

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

11 MAY 2023

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 11 May 2023. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Lesley Morisetti (Acting President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer), George Stamets (General Officer), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Nicola-Jane Dyson (General Officer).

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

Resignation from the BSF Executive

Mike Lott, who has served as the Coaching Officer on the BSF Executive for the past several years and has recently taken on the role of chairing a Working Group to plan and deliver the European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship that the BSF is hosting at Farnham Park in 2026, has resigned from the BSF Executive.

The Executive is grateful to Mike for the contributions he has made and will be looking to co-opt someone to fill the Coaching Officer role. Mike's role as Chair of the Working Group for the 2026 European Co-ed Slowpitch Championships has been taken on by BSF General Officer Nicola-Jane Dyson.

Meanwhile, the Executive has confirmed that Lesley Morisetti, who has stepped up to fill the role of BSF President on an interim basis after Ieuan Gale resigned at the AGM in February and no one applied for the position, will remain as Interim President until the BSF's next AGM in February 2024.

However, the BSF will be encouraging candidates to come forward for the position at that AGM, as this is not something that Lesley wants to do on a long-term basis.

Developments at Farnham Park

BSUK CEO John Boyd told the Executive that an electronic scoreboard, requested by the BSF, paid for by BSUK, and designed to be used primarily on Pitch 1 at Farnham Park, has been delivered and should be in action soon.

Also, a wooden bin for the donation of used equipment has been set up outside the BSUK office adjacent to Pitch 1, and donations are invited. Any equipment received will be used for development programmes.

BSF Athletes Commission

The BSF has had seven applications from people interested in joining its new Athletes Commission. Decisions on these applications will be made shortly, and the hope is to get the Commission up and running soon.

The Commission will consist of four people, with one person each representing men's fastpitch, women's fastpitch, male slowpitch players and female slowpitch players. Representatives will sound out views and opinions from members of these groups on a range of issues in the sport and will meet on at least a quarterly basis to discuss their findings. One representative from the Commission will then bring important and relevant views to the BSF Executive along with Commission recommendations.

Financial matters

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt reported to the meeting that the BSF currently has £450 from its Development Grant budget of £1500 available to award during the rest of the BSF's current financial year, which ends on 30 September. Applications can be made through the "Apply for a BSF Development Grant" button on the left-hand side of the BSF website Home Page.

Laura also gave the Executive an update on spending and income at this point in the financial year. While some categories are currently overspent, this will probably be balanced by underspending elsewhere and the budget should generally be on target.

However, no more spending will be possible under the Contingency budget line introduced this year to cope with unexpected costs or expenditure opportunities.

Laura reported that about £28,000 has come in so far in affiliation fees, with 11 leagues and some independent teams still to pay. The deadline for payment is the end of May.

Working Group updates

CONCUSSION WORKING GROUP. A variety of material on concussion and how to deal with it has been developed by the Working Group and has been sent to League Heads and Tournament Organisers. Further material may follow, including links to a useful video on the topic developed by rugby. Meanwhile, signs about concussion protocols have gone up in dugouts at Farnham Park, with the basic "If in doubt sit them out" message. The Working Group will meet again soon to discuss what else needs to be done.

2026 EUROPEAN SLOWPITCH CHAMPIONSHIP WORKING GROUP. This Working Group met at the end of April, chaired by BSF Coaching Officer Mike Lott, but as announced at the beginning of this report,

Mike has had to step down from this role and Nicola-Jane Dyson has been appointed. Meanwhile, BSUK CEO John Boyd has been provided with information that should allow him to draw up a rough budget for the event so we know how much money has to be found or raised.

RETENTION OF UNIVERSITY PLAYERS IN MAINSTREAM SOFTBALL. A suggestion had been made that the BSF and BSUK form a Working Group to provide information and opportunities for players in university programmes to continue playing softball under BSF auspices after graduation. However, the consensus was that this doesn't need a Working Group as much as a strategy, and BSUK Head of Development Chris Rawlings has put forward a series of proposed actions to make this happen. Lesley Morisetti and Bob Fromer will work with Chris on this initiative, and the BSF will have an official presence at future University Softball National Championships.

Meanwhile, John Boyd told the meeting that as part of the MLB Legacy programme developed around the MLB London Series games, there will be a slowpitch competition for teams from London universities in Regents Park on a Saturday in June, shortly before the MLB games.

Autumn League Heads Forum meeting

Following a suggestion made at the League Heads Forum meeting in February, the BSF plans to convene a second meeting with League Heads in the autumn, after the playing season is over, and hopes to continue with a schedule of two meetings a year, before and after the season.

BSUK reports

BaseballSoftballUK CEO John Boyd gave a report to the Executive on three current areas of activity: events tied in with the MLB London Series games, initiatives that BSUK is putting forward towards slowpitch coach development and a review of BSUK's programmes for Facilities Fund grants.

LONDON SERIES EVENTS. Events related to the MLB games in London on 24 and 25 June will start around ten days before the MLB games and will include:

- The launch of a baseball/softball programme for primary schools called First Pitch, delivered to schools in London and around the country.
- A girls' fastpitch programme for groups of secondary schools.
- CPD workshops for coaches.
- Invitations to selected stakeholders to the Workout Day on Friday that will be held by the Cubs and Cardinals.
- The chance for members of the BSF Executive to present on softball's progress in the UK to the World Baseball Softball Confederation Board, which will be in London for meetings around the London Series weekend.

John will send the Executive more information and timings for these events. The overall message is that these and other events around the London Series are designed to provide opportunities for many more people to play baseball, slowpitch and/or fastpitch, and work will be done to connect these programmes with Federation structures.

SLOWPITCH COACH DEVELOPMENT. BSUK has proposed an Action Plan for slowpitch development to the BSF Executive, with a particular focus on coaching and coach development tailored to the needs of the slowpitch community. BSUK plans to bring in an expert consultant to help create an improved coaching structure, but will draw on expertise from the slowpitch community on how to adapt this to slowpitch needs. Online material may be developed to aid coaches in teaching specific skills. More dialogue will take place on the details of the proposal.

FACILITIES FUND GRANTS. After another year in which most of the Facilities Fund grants awarded by BSUK went to baseball projects, the programme will be reviewed to see how more slowpitch applications can be encouraged and facilitated, to make sure the programme is relevant to grassroots clubs and teams, and to make sure that no conflicts of interests arise when awards are made.

Tour by US Senior Team

A team of senior softball players from the US will be coming to Great Britain in 2024, and will now be hosted for games in Scotland by the Edinburgh Softball League, after originally planning to tour in Yorkshire.

Registration

Membership Officer Liz Graham told the meeting that more than 1200 individual players have now registered on the BSF's new Teamlinkt registration system, with more to come.

This is a good start towards the BSF's aim of having contact details for all or most of its players over the next couple of years, as virtually all other sports do.

Restrictions on drinking, smoking, drugs and vaping

The BSF will be posting reminders on the BSF website and social media channels about the greater enforcement this year of long-standing WBSC and BSF rules prohibiting drinking, smoking, use of recreational drugs and vaping in dugouts or, where there are no dugouts, in team areas at the side of the pitch.

The rules will be particularly strongly enforced on this season's NSL weekends and at BSF National Championships.

Next meeting

The next BSF Executive videoconference meeting will take place on Tuesday 6 June.

Anyone from the Executive or the softball community who has an item to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer: bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org.

The BSF Executive's July meeting has been moved from 6 July to 20 July.