

BSF Executive Meeting Report: 13 November 2014

The BSF Executive held its latest monthly conference call meeting on the evening of Thursday 13 November. Below is a journalistic report on the highlights of discussions and decisions.

Attendance

Present: Stella Ackrell (President), Darren Prouty (Administrator), Mike Jennings (Treasurer), Liz Graham (Tournaments Officer), Claire Waldron (Youth & Schools Officer), Mark Wigington (Marketing Officer), Chris Moon (BASU Representative).

Apologies: Beth Perkins (National Teams Officer), Fiona Thorley (Tournaments Officer), Mark Munnery (General Officer).

Guest: Bob Fromer (BSUK).

Feedback from League Heads Forum

The BSF's Annual **League Heads Forum** was held on Saturday 8 November in Birmingham with 13 leagues represented, along with the BSF and BSUK.

A good session was delivered by Alistair Gray from the sports consultants Renaissance, who is currently working with BSUK, the BSF and BBF on a structural review to determine the optimum working arrangement for the three organisations. Alistair invited those present to put forward their visions for the future of softball, and he will feed back to the BSF, possibly at the 2015 BSF AGM.

League representatives attending the Forum agreed with members of the BSF Executive that it is essential for all teams affiliated to the BSF to register and to roster their players on the BSF website so the BSF can have as complete a database of its playing members as possible. However, using the Spawtz league and team administration system on the website for registration is regarded by some as cumbersome, and the system is not used at all by others. The BSF Executive will see whether a separate and simpler registration system can be set up on the site before team registration begins in the new year.

The Spawtz system will continue to be available in 2015 for league and team administration for those that want to use it, and the BSF will absorb the cost of £10 per team. However, BSF Administrator Darren Prouty and General Officer Mark Munnery, who will be conducting a comprehensive review of the website, will be considering whether the Spawtz system should be used beyond 2015 and whether anything needs to replace it.

While the BSF is very keen to have a database of individual players, the feeling is that team affiliation remains the best basis on which to provide insurance. One question raised at the Forum was whether the standard Personal Accident and Injury insurance that can be purchased as optional through the BSF is adequate and whether the most usual injuries that occur in softball are covered. Joelle Watkins from the Greater London Softball Mixed League will provide the BSF with

a list of what such a policy would ideally cover, and the BSF will see what such additional coverage might cost, so individual teams who choose to do so can buy extended cover.

A number of other topics were discussed at the League Heads Forum, and a report on the meeting can be found on the BSF website.

2015 BSF AGM

The 2015 BSF AGM will be held on Saturday 28 February 2015. The venue, still to be confirmed, is likely to be in Watford – a location deemed to be easily accessible for the majority of league and team representatives from across the country.

An [article](#) currently on the BSF website provides deadlines for motions to be submitted to the AGM and nominations for Officers on the BSF Executive.

A [separate article](#) on the website gives details and the deadline for nominations for the awards that the BSF gives out annually at the AGM.

The Executive is currently considering topics for morning workshop sessions at the AGM, and these will be announced shortly. A full AGM Pack, including accounts for 2013-14 and a proposed budget for 2014-15, will be sent out around the beginning of February.

The Executive has already announced, at the League Heads Forum, that team affiliation fees for 2015 will be unchanged from those in 2014.

2015 Tournament Calendar

The BSF, with help from BSUK, has created a proposed Tournament Calendar for the 2015 season that aims to achieve reasonable separation between all large tournaments involving at least three tiers of play, including A-grade (National Softball League) competition.

BSF Tournaments Officer Fiona Thorley is currently consulting with tournament organisers to reach agreement on the proposed dates and to see where adjustments might need to be made.

There will be two new tournaments on the calendar run by BSUK at Farnham Park, including a major new three-grade co-ed slowpitch tournament, probably on the weekend of 18-19 July, which will include NSL play. BSUK also plans to run a combined baseball and international fastpitch tournament at Farnham Park on 6-7 June, and the BSF will look at the possibility of organising a slowpitch tournament on the grass pitches on that date so that all three formats of the sports can be included in a combined event.

Slowpitch World Cup

The International Softball Federation is keen to continue with the Slowpitch World Cup competition that it revived earlier this year, when the event was staged in Plant City, Florida in January and the GB Slowpitch Team won a silver medal.

However, the ISF would like to move the tournament to November in 2015, when it will coincide with a major festival in Plant City involving lots of music, beer and BBQ, and the BSF is waiting for confirmation that the event could go ahead and specific dates. Whether it does take place will also depend on sufficient Federations and teams being prepared to participate.

One question that BSF Treasurer Mike Jennings has discussed with the ISF is whether the tournament will remain an open Cup competition, or whether it can be designated as a Championship. This may attract more entries, and the BSF would be active, as in the past, in encouraging entries from Europe and beyond.

Meanwhile, the BSF will consider how GB can best participate in 2015.

New NSL team

The BSF has received an application from a new Bristol-based tournament team to enter the National Softball League (NSL) next season.

For the past couple of years, the NSL has had 12 teams, with the top eight qualifying for the Premier Nationals. Assuming that all of those teams wish to play again in 2015 – which the BSF has still to determine – the new Bristol entry would take the league to 13 teams.

The BSF is currently reviewing an outline proposal on NSL promotion and relegation and expects to publish a new structure by the end of the year.

BSF Safeguarding Liaison Officer

The BSF Safeguarding Liaison Officer, Jess Casey, has had to resign from the position due to work pressures, and the BSF needs to replace her, as governance principles agreed by the Federations and BSUK mean that this position needs to be filled.

The BSF will advertise the position on the website and may co-opt someone to fill it in advance of the AGM if no candidates come forward.

BSUK Committees

The BSF sends representatives to the various BSUK Board subcommittees, and reports from those meetings are reviewed at BSF Executive meetings.

Mike Jennings attended a Finance Committee meeting on 11 November, and reported that BSUK half-year results were generally as expected. He noted that BSUK is making encouraging strides in tapping new sources of finance for a new baseball and softball facility to be built in Manchester over the next two years.

There has not been a recent meeting of the Governance Committee, but Stella Ackrell reported that following a series of interviews in which the BSF participated, decisions are being finalised

regarding the three open positions for Independent Directors on the BSUK Board.

There has not been a recent meeting of the Commercial Committee, but Mark Wigington reported that progress has been made on selecting a supplier to provide baseballs and softballs to the Federations next year.

BSF website

The BSF Executive is to ask BSUK to undertake two modifications to the BSF website pending the more comprehensive website review mentioned above:

- Whatever registration system is adopted on the website for next year, the Home Page link for registration will be larger and in a more prominent position.
- A new tab will be created on the Home Page, leading to a page that will explain the structure and qualification paths and requirements for BSF National Championships and the new promotion and relegation system for the NSL. This page will then link to the long-standing BSF Nationals website www.bsf-nationals.com.

Charities Softball League

The largest softball league in the country – though not many people know this – is the Charities Softball League in London. The league, which does not affiliate its teams to the BSF, plays mainly in Hyde Park, often on unmarked pitches, and with a somewhat unique set of rules.

However, both the BSF and BSUK have provided some support to the Charities League over recent years, and the hope is that the league might eventually choose to come under the BSF umbrella.

To further this process, it is proposed that the Greater London Softball Mixed League invite a team from the Charities League – perhaps an All-Star team or the team that won the league title in 2014 – to compete in its First and / or Last Ball Tournaments in 2015. Charities League organisers seem keen on the idea and the BSF may provide a GB Slowpitch Team coach to help their team on the day. This initiative could be extended by local Leagues to similar non-BSF teams around the country, including university teams, which may or may not be represented in their local league's normal season activity.

Insurance

BSF Treasurer Mike Jennings reported that there are increasing demands from Perkins Slade, the company that provides the Federation's Public Liability and Accident / Injury insurance.

Some of these demands are to do with child protection, which BSUK will pick up, but the insurers are also asking for a full schedule of softball events in 2015. Depending on the amount of detail they require, this request might be quite difficult to fulfil. Mike will pursue the matter and report back to the Executive.

Next meetings

Conference call meeting dates between now and the BSF AGM at the end of February have yet to be set, but it is likely that there will be two meetings in January and further meeting in February in advance of the AGM. There will be no session in December.

Anyone with matters to raise at any of these meetings should contact BSF Administrator Darren Prouty on: darren.prouty@britishsoftball.org.