

BSF EXECUTIVE MEETING REPORT:

10 JUNE 2021

The BSF Executive held its most recent monthly videoconference meeting on the evening of Thursday 10 June. Below are details of the main discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Ieuan Gale (President), Laura Burkhardt (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Competitions Officer), Mike Lott (Coaching Officer), Simon Mortimer (Communications and Marketing Officer), Mike Jennings and Lesley Morisetti (General Officers), Bob Fromer (Administrator).

Apologies: Alexis Markham-Hill (National Teams Officer), Pete Saunders (Technical Officer).

Guest: John Boyd (BSUK).

Financial Matters

BSF Treasurer Laura Burkhardt presented the Executive with some possible budget revisions ahead of a special Finance Meeting to be held later in June to re-set the BSF's 2020-21 budget in light of team registrations and income and expected changes in expenditure.

The deadline for payment of league and independent team registrations was 1 June, but there are a small number of payments still to come. Taking these into account, Laura said, BSF income for the 2021 season was likely to fall just short of projections, which were based on a post-Covid return of 80% of the teams that played in 2019.

Crucial items for the Finance Meeting to consider in light of income projections will be the resumption of a Service Level Agreement with BaseballSoftballUK, expenditure on legal and administrative costs, provision for additional Development Grants in the current financial year, costs for BASU umpires officiating in Europe and potential savings in national team expenditure given that no GB Teams will be competing internationally this season.

In other financial matters, the Executive has accepted an offer from BSUK to make training facilities available for all national teams at Farnham Park through March 2022 at no direct cost to the teams, in exchange for a single payment from the BSF.

National Teams Levy and GB Affiliation Fee

BSF Communications and Marketing Officer Simon Mortimer reported on agreement reached by a BSF subcommittee that met on 1 June to consider revisions to the current system of annual grants to

national teams through the National Teams Levy (NTL) and the payment of GB Affiliation Fees (GBAF) by players selected to national team competition squads to provide income for the GB Management Committee (GBMC).

With no national teams in competition this year, the BSF has seen this as an ideal time to reform and improve the system.

The Executive has accepted the subcommittee's recommendations, which are:

- The NTL will continue to be collected by ringfencing £10 from each BSF full member team's affiliation fee. The NTL will always be a minimum of £3000 and will be higher if BSF affiliations exceed 300 teams.
- However, the NTL, instead of being spent in the form of small grants to each GB National Team in official competition that year, as in the past, will now go in full to the GBMC to use in the many and varied ways that the Committee supports national team programmes.
- In addition, and to ensure that the GBMC has sufficient income, each national team in official competition in a given year will pay a £200 fee to the GBMC, to be collected from players as part of trip fees.
- National team players will no longer have to pay the GBAF, which in recent years has been £50 per player per year. The loss of national team NTL grants paired with the ending of the GBAF but a small additional team fee for the GBMC will have a neutral financial effect on players.
- Advantages for the BSF are that the system as a whole will be simpler, and BSF expenditure based on the NTL will be fixed and capped (in recent years, with the increase in the number of national teams, the BSF was spending more on NTL grants than it was receiving in NTL payments).
- The advantage for the GBMC is that it will have a predictable income, with the bulk of it (the NTL payment from the BSF) available at the start of each season.

Registration

Competitions and Membership Officer Liz Graham circulated an update on league and independent team registration before the meeting.

The Cardiff Softball League appears to be the only regional league that is not running a league schedule or affiliating its teams this year, though the status of one or two of the London corporate leagues is still unclear.

A number of leagues have lost some teams compared to 2019, but in most cases losses have been fairly minimal.

Personal Accident insurance

General Officer Mike Jennings, who handles insurance matters for the BSF, reported that take-up of Personal Accident and Injury insurance by BSF member leagues and teams has exceeded the number necessary to support the BSF's purchase of this policy for the 2021 season.

The policy went into effect for these leagues and teams on 1 May.

With regard to Civil and Public Liability insurance, which was automatically renewed for this season, we are still awaiting the full insurance schedule from the insurance providers, which is often needed by leagues or teams for booking facilities or arranging sessions.

Slowpitch World Cup

Mike Jennings reported that there have been no further meetings of the WBSA Slowpitch Commission since the last BSF meeting, and none are currently scheduled.

This Commission is considering dates and arrangements for the first-ever Slowpitch World Cup for national teams, likely to be held in 2023.

Criteria for Development Grants

The BSF has awarded five Development Grants of £250 each to teams or leagues so far this year.

Going forward, the BSF intends to publish criteria for awarding Development Grants – including information on items that are unlikely to be funded – so that potential applicants will have a better idea of how to shape requests to maximise chances of success.

National Softball League review

National Softball League play took place for the first time this year on the weekend of 5-6 June when the 12 teams in NSL2 played leagues games alongside the Diamond Series tournament at Farnham Park.

As everyone knows, NSL2 and NSL1 teams are playing a shortened schedule this year due to Covid: instead of playing all other teams in the league twice over three weekends in 60-minute time slots as in 2019, teams are playing all other teams once with 90-minute time slots over two weekends.

Competitions Officer Liz Graham circulated a report before the meeting on how this went and on player reactions.

Generally, the schedule seems to have been well received. Teams played an average of 6.5 innings per game (as opposed to 4.3 innings in 2019), and most players seemed to enjoy the longer games or were just happy to be back playing.

One complaint was the long waiting time that some teams had between games, and Liz plans to tweak the schedule for the rest of this season's NSL play to avoid this problem.

Once this season is over, the BSF will look at feedback and results and consider the possibility of a compromise schedule for 2022 that might have 75-minute game slots plus finals on the last weekend.

BSUK CEO John Boyd pointed out that Covid has made 2021 into an experimental season, with tournaments ranging from the 90-minute game slots in NSL to the 45-minute games with a 1:1 count that will feature in the BSUK Slowpitch Cup on 19-20 June. Experiments can sometimes point the way to a better future!

BSF Tournaments

Liz Graham reported that up to 23 teams that qualified in 2019 have shown an interest in playing in the BSF Co-ed Slowpitch League National Championships on 7-8 August at Farnham Park, though not all have yet confirmed by paying the entry fee. Anything near this number will be a good post-Covid turnout.

Bob Fromer told the Executive that all 15 places available have now been awarded for this year's Softball World Series Tournament, scheduled for 18-19 September at Farnham Park, with six teams coming from overseas if travel regulations permit.

Slowpitch coaching

Coaching Officer Mike Lott told the Executive that he is working on plans for slowpitch coaching and training sessions that will be advertised soon on the BSF website.

UK Sport grant to the GB Women's Team

A productive meeting was held at the end of May with representatives from the BSF, BSUK and the GB Women's Team programme to look at conditions and use of the UK Sport grant made earlier this year to the Women's Team.

The grant, which will consist of more than £57,000 this year and almost £290,000 for the period 2021-24, is designed to enhance the team's possibilities of Olympic qualification for the 2028 Games in Los Angeles.

The grant will come via BSUK, which will need to sign a contract with UK Sport defining conditions for use of the money, which will be spent on developing the fastpitch talent pathway for female athletes as well as directly on the Women's Team.

A further meeting will take place soon to look at fastpitch development in the UK and how the grant money can most effectively be spent.

Revision of BSF Articles and Constitution

BSF President Ieuan Gale has set up a working group to bring the BSF's Articles of Incorporation and Constitution up to date, and the first meeting of the group will be held over the next few weeks to define the tasks and assign roles.

Communications

Communications and Marketing Officer Simon Mortimer and BSF Administrator and Website Editor Bob Fromer, at BSUK's request, have been developing a series of protocols to define how BSUK and the BSF will work together on communications through both organisations' websites, social media platforms and other communications channels given recent changes of relevant personnel in both organisations.

These protocols will be discussed at a meeting between the two organisations on 22 June.

While the BSF wants BSUK to continue to be an integral partner in generating communications, procedures need to be established that will ensure BSF control over its own media channels.

Next meeting

The next BSF Executive videoconference meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday 8 July.

Any member of the softball community with matters to raise at the meeting should contact BSF Administrator Bob Fromer on: bob.fromer@britishsoftball.org.