



WSDC Ltd. DIRECTORS' REPORT

2010-2011

1. Introduction

The following individuals have served on the Board of Directors (the Board; the Directors) of the World Schools Debating Championships Ltd. (WSDC Ltd) since February 2010:

- Taimur Bandey
- Andrea Coomber
- Peejay Garcia
- Andrew Goodman; resigned September 2010
- Daragh Grant
- James Probert
- Yuri Romanenkov
- Claire Ryan
- Asher Weill

The Board elected Andrea Coomber as Chairperson. Andrew Goodman resigned in September due to work commitments.

As reported last year, James Probert served as Company Secretary until December 2009. In the past year, the Board has discussed with the English Speaking Union (ESU) the possibility of it taking on this role in future. In March 2011, we will meet again with the ESU in London hopefully to finalize collaboration.

2. Achievements

The conclusion to the Directors' Report last year noted that it was the focus of the Directors in the coming year to consider new approaches and structures to promote debating world-wide. Over the past year the Board has taken steps to further consolidate the institutional framework so as to allow WSDC Ltd. to meet its objectives, as elaborated in Article 3 of its Memorandum of Association.

To this end, the key achievements of the Board have been:

- a. Appointing a Development Board following a transparent competitive process;
- b. Drafting and consulting a strategic paper on reform

a. Development Board

The Rules of WSDC Ltd. provide for a Development Board (in Article 8), which is the business engine room of the WSDC machinery. It was the view of the Board of Directors that the work of the Development Board would best be served by initiating an open recruitment through a competitive process. Particular competencies were identified (as elaborated in the Board paper put to last year's AGM) and a sub-committee of three Directors (Asher Weill, Daragh Grant and Andrea Coomber) was charged with reviewing applicants. We were delighted with the response from within the WSDC community, and the Board confirmed the appointment of the following seven individuals to the Development Board, at the same time expressing the hope that the Board can be expanded geographically in the future:

- James Probert (Chair; as the Rules require the Development Board be chaired by a Director)
- Kris Ade
- Michael Birshan
- Effie Giannakouri
- Beth James
- Trevor Sather
- Nick Sloboda

The Development Board began work in August 2010. It agreed on seven priority areas of business, namely: securing charity status; registering trademarks; agreeing on a fundraising mission and strategy; agreeing on internal development strategy; beginning to submit grant and sponsorship applications and developing a partnership strategy. Much of the Development Board's discussion focused on raising funds to facilitate registration of charity status with the Charity Commission. The Board felt strongly that prior to approaching wealthy alumni or individuals in our community willing to donate several hundred pounds, we should draw on the broadest possible base of paying membership to set up basic income. The Chair has also met with an experienced fundraising consultant on a pro bono basis, who has agreed to help us build a fund raising strategy and write the grant applications mentioned in the list of priorities. There was support for the project of registering WSDC's trademarks in due course, and ideas for the greater use of Facebook and other social networking tools to work with alumni.

b. Paper on governance reform

The founding documents of WSDC Ltd. include reference to a number of different bodies which contribute in different ways to fulfilling the mission statement and aims of WSDC Ltd. These are

complicated and demarcation of roles and responsibilities are not always clear. In the past year, the Board has worked towards streamlining and increasing inclusivity of the WSDC governance structure, and to this end produced a reform paper and proposed a bylaw which would facilitate the suggested changes.

The reform proposal was widely circulated and subject to open consultation within the WSDC community, a consultation which was extended to November 2010. In November 2010, the Board of Directors adopted the reform paper and proposed bylaws and agreed that they should be put before the next AGM. This matter will be discussed and voted on at the AGM in mid February.

Though anticipated in the Directors' Report to the last AGM, we have not pursued charity registration as a priority in the past year. The first priority was to establish a management – in the form of the Development Board – and sorting out the structure of our governance. The former is important to have in place prior to attracting assets to the organization; the latter is critical in terms of adopting clear legal and organizational boundaries between the would-be charity (WSDC Ltd.) and the championship host. The reform, which we are putting to the membership at the AGM will serve to make WSDC Ltd. a more attractive and competitive prospect for potential funding organizations and sponsoring corporations, whilst simultaneously ensuring the security of the company's assets. It is anticipated that the Development Board will have a fundraising strategy in place by mid- 2011, which can then be initiated in the latter half of the year.

3. Challenges

On numerous occasions the Directors have discussed aspects of the legal liability of WSDC, Ltd., including the desirability of securing insurance coverage for Directors. The Board is exploring options with respect to insurance and securing coverage as soon as possible remains a priority for the Board.

We continue to experiment with methods of communication. This year we have held meetings by Skype and by email, both of which have advantages and disadvantages. With the support of Development Board member Trevor Sather, we hope to have developed a practicable mechanism by which we can hold an electronic AGM in February 2011. This will be another experiment; we urge the Members patience while we work out the best way in which such a geographically diverse community can meet and discuss issues.

Finally, as a new organization, WSDC Ltd. entirely relies on the time and efforts of its volunteers – the Board and Development Board members – to get off the ground. In the middle of the year, my ability to Chair the Board was adversely affected by personal matters. While I offered to step down from the Chair, my fellow Board members asked that I remain and I agreed. During the coming year I expect to be able to assist the Board and WSDC Ltd. towards greater consolidation.

Andrea Coomber

Chair, Board of Directors

World Schools Debating Championships Ltd.

7 February 2011