



Chess Tables In Parks - Implementation Considerations

The English Chess Federation (ECF) is the governing chess organisation in England and is affiliated to FIDE (the Fédération Internationale des Échecs). Its mission is to promote the game of chess, in all its forms, as an attractive means of cultural and personal advancement to the widest possible public. In addition, the ECF aims to support development of the highest forms of chess excellence and to expand the game as a social and sporting activity.

You can find further details of the ECF on our web site: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk>

The ECF has been working with DCMS Levelling Up team to support the Chess Tables Initiative and has developed some implementation notes which Local Authorities may wish to consider. The notes will of course be subject to any specific direction provided by DCMS and should be considered in the context of local park arrangements.

Location and supporting facilities - Local Authorities (LA's) will want to consider a number of factors in designating parks and/ or areas within parks to receive the chess tables. These include footfall, available space for the tables, and availability of nearby park facilities (eg visitor centre or cafe). Nearby park facilities are important so that there is a means of issuing and retrieving sets for players to use at the tables. If there are no dedicated park facilities then LA's could consider alternative arrangements for equipment management - eg with neighbouring buildings/ partner organisations - and/ or whether park visitors could be encouraged to bring their own sets.

Tables - There are at least two options that LA's may want to consider.

Concrete table and built in or separate seating - The table would have one or two boards with space for two players seated opposite per board.

Recycled plastic table and bench seating - This is a lower cost alternative, usually with two boards printed on the table and again accommodating two players seated opposite per board.

Equipment – Park goers using the facilities will need access to suitable chess equipment to play with options as shown below.

Tournament style chess sets - The basic requirement will be for one plastic/ weatherproof set per board with spare queens and at least one spare set for players to use at the tables. The standard tournament size set has a 3.75 inch king height. The link here provides some helpful guidance on piece sizes which you may wish to consider in the context of your selected table - <https://www.chess.com/article/view/chess-board-dimensions#basics>

Any council provided sets will need to be issued to players from park facilities or alternative provision and returned for storage. Where this is not practical park goers will need to bring their own sets, however this will limit the potential for general park goers to use the facility.

Clocks – A chess clock is a pair of timers that control the amount time each player has to make their moves. These are by no means essential but if provided need to be durable so that they will stand up to outdoor use with the best option likely to be a very basic/ low cost



digital clock. Issuing/ retrieval of clocks would need to be carefully managed as with the chess sets and in general its best to only issue clocks on request to experienced players who will understand how to use them.

Giant sets - These are designed for outdoor use, with the boards assembled from interlocking plastic squares to make a complete chess board with 'giant' pieces. Giant sets are designed to provide a showpiece for use at chess events. They are excellent for promoting the facility and attracting attention although consideration again needs to be given to storage, setup and retrieval.

Supporting Chess Organisations - There is a booming chess scene across England and the UK and a number of national and local chess organisations available to help Local Authorities establish tables and chess facilities. Two of the organisations you may wish to contact for support are as follows:

The English Chess Federation - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/> - Contact office@englishchess.org.uk or telephone 01424 775222 - The ECF will be happy to support councils with general advice on the implementation, sharing of good practice and resources, and putting you in contact with local chess associations and clubs. The majority of the thirty nine historic English counties will have a chess association, and there is also a total of 700 English chess clubs, which means that you will have a number of local points of contact with the chess community in addition to the national organisations. The link here provides a list of the English Chess Clubs and should help you make contact with clubs in your area: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ECF-Club-Finder.html>

Chess in Schools and Communities - <https://www.chessinschools.co.uk/> - Contact info@chessinschools.co.uk or telephone 020 7935 3445 - CSC are a national organisation providing support for chess coaching in schools as well as promoting chess within local communities and running outdoor chess events

Launch Event and promotion

Once Local Authorities have established the facilities they may wish to consider organising a launch event, potentially in partnership with one of the local chess organisations. There may also be the opportunity to organise more regular 'Chess in the Park' events depending on the level of support from local chess organisations and players.

English Chess Federation

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