

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

9 NOVEMBER 2023

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 9 November. Below is a report on the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Lesley Morisetti (President), Liz Graham (Competitions and Membership Officer), George Stamets and Nicola-Jane Dyson (General Officers), Tim Bishop (Athletes Commission), Jessica Hastings (co-opted as Administrator beginning in 2024), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Alice Hunter (National Teams Officer), Laura Hirai (Fastpitch Development Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Stella Ackrell (Safeguarding Officer).

Guests: John Boyd and Leah Holmes (BSUK).

Action Points

Below are results of some of the Action Points arising from the Executive meeting of 19 October:

- A meeting still needs to be set up between members of the BSF Executive and members of the BASU Committee to discuss how the costs of umpire travel to European assignments in 2024 will be shared, and what measures we can take to ensure that all our umpire assignments are fulfilled, since every unfulfilled assignment – and we have to send one umpire to Europe for every British national or club team that plays in a European competition -- will now mean a bill of 850 euros from WBSC Europe. We also want to discuss how we can facilitate more members of the fastpitch community to train as umpires, both by setting up training here and sending umpires to WBSC Europe clinics.
- We are still waiting to hear about the number of grass pitches that will be available at Farnham Park next year, which will allow the BSF to decide on NSL configuration. BSUK will be meeting the Council later in November in an attempt to get a definitive answer.
- We now have a more prominent link on the BSF website Home Page to the NSL website (www.eurosoftball.org), ensuring that the NSL is more prominent as a BSF brand.

Financial matters

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt was not able to attend the meeting, but reported in advance that the new BSF bank account at NatWest is still not open but should be soon. The need to open a new bank account

for the BSF was because Barclays Bank recently closed our account for a minor technical violation of their regulations.

Laura will convene a special BSF Executive meeting in the first half of December to review the proposed budget for the BSF's 2023-24 financial year.

Once finalised, the budget will need to be approved by the full Executive and will then be included in the AGM Pack to be published early in 2024 and brought to the AGM on 24 February for approval by the membership.

Athletes Commission

A new Page for the BSF Athletes Commission will shortly be created on the BSF website, with a prominent box on the Home Page that links to it.

The page will explain the aims and objectives of the Athletes Commission, list the four Athletes Commission members, and explain how to contact the Commission.

Points from the League Heads Forum

With help from BSUK CEO John Boyd and Acting Head of Development Leah Holmes, the meeting reviewed some points raised at the Autumn League Heads Forum meeting on 17 October.

Shortage of pitches in London. At the League Heads Forum, Whitney Hollis, on behalf of the London Softball League, talked about an increasing problem finding pitches where LSL games could be played. BSUK has been working with LSL Director Lorraine Phee to find new pitches, including in areas of London not previously explored – which, if successful, could also be a mechanism for growth.

Captains' Support programme. Leah Holmes told the Executive that meetings are ongoing with players involved in developing a support package for softball team captains. One meeting talked about creating a resource area on the BSF or BSUK website, another talked about ideas for online workshops, and a third meeting will look at mentoring and buddy systems.

Women's Recruitment. Leah told the meeting that this BSUK programme, designed to get more women playing softball, is in its early stages. League Heads have been asked whether there is a big disparity between the number of men and women players in their league so that help can be targeted.

Facilities Fund. Leah is urging slowpitch leagues, clubs and teams that feel there is a possibility to develop facilities where they are currently playing to get in touch to discuss an application to BSUK's Facilities Fund, with applications for awards for the current cycle to be closed at the end of February and results announced on 1 April. An online workshop will be held on 27 November and will deal with grant writing, ways to find the match funding the scheme requires, and other topics that people want to explore.

Youth equipment regulations for 2024

The BSF has decided that the regulation requiring youth players who are under 18 to wear a batting helmet with a faceguard attached when batting or baserunning in both fastpitch and slowpitch will be implemented during the 2024 season. The regulation was passed early in 2023 but then suspended because of the lack of availability and high cost of this equipment. However, helmets with faceguards are now more readily available from UK suppliers at a more reasonable price.

UK Sport Panel meeting for softball and baseball

A UK Sport Panel meeting was held on Wednesday 8 November to assess funding applications from the GB Softball and GB Baseball Olympic Senior National Team programmes.

John Boyd told the Executive that the meeting went extremely well, and that a key factor was that BSUK was able to present a signed Delegation of Authority negotiated over the past two weeks between the BSF and BSUK, giving BSUK the authority to run all five female national team programmes, at least through the end of the 2028 Olympic cycle. It was also important that the Head Coaches for both national teams – Tara Henry and Drew Spencer – were present and, as John said, presented “an energy and a synergy”. Tara had flown in from California to attend the meeting.

Although GB Softball is at #13 in the latest WBSC Women’s World Rankings, which are based on ranking points awarded across all Senior and age group national teams, UK Sport has accepted the argument made during our submission that the real world ranking for the Senior Women’s Team is seventh, that we are among the world’s top teams, and that we have been given a 34% chance at this stage to win a medal in the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

GB Softball and GB Baseball will need to make a final funding submission to UK Sport in January 2024, and the outcome should be known by March. The hope is for an increased level of funding for both programmes.

Next meeting

The BSF Executive’s next monthly videoconference meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 7 December.

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.