Trustees' Annual Report for the period from 1st Oct 2022 to 30 Sep 2023.

Based on template from Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Charity name: Braille Chess Association.

Charity registration number: 263049.

Objectives and Activities.

Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document.

The Objects of the Association are the furtherance of education amongst blind and partially sighted people in relation to the game of chess by:-

The promotion of chess tournaments with over-the-board play, and by correspondence. The publication and distribution of chess literature including the provision of an audio service. The encouragement of the participation of blind chess players in mainstream tournaments. Any other activity connected with the promotion of chess among blind and partially sighted people.

Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts.

During the year 2022-2023 we were able to run a normal over-the-board programme, including two weekend congresses, the annual chess theme break, and a week-long tournament in the summer. We also held a remote tournament with members playing either by phone/Skype/Zoom or using online chess platforms such as Lichess. We played our correspondence games and email tournaments as usual.

We published our quarterly gazette which is distributed to members in various formats and also published on our website.

Our new website was launched in August 2023.

We provided audio selections of articles from Chess Magazine to our members.

There is an allowance for members who wish to develop their skills through coaching and although coaching weekends weren’t possible, online coaching was arranged.

We supplied adapted chess sets and talking chess clocks to visually impaired chess players.

We also supplied merchandise with the BCA logo on to increase a feeling of belonging and to raise awareness of our association.

Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

The BCA complies with the principles set out in the latest edition of the Good Governance Code for Trustees. We are also mindful of the guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission.

Additional information (optional).

You may choose to include further statements, where relevant, about:

Policy on grant making.

Policy on social investment including program related investment.

Contribution made by volunteers.

Other.

Nothing entered.

Achievements and performance.

Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity’s work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole.

Our autumn international tournament, held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Solihull was a noteworthy occasion as we decided to use it to commemorate our 90th anniversary. We enjoyed a drinks reception and members were given BCA-branded mugs and also offered the chance to buy BCA-branded merchandise. Steve Burnell (North Shields) won the open, while Simon Highsmith (London) won the challengers’ section.

Our 29th annual chess theme break was held at the Lauriston Hotel, Weston Super Mare starting 28th January 2023. This used to be run by Peter and Celia Gibbs (Hinckley), but this year trustees, in particular Julie Leonard (Tewkesbury), and Gill Smith (Bristol) had to take on a much more hands-on role. A lot of support was also provided by Gerry Walsh (Middlesbrough). The theme break is a relaxed event featuring social activities, some chess training and an all-play-all handicap competition. Gill Smith won the mini tournament, and it was pleasing that Peter and Celia were able to attend the prize giving online.

We held our AGM and spring congress at the Old Swan Hotel in Harrogate from 14th to 16th April 2023. After holding the AGM separately for a while, we felt able to combine it with the congress as we used to do before the pandemic. Associate member Owen Phillips (Carshalton) and Bittor Ibanez (London) won the open and challengers’ section respectively. New player Gary Hogan (Carterton, Oxfordshire) turned in an excellent performance finishing joint second, and based on this we felt able to offer him the chance to represent us at the International Braille Chess Association’s individual world championships in Rhodes scheduled for October 2023.

We ran our week-long, seven-round Chairman’s Cup from 15th to 22nd July 2023 at the Marsham Court Hotel in Bournemouth. We were particularly pleased to be joined by players from Vienna, Barcelona and Sweden. Associate member Ian Blencowe (Gloucester) finished first and Stan Lovell (Scarborough) was the highest finishing visually impaired player. Neda Koohnavard (London) won the trophy for those graded below 1300 and also the ladies trophy.

The multi-format event of the year was our remote Summer Cup which started on 29th July. Competitors played a game every two weeks over a ten-week period. The event was put on to offer members the chance to play competitive chess at a time when there is not so much over-the-board chess going on. Stan Lovell and Colin Fisher (Dumfries) finished equal first with Stan taking the trophy on tie-break. Nene Clayton (Belper) achieved the same score as Stan and Colin and was awarded the trophy for those graded under 1300 and the ladies trophy.

A huge effort went into organising and running this event and we must extend particular thanks to Julie Leonard and Gerry Walsh. Mark Hague, Lea Ryan (both of London) and Nene Clayton acted as timekeeper for more games than they played! We are also very grateful to Bittor Ibanez (London) for collating the games of the tournament, meaning that we have scores of almost all the games available in multiple chess formats.

Regarding correspondence chess, we continued to run our usual league and championship. A new league began in January 2022 and was due to run till 31st October 2023, but it finished early. A new league will begin in January 2024. Our 47th correspondence championship began in January 2023 and Voldi Gailans (Romford) has already won the challengers’ section. Our thanks go to Paul Benson (Runcorn) for running these events.

We held 2 BCA email competitions. The 17th featured four divisions. Bill Armstrong (Leek) and Steve Burnell shared first place in division 1. Eamonn Casey (County Westmeath), Malola Prasath (Durham) and John Fullwood (Camberley) finished on equal points in division 2. Voldi Gailans won division 3 and Marilyn Bland (USA) won division 4.

The 18th email competition also featured four divisions. The overall winner was Malola Prasath. Eamonn Casey won division 2. Nene Clayton and John Ramm (Derby) won divisions 3 and 4 respectively. A new email tournament is underway.

These email tournaments are amongst our most popular events, and we would like to put on record our appreciation of the work Eamonn Casey and Philip Doyle (Dublin) put into making them such a great success.

We have undertaken a significant overhaul of our website to improve its accessibility and ensure that it shows the full scope of our activities. A completely revamped site was launched at the beginning of August 2023. Our thanks go to Olly Leonard (Tewkesbury) for the huge amount of work he put in to tidying up files from the old site and launching the new one.

The amount of coaching activity has increased significantly. Several members now take advantage of regular online “How Good is Your Chess” sessions. Participants have to try to work out moves made in a high-level game and are awarded points based on the accuracy of their suggestions. Our thanks go to Voldi Gailans and Gerry Walsh who have put a lot of effort in to getting these sessions up and running.

Our Publicity Officer, Abi Baker (London) has been busy. She was interviewed by Radio Leicester in the spring and by the Macular Society in September 2023. The interview will feature in their magazine Sideview and we will be allowed to use the article for publicity purposes. We have also decided to delete our X/Twitter account and try promoting the association by means of videos on YouTube instead. Two videos showing how visually impaired people play chess have been uploaded to our Facebook page.

The impact of our work can be profound to visually impaired chess players and has wider benefits to their communities. We often receive messages from our members thanking us for our support. Here is one example:

“I just wanted to thank you all for the chess set… Having been very depressed when you sent it, about my sight, this helped me keep playing, and I’ve now set up a chess club for kids and have taught a few adults to play... …It might have seemed a little thing, but it genuinely made a difference to my mental health, and I am able to give back to my local community. … Locally I'm not the 'blind lady,' I'm the 'chess lady.'”

Additional information (optional).

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Achievements against objectives set.

Performance of fundraising activities against objectives set.

Investment performance against objectives.

Other.

Nothing entered.

Financial review

Review of the charity’s financial position at the end of the period.

We are in a good position financially partly due to the work of our professional fundraiser and also because our activities were greatly reduced by the pandemic.

At the end of September we held £94,794 in bank accounts and the value of our investments was £42,956.

For a few years we have arranged more remote events than previously, such as email and Skype tournaments.

The events we organised in 2022-2023 included only one player competing internationally while a pre-Covid year would have had events such as the Six Nations and/or an IBCA team event with a considerably greater demand on our resources.

Now our expenditure is rising in cash terms and likely to continue to do so as inflation continues to erode the purchasing value of our reserves.

Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held.

The BCA aims to hold funds sufficient to support at least 2 years’ worth of activities. This enables us to obtain preferential rates when booking venues and accommodation, and when ordering batches of adapted chess sets and talking clocks. It also means we can plan participation in international events.

24 months of net expenditure equates to approximately £93,000 in general funds, we aim to hold at least £100,000 in reserves.

Amount of reserves held

As we have £137,751 in cash and investments, we currently have more in reserve than our target of at least 24 months of net expenditure. We will need to meet the obligation to host the Six Nations at a future date and we would expect this to use up the apparent surplus in our funds.

Reasons for holding zero reserves.

N/A.

Details of fund materially in deficit.

N/A.

Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern.

N/A.

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

The charity’s principal sources of funds (including any fundraising)

The majority of our income is raised by a professional fundraiser from grant-giving trusts and foundations. Members run raffles at our over the board events.

Investment policy and objectives including any social investment policy adopted.

Several years ago, the charity benefitted from an unexpected and significantly large legacy. We took advice from a financial adviser and chose to put some funds into an investment to increase their value in the medium to long term and meanwhile provide some income. Our investments are held in a Charities Official Investment Fund.

A description of the principal risks facing the charity

Nothing entered.

Other

Nothing entered.

Structure, governance and management.

Description of charity’s trusts:

Type of governing document (eg. trust deed, constitution):

Constitution.

How the charity is constituted (eg. trust, association, company):

Association.

Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees.

Trustees are elected by Annual General Meeting.

Constitutional provisions:

Under section 7 – Officers shall be elected by the Annual General Meeting, and shall hold office until the following Annual General Meeting.

A retiring Officer shall be entitled to seek re-election, and any two offices, other than those of Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer, may be held by one person.

Additional information (optional)

You may choose to include further statements where relevant about:

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees.

Nothing entered.

The charity’s organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works.

Nothing entered.

Relationship with any related parties.

We are affiliated to the English Chess Federation, Chess Scotland, the English Federation for Correspondence Chess and the International Braille Chess Association.

Other.

Nothing entered.

Reference and administrative details.

Charity name: Braille Chess Association

Other name the charity uses:

Registered charity number: 263049

Charity's principal address: 58 Earl Russell Street, Leicester, Postcode: LE2 8LH

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity.

Table headings: Trustee name, Office (if any), Dates acted if not for whole year, Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any).

1 Bill Armstrong, Chairman.

2 Dr B Guy Whitehouse, Secretary.

3 Gill Smith, Treasurer.

4 Julie Leonard, Gazette Editor.

5 Mark Hague, Membership Secretary.

6 Mark Kirkham, Audio Librarian.

7 Voldi Gailans, Junior Development and Coaching Officer.

8 Abi Baker, Publicity Officer.

Corporate trustees – names of the directors at the date the report was approved.

N/A.

Name of trustees holding title to property belonging to the charity.

N/A.

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others.

N/A.

Additional information (optional).

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information).

Nothing entered.

Exemptions from disclosure.

Reason for non-disclosure of key personnel details.

N/A.

Other optional information.

Nothing entered.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees’ report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity’s trustees.

Signature(s):

Full name(s):

Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc):

Date :