

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

14 SEPTEMBER 2023

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 14 September. 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), Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Laura Hirai (Fastpitch Development Officer), Nicola-Jane Dyson and George Stamets (General Officers), Tim Bishop (Athletes Commission).

Guests: John Boyd (BSUK), Mike Jennings.

National Teams Officer

The BSF Executive unanimously approved a motion to co-opt Dr Alice Hunter to the vacant position of National Teams Officer and chair of the GB Management Committee.

Alice will take up the role as a co-optee for next five months and will then stand for election to a two-year term at the BSF AGM in February 2024.

Dr Hunter is a Senior Lecturer in Sports Coaching at Bournemouth University and has been involved with softball for a number of years, primarily as a player but also in coach mentoring initiatives, after serving as a player and Federation official with korfbal.

Development

Coach Training Review. BSUK is in the process of appointing an external consultant to help it carry out a review of its coach training provision during the autumn, and Bristol Softball Association President Neil Butterfield has been representing the BSF Executive on this project.

Two bids for doing this work have been received, and a decision will be made during the week beginning 18 September. Neil and Mike Hayward for the BBF will be involved in the decision.

BSUK CEO John Boyd told the meeting that the project is a couple of weeks behind on its original timeline, but there will still be time for the review to be completed in the autumn and for the outcomes to be reflected in coach training provision in 2024.

“We want to make sure,” John said, “that we get coach training right for all three formats – slowpitch, fastpitch, and baseball.”

Once a consultant has been chosen the review will involve extensive consultation with relevant people in both the softball and baseball communities.

Women’s Recruitment. John Boyd also told the meeting that BSUK will be embarking on a major programme this off-season to recruit more female players – “people who don’t yet know that they want to play the sport!”

Fastpitch Development. BSUK development staff will be meeting BSF Fastpitch Development Officer Laura Hirai shortly to review progress on fastpitch development initiatives.

Among other things, BSUK has committed to establishing secondary-age girls’ fastpitch clubs in Chichester, Conniburrow, East London, and the area around Farnham Park for next season.

Slowpitch Academy. There has been a very good reception for initiatives carried out this summer under the aegis of BSUK’s Slowpitch Academy under the direction of Luis Arrevillagas.

During the summer, 23 clinic sessions were delivered at various tournaments on 10 different days, attracting 159 participants. Session topics included hitting, first base mechanics, warm-ups, middle infield mechanics, base coaching and coaching for beginners. Six more sessions are planned for 23 September at tournaments in Milton Keynes and Cardiff.

The plan for the off-season is to deliver longer regional Academy sessions for leagues, universities and other community organisations. Sessions have been planned in Leeds, London, Manchester, Bristol, and Glasgow.

Early next year, there will be training for tutors to help standardise delivery across all Academy sessions.

International matters

Bid for 2027 European Women’s Championship. The BSF has approved a bid, to be created and submitted by BSUK by 1 November, to host the 2027 European Women’s Championship at Farnham Park. This approval is conditional on there being no financial responsibility of the part of the BSF for this event, only a future conversation on how the community as a whole might contribute to meeting the costs, since the BSF is already committed to hosting the 2026 European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship. Proceeding with the bid, with significant funding expected to come from UK Sport, will be contingent on baseball/softball being included in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Meeting to discuss the implications of further UK Sport funding. If softball is included in the Los Angeles Olympics, BSUK, on behalf of the BSF, will be applying for further funding from UK Sport for the GB Women’s Fastpitch Team to enhance our chances of qualifying. BSUK has requested a meeting with the BSF Executive to explore the implications of enhanced funding, and this meeting will be held on Thursday evening 12 October, a date on which the BSF had planned to have its next monthly meeting. That meeting has been moved back a week to Thursday 19 October.

League affiliation

Competitions Officer Liz Graham told the meeting that the Swindon Softball League plans to affiliate all its teams next year. Previously, Swindon has affiliated one or two teams so they could take part in BSF-sanctioned tournaments. At present, the league consists of four teams plus a development group from which new teams can be formed.

Donated equipment

During the NSL Nationals on 2-3 September, BSF President Lesley Morisetti did a quick inventory of used equipment that has been donated over the course of the season through the Donations Box outside the BSUK office at Farnham Park.

Equipment donated includes gloves, bats, and helmets, but many of them are either designed for very small children or are too worn out to be used. A more thorough inventory will be carried out before the start of next season to see how much of the equipment is actually useable, and a decision will be made what to do with it.

BASU

BSF Technical Officer Pete Saunders reported that three leagues have already signed up for the online BASU qualifying course for next year, and another two leagues have expressed interest.

A key issue for BASU going forward will be recruitment, which is usually about finding more league umpires willing to step up to national level. The use of fill-in umpires at many tournaments this season suggests that the need for more umpires is acute.

Pete also suggested that Crew Chiefs need to receive tournament Packs, Rules and Schedules much earlier than they often do.

League Heads Forum

The BSF is hosting an autumn League Heads Forum as a remote meeting on the evening of Tuesday 17 October, and members of the Executive were asked to submit suggestions for Agenda items.

BSUK will have a slot at the meeting and has already put forward a number of topics it would like to talk through with League Heads.

Next meetings

A special meeting of the BSF Executive with BSUK officers to discuss the implications of further UK Sport funding for the GB Women's Team programme will be held on the evening of Thursday 12 October.

The next BSF Executive monthly videoconference meeting will be held on Thursday evening 19 October. Anyone on the Executive or in the softball community with matters to raise at that meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer on: bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org.