

Chairman's Report - YCBC AGM November 2026

As members will be aware, the Young Chelsea leases the whole of the London MindSports Centre, but is dependent on hiring out space within the building in order to meet the day to day costs of running it. Due to a number of factors which the Treasurer will explain, the last 12 months for the club has been a less successful period financially than the previous year, but we have still achieved a small surplus. However, there has been progress in a number of areas that are important to us in fulfilling our charitable aims and establishing our place in the community.

We have consolidated our relationship with the Hammersmith Chess Club (HCC) by signing an agreement with them for their long-term use of the building. This gives us a guaranteed long-term income from HCC and gives them the guarantee of a permanent home, a mutually beneficial arrangement. The London Go Centre, our other long-term partner in the building continues its regular twice-weekly activities, and recently hosted the European Women's Go Championships. Other independently-organised chess activities continue to grow, alongside a wide variety of additional users running mindsports events and other activities.

The use of the building by Hammersmith & Fulham council has also continued throughout the year, but their future level of demand is still uncertain. The new Civic Centre has still not yet been fully opened, and the impact of the opening continues to be a concern, along with funding cuts which will affect how the council prioritises its spending.

The room bookings and building maintenance continue to be efficiently run by Eva and her team. These include Gabor, our duplimate operator and general handy man (who has been kept quite busy this year, sorting out a number of plumbing problems in the building!) and the team of Ukrainian staff – Nataliya, Tanya and Olena - who keep everything operating smoothly. Many thanks to all of them.

We are very pleased to have found a donor who is willing to finance the installation of a lift in the building. It is planned for this to run between the ground floor and the Warwick Room, in the area currently occupied by the store rooms in the north west corner of the building. No firm date has yet been set for the installation, but the plans are progressing. It is hoped that the availability of lift access to the first floor will significantly increase the range of activities which can be accommodated upstairs.

Turning to the club's own bridge activities, membership is more or less static at around 500, including students and junior members. The main Friday evening games continues to attract a healthy regular attendance, and the Super League is as popular as ever. We continue to run teaching programmes for all levels and we have further developed the options available to those progressing from being bridge students to becoming competent club players. As well as running regular courses for Beginners and Improvers, we now have four regular weekly "Goldhawks" sessions: two daytime sessions – a Tuesday supervised duplicate and a Friday morning relaxed duplicate – and two evening sessions – a Tuesday evening Supervised play session and a Thursday evening supervised duplicate, all of which are well attended. In addition, we run afternoon seminars for Improvers which are popular for reinforcing various aspects of the game. This year we have also run a series of advanced seminars for regular club players, but the take-up of these from their target audience has been somewhat disappointing.

Youth bridge activities have also continued this year, with minibridge teaching at a local Youth Club and our after-school bridge sessions for local school-children. We are most grateful to Tom Townsend, who runs these, with help from Ewa Kater, and Barry Myers – the sessions are now well-established and numbers are growing.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone else who has helped to keep the wheels turning and to make the club a success this year, including: Brian Callaghan, who is a member of the club management team along with myself and Eva; all the Management Committee members; Gitte and all the TD team; Sara and Shelley, our teachers; and everyone who helps in other ways, including hosting, offering professional expertise when needed, helping with competitions etc. Finally, I would like to thank all the members who support the club by coming along to play – do keep coming as often as you can! The Young Chelsea Bridge club belongs to you, its members, and without you there would be no club.