

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

19 OCTOBER 2023

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 19 October. Below is a summary of the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Lesley Morisetti (President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), Alice Hunter (National Teams Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Nicola-Jane Dyson (General Officer), Tim Bishop (Athletes Commission), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Laura Hirai (Fastpitch Development Officer), Stella Ackrell, Safeguarding Officer.

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

Financial Matters

With the BSF's 2022-23 financial year having ended on 30 September, BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt will begin drawing up a budget for 2023-24 that can be reviewed and approved by the Executive and then taken to the AGM in February. A special BSF Executive meeting will be called in the second half of November to carry out an initial review.

BSF Athletes Commission

BSF Athletes Commission Chair Tim Bishop told the Executive that the Commission was still trying to ensure that players throughout the sport know about it and how to contact Commission members. There appear to be about half a dozen leagues that haven't yet disseminated this information to all their teams.

Over the closed season, the Commission will continue a dialogue with BSUK about matters raised during the summer with regard to Farnham Park, and will continue to ask for feedback from players at Indoor leagues and tournaments and Academy sessions.

BSF Annual Awards and Hall of Fame nominations

An article will be posted on the BSF website shortly asking for nominations for the Annual Awards that the BSF will present at its AGM in February. In addition, a new cohort will be elected to the BSF Hall of Fame at the AGM, and nominations for potential Hall of Fame members will also be requested.

The list of Annual Awards to be presented (assuming nominations are made) and criteria for Hall of Fame nominations will be in the article.

Finally, the article will also call for nominations for BSF Executive Officers and motions to the AGM.

2024 Softball Calendar

A good deal of the Softball Calendar for 2024 is now in place, but the BSF is waiting for information from BSUK about its own tournament dates at Farnham Park, as well as BBF requirements, so we can incorporate these into the Calendar and then circulate it to League Heads and Tournament Organisers to see how their dates fit in.

The aim is to have the Calendar more or less finalised, with any major clashes resolved, by the second half of November.

BSF Executive vacancies

Having recently co-opted Laura Hirai as Fastpitch Development Officer and Dr Alice Hunter as National Teams Officer, remaining vacancies on the BSF Executive are:

Administrator. With Bob Fromer stepping down from this role after the AGM in February, the aim is to divide some of his responsibilities among other Executive members so that the post will revolve mainly around organising and reporting on meetings (Agendas, Minutes, etc) and acting as the hub for the BSF's internal and external communications.

Softball Development Officer. This is a new position, and the holder will be mainly working with BSUK to develop and oversee the implementation of slowpitch development initiatives.

Communications and Marketing Officer. This post will mainly involve commissioning, writing, editing, and posting content on the BSF website and working with BSUK on marketing plans for the Federation.

Anyone interested in any of these posts, or who wants more information, should contact Bob Fromer (bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org).

Coach-Training Review

BSUK CEO John Boyd told the meeting that the BSF, BBF and BSUK have been working together to agree on the parameters for a review of BSUK's coach-training provision by an outside consultancy, and a consultant has recently been appointed.

Over the next few weeks, the consultant will be talking to relevant people in both sports, and the intention is to have a Plan with Action Points by the end of the year that can affect the provision of coach training in 2024.

Because of her professional background as a lecturer in Sports Coaching, Dr Alice Hunter, the BSF's new National Teams Officer, has agreed to be involved in the project.

BSF Development Grant

The Leeds Softball League has been contacted by the BBC's regional news outlet, Look North, to conduct interviews and film local softball activity in response to the recent announcement that baseball and softball will be included in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The league is keen to accept the invitation because it will create valuable local publicity, but they will need to hire an indoor sports hall where the filming can take place and asked if the BSF could help.

The BSF has awarded a Development Grant of £100 to help cover the hire costs, and BSUK has been in touch to help with communication points for the interviews, particularly to explain the differences between Olympic softball and the slowpitch softball that Look North will be filming.

Report from Euro 2026 Working Group

BSF General Officer Nicola-Jane Dyson, who chairs the BSF/BSUK Working Group for the 2026 European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship that will be hosted at Farnham Park, reported on a recent meeting of the Working Group.

Nicola-Jane, John Boyd, Mike Jennings and Bob Fromer spent most of the meeting going through a draft budget that had been created by BSUK, and came away from the meeting feeling fairly confident that the costs of hosting the tournament can be met.

During the off-season, the Working Group will consider a number of practical issues concerned with hosting the tournament, and the hope is that other people will join the Group as appropriate.

International issues

A number of issues concerning international softball were discussed during the meeting:

WBSC Slowpitch World Cup. Following a series of meetings over the past few weeks involving BSF and BSUK representatives and GB Slowpitch Team staff, a number of issues concerned with the team's participation in the first-ever WBSC Slowpitch World Cup for national teams, to be played in Guadalajara, Mexico from 5-10 December, have been mitigated and preparations for the team to attend are moving forward. The squad selected for the tournament was announced on 2 October. The BSF and BSUK are providing unprecedented financial support for the team, as well as helping in a number of other ways.

Baseball and Softball at the 2028 Olympics. The announcement on 16 October that baseball and softball will definitely be on the programme for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles has been received with excitement and also, as John Boyd told the meeting, with "a sigh of relief". For various reasons to do with international sport politics, the presence of our sports in Los Angeles was never the

done deal that many assumed it to be. The hope is that the GB Senior Women and the GB Men's Baseball Team, both with excellent recent results, will be awarded the same or increased funding at UK Sport Panels next month for the LA Olympic cycle if we can persuade UK Sport that both teams have an excellent chance to qualify, and the GB Women to medal. Increased funding will, however, require the development of appropriate performance systems.

WBSC Congress. The World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) is holding its biennial conference on 6 December as a remote meeting rather than the in-person meeting that was always the case before the pandemic. While this will of course save money for National Federations, including the BSF and the BBF, there is some concern that a remote conference will discourage discussion, not to mention the loss of opportunities for networking. BSF President Lesley Morisetti will attend, along with representatives from the BBF and BSUK.

Personal Accident insurance

One of the topics discussed at the BSF League Heads Forum meeting on 17 October was whether Public Liability Insurance, currently provided for all BSF softball leagues through team affiliation fees, should be combined in future in a package with Personal Accident insurance.

Currently, the provision of Personal Accident insurance has been discretionary, with leagues choosing to opt in on behalf of all their teams. In 2023, the cost for Personal Accident insurance amounted to about £22 per team for the 12 out of 18 leagues that opted in.

The leagues that currently opt out do so because they feel the number of incidents that would bring Personal Accident insurance into play is low and that the insurance is therefore not worth the cost.

The BSF will do some research to see whether combining the two insurances could result in cost savings, and will have further discussions about how to proceed – including with leagues -- before making a decision.

Helmets with faceguards

In 2023, the WBSC mandated that all players under the age of 16 had to wear batting helmets with built-in faceguards when batting or baserunning in fastpitch and slowpitch softball, and the BSF made this mandatory for all players under 18 before the 2023 season started.

However, it soon became apparent that it was almost impossible to source helmets with faceguards, and when it was, the cost seemed prohibitive, so the BSF suspended this requirement for 2023.

There are now indications that UK-based equipment suppliers will have helmets with faceguards available for purchase for the 2024 season, at prices that seem more reasonable, and the BSF is undertaking research to verify this.

The intention is for the BSF to make a statement on regulations for 2024 as soon as possible, and if these helmets are made mandatory for under-18 players for next year, the BSF will also look at whether any subsidy can be offered.

WBSC Sanction Regulations

All teams and players affiliated to the BSF, and all tournament organisers, need to be aware of WBSC sanctioning regulations concerning “international tournaments”. These are defined as any tournament where teams from different countries are competing, or where players under the jurisdiction of different countries are competing, regardless of the size or importance of the tournament.

With regard to British club teams travelling to tournaments abroad that are not WBSC Europe or WBSC competitions, these teams **must** let the BSF know before they travel and provide information about the tournament they are travelling to. This is partly so that the BSF is aware when teams under its jurisdiction are overseas and can help if emergencies arise. More importantly, however, if a British club team travels to a tournament overseas that has not been sanctioned by the WBSC, then the team and players involved -- and the Federation -- could be penalised with suspensions and fines.

With regard to tournaments organised in this country, any tournament hosting a team from overseas, or where domestic teams taking part include players under the jurisdiction of other national federations, must apply for WBSC sanction for the tournament and must receive it before the tournament can be held.

None of this is easy, and in the view of the BSF it represents considerable overkill, but these are the WBSC regulations and the WBSC is very likely to impose penalties if these regulations are broken.

WBSC Sanction Regulations can be found here:

<https://static.wbcs.org/assets/cms/documents/8c6bda80-35a5-6741-5023-2939a01ab94a.pdf>.

Anyone with questions should contact info@britishsoftball.org.

Next meeting

The next BSF Executive monthly videoconference meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 9 November.

Any member of 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).