**Publicity Director Report 2016-2017**

Since the last AGM, efforts at promoting chess have not been as successful as they were during previous years in my role as Publicity Director.

We live in an age where many get their news from web-sites. The lack of an accessible web-site for the WCU over the summer greatly hindered efforts to report on Welsh chess activities. This issue even remained to some extent when Andrew Trickey had the web-site up and running, but did not post the items that were sent to him.

Fortunately, these problems are now behind us, and we did not have to face the situation of a good number of advertisers complaining about an ‘absent’ web-site, and demanding a return of their fee. It is clear, however, that if the WCU is to appoint a Commercial Director and seek substantial advertising revenue, a robust and reliable website must be in place.

Another disappointment faced over the last few months is the lack of interest in local media in covering chess success. Obtaining coverage in *The Western Mail*, a group that also owns *Wales On-line*, is never easy, but I hoped we’d succeed with three photogenic, newly appointed WCMs. Although I did have a positive response to an e-mail to a reporter, I got no further.

Smaller papers often offer more opportunity for reporting chess success. However, it appears that they are feeling saturated by their coverage of junior chess success. A few years ago, a story about a state school reaching a national final could receive good coverage, including photos, but this year it failed to make the local paper. The recent success of Chepstow Comprehensive at the Eton Rapidplay did appear in the South Wales Argus, but sister paper the Monmouthshire Free Press did not run a piece about this school reaching the national finals of the ECF Junior Team Challenge.

In a similar vein, attempts to bring TV crew to Cardiff Stadium are having less success. My belief is that they have covered this before, and see no need to report on this again.

So, with local papers and TV, the interest is on participation of the game, rather than the games themselves.

I feel that we now need to pursue a new direction, trying to get more coverage of chess in chess magazines, rather than the mainstream media. I am unable to do this, as I’m not even strong enough to be described as a patzer.

Currently, an increasing amount of my time is being spent in trying to improve the standard and levels of participation in chess in Gwent, and in the Chepstow area in particular. Fielding a Gwent county teams is becoming increasingly difficult, and I’m trying to address this by supporting chess in more schools.

I intend to increase my efforts in this direction, and as I feel as I’m no longer having a strong impact in my role as Publicity Director, I’m keen to stand down from that position. However, if no-one else stands for Publicity Director for 2017-18, I am happy to continue this role for one final year.

Richard Stevenson 16 February 2016