

# BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

## 7 OCTOBER 2021

The British Softball Federation Executive held its latest monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 7 October. Below is a journalistic report on the main discussions and decisions.

### Attendance

**Present:** Ieuan Gale (President), Liz Graham (Competitions & Membership Officer), Alexis Markham-Hill (National Teams Officer), Simon Mortimer (Communications and Marketing Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer), Mike Jennings and Lesley Morisetti (General Officers), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

**Apologies:** Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Stella Ackrell (General Officer).

**Guests:** John Boyd and Joelle Watkins (BSUK).

### National Championships and the Softball World Series

**Nationals Championships in 2022.** Holly Ireland from Cardiff, who has previously run the Diffodil Tournaments in Wales and also heads a Welsh development programme called RBI Wales, has agreed to organise the Single-Sex Nationals in 2022 on the BSF's behalf, supported by BSF Competitions Officer Liz Graham. The tournament will be played on the weekend of 25-26 June, though a location and venue have yet to be confirmed.

The 2022 BSF League Nationals on 6-7 August at Farnham Park will be organised by Solent League President Matt Tebb on the BSF's behalf, while Liz Graham will organise the NSL Nationals, also at Farnham Park, on 3-4 September.

**Softball World Series.** Bob Fromer and Mike Jennings, who organise the annual Softball World Series Tournament, told the meeting that this year's edition, played for the first time at Farnham Park on 18-19 September, went well, albeit with no European teams able to take part because of Covid issues. Next year, with European teams presumably returning to the competition, the hope will be that at least some grass pitches at Farnham Park can be used so that the World Series can return to its former size and format based on 18 teams. Depending on whether this is possible, the BSF may explore possibilities for an alternative venue.

One of the teams at this year's World Series was a GB Universities Team that included players from eight or nine different universities. This clearly has development value and the possibility of retaining this team in the competition will be explored.

## International affairs

**WBSC Slowpitch Working Group.** Mike Jennings told the meeting that suggested formats for the planned WBSC Slowpitch World Cup for national teams in 2023 have been circulated to the members of the WBSC Slowpitch Working Group for comment and will be considered at the group's next remote meeting, which should be convened soon.

**European Slowpitch Championships.** Because this year's European Co-ed Slowpitch Championship was cancelled due to Covid issues, Softball Europe will run the tournament in 2022 (date and venue to be confirmed) as a Qualifier for the Slowpitch World Cup. A European Men's Slowpitch Championship is also scheduled to take place next summer, possibly in Italy, though a date is yet to be confirmed. The fact that both the Co-ed and Men's Tournaments will run in the same year may cause issues for us and other countries in Europe and could affect the number of teams in both competitions.

**European Congresses.** WBSC Europe, which includes baseball and softball divisions (formerly CEB and the ESF) will hold a special Congress in late November to agree the legal status of those organisations (dissolved or dormant) and to determine which posts within the new umbrella organisation will be elected or appointed. The normal annual WBSC Europe Congress for both divisions will take place in February. The BSF will send one or more delegates to both Congresses.

**Bat regulations.** One possibility that British players need to be aware of is that WBSC bat regulations – which do not recognise bats approved by the ASA – may become the norm in Europe and around the world for slowpitch as well as fastpitch. Softball Canada has recently dropped support for ASA-approved bats and other countries may follow. But a final decision on this may not be known until the spring of 2022.

## Academy and HPA

Both Academy Softball and the Softball High Performance Academy (HPA) were suspended during the 2020-21 off-season due to Covid. John Boyd told the meeting that the Academy will resume this winter on both sides of the Christmas break, and an announcement on this will be made soon.

However, the HPA structure for softball will need further review because of the limited number of athletes that at present would meet the criteria for inclusion. Further work is needed to create an effective talent pathway for British-based athletes, and this will be part of BSUK's development plan for fastpitch.

## BSF Development Grants

The BSF Executive has agreed to provide a Development Grant of £250 to the University of Kent Baseball and Softball Club to support softball coaching at the club between now and the end of the academic year in June 2022.

With softball now included as an official sport within BUCS (British Universities and College Sport), the club is growing and their need for qualified coaching has expanded.

The BSF has also received a detailed report from another organisation that received a development grant earlier in the year: RBI Wales. Throughout the pandemic, RBI Wales continued to engage with young people in Cardiff and South Wales, offering both COVID-safe and virtual coaching and team-building sessions. As the pandemic recedes, the organisation has ambitious plans for the future.

### **BASU update**

BSF Technical Officer Pete Saunders reported that the recent Softball World Series Tournament was used to assess five British slowpitch umpires who attended Softball Europe's Slowpitch Umpire Clinic this year. Three of them passed and can now umpire at Softball Europe tournaments.

Meanwhile, work continues on a new BASU training package that will be used for umpire training next spring. The aim is to complete the package by Christmas.

### **University affiliation**

With the new academic year having recently begun, the BSF is once again offering free BSF affiliation to all University softball clubs that do not already play in BSF leagues. Five universities signed up last year, and the hope is that more will do so this year.

A revised Affiliation Form, agreed between BSF Administrator Bob Fromer and BSUK National Development Manager Chris Rawlings, will shortly be sent to eligible University clubs.

The free affiliation provides the clubs with Civil and Public Liability Insurance cover for participation in BSF-sanctioned competitions and also allows clubs to access services through the BSUK Development Charter.

The aim is to give more visibility to University softball and to encourage members of University clubs to get involved in mainstream BSF softball once they leave higher education.

### **Next meeting**

The next BSF Executive meeting will be the Board's annual weekend face-to-face meeting, scheduled for 6-7 November in Manchester.

Any member of the softball community with items to bring to the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer [[bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org](mailto:bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org)].