

## Board Meeting Minutes

### Minutes of the Board Meeting held at 10am on 21 November 2021, Stirling Court Hotel

#### Present

Graeme Marchbank (GM)	Chair
Euan Lowe (EL)	Chief Executive
David Beattie (DB)	Board Director
Kerry Christie (KC)	Board Director – via link
Jackie Davidson (JD)	Board Director – via link
Andrew Dunlop (AD)	Board Director
Andy Figgins (AF)	Board Director
Caitlin McClatchey (CM)	Board Director
Colin Kennedy (CK)	President

#### In Attendance

Deborah McGinniss (DM)	Finance Manager/Company Secretary
Elaine Mackenzie (EM)	Director of Services
Paul Wilson (PW)	Disability Performance Development Manager
Deborah Rookes (DR)	Minute Taker

#### Item No.

#### Action

##### 1. Chair's Address

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting, thanked Paul Wilson for his attendance, and noted that it was CK's first Board Meeting as President. The Chair noted his thanks and congratulations to EM, DM and all of the staff who organised the AGM in challenging circumstances and to Ian Fleming for hosting and chairing both the AGM and EGM.

Since the last meeting, there has been a critical meeting with **sportscotland** regarding indicative funding for the next period. This is exceptionally important as we move into the delivery of the new corporate plan, and the Chair thanked all staff and DM for their work on this.

##### 2. Declarations of Interest

AF declared his interest as coach.

##### 3. Apologies for Absence

Brian Hendry, Barry Cook, Ally Whike and Helen Plank.

##### 4. Minutes of Previous meetings: Board Meeting, 22 August 2021

No comments or matters arising to note.

##### 5. Actions from previous meeting: Board Meeting, 22 August 2021

EL explained that the Board profiles on the website are still in the process of being updated and encouraged members to review their profiles and email Charlie Harris directly in providing updated information.

#### Board

On wellbeing and protection, there is an outstanding action around the definition of risk. There is a concern that the current definitions do not accurately capture the intention of the Board. Reputational risk is not of crucial importance, nor a reason for making a decision, but rather a consequence to be mindful of. The only motivating factor should be safety of athletes and members.

Remaining actions all complete.

##### 6. Performance Plan Update

Paul Wilson provided an update on performance. He attended the meeting in place of AW.

The focus of this update will reflect on the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic performances. He remarked that there was a different lead into the games over this last year, given the restrictions and the fact that it was a 5 year cycle.

With the key objective being sustained high performance on the international stage there has been a focus on continued development of professional environments. Overall, performances have been strong across the key events that we have targeted within the cycle.

PW reported that there was strong success in terms of representative within the British team and a good spread across events and across male and female. There was representation in swimming (17%); diving (17%) and para-swimming (24%) at the Games.

With reference to Project Ailsa there has been good success in bringing through female athletes with Toni Shaw and Beth Johnson being examples among a number who are developing through the system.

Swimming and diving were happy with their returns at Tokyo, which were pretty much on target. Para swimming hit target but were looking to have a little more from the program, this may be in part due to the return of the Russian athletes who are strong in para-swimming.

Strong medal position from a swimming perspective, third on the medal table. From a diving perspective, second on the medal table is a good position and from a Scottish perspective, it was the first time we have had a male athlete in the top ten at the Games. In terms of para-swimming, finished 7<sup>th</sup> on the medal table, which is perhaps not what had been wished for. He noted that there was a bit of resurgence from the USA, and this is something that needs to be aware of.

In terms of overall reflections PW explained that it was a very unusual lead into the cycle and the travelling restrictions leading into the Games had a huge impact. PW also offered that the unusual 5 year cycle as opposed to 4, and now leading to a short 3 year cycle to Paris brings some benefits and also challenges. He provided a general update in terms of podium representation, season's best, and performance across the Board more generally.

The Chair opened to the floor for questions.

AF asked if the performances from para-athletes were from different athletes, or the same athletes ranked in different disciplines and Paul confirmed that these were all different athletes. There is a real strength across the Board. There is not a group of athletes performing well around one or two events, but rather performing well across the Board with a larger number of athletes. This is a real positive.

Performance Centre review is ongoing. There is a strong swimming representation from the Stirling centre on the Olympic team and there are para athletes based at all 4 centres, which is a real positive. The success that the Stirling centre had at the Games is drawing people in and the challenge is how to share this success around the other performance centres and ensure they are offering the same opportunities.

AF commented that the feeling is that it is polarized in Stirling, which is cemented by swimmers have achieved success are leaving centres to go to Stirling. He has been asked if Scotland are big enough for 4 performance centres and Paul confirmed the plan is to drive success and can sustain Olympic success and deliver at an international level across all 4 centres. Each centre has a part to play in the overall picture of Scottish Swimming.

EL noted that in recent individual discussions with the performance centres that they all commented on the need to maintain 4 centres for a whole variety of different reasons, including providing choice and complimentary strength to the system and the overall picture of Scottish Swimming. The Board agreed this is the right approach.

The Chair asked about the 28% athlete representation on podium potential and asked if that was higher than normal and Paul confirmed it was a significant increase on previous years. The numbers are really positive and the depth of diving is increasing. Whilst Stirling has the swimmers at the elite end at the moment, there has been a huge step forward at the level below and we are focusing on harnessing and encouraging this.

The Chair noted the strong performances in Tokyo despite disrupted preparations and asked if this has changed the way we coach, perhaps a move towards quality over quantity. AF noted his view that it has to a certain extent in relation particular to short and middle length events, but at open water level and longer distance there is still a mindset that there needs to be more done. A definite shift in the way people are coaching, and this may be as a result of Covid giving people the chance to reflect.

The extended break offered athletes the chance to focus on more technical aspects of swimming, and with smaller groups and more contact, coaches were able to focus on these elements. The lack of race practice however, clearly had a big impact.

## **7. Items for Decision**

### **7.1 AGM Draft Minutes / Debrief**

The Chair invited comments on accuracy or content on the minutes from the AGM, but there were no comments.

EM clarified that if approved by board they will be published on the website as draft pending formal approval, along with the 2020 AGM minutes, and the EGM minutes at the next AGM when it meets in person.

The Chair asked for any comments to be sent EM by Wednesday 24 November.

**Board**

## **7.2 Corporate Plan Development**

### **7.2.1 Draft Direction and Focus**

The Chair introduced the paper and explained it is a work in progress, but important to scope out where we are going to be over the next 4 years. The focus is on how to engage with partners, (in particular **sportscotland**). The plan sets out what the organisation wants to do and how it wants to represent the aquatic family. It is absolutely a challenging piece of work; it is a statement of ambition and direction.

EL explained that he had sent through the draft corporate plan and welcomed the feedback of the board in finalising the plan. He explained that it is a little out of sync in terms of timing due to the need to share the direction of travel with **sportscotland** ahead of this board and keep in line with their investment timelines. During the **sportscotland** investment meeting last week there were comments received on how well we had delivered against the previous plan in addition to a thanks from **sportscotland** to the Board, staff team and sporting community for our input and support over the last 18 months.

EL went on to share the direction of travel in a little more detail.

EL noted that the consultation process did not have the scale of response anticipated from the membership or partners. The organisation had arranged 7 separate member consultation events but reduced these to 3 events given the response. That said, the feedback that was received was rich, clear, and consistent across membership and partner events. There are some partners to still to gather feedback from including a meeting with local authorities partners later in the month.

One method used to generate feedback was Survey Monkey attracting a good response rate with over 180 respondents. Along with growing the membership the feeling generally was that providing inclusive environments, Learn To Swim and school swimming should be a continued focus.

The feedback also suggested that the value of the sport in general has been better understood, as has the impact it can have on society more generally. The change of landscape was also highlighted, there has been an increased demand for indoor and outdoor space for swimming and with it the role aquatics has as part of local communities.

The plan seeks to pull all of this together and create objective and core areas to focus on, largely being - more swimmers, stronger clubs, supported athletes and active communities. There is recognition from the feedback of a desire to move towards inclusive opportunities keeping people in the sport for longer, rather than perception of focusing too heavily on the elite athletes.

The Chair opened to the Board for discussion but stressed what is being approved today is the direction of travel – not the final plan. Simply seeking comments/confirmation that the Board are happy with the direction of travel now, as it will be more difficult to fine tune this at a later stage.

The Board reflected on the away day which had taken place in Edinburgh before the pandemic and noted the challenging environment going forward in terms of public funding etc. and asked if the public policy funding environment had changed since then. It was agreed that it was a benefit that the plan picks up on the active community's area and focus on keeping people swimming longer and what would be done to encourage this. In terms of linking the policy to the financial plan, the Board sought clarification as to what investment was placed behind this.

EL confirmed that in relation to the policy change and funding landscape, there cannot be a definitive answer, however government has doubled their investment to sport. Whilst there has unfortunately been no announcement on how this may be distributed. Whilst it is not about chasing funding, the community piece is really key to securing funding, as it appears likely that future investment into sport will be linked with diversity and inclusion.

When considering the less competitive athletes, there needs to be a way to keep them interested and the Board discussed some comments from clubs regarding these individuals – it is less about their times or success in the pool, but more about the social aspect. The YVP have some great ideas, with focus more on the event rather than the swim times and there may need to be a review to ensure that the right events are being offered in the right place.

DB shared his disappointment around the lack of consultation and response. He also noted that diversity should be profiled more within the plan. CM agreed with this and highlighted that this needs to be addressed throughout the organisation, from coaches, to volunteers, to athletes. DB also sought discussion on how to bring those part of the community who are not involved in swimming on board. It was also suggested that there is nothing in the plan regarding environmental impact, which potentially needs to be addressed.

AF noted that when he read the plan, he always considered how the members will feel about it, and what they will see. Would members likely feel more connected with Scottish Swimming than before? If there is an intention to tone down focus on performance, but it is important to ensure athletes do not lose focus. There may need to be work on a messaging around the use of the word 'supported'. Concerned that when people see this, they are only thinking about national squads. Every person should feel they are a supported athlete, regardless of level. AF also noted when writing the level 3 coaching module, there was a section on green coaching, and he believes this is important – there is a need to get people to think as coaches about how to coach greener. Overall, AF comfortable reading it.

KC welcomes the work on connectivity back into the sport. KC noted the need to place importance on recovery going forward. For Clubs, this is likely to be one of the most important plans they will even receive from Scottish Swimming as they build back up post-Covid. EL agreed with this approach and noted that the importance will be on the messaging as some of it is absolutely about recovery, combined with more long-term aspirations.

CK noted that the lack of engagement may be as a result of the volunteers running the clubs, have so many other things on mind regarding their recovery. CK believes the plan itself is good, but perhaps unfortunate timing in trying to gather feedback. Only point may be that there needs to be a focus on influencing government around facilities and engagement, JK agreed with this point.

There was a belief that the points around facilities and diversity needs to be stronger, but generally happy with the direction of travel.

### **7.2.3 Financial Plan**

The Chair noted that the financial plan has to follow the corporate plan, so this is subject to constraints around that. Potential concern around the assumptions made around membership figures, which might not rise as quickly as hoped. Suggested that there may be a need for some scenario planning around this and this is something to be brought to Board.

DM stressed that the numbers are aspirations as to how the organisation will get back to pre-Covid level: tried to be realistic and considered how long these lower figures can be sustained. The assumptions have been aspirational, but realistic. Work is ongoing and a full update will be included within the detailed plan that will be presented at the next Board meeting.

The organisation generates income from mainly five sources, this means if our membership numbers do not revert back to pre-covid levels quickly, we are unable to generate revenue from other sources to support the shortfall in membership numbers. This will have a significant impact on where we allocate our resources and affordability on delivering against our plan. That said, the meeting with **sportscotland** was positive, and if the same level of funding is granted, it would provide welcome support.

DM advised that the management team continue to focus on cost management. Revenue management may need a greater focus and the active communities' piece may be helpful in this regard, however the Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that funding partners align with the organisation and add value.

The management team will present a detailed financial plan to support the new corporate plan at the next Board meeting.

## **8. Items for Decision/Information**

### **8.1 Finance Report (Quarter 2)**

DM spoke to the paper and noted that on the executive summary, the projected deficit was £300,000, but now sat at £269,000.

Whilst suggesting a more positive outlook, given the uncertainties surrounding future activities the focus will be on levels of expenditure across the next 6 months. Membership has come through better than expected and targets have been reached and exceeded.

Scenario planning, the risks that we identified at the start of Covid haven't materialised to the level we expected, and things are looking positive. The focus now is assessing what the position will be at the end of the financial year.

The Chair confirmed that England seeing similar patterns, albeit they are slightly ahead.

The Board agreed that the plan would benefit from consistency in terminology being used, and not using target, budget and forecast interchangeably.

The Board agreed that this was all very positive.

## **8.2 National Framework Update**

EL provided update on behalf of AW. This update is being brought to Board given its' significance. The paper contains a lot of detail to capture progress and we are seeing encouraging signs from partners and the opening of facilities. The challenges are detailed in the paper, but generally the lack of teaching staff is a key factor for partners in offering more activity.

The Chair opened to questions and noted that alternatively questions could be sent by email to AW.

AF asked if there was a projection of where we are going to go in next 6 months in terms of the rest of the pools reopening. EL confirmed that this is still up in the air, but there is a framework provider day scheduled for next week and discussions will be had around this point.

AF also asked if there was a consideration of mapping Learn To Swim into school swimming. EL confirmed that this is being looked at. The aspects and principals are similar, but it needs to be implemented differently in schools. This is being reviewed and will be rolled out on a pilot when funds become available.

The Chair confirmed that the Board are tightly involved in the Government's work on school swimming, very much at the table on these discussions. EL confirmed that a ministerial group has been established with the aim of improving water safety, so will be interesting to see how school swimming provision is reflected by this group. There has also been a public petition requesting that curricular time school swimming be made a statutory requirement; Scottish Swimming has been asked to provide comment by parliamentary committee, to which we have responded positively to the suggestion.

## **8.3 ARC minutes**

On facilities, AD commented that the staffing and state of facilities were discussed, and there was an interesting debate around these. The conclusion of those discussions was that it is absolutely essential that facilities are managed and prioritised.

The minutes provide a full summary of the discussions.

## **8.4 Wellbeing & Protection update**

EL provided an update and explained that the detail in the paper reflects the interim position currently in relation to wellbeing and protection, trying to make use of Lyndsey Booth's time before she leaves.

EL touched on key points:

- 1) Just gone through a Children's First light touch review of standards. This is a compliance area for us which is important and has an effect of funding partners etc. Whilst the organisation was 100% compliant, this is the minimum accepted, so it is looking how to progress this further. Children's first were happy with our approach but identified 3 action points. Two of these were already in action, but there is also a need to arrange more training for the Board which EL will take forward. It was also suggested that there be a review of current policies, and this is in action at the moment. The final action point being a recruitment plan for a replacement Safeguarding officer which is in place.
- 2) The review of technical official roles has identified further roles deemed as being regulated roles requiring a PVG. A plan of action has been developed to account for training needs. Following review there are a number of coaches that appear on the system as requiring an update or refresh of their essential training. Coaches themselves need to take some responsibility for this, but we also have a responsibility to ensure we are compliant in this regard. There is now a plan of action in place, and we are continuing to plan how we can mitigate risk in the meantime. Logistically, getting these done quickly is likely to be difficult given the timings. It is likely that lapse is connected to inactivity during covid, but we need to accelerate training opportunities as fast as possible.

EL

CM asking if there is likely to be similar problems across other sports, and if **sportscotland** may put on additional courses to assist with this. EL to follow up.

The Chair asked for a report at the next Board meeting on this.

EL

- 3) EM provided an update on recruitment. The initial approach was a like for like position on a part time basis however this did not attract suitable candidates; it appears other sports have had similar experiences. Subsequently attempts were made to attract candidates on a full time basis, this again was unsuccessful. As a result, Sean Dawson is carrying out the role in an interim basis.

EL

The job remit and advert is currently being reviewed with the support of Children 1st with the intent of readvertising in January.

## 8.5 Interim plan Six Month Progress Report

### 8.5.1 Interim plan Six Month Progress Report

EL confirmed that the organisation is making progress against the interim plan, but it is a one year plan, so still being actioned. The team are pushing ahead and doing a good job on this. The Chair opened to the Board for questions.

AF commented on the swim wear policy roll out, and EL noted that it got a reaction when first circulated although the roll out was highlighted well in advance. It has been recognised that it has an emotive subject and further feedback has been sought over the proposal and the proposal has been further refined. A key point which was raised is that it is quite difficult to buy non-logoed suits. Potentially there will be a need to for further refinement which may result in a delay in implementation. It does appear that the overwhelming feeling within the members is that it is the right thing to do.

## 9. Reports from the Company

### 9.1

EM provided an update on mental health and wellbeing. The SMT are trying to support staff and others around mental health. This is a big piece of work that we are championing.

EL reported on the paper as being taken as read. The marketing team have been supporting a lot of work, with a one of the key areas of work being improvements to the website. Charlie Harris joined in June and has been bringing new ideas to the team.

### 9.2 Legal Items

None.

## 10. Directors' Reports – *verbal*

None.

## 11. British Swimming Update – *verbal*

The Chair provided an update, and spoke around the Chairs recruitment, and the recruitment consultancy has recently been selected. BS are hoping to get a Chair appointment before Christmas, but this may be challenging. The Senior Independent Director (SID) role remains vacant too. Once the Chair is appointed, this role will be recruited for.

The Athlete representative role is also vacant, there was one applicant for this, but going back out to try to generate more interest.

On funding, they had a meeting on Thursday last week with British Sport regarding the funding uplift post-Games.

There is also an organisation restructure ongoing, swimming, and diving and para-swimming have previously been very distinct. This whole system has now been refreshed with a single performance director who oversees all three programs. Chris Spice has been appointed as the overarching performance director, with an Associate Director sitting beneath him. There are some concerns within the diving and para-committees about this new structure. The Chair raised to the meeting that it was essential to make sure that the para voice is not lost. There can be huge benefits with this structure, but it does need to be monitored. It makes a lot of sense from an efficiency point of view but do need to be mindful of the risks.

## 12. AOCB

Paul informed the Board that the Commonwealth Games selection panel has been convened and Caitlin McClatchey and Duncan McKinnell have been appointed to that panel, the Board congratulated them for this.

CK noted a point from the Editorial Board, who are asking the Board to consider any update to the governance documents to be put forward before the next AGM. EM confirmed that these need to be submitted by 1<sup>st</sup> June.

Since the last Board meeting **sportscotland**, Sport England and Sport Wales published guidance around participation and performance of trans-athletes and a report on the challenges around that. Coincidentally the British Swimming board meeting asked for a report on this to be presented around the Brabners report. The Chair encouraged the Board to read this.

This is something that the Board want to give consideration to going forward, this is an issue which will need to be grappled with. The ICO published their position and noting how they will act and communicate with Governing bodies on their transgender policy.

One of the considerations being to reach a joined up approach with each of the home nations governing bodies. There needs to be parity and a joined up approach going forward. Another challenge is that a transition takes place over many years, it is very difficult to deal with this. We will need to think really hard about this and land on a position for going forward.

EM agreed that this is a balancing act, about balancing fairness, inclusion, diversity and safety. All competing principals. There are two areas to consider; participation level, and competition level and we do not have the ability to make decision beyond our level. There are 3 live cases in the last 6 months, it is a live consideration with evolving complexities and understanding making conversations with clubs difficult. We have tried to draft a policy previously, but it is really difficult. EM noted that she has asked the trans-community to engage with the organisation in relation to this, there is not much uptake.

EM believes there may need to be 2 policies, one for participation, one for competition or one policy with related appendices. In any event, any policy would need to go to consultation and identifying appropriate consultancy groups will be crucial.

**Date of Next Meeting(s):**

Saturday 29 / Sunday 30 January 2022 – Board meeting and training - Venue TBC

<b>cc</b>	Board & Council	Editorial Board	Harper Macleod
	Barry Cook, <b>sportscotland</b>	National Chairs	Kevin Reynard