

ECF Support for Grassroots Chess Development

A. Introduction

The recently announced funding for developing English chess by HM Government has given us the opportunity to earmark funds for grassroots developments across the country. Grassroots support will be provided by way of a strategic grassroots fund. This paper outlines the scheme, suggests some areas where grant applications may be applicable, and tells applicants how to apply for a grant.

We have split this fund across nine regions, based on the nine governmental regions. Each region will receive £10,000 in funding. In each region we have appointed a regional coordinator who will (liaising with other organisers as appropriate in their region) make recommendations to the ECF for awards from the grassroots fund. For those projects which involve more than one region a central fund has been retained.

The regions (and coordinators) are:

- North West (Richard Walsh);
- North East (Mick Riding);
- Yorkshire and Humberside (Andrew Wainwright);
- West Midlands (Tim Lane);
- East Midlands (Paul Mottram);
- East of England (John Wickham);
- South East (Jo Wildman);
- Greater London (Chris Skulte);
- South West (Nikki Forster).

At the ECF the central team assessing grant applications to the ECF comprises:

- Stephen Greep, Non Executive Director (Chairman);
- Mike Truran, Chief Executive;
- Nigel Towers, Director of Home Chess.

B. Outline Proposals

There are over 500 active clubs across England, and we will target any funding/grants towards areas/clubs which need most support and/or where there is the most value for average players in the demographic we are trying to reach. Potential areas for development support include:

- Clubs;
- Congresses and other events;
- Equipment;
- Education;
- Online chess and content.

C. Potential Areas for Development Support

The following is not intended to be exhaustive, nor does an application based on one of these areas guarantee funding. It is intended as a guide only.

C1. Clubs

1. **Start-up Support** - Support packages for new/ start-up clubs, for example:

- Templates/ guides for setting up a new club;
- ECF publicity, and funding for new clubs with financial support in exceptional cases;
- New club support could be targeted in areas where we know the number of over the board clubs is low in proportion to the population.
- Support to new and existing clubs by provision of funding for equipment (or arrangements for equipment sharing) – see ‘Equipment’ below.

2. **Safeguarding** - Grants to clubs for safeguarding training.

3. **Publicity** - Grants to clubs for a costed PR campaign to increase interest and attract new members.

4. **Website and Social Media** - Grants to clubs for costed plans to develop their websites.

5. Education - Two clubs in each union to get an annual GM simul and lecture.

6. Social Chess Support - Financial support for clubs to run social/community chess events using non-club venues. This could have a big effect on making over the board chess more visible and mainstream and on attracting more players to join clubs and play in leagues and congresses. This could be linked to the Tables in Parks initiative in partnership with local authorities and Chess in Schools and Communities. The funding could go either direct to the clubs or via leagues/associations to help run the events and maybe pay for some top-level players to appear.

7. Junior Development Pathway - There is a big demand for more junior clubs run on days and times that work for younger players and their parents. We need to publicise the Development Pathway more effectively, but we should also target more practical/hands-on support for those wishing to setup a junior club, for example by providing funding for coaching support, help with safeguarding, and advice/guidance on finding venues, maybe working with local authorities and with libraries, which generally work extremely well for junior clubs.

8. Chess Centres – There is a small but increasing number of ‘Chess Centres’ in England providing chess facilities in dedicated venues open throughout the week. Additional support could be provided to existing facilities and for setting up new facilities in areas which would benefit the most in this regard.

C2. Congresses and Other Events

1. **New Congresses** - Support packages for new/ startup congresses (along the same lines as club start-ups), for example:

- Updated guidance on ‘how to organise a chess congress’;
- ECF publicity, and funding for new congresses and events with financial support in exceptional cases;
- New congress support could be targeted in areas where we know the number of congresses is low in proportion to the population;

2. **Equipment** - Support to new and existing congresses by provision of funding for equipment (or arrangements for equipment sharing) – see ‘Equipment’ below.

3. Top Level Player Participation - Attracting more of our top-level players to ECF-organised and third party events, and also improve their visibility, in order to attract more grassroots players to engage with them, whether by playing or by watching.

4. County Chess - Support for Unions and Associations in encouraging the recovery of county chess.

C3. Equipment

The ECF is open to providing funds to help member organisations and clubs (particularly new startups) purchase equipment.

C4. Education

This is an area with big potential, and there is a real demand for affordable/top level coaching and education for club players.

This could maybe include a fund for clubs to engage ECF registered coaches at club evenings.

We will also look at further funding for the ECF's Certificate of Excellence scheme and National Curriculum, which are getting increasing levels of interest from coaches, schools and clubs.

C5. Online Chess and Content

Online/streaming. This could include a weekly online question and answer lecture for ECF members with a grandmaster, and more financial support for the online commentary for ECF events that we already do well.

Regular online masterclasses for ECF members could also be considered; Lorin D'Costa's, Keith Arkell's and Danny Gormally's masterclasses have gone down very well, and there seems to be a big market amongst grassroots players for more of the same.

As well as more funding for online commentary, we also need to build up our base of content on YouTube, as well as perhaps having some exclusive educational/ coaching content for ECF members linked to the National Curriculum.

D. How to Apply for a Grant

Making an application is simple. Please complete the form here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/ecf-grassroots-chess-initiative/>

... remembering to select the appropriate region from the drop-down menu at the bottom. The more information you can give in support of your application the better. For applications which cross more than one region please choose the option at the bottom of the ‘Regional Co-ordinator’ drop-down menu on the application form. You can apply at any time, but we intend that assessments will be made quarterly on or around:

- 1st September
- 1st December
- 1st March
- 1st June

If the application is urgent, please include a note to that effect in the ‘Summary’ section of the application form. Grants will normally be paid in arrears on production of evidence of expenditure. For any general enquiries please contact Stephen Greep (sjgreep@gmail.com).

Please note that grassroots funding for each region is of necessity limited. We therefore recommend that individual requests for funding should not exceed £1,000 to ensure a reasonable spread across a number of projects. Applications above this level will be considered, but are less likely to succeed except in exceptional circumstances.

E. Reporting Arrangements

Reports from grant recipients on how their project was implemented and what the project outcomes were will be expected. We hope to include regular articles in *ChessMoves* based on those reports.