

Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Board Meeting held at 2pm on 4 February 2023, The Radisson Hotel, Glasgow

Present

Graeme Marchbank (GM)	Chair
Euan Lowe (EL)	Chief Executive
Andrew Dunlop (AD)	Board Director
David Beattie (DB)	Board Director
Jackie Davidson (JD)	Board Director
Andy Figgins (AF)	Board Director
Caitlin McClatchey (CM)	Board Director
Kieran Watt (KW)	Board Director
Brian Hendry (BH)	President
Fiona Crawford (FC)	Vice President

In Attendance

Deborah McGinniss (DM)	Finance Manager/Company Secretary
Elaine Mackenzie (EM)	Director of Services
Ally White (AW)	Director of Aquatics
Helen Frost (HF)	Head of Marketing
Deborah Alexander (DA)	Minute Taker
Paul Donald (PD)	Club Development Manager
Victoria Park (VP)	Discipline Development Manager

Item No.

Action

1. Chair's Address

The Chair welcomed everyone, and in particular PD and VP, to the meeting. In providing his address, the Chair noted that he has attended a number of events recently, including the National Championships in Edinburgh and the National and British Diving Nationals and remarked on the energy and enjoyment coming out of those events. He encouraged Board members to attend similar events where possible.

In terms of recent appointments, he explained that Forbes Dunlop has now been appointed as the permanent CEO of **sportscotland** and the Chair believes it is positive to have someone who understand the challenges facing Scottish sport. The Chair has also had another meeting with Anjan Luthra, the chair of Scottish cricket who sought to understand from GM the challenges inherent in being the chair of a SGB and of Scottish sport in general. GM was happy to discuss with him and shared a willingness to help him in any way possible. The Chair has requested that Anjan meets with the Board in due course to discuss how best to connect with the communities that Scottish Swimming don't currently connect with. The Chair believes that there is a need to encourage minority groups to the pools and believes that working with Anjan will allow a great insight.

Finally, there has been a report obtained by The Times newspaper with concerns with the welfare and protection policies and culture within Swim England. This has caused concern within the swimming community. This, combined with the Whyte Report, has resulted in a request to EL to look into this in more detail and check our own governance and flag up any weaknesses which need to be considered.

2. Declarations of Interest

AF – Tutor

3. Apologies for Absence

Barry Cook, **sportscotland** Partnership Manager

4. Minutes of Previous meetings: Board Meeting, 16 November 2023

The minutes of the previous Board meeting held on 16 November 2022 were agreed as a true record.

5. Actions from previous meeting: Board Meeting

DB highlighted to the Chair in advance of the meeting, the importance of making sure that the KPIs are transparent across the membership and EL confirmed commitment to doing this and believes it is clear from the Aquatics Plan paper.

The Chair was also asked about the school swimming fee, and it has been agreed that rather than this being written off, a donation was made to Scottish Schools. EL noted that this was a welcomed and appreciated offer from Board, and this will be actioned.

Finally, in relation to comment in press/media recently around British Athletics and transgender, AF sought to understand if there was a legal position on this point. The chair suggested that this be discussed within the transgender policy section.

6. Save Our Pools Campaign

HP gave a presentation in relation to the save our pools campaign and began by acknowledging the pace at which the campaign was progressing.

Andrew Dunlop sponsors this paper and remarked that HF has done a tremendous job at getting the campaign together at a very quick rate and this is a high impact issue for the sport. A key element is to be clear on what the ask of Government is and what the call to action is for interested parties. The campaign is designed to apply constructive pressure to Government and strengthen EL's had in the discussions he has been having with Government. The campaign is shaping up well, but because of the importance it needs dedicated budget behind it.

HF presented the paper but noted that all detail is in the paper. The #saveourpools tagline started in England and the big ask is for immediate financial support for energy relief. The energy relief announcement for businesses excluded pools, which is a concern. Scottish Swimming's version of the campaign is slightly different, there is a desire to keep it positive.

There are 3 levels of campaign; i) joining with the home nations to put pressure on the UK Government, ii) focus on addressing things with the Scottish Government (through EL, **sportscotland** and also letters/press releases; and iii) a local level, (i.e. in Aberdeen, STV piece on this and similarly in Falkirk, there has been a lot of traction). At a local level, our role is to equip members and clubs with the resources they need (i.e. letter templates and press release templates).

HF explained that the work is moving at a rapid pace and we are also having to react quickly. To-date we have created graphics, email signatures, website banners, with defining key messages (safety, community and health) and regular meetings at a UK wide level.

In working towards a Parliamentary reception HF noted that Scottish Water have given support and they are in Parliament in the same week (end of March) which is positive to keep the momentum building to ensure joined up messages.

HF showed the website overlay and explained the changes still to come. There is a petition to Government to recognise pools, their value and to obtain financial support. This is awaiting approval to proceed and once done a link to the petition can be included in email signatures.

HF spoke through the poll headlines. 1000 Scottish adults were interviewed and the results were positive – 94% of Scots believed that swimming pools were important for safety and no one disagreed with that statement. A media release was pulled together really quickly to be published early next week. Engaging with Scottish Water's PR team on this to make it go as far as possible.

HF commented on statistics returned, all of which are very positive and is delighted to have that independent data to go to press with and also noted that Community Leisure UK are trying to organise a 'Big Swim Day' on 24 February across all members as a celebration of swimming.

HF sought feedback from Board on the paper and the ask of Government. The plan is for this to be a sustained campaign, not only about energy relief – this is long term.

AD asked re data and whether there was a piece to be done to understand the real and potential impact, to have that alongside data related to the rising costs for pool operators but appreciated that it may be difficult to collate all of this together. EL acknowledged that we are relatively 'data light' in Scotland and this is not limited to swimming – it is a problem across the leisure industry. EL spoke to industry experts about the increased costs in terms of energy, it is difficult to predict, however it is fairly safe to say the energy cost is likely to double from March to April, which is a real concern.

EL commented on the difficulty in trying to identify how many pools are at risk, attempts so far have gained limited response primarily as a result of local sensitivities. There have been a couple of instances of partners coming to us seeking supporting information, however they do not wish to get involved in the political debate. EL highlighted the great job that the Falkirk clubs did in this regard (community meetings attended which resulted in an ask for pool closures to be reconsidered, at least in the short term).

It was discussed whether there may be a benefit in costing out each sports' medal costs (i.e. the medal to funding ratio), to highlight whilst it costs a lot to run a pool, there is a high number of users and the user cost/value is more manageable.

AW highlighted that it is rare that a sports center makes money, however when council invests into trusts, still

usually need to deliver certain services, even if running at a loss – maybe this is an area to put pressure on.

It was agreed that the positive messaging was the correct approach, as opposed to an aggressive approach and consideration was given as to whether other SGBs would support the campaign (i.e. triathlon). EL noted that this would be beneficial (and Falkirk did involve triathlon) but there is not the momentum at the moment.

AF highlighted the risk that pools close now as a result of the energy prices/inflation etc., but then prices come down in the medium term future, once it is too late. It was agreed that this was a real risk and once a pool shuts down, it is much more difficult to re-open again. Even if there is an undertaking to open a new pool, that could take 10 years.

The Chair summarised discussions and highlighted that the budget piece is key. Board was asked if they were aligned that this was a vital area of investment, and it was agreed that if there are budget challenges, we may have to look at where savings can be made and funds reallocated to the campaign. It is simply not possible to ride this out for 3-5 years and then things will go back to normal.

Board agreed to dip below reserves if there was a need to do so. That said, we acknowledged that we cannot throw everything at it. There is a need to know what exactly is requested in terms of investment needed. The hope is that a balanced budget can be maintained whilst the plan is implemented. DM noted that there was a strong possibility that we will not use the contingency fund this year, so that gives us scope.

It was agreed that as long as balanced budget can be delivered, the Board are happy for funds to be allocated to this campaign, but if there is a need go into reserves, EL should call a Board meeting to discuss. Chair suggested that if that is needed, do not hesitate to do so, whilst thanking the members for their support.

The Chair concluded by noting that progress should not be halted by waiting on perfect data and it is possible to change the messaging as we go and requested that everyone involved add the new email signatures to their personal and business footers where acceptable.

The Board thanked HF for her work.

7. Items for Decision

7.1 Aquatics Plan

AW noted that information in relation to the plan was circulated to Board so provided a quick round up following feedback from Board about the readability of the plan and an executive summary been circulated.

Followed a fairly robust process of consultation and sought additional feedback. There is awareness that values play a big part in this, which are being developed. Once completed, these values will be included in the plan.

On the KPIs, these have been developed and these include the **sportscotland** KPIs, however should remember that the KPI's in the plan are for the sport, not **sportscotland**.

From a finance perspective, do not anticipate having to come back to the Board and can utilise reserves and to implement efficiencies and a readjustment of priorities to allow the plan to be delivered within the current budget.

AW sought Board agreement to allow more refinement around the presentation in finalising the plan, (values and executive summary on website and possibly put KPIs on website).

AW invited discussion from the Board.

DB applauded the focus on transparency around KPIs and agreed with the current direction of travel. JD queried if it would be possible to include some further information alongside each KPI about how it would be achieved, she believed that this could be impactful and attractive to future sponsors. AW believed that it would be possible in theory but might need to be something for HF to consider, perhaps as part of the communication plan.

KW noted that it feels like there are a high level of measures within the document and there is a disparity in terms of some being very specific and others are really high level. KW believes that there is a benefit in being clear on what the actual target is. AW noted that this is already being considered and a discussion was had around the introduction of tiered KPIs.

AW noting that there has been a deliberate decision not to put any timescales on the plan, largely because it is quite difficult to do so, but also because the teams are already prioritising the work, timescales will be introduced in due course, once we come to look at the operational aims.

The Chair summarised by noting that it is a great piece of work and brought discussion to an end.

7.1.1 Draft 2023-24 Annual Targets – Noted, with the sportscotland related investment targets to be further defined and agreed with sportscotland.

7.2 Disciplines Report & Investment

PD presented to the Board and explained that today we are looking for agreement in principle for the plans and the future investment required. The aim is to understand how to support and streamline with the corporate plan.

The appointment of VP as discipline development manager has been valuable and she has started meeting with discipline chairs, with regular meetings set up. This has been a good step with the sports in the right direction. There is also a list of development team staff who are all taking more responsibility for each of the disciplines with VP bringing staff together across the business to create a joined up approach.

Alongside staff support, PD noted we have been able to attract partner support and funding to benefit some sports, for example, excited to have investment into Strathclyde Uni for a full time water polo coach and funding into the diving coach program. There is also a drive to integrate open water into the national competition framework. Membership numbers are still in recovery post-Covid and the numbers are not 100% accurate and VP is going to work towards achieving a real proper baseline.

VP explained how the plans were created, starting with a SWAT analysis to identify key areas of priorities. Sought to involve as many people as possible and had really good range of participation from athletes, coaches, parents and officials. This resulted in agreement on key themes and this started to develop the plans going forward. The plans were edited and developed to produce a final draft at end of November which were then circulated within Scottish Swimming and the National Chairs Group for feedback. The feedback was that the plans were ambitious but strong and achievable.

Common themes were identified; people development and a need to improve recruitment, retention and training within roles; marketing and communication to raise the profile and their reputation and get information in the public domain; increase in the number of participants with a strong emphasis on the importance of clubs and athlete support; facilities and access to training and competition facilities.

Throughout whole process, it became clear that there was a need to review governance and part of that includes reviewing the roles and responsibilities of the National Committees and policies and procedures in place for each sport and safeguard compliance.

In terms of longer term investment needs, this has been a difficult to forecast due to the volatile time we are living in. We have however been able to provide the cost needed for the next 3 years. The paper only details the predicted costs to deliver the outcomes with broader income generation to be factored. It is anticipated that the overall investment requested will be reduced, this is the highest amount of investment that should be needed.

To move forward, it is hoped that the plans will be agreed in principle and then will drill into the budgeting detail with implementation of the plans from April onwards. VP opened to the Board for questions.

JD congratulated VP and PD on creating the plans, but raised that some elements within the plans are difficult to visualise and are perhaps lacking in tangible measures, to know what will be realistic. Difficult to consider budget without this sort of information, and where there exists a stronger case for investment when comparing across disciplines.

There was a discussion around the creation of another central marketing post, which is something which has been discussed. VP noted that the decision has been to start small but if it grows then absolutely something which could be looked at.

KW highlighted that there appears to be a disparity between the distributions of funding and participation numbers and this needs to be monitored and managed. This was generally agreed to be an area which requires to be looked at in a little more detail to ensure that there is a sensible distribution of funding.

It was agreed that this is one of the first times that there is something ambitious and aspirational has been produced, which is really refreshing to see. Whilst that this is no criticism of previous work done, it is good to move from maintenance to progress.

AD queried whether there are too many actions across all of the disciplines which may be difficult in terms of people resource required to implement them. PD noted that there will be areas for overlap between the disciplines which will make it easier to manage. Strategies will be aligned and this will allow a clearer plan to be pulled together for this.

With this in mind, phased investment may be something to look at.

The Chair summarised the paper and confirmed that it is a fantastic paper and whilst the Board cannot sign off on the increases sought at this moment, with further information around financial aspects and sensitivities around this, this can be relouked at. None of that takes away from what is a fantastic paper, just need the broader piece carried out to be signed off.

7.3 Board & ARC Content Planning

7.3.1 Board & ARC Content Plan

The Board considered the proposed dates for the Board meetings and remarked that it was good to be back to more regular business. There was a discussion around potentially changing some of the dates for various topics to take into account various governance timescales.

There was a discussion around other potential areas of review, around EDI, sustainability, CSR and environmental considerations.

The Board were happy with breakdown between virtual and physical meetings.

8.1 Transgender Guidance & Policy Update

EL thanked Sean Dawson for the paper and noted that there is already a large remit around this area, however the pace feels correct. It is a hugely complex and emotive area and legally challenging, however it was recognised that there was a need to move this forward. Swim England are looking to go live with recommendations very soon and are ahead of the curve, our approach is slightly more cautious than Swim England, and we require a consultation with our members.

AF noted that he has heard different deliberations from World Aquatics in this area. British Athletics are taking the view that this is a decision for Government, whereas Government are saying it is for the SGBs – there is a need to do something, but it needs to be measured and it would be helpful to put a timeline on this. AW believes that athletes understand and appreciate the complexity on this but do need clarity. It was agreed that the challenge is that there is something in the news every day and not being caught up with this, instead want to try to steer the organisation through and not be put off by incremental changes. Should focus on the plan we want to achieve.

The Chair noted that there is a QC based in London who is a leading expert in sports law, and the Chair noted that UK Sport may engage as a consultant. This is not a resource that Scottish Swimming could afford.

It was generally agreed that there needs to be movement but it is acknowledged that there will be pressure no matter what has been put out. As a Board there is a need to be clear on the direction we are going and for us to be prepared to stand behind that. Need to have conversations with local authorities etc., around changing facilities. Child protection is also an area of concern.

It was acknowledged that there may be a need to put out part of the policy and obtain feedback, and then look at competition subsequent to that.

The focus needs to be creating a safe and competitively fair space and bearing in mind that swimming is for everyone, we need to keep that in mind.

Agreed that the plan is in good shape and let's continue to keep up the pace.

8.2 Management Accounts (Qtr 3)

8.2.1 Financial Projections for 2023-34

DM explained that the management team are working hard and expected to produce a balanced budget. The figures in the report rely on having to draw down on the contingency fund, but DM does not think that this will be required. Meeting with the management on Tuesday and want to get a better idea of factors which may impact figures for the year end. This will then allow DM to calculate what funds are in place to support 2023/24 which is a big year. There are plans in place now that we simply did not anticipate being considered when the plan was drafted. Overall finances are in a good place.

DM asked if the Board were happy to wait until 19 April for final projection given there is a lot going on prior to that. It was agreed that the budget would need to be signed off prior to the start of the financial year. The Chair suggested that there should be a Zoom call arranged to allow the Board to approve the budget, all agreed.

8.3 Audit & Risk Committee

AD attended the previous meeting and noted that the discussion were self-explanatory from the minutes.

On wellbeing there was a long discussion and it was agreed that prevention is better than sanction and what measures can be put in place in order to avoid having to sanction people. Want to intervene before this becomes necessary.

Discussion about the non-negotiables – PVGs being in place and be explicit with clubs to ensure that there is full awareness. In general, Clubs are supportive and want to ensure compliance.

ARC's nervousness around sanctions is understood but we've come such a long way that not to impose a sanction would make progress difficult. There is a need to be clear with clubs that if governance is not adhered to, then sanctions will absolutely be used.

8.4 Wellbeing & Protection Update

EL had nothing to add, but summarised that there has clearly been progress, although perhaps not the response rate anticipated. A report scheduled to be run next week which will confirm more, but the feeling from Sean and Francesca is that things are positive.

Capacity for courses was a concern raised previously, as a result additional courses have been added.

AF queried whether there was a way in which the number of open cases could be more transparent (i.e. can we see if some have been closed and others opened). There is currently no way of knowing if they are historic or not.

Finally, around the university programs – it is possible there could be under 18s involved in those. So there may be a need for training in relation to wellbeing and protection training for courses. It was confirmed that there was a plan to include such training in the general coaches training.

On safeguarding strategy it was agreed that there is an aim to work towards a final draft for August and a final for November Board meeting.

9. Management Report

EM noted that she is still waiting on a number of Board appraisals and there is a real need to get them completed.

Board

In terms of the mental health focus, noted that there has been an increase in cases in the last year, which is the highest number ever, so it is definitely an issue. EM explained that there is an umbrella steering group focusing on members, clubs and staff and how to support mental health challenges. Staff are continuing to go through mental health training.

EM also noted that a few panel members have stepped down EM has pulled together paperwork which has been shared with management, looking to recruit a number of panel members to support our governance should a complaint be raised. EM made the suggestion that we have one board member who works with Lyndsay as Head of Panel in recommending additional Complaint panel members to Board. Board happy with this and EM suggested that KW took up this role. This was agreed.

KW

EM updated that the consultation on membership strategy is underway, having met with the Club Chairs and still to meet with some districts a paper will be pulled together and changes will be brought to the April meeting. The meetings so far have been positive. This will be added to the April Agenda.

On the AGM, it was agreed that this will take place at the Raddisson Blu, so there may not be the ability to host extra engagement, however we are continuing to look at the option of a hybrid meeting. A paper on this will be brought in April.

Finally, EM noted that Francesca sent an email about out about additional training and if there is any interest from Board members, please let her know.

DM – nothing to add

Hf – nothing to add.

AW – nothing to add. FC queried however whether there has been a cost implication for the level 2 course being hybrid. Confirmed that there is no change.

AF noted that in relation to the Scottish Short Course championships, the data report came back about 50% non-Scottish resident entries. Concerned about this, the timing was such that it caused problems with entering into other competitions. The general feedback from talking to swimmers who not positive. AF wondered if there a methodology around accepted times etc. Seemed disappointing for a lot of people.

AW noting that this was simply not good enough and that has been accepted as more of an operational/mechanical thing. In the mix of the Scottish short course, get the best of Britain coming up and

attracts people. The problem is that we never can be sure of the exact levels will be. AW will however take the feedback back and also noted the need to make sure that there is capacity elsewhere.

FC noted that the masters suffered from lack of STO's and queried whether there was an issue with burnout of officials with too much going on every weekend. This may be an area which needs to be developed, but will clearly take a while to filter through.

The Chair concluded by highlighting the stronger clubs and the young volunteer program and sought Board input on the perceived value of this. The Board agreed that the YVP was a central program which should be supported. It was acknowledged that there has been discussion about a lack of volunteers and officials, the programme outcomes will support the next cohort.

10. **British Swimming Update – verbal**

The CEO recruitment is now down to final stage of interviews which will be held next week. The successful candidate will be selected shortly after, but this will not be at the next board meeting. The next Board meeting will be Adele Stach-Kevitz last meeting and by the next Board meeting in April there is a need to appoint 2 independent directors, one of which will be the Senior Independent Director.

Karen Webb Moss as new Chair of BS was at the diving and EL was able to have a good discussion with her.

The current focus at British Swimming is on branding and commercial opportunity, meeting re this next weekend and it is recognised that it is key to closely coordinate with the Home Counties.

Jane Nickerson is retiring from her post as CEO of Swim England at the end of the calendar year.

LEN have taken a focus on Learn to Swim and they see this as a big area of energy. LEN are considering holding a Learn to Swim conference which may be something for us to consider supporting in Scotland.

The Chair concluded by again stressing that Board members can attend a British Swimming event and it is likely that accreditation would be arranged and the Chair can facilitate a discussion about this.

11. **AOCB**

The Chair confirmed that the additional paper talks to itself – change of name from FINA to World Aquatics. The Board were happy with this.

FC noted that on the #saveourpools campaign, there may be a real benefit in targeting local authorities because decision are going to be made this month.

FC also sought an update on the facilities review and EL confirmed that a tender went out yesterday.

Finally, FC highlighted the environmental drive and whether this was being considered. EL confirmed that this is part of the tender. FC asked if we can we drive recommendations (i.e. pool covers, temperature, lessons in colder pools).

12. **Staff Salary Paper**

EL spoke to the paper and a discussion took place around all potential options as well as a recap as to how this was implemented last year,

The Board were all in favour of option 2 and this was agreed.

Date of Next Meeting(s):

Council Meeting	Sunday 19 February, 10.30am – 1:00pm, Stirling Court Hotel
Board Meeting	Wednesday 19 April, 6.30pm - 9.00pm, Virtual

cc	Board & Council	Editorial Board	Harper Macleod
	Barry Cook, sportscotland	National Chairs	Kevin Reynard
