

Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Board Meeting held at 10am on 25 August 2024, Stirling Court Hotel

Present

Graeme Marchbank (GM)	Chair
Euan Lowe (EL)	Chief Executive
Andrew Dunlop (AD)	Board Director
Jackie Davidson (JD) (Part)	Board Director
Andy Figgins (AF)	Board Director
Caitlin McClatchey (CM)	Board Director
Gillian Strathearn (GS)	Board Director
Fiona Crawford (FC)	President
Derek McGown (DMcG)	Vice President

In Attendance

Elaine Mackenzie (EM)	Director of Services
Sophie McCall (SM)	Director of Aquatics Development
Deborah McGinniss (DM)	Finance Manager/Company Secretary
Sean Dawson (SD)	Safeguarding Manager
Helen Frost (HF)	Head of Marketing
Ian Wright (IW)	National Coach
Barry Cook (BC)	sportscotland
Laura Brennen (LB)	Minute Taker, Harper Macleod LLP

1. **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. The Chair noted that since the last meeting the Olympic Games had taken place. He acknowledged the athletes, specifically Duncan Scott and Katie Shanahan. The Chair also highlighted that a significant amount of the Scottish Athletes attending the Olympics were female. The Chair stated that he was looking forward to the AGM the following month which would be the next time the Board would be together.

2. **Declarations of Interest – None**

3. **Apologies for Absence – David Beattie.**

4. **Board Meeting Minutes - 23 June 2024**

GS noting that she did not have initials after her name. Further noting on page 3, item 7 it stated, 'it was queried', GS noting that she was the person who queried this item.

5. **Actions - Board Meeting - 23 June 2024**

EL noting re item 7.3.4, this item was reviewed in the early part of 2024 and that the risk appetite was low. EL noting that the other actions are in the agenda for this meeting. EL advising regarding item 14 that this will be reviewed in the coming weeks. EL confirming that all other points were actioned. FC noting in the minutes that there was an action about the learn to swim membership and that this had been missed off. EL will action.

6. **Aquatics Plan update / Performance Development Review**

Presentation on Performance Development

IW presented on performance development, emphasizing its integration into broader pathways involving facilities, athletes, and clubs, supported by partners like sportscotland and Aquatics GB. Three strategies for growth were outlined: improving overall quality, focusing on top talent, or increasing participation. Key factors include quality competition, targeted investment, and collaboration with partners. IW cited the successful Borders program as an example but noted that areas like club and coaching development, and competition frameworks, require improvement.

Challenges in Coaching

IW discussed coaching challenges, highlighting a lack of focus on performance pathways, reliance on underpaid voluntary work, and difficulty attracting skilled coaches. Issues like governance, employment status, and insufficient pool hours were raised. IW also flagged high turnover and the loss of experienced coaches post-COVID as critical concerns.

Competition Framework

IW noted the competition framework is respected but needs alignment across districts. Participation is imbalanced, with only 6,000 of 13,000 members competing in Level 2 or higher meets. Tollcross pool's closure was identified as a major disruption. Licensing restrictions and financial barriers to running Level 3 meets were debated.

Questions and Board Feedback

Key concerns included coach development strategy, learning from other countries, and facility costs. Rising pool fees were cited as a challenge, with Aberdeenshire charging £52 per lane for weekend use. The Chair emphasized the need for actionable plans and KPIs while IW stressed balancing participation and performance. EL pointed out that the presentation highlighted some of the realities we face but that we are already working on these through the objectives set out in the Aquatics Plan and its existing actions and indicators.

Funding and Club Support

Clubs struggle to progress due to financial constraints. IW and Board members discussed how SS could assist, including supporting clubs transitioning to full-time coaches. Ambitious clubs face pushback on raising fees, complicating resource gaps. IW suggested fundraising and targeted investment to bridge funding shortfalls.

Next Steps

The Chair asked for clarity on what the Board can do to address challenges, proposing adjustments to the licensing model and targeted district-level engagement. It was suggested to adapt IW's presentation for the AGM to inspire clubs to aim for higher levels and address systemic issues collaboratively.

7. Items for Decision

7.1 Wellbeing & Protection update

GS opened by crediting SD for all the thorough work that has gone into the papers. GS wanted to highlight how she felt the Athlete Voice piece falls into participation also and cannot just focus on the elite athletes and the focus should reflect engagement from all.

SD informed the board regarding the PVG processing contracts that all 147 clubs are now compliant and there are no suspensions required.

The number of cases being attended to year on year was discussed with SD commenting that the trend is for increased case numbers noting that there are more low-level concerns and perhaps suggests there is increased confidence in the system. The ability to analyse trends through Globacol should improve our understanding and insight into potential future interventions. What needs to be done better is looking at trends and what needs to be done in terms of the trends. The Chair commented that in relation to case reporting and existing cases it would be helpful to understand how long cases have been open.

7.1.1 Safeguarding Strategy Draft

SD introducing the strategy and sought feedback on content/direction. The Chair noting that it is a good step forward and commented on the terminology with the use of 'safeguarding' and welfare being used across the document and its title. SD noting that safeguarding being used as an umbrella term for safeguarding, wellbeing, and protection but if the feeling that it is to be a wellbeing strategy then caution around that would be mental health and general wellbeing – which is not what is covered. The Chair noting they could use 'safeguarding and wellbeing.'

The Chair noting that regarding the steps that he feels it could be called out more regarding the circular nature of the review process, noting that it is a continuous cycle of continuous improvement. Make sure the content in the paper is about welfare and people doing their best.

The board discussed the challenges in monitoring and referring to case numbers and reporting of the number cases – are we expecting a high number or a low number and what does this tell us. The focus should be on the types and level of cases being reported.

7.1.2 Safeguarding Policy (Children & Young People)

SD noting that this is the first draft of this paper there will be a slimming down of language. Everything that SD feels is required is contained in it, the thirty-four appendixes address the specific topics.

FC noting that the paper was fantastic and absolutely everything that is required is within it although noted that we should seek to find a way of having volunteers 'sign up' to the policy also.

The Chair queried if there was a way to make this usable as it's a large document – is there a way to put it into a portal so that volunteers can understand as a volunteer how they use it as a tool.

SD noted that it will be launched end of September/start of November and along with it modify the website with the aim of making the documentation easier to access and use.

The Chair felt that the language in relation to athlete voice should offer sentiment that the athlete voice should be included/ involved in decision making etc to make it sound less of an option.

7.1.3 Case management Review Group Terms of Reference – for decision

SD noting regarding this paper if everyone is comfortable with it, it will only be implemented if the governance goes through in September. If it does not go through, then it would not be used. The Chair noted he had one comment on the second paragraph that it is missing some of the protected characteristics. The Chair noted that he felt all nine should be listed if relevant. AD asking what is the criteria for whether a case goes to the review group, is it all cases that are being investigated by SS or it is more targeted than that? If it is more targeted, then it should be spelled out more clearly how it gets referred to the review group. SD noting that if it is a higher risk case that requires them to implement a suspension for example would go to the group. SD noting that anything below that SD or one of the lead officers thinks there are any doubts around the process to make, it would not go to the group unless they required additional step to do this and will add into the document to provide more clarity.

SD informed the board that as part of the support from the CMSS there are a couple of workshops available, one on investigations and one on disciplinary processes, SD and EM have identified a few individuals within the staff group that would be needing to go to each of the sessions and anyone who has been identified as a case officer it would be good if they did both. EM will send the dates out. SD noting that it is in person for the investigations and the discipline one will be looking into the CMSS.

7.1.4 Athlete Voice & Rights of the Child Paper – for discussion

SD and Ollie Summers are reviewing what SS currently do, identifying gaps and will include as part of the action plan that will be put forward to the board in December. The Chair noted that the action plan was good, and it is a good paper. The Chair noting that he is a huge fan of codifying the Athlete Voice, not something that should be optional. Only point the Chair noted was around number 6, Learn to Swim and he had put a note when discussing with the local authorities taking a more advocacy role with it and present it in the form, recognising decision making lies with the authority or trust but that SS should be a constant around that important aspect.

CM noting that it was a great paper and great to read about all the things SS are doing across the different levels, suggesting that short surveys may be an option in gathering performance athlete views. This is something SD will pick up with Ollie to understand what those athletes are asked from an Aquatics GB Level.

The Chair made the board aware of the move to appointing a young person to Council but no young person on the board yet but is something to progress towards also.

AD then asked how SS encourage the young representative positions on club committees, considering whether this is something that could be built into the Aquamark standard just to nudge clubs in the right direction. SD noting that the regional team are actively working with the committees when they do the governance presentations which is absolutely linked with Aquamark and there are other questions around engagement with the young volunteer programme or equivalent so there is a good bit of work that the regional managers are doing with young people. In terms of the requirements, SD noting that clubs do not require a young person on the committee but encourage them to do so.

BC noting there is some good practice coming through in terms of swimmer's voice and athlete voice through the club of the year nomination process, which is one of the questions that the committee asked about swimmer's voice and the processes that were in place within the club. BC noting that there were some examples shared in the process either through club captains or there are sometimes groups that involve everybody.

7.2 Review of Annual Business Document & Annual Report

The Chair asked for any questions or comments on the report. EM noting that the paper is going out on Thursday to the membership and will then be locked down. The Chair encouraged the Board if they had any questions in the next 24 hours or so to feedback to EM. The Chair raised a typo on page 15, number 8 regarding Company fees, the heading noted it was fees for 24/25, but the text relates to fees for 23/24.

EM confirming that everything that was raised in the minutes regarding the Transgender policy has been signed off by those mentioned. It was mentioned that one of the points was that a compliant was going to be taken further regarding the transgender policy and child safety. The Chair queried if this was taken further. SD confirmed this was taken to Children1st but not taken any further. SD confirming that complete a review of the policy earlier in the summer and there are a few minor changes to be made but nothing substantial. EL noting re transgender policy and non-binary policy and guidance, after submitting the documentation to Sporting Equals they reverted eight months later to advise that the policy was good. The Chair asked if the Board had any further questions to be submitted by the end of the following day.

EM echoing the Chair's sentiments and adding that Mel has asked for people to feedback to her, re attendance and accommodation requirements as the AGM will take place in Aberdeen and starting at 10.30am, the accommodation has also been extended to SS staff for the Friday evening. EM has set up an informal social from 8pm for the Board and Staff.

7.3 Appointment of the Editorial Board

AD noting that the only thing to highlight as it says at the end of the paper approve the amended terms of reference and the only change, they are making is to apply a term limit to the Chair of the Editorial Board in line with that of what is applied to Board Directors. The Chair noting that the only question he had was in respect of number 3 – does that cover the Board as well? This was confirmed. The Chair confirmed that it is just the broader definition required.

7.4 Review of our Accounting Policies

7.4.1 Statutory Accounts

DM had a couple of points to draw to the Board's attention: (1) 7.4.1 – KR wanted DM to draw to attention the tax on profit. DM advised that the tax last year was £8.4k compared to this year £22k, the reason for this is SS was to recover corporation tax on the previous year trading losses, meaning the last year was understated. This year's tax is high as a result of corporation tax being due against bank interest and sponsorship. DM advised membership income and grant income is excluded from this.

7.4.2 Letter of Representation

DM noting that KR wanted to draw to the Board's attention the last sentence in the first paragraph. DM noting, they have conducted all the work but the responsibility sits with the Board Directors so to ensure that they are ready and understand what the responsibilities are. DM noting that it is DM and GM that signs the paper, but it was suggested that the Chief Executive also signs so DM, GM and EL will sign. EM also noting the financial papers still show British Swimming but that this has been picked up and the documentation will be updated to read Aquatics GB. DM asking for any questions. No questions were intimated. The Chair noted one point to be taken to ARC, regarding when was the last Audit? EM noting that the Audit is every four years, but it is not financial but more governance. The Chair queried whether ARC should consider an Audit at the end of the Chair's term. DM noting, they have signed up for 3 years with the current provided. The Chair asked whether SS should consider whether an Audit should take place at the end of the term so the next Chair can feel confident with the Accounts.

7.4.3 Review of our Accounting Policies

No questions were intimated.

7.5 Approval of Sports Fees

EM noted that it was as per the paper. DM was going to pick up with Water Polo regarding the increase to the annual competition fee rising to £35 but they have not yet responded so they will need to be chased on this point. Swimming Committee, DM advised that they have completed four-year projections and looking to increase the fees each year and any surplus being reinvested back into the development of the national competition. DM noting that they will complete a reconciliation each year before the fees for the year ahead are released. DM noting that a huge amount of work was done on this to make it sustainable and generate additional revenues. FC querying as to how many water polo events there are. EM confirming not many. There was then a discussion about the spectator experience, acknowledging that a lot had been put into the live streaming already and improving the experience for all participants. DM to feed that back. IW noting that this links back to his presentation, noting that very easily things can get blocked. It is about getting good ideas over the line.

7.6 Approval of Co-opted members

EM noting that the paper has been updated to include diving's co-opted members. There was discussion about the use of term of Scotland National Coach, it was decided that this would be revisited following appointments.

7.7 AGM and Awards Dinner Venue

EM advising the proposed date for the 2025 AGM is 20th September 2025. EM discussing that there are lessons learned and looking at costs again. EM noting that she is delighted to go to Aberdeen, but it is more expensive than Glasgow as we need to factor in the cost of accommodation for staff but advised that the North clubs and partners have hugely supported the event, and numbers are sitting at 265 and set to rise to over 300.

EM advising that Edinburgh is proving too expensive and we take the event back to Glasgow for 2025/26 to align with Glasgow hosting the Games again in 2026. After discussion it was agreed that EM would investigate venues and bring a paper the December Board for agreement. This will be looked at after this year's AGM and Dinner to see what, if anything can be done and any lessons about how to make the AGM more engaging.

7.8 STO Regulations

In the absence of Blair Prentice. FC had no further comments. EM noted that the paper was as read. SD noted that they were making it tougher to be a referee. DMcG suggesting extending the time for a level 4 meet should be extended slightly.

8. Items for Information and Discussion

8.1 Finance Report (Quarter 1)

DM wanted to draw to attention of the Board regarding the Education, which is currently sitting at Amber, this programme has a target to generate surplus in the region of 20% each year to support other areas of the business however this year will be challenging. DM wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you to DB for his knowledge and experience and noting the purpose of the meeting was for DB to formally resign so that he will be removed from Companies House as per DB's request.

8.2 Risk Register

KL complimenting EL and the management team. This is a live matrix that is moving in a good direction and mitigations are put in place. The Chair noted there was a formatting issue which made it harder to track against previous versions, consideration to be given when converting this to a pdf document to ensure that the data does not go out of alignment.

8.2.1 ARC minutes

FC raising one question regarding the risks of the calibre of Council members but noting that the number is not being changed and does not see the risk. DM advised that Kevin Reynard tenure comes to an end in April 2025 and has advised that he has been explicit and will be stepping down at this time. DM advised that urgency around the recruitment process starting in a timely manner to allow Kevin to end his tenure as per his appointment letter. The plan was to have a handover prior to Kevin stepping down but this now looks unlikely however DM will see if Kevin would be happy to do one further meeting with the new ARC chair prior to his departure.

8.3 Scottish Swimming Anti-Doping Education Update

EL picking up in JD absence. EL noting that this needs to be presented at Board Meeting for the governance requirement at UK level. EL noting it charts the process alongside the action plan. FC raised a point about return to sport after sanction, asking how welcoming the sport may be to a return. EL noting this is as similar situation to anyone returning from any safeguarding sanctions with the importance being on clear communication over the basis for a return to the sport.

8.4 EDI Moving to Inclusion Framework

GS noting at early stage of the work but particularly important work to ensure that SS are inclusive as possible. GS highlighting to all board members that there is online training on 17th September and encouraging them all to attend to ensure they are aware of the terminology. EL noting that it is in early stages, but it is a framework that SS have been working towards and in making use of the self assessment tool to group applied a critical eye. EL noting that the 58% score may not look particularly encouraging but it does clearly highlight the opportunity to grow.

FC commenting that this paper would additionally be beneficial for Council.

The Chair then noted like EL, the score is good and know in the hearts that people are decent and support it and commit to it, pleased that there is more to do in this space. The Chair noting that the focus can be on what they do next. The Chair then raised that the first World Swimming EDI Summit is in Belfast on Friday 27th September, noting that they believe that no where else in the world has there been an EDI Aquatics focused summit. The Chair noting that it will be interesting not only because he is on the EDI working group, but some countries are also pushing towards it and there are real pockets of success and weaknesses.

9. Management Team Report from the Company

9.1 Management Report

The Chair asked if any specific questions for the Board. GS asked if there are any questions regarding EDI used in the interview process during Board Recruitment. EM advised the board roles will be advertised and EDI knowledge and understanding is gathered during the application process.

9.2 Legal Items – None

10. British Swimming Update

The Chair advised that there have been no Aquatics GB meetings since the last Board Meeting due to the summer hiatus. The next meeting is the Aquatics GB AGM, and there is a proposal regarding non-executive members on the board that is no longer going forward, this process will be carried out via policy rather than governance. In addition, the Chair will attend congress at the end of September and the EDI event that is running as part of that.

11. AOB

FC querying regarding associate membership, notwithstanding what has happened with SS there are clear guidelines about what that is, at a minimum showing proof of insurance, maybe welfare and protection policy and some aspect of reputational acknowledgement, something in place to ensure the membership can be reviewed at the end of the year.

EL noting that there were two papers brought to board recently in relation to Associate membership that included considerations that could be adopted in reviewing an application.

There was a discussion in relation to Scottish Schools events and appropriateness of associate membership with agreement this needs to be explored further. FC/DMcG to look at initially

FC then thanking the board advising she had a very enjoyable two years as President.

AF then echoed his thanks to the Board for having him for eight years noting it has been the best personal development experience and delighted to give something back to the sport having served continuously for 53 years.

EL then highlighting that a new partnership has been created with University of Edinburgh with support from Aquatics GB and Edinburgh Leisure to introduce a high-performance diving position going into Edinburgh, highlights the confidence that Aquatics GB have in SS and should help with further opportunities with diving.

The Chair then acknowledged that it was the last board meeting for three members, including DB, thanking DB and the personal support he has provided along with the knowledge and confidence he has provided when making decisions. The Chair then thanking FC for her hard work and contribution to the Board and Council over the years. The Chair then turned to AF to advise that he has brought valuable insight to the Board. The Chair concluded by thanking them.

The Chair brought the meeting to a close and confirmed that the next board meeting will be on the 8th of December 2024.

12. Next Meeting(s):

Board – 8th December 2024, RCP, Edinburgh.

cc

Board & Council
Barry Cook, **sportscotland**

Editorial Board
National Chairs

Harper Macleod
Kevin Reynard