti (President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Alice Hunter (National Teams Officer), Laura Hirai (Fastpitch Development Officer), Jessica Hastings (Administration), Nicola-Jane Dyson and Shiraz Mehra (General Officers), Tim Bishop and Matt Tomlin (Athletes Commission), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer).

Guests: John Boyd and Leah Holmes (BSUK).

Financial matters

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt told the meeting that there had been unexplained hold-ups with getting the BSF's new bank account at NatWest open, but she hoped that it would happen during the week of 11 December.

There is a backlog of invoices that need to be paid, but no one has been pressing for payment, and the hope is that we will not need to call on BSUK to make any payments on our behalf before the account is operational.

A meeting to discuss the BSF's 2023-24 budget, open to all members of the Executive to attend, was held on the evening of Thursday 14 December. The proposed budget that comes out of that meeting will need to be approved by the Executive at the face-to-face weekend meeting in January and will then be put into the AGM Pack and put to members at the AGM.

Athletes Commission update

An Athletes Commission page (www.britishsoftball.org/getinvolved/athletescommission) is now live on the BSF website explaining the role of the Commission and how players can contact Commission members, plus a summary of Athletes Commission achievements in its first year of existence in 2023.

The summary of achievements has also been posted as a news story on the website.

Commission members will continue to talk to players over the off-season to see what further issues might need to be raised with the BSF and/or BSUK.

Annual Awards and Hall of Fame Subcommittee

A BSF subcommittee consisting of Bob Fromer (Administrator), Liz Graham (Competitions Officer), Alice Hunter (National Teams Officer) and Tim Bishop (Athletes Commission) has been formed to look at nominations for the BSF's 2023 Annual Awards and for new members to be inducted into the BSF Hall of Fame.

This year, there have been multiple nominations for some of the Annual Awards, so decisions will need to be made, and Hall of Fame nominations will need to be assessed according to published criteria.

Announcements about the recipients of Annual Awards and people chosen for the Hall of Fame will be made at the BSF AGM on 24 February 2024. Because the AGM will be a remote meeting, trophies will be presented to recipients at tournaments and events over the course of next season.

BSF Executive vacancies

Shiraz Mehra, a team captain from the London Softball League, was co-opted at the meeting to fill a General Officer role on the Executive. Shiraz, who will initially provide general administrative support, will stand for the position at the BSF AGM in February.

Update on Captains Support project

BSUK Acting Head of Development Leah Holmes reported on BSUK's Captains Support project, having previously circulated an update on the programme.

A Working Group made up of team captains with different levels of experience and from different leagues has held a series of meetings to look at:

- Creating a webpage or document with important information for team captains.
- Creating a series of online workshops to improve skills in relevant areas.
- Creating a mentoring or "buddy" system for new and inexperienced team captains.

The next step will be to put the ideas from these meetings into practice.

Another aspect that the Working Group will look at, suggested by BSF President Lesley Morisetti, shades over into another BSUK project -- on the recruitment and retention of women. What are the barriers to women joining and remaining in the sport, and how can these barriers be overcome?

BSUK plans to run pilot projects with a small number of leagues on this topic, but recognises that the challenges faced by leagues in this area are often unique rather than generic.

Insights gained from these pilot projects will be reflected in the materials being created for team captains.

Coach Education Review

A consultancy called Sporting People has been helping BSUK to review its coach education and development provision over the last couple of months, and Bristol Softball Association Chair Neil Butterfield has been the BSF's representative on the project.

Consultations have been held with a range of people from the slowpitch and fastpitch softball communities and parallel consultations have been held with people from the baseball community. Conclusions and proposals are now being developed that will be presented and discussed at the BSUK Coach Summit on 27-28 January, prior to implementation for next season.

Terms and Conditions for British teams playing in WBSC Europe competitions

The Executive has agreed to send out a Terms & Conditions document and contract to national and club teams playing in Europe next year to provide them with critical dates for fulfilling entry and other conditions, and to remind them that they need to observe WBSC Europe regulations when competing in tournaments to avoid the team or the Federation incurring sanctions or fines.

Sanctions (not fines) were imposed by WBSC Europe on three players from a team that competed this past summer, and the BSF needs to make it clear that if any fines are levied on the Federation in these circumstances, teams will need to reimburse the BSF in full.

WBSC Congress

A World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) biennial Congress was held on 6 December – not as an in-person meeting, or even an online meeting, but as an email vote on motions put forward by the WBSC Executive with little or no information provided.

Among the motions presented, there were some to remove unfinancial Federations from WBSC membership and some minor statute changes. A Financial Report was also provided.

The BSF and the BBF have written a joint letter to the WBSC to express disappointment that the Congress was run in this fashion, and both Federations abstained on all of the motions put forward. A response has been received from the WBSC noting our objections, but suggesting that only Election Congresses may be held on an in-person basis in future.

In-person Congresses provide important opportunities for discussion, consultation, networking etc.

2024 Single-Sex Slowpitch Nationals

It has now been confirmed that the 2024 Single-Sex Slowpitch Nationals will be held at Farnham Park on the weekend of 15-16 June 2024 after the BSF was unable to find a regional venue that could host the tournament.

The BSF prefers the Single-Sex Nationals to be held at different locations around the country, as has been the case in recent years, and hopes to go back to this in 2025.

General Officer Nicola-Jane Dyson, who organised the tournament when it was held in Manchester this past summer, has volunteered to organise the 2024 event in conjunction with BSF Competitions Officer Liz Graham.

BASU update

BSF Technical Officer Pete Saunders reported that the 2024 BASU AGM will be held on Saturday 27 January, either at Farnham Park or in the area.

So far, London, Bristol, Cardiff and Manchester have booked online umpire qualification courses for 2024, and other League Heads will be invited to contact BASU Training Officer Colin Russell if they wish to host a course next year. Information will also be circulated on whether there are any places available on courses that could be taken up by people from outside the hosting league.

League Heads Forum

BSF remote League Heads Forum meetings are now held twice a year, before and after the playing season, and the BSF plans to hold the pre-season meeting for 2024 on the evening of Thursday 15 February, before the BSF AGM.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the BSF Executive will be its annual face-to-face weekend meeting on 13-14 January near Manchester.

Anyone on the Executive or in the softball community who wants to raise an item at that meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer: bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org.