

Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Board Meeting held at 10am on 24 August 2025, Stirling Court Hotel

Present

Graeme Marchbank (GM)	Chair
John Lunn (JL)	Chief Executive
Andrew Dunlop (AD)	Board Director
Caitlin McClatchey (CM)	Board Director
Ciaran O'Brien (CO)	Board Director
Gillian Strathearn (GS)	Board Director
Jo Thomson (JT)	Board Director
Kieran Watt (KW)	Board Director
Derek McGown (DM)	President
Tony Dane (TD)	Vice President

In Attendance

Elaine Mackenzie (EM)	Director of Services
Deborah McGinniss (DM)	Finance Manager/Company Secretary
Sean Dawson (SD)	Safeguarding Manager
Helen Frost (HF)	Head of Marketing
Sophie McCall (SM)	Director of Aquatics Development
Ian Wright (IW)	National Coach

1. Welcome

Action

GM welcomed everyone to the meeting, with a particular welcome to Ciaran O'Brien attending his first board meeting. The Chair noted that it had been the intention for a young person to join today's meeting; however, this was not possible due to a diary clash. He emphasised the importance of considering a clear and consistent approach to ensuring both athlete and young person voices are represented, and whether this should be formally codified. A joined-up approach will be required, and the Chair will take this forward.

GM

2. Declarations of Interest – None

CO had provided a written declaration in advance of the meeting, no further declarations noted.

3. Apologies for Absence

Received from Chris Davison, Board Director and Barry Cook, **sportscotland**.

4. Board Meeting Minutes - 22 June 2025

None

5. Actions - Board Meeting - 22 June 2025

JL spoke through the actions and confirmed that most are completed or actioned. On those that are not:

Item 9.2 – this is covered within today's agenda, but ongoing at the moment.

Item 5 – the Speedo contract been completed and signed.

6. Presentations

Operations: Performance Review

IW presented on the recent performance review and summarised the 2025 international season so far. He noted that there was Scottish representation at a number of international events, and a range of Scottish coaches, managers and support staff were present, with 28 Scottish athletes across swimming and diving. The performance outcomes from this year were discussed, with it being noted that athletes performed admirably, achieving medals, setting new national records, and competing in many finals across all disciplines.

IW then evaluated performance against the KPIs, which are broadly being achieved. IW set out the areas of strength throughout the performance area; coach development, upcoming talent and full integration of para-swimmers at mainstream clubs and meets and then discussed the structural challenges; rising costs for travel and accommodation, access to training and aging pool stock as

well as application of governance and capacity concerns. Expertise and ambition within the coaching pathway are also weaker than they have been historically, and volunteer burnout is occurring (this is covered in the risk register piece).

It was also discussed that the potential strategic opportunities arising from Glasgow 2026 offered a unique opportunity to elevate Scotland's international sporting profile.

IW noted that in order to continue the performance success we have had over the last 16 years there is an immediate need to advocate for protected/enhanced investment in performance sport. The short-term priority is to engage with partners ahead of Glasgow 2026 and to be organised and focused on this, in order to make the most of the unique opportunity. In the medium term the focus is to support clubs managing challenges, and to ensure the continued sustainability and high-quality programme delivery.

JL noted that it was clear that the organisation was performing incredibly well, however there are undoubtedly challenges and risks which need to be considered and monitored.

Views were sought from the Board, and this was discussed at length. It was acknowledged that the organisation is largely run by volunteers and potentially the structures at some of the large development clubs might benefit from being reviewed and changed. More generally, the number of complaints and challenges that have been received is increasingly significantly. Whilst a lot of these are from individuals who are simply unhappy, however there is a cultural and behavioural piece that could usefully be discussed with Council and others. The organisation should avoid dedicating disproportionate time to complaints and compliance matters at the expense of its core priorities of development, improvement, and growth.

Critical Factors: Home Nation Safe Sport Project

JL spoke to the paper, noting that it crosses over into the work around safeguarding and it is essentially an update in relation to a "safe sport" project that has been ongoing at a UK level. The paper outlines the details, and JL is seeking thoughts and input from Board on a couple of areas.

JL provided an update on recent developments not covered in the paper. The aquatic Home Nations have agreed to collaborate on this area, alongside the UK Safe Sport project as outlined in the paper. In addition, UK Athletics, British Gymnastics, and British Cycling, along with their home nation counterparts, have expressed interest in joining with Aquatics, recognising clear similarities.

While discussions remain at an early stage, the potential benefits include scale at a UK level and improved consistency. However, involving up to 14 Governing Bodies may introduce delays and challenges in reaching alignment. Overall, the opportunity is viewed positively but will require careful consideration.

JL spoke through the areas of focus, which are as set out within the paper at point 5: information sharing; a move to a greater focus on prevention; consistency of policies and procedures across the Home Nations (though noting the legislation differences might hamper this); consideration of an aligned approach to case management; and collaborative working to enable the pooling expertise.

JL also noted that consideration has been given as to whether there would be a desire / ability to publish a list of individuals who are banned from the sport and that advice had been sought from Harper Macleod on this. The view given was that there was nothing in law which would prohibit this, but there was a need to exercise caution. JL noted that this would need to be discussed in more detail at an appropriate time and was simply raising it now for awareness and initial thoughts. UK Athletics and British Gymnastics both currently publish lists at present (albeit with different levels of detail publicly available), and this has been subject to legal challenge by some individuals. JL noted that this is an emotive subject, and he welcomed the Board's thoughts.

JL opened to the Board for questions.

JT asked about the scale of system changes needed for the proposed collaboration with the Home Nations. JL responded that safeguarding case management, data sharing, and trend analysis could be adapted quickly, but training, policies, and procedures may present more logistical challenges.

AD stated that whilst collaboration is absolutely a good thing, however sought reassurance that it would add value to what is already being carried out. He queried whether capacity was going to be an issue or if it would distract from other initiatives and / or overwhelm the team. JL accepted AD's concerns were valid but provided reassurance that he does not think that this is a significant cause for concern provided matters are kept focused and being aware of the timescales available in this area. The Chair highlighted the potential for delay given the high number of parties potentially involved and reiterated the need to act quickly on this.

In terms of the data sharing and releasing a list of banned individuals, SD confirmed that there is a data sharing system in place and the systems discussed under this policy would make this process much smoother. Would remove the risk of human error – presently the system relies on communication between SD and his counterpart within the Home Nations. The Chair noted his concern that it would never be possible to guarantee that the banned list would remain internal to the sport only, and believed that it would difficult to ensure this was the case.

It was agreed that there was a need to think about the 'why' before making a decision on this and to be clear on what the intended purpose is – what is required for one sport, will not necessarily be required for all. It was agreed that this cannot be something that is done without being clear as to why.

CM queried whether the data sharing agreement extended beyond athletics in order to ensure that a banned individual goes to another sport and this is not picked up. SD noted that at present, it is just in relation to the aquatic sports. JL sought to provide some reassurance to CM by highlighting that any serious concerns would be flagged by the PVG checks – the data sharing piece is intended to cover areas such as complaints and lower level matters.

The Chair closed the discussion by confirming that Board appeared happy to continue the conversation around this but cannot agree to this publishing of lists at this stage.

7. Items for Decision

7.1 Wellbeing & Protection update

GS spoke to the paper, noting that Scottish Swimming is frequently regarded as a benchmark for other governing bodies in wellbeing and protection, with much of its work recognised as best practice.

SD confirmed the papers could be taken as read and provided additional updates. PVG checks have increased by around 190% in recent months, and thanks were recorded to Natasha, Emma, and Francesca for their work.

While the online Disclosure Scotland system continues to present delays in processing, progress has been made on compliance: WPO training stands at 94% (above the 85% requirement), the number without CWPS training after six months has reduced to 143, and those in regulated roles without a PVG now sit at 59, close to target.

Since the start of the year, 135 cases have been recorded, many involving self-harm. Training on this area is being arranged for WPOs.

7.1. Wellbeing & protection Policy (Children & Young People)

SD confirmed this is the final version of the document approved by the Board in June, now returned for final sign-off, with publication planned for Wednesday 27 August. Communications will include a new email address for reporting concerns, although the existing address will continue to be monitored. It was also noted that,

in line with standard practice, anyone line-managing a regulated role is required to have a PVG.

7.1.2 Vexatious Complaints Policy – for discussion

This paper was provided for information only, having already been considered by the Board and Council in June. SD invited comments and confirmed publication is planned for Wednesday 27 August.

7.1.3 Transgender & Non-Binary Guidance document – for discussion

Most changes relate to clarifications following the Supreme Court ruling and updated definitions. While further Scottish Government and EHRC guidance is awaited, the organisation intends to publish what it believes is correct, noting this may change with future guidance or any EHRC appeal. A possible addition on changing spaces may follow, though current guidance covers female changing places.

Following discussion, it was agreed to publish the updated policy as an interim version, flagged for review and update as required. It was also queried who holds responsibility for enforcing the use of changing rooms, and SD agreed to consider this.

7.1.4 Transgender & Non-Binary Competition policy – for approval

Minor amendments have been made across all sports, with comments on definitions noted above. Water Polo has undergone more significant changes with a realignment of age groups to bring into line with the other sports; these have been approved by the Water Polo National Committee.

It was noted that, while individuals generally compete in their birth sex, at “level 4” meets competitors may participate aligned to their gender identity. SD confirmed this approach follows Swim England and Wales principles and best practice. This decision aligns with recent guidance from the Sports Council Equality Group.

7.1.5 Historic Case Review Terms of Reference – for approval

This has come out from work carried out by Swim England and the culture review which is ongoing across all Home Nations. Swim England are reviewing all cases in the last 20 years, amounting to around 1,500 cases. We will review cases from 2020 onwards, SD noting that Scottish Swimming do not have the same high number although our cases include lower levels concerns that Swim England do not capture.

Anything prior to 2020 would be difficult to review, due to the recording methods prior to this. Similarly, prior to 2015, Swim England used to manage serious cases on behalf of Scottish Swimming, so in some cases no data exists at all. That being the case, focus is on the last 5 years, and the review is centred around the processes used, rather than the outcome themselves. Children1st are assisting with this, to provide a robust and independent review to appropriate cases, though due to their capacity issues, this may impact on timescales. Additional support may also be required internally.

The Chair flagged some typing errors to be rectified and also queried whether the threshold of ‘overwhelming need’ in para 8.2 is too high. It was discussed that using a lower threshold could result in a need to investigate an extremely high number of cases. It was agreed the threshold needs to be high, but potentially ‘overwhelming’ is too high.

The Board approved the paper.

8. Items for Information and Discussion

Item 8.1 / 8.1.1 / 8.1.2 / 8.1.3 Statutory Accounts

DM provided The Board with an overview of the statutory accounts and supporting papers.

- The accounts show a small surplus of £11, bringing retained reserves to just under £400k, broadly consistent with last year. Cash balances remain strong at £2.3m.

- Timing differences are evident, with higher deferred income due to membership fees and grant funding received in advance, and slightly higher trade creditors at year end due to March invoices. None of these variances are unexpected.
- Projections indicate cash balances will dip in March 2026 before recovering with April membership renewals and May sportscotland investment. The organisation is considered a going concern for the next 12 months.
- The Letter of Representation was noted, confirming the Board's responsibility for the truth and fairness of the accounts and the correct treatment of income sources. The Audit & Risk Committee has reviewed the accounts and recommends approval.

Decision: The Board approved the statutory accounts and Letter of Representation as presented.

8.2 Review of Annual Business Document & Annual Report

EM spoke to this paper, noting that the annual business document is also with Council for comment. EM seeking further input about the GB judicial panels membership and there may be a need to look at the governance around this point in the future.

EM

EM looking for comments as soon as possible, because once this goes out to members, any changes would need to go to the AGM.

EM thanked everyone for coming back to her in relation to the approval of the awards and noted that the criteria for considering approvals is detailed in C11.3 – C11.17. These have now all been approved by Board and Council.

With 19 proposals coming to the AGM, and a small number of these are expected to elicit some debate and discussion, as well as the trialing of a hybrid this year, we need to ensure that things run smoothly and presentations will be kept short. Ideally anyone who is proposing or supporting an item will be there in person.

8.3 Appointment of Editorial Board

The paper was taken as read. EM noted there are currently no co-opted members, with plans to consider this in the future. EM on behalf of the Editorial Board thanked Blair Prentice for his valuable contributions as Chair, member and mentor.

The paper was approved.

8.4 Approval of Sports Fees

This paper was taken as read and approved.

8.5 Approval of Co-opted Members

These are as listed in the paper and were approved.

9. Management Team Report from the Company

9.1 Management Accounts Quarter 1

DM provided the Board with overview of the Q1 management accounts.

- A new reporting format was introduced, designed to provide clearer trend analysis between the full-year budget and the revised budget. References to phased budgets have been removed from the main report but continue to be monitored at budget-holder level.
- The overall financial position after Q1 is on track, with both income and expenditure at c.25% of budget. The budget is currently balanced, which compares favourably to a small deficit at the same stage last year.
- Membership income has increased year-on-year, reflecting the rise in fees from £48 to £55. Sponsorship income is lower than last year due to timing of planned spend, not reduced income. Other income has increased, largely due to competition entry

fees, which are matched by expenditure. The sportscotland grant is flowing as expected, with nearly half received already.

- Expenditure is in line with budget. Some underspend is evident in Education & Development and Marketing & Comms, reflecting planned phasing. No overspend concerns are flagged.
- Cash reserves remain strong at £2.76m, with net assets stable at £400k. Reserves remain below the target level of £508k (three months' operating costs), leaving a £108k shortfall.

As at quarter 1, we are on target financially – both income and expenditure are sitting at 25% of the budget, which is aligned with the plan.

Summary: Q1 shows a stable position with no immediate concerns, though reserves remain under the target level and will continue to be monitored closely.

Action: Board to review the format of the paper and provide any specific comments or feedback they have. The Chair requested that future management accounts include phased budgets reported against anticipated actuals for each quarter, with a variance column showing the difference between actuals and phased budgets. DM advised that this could be provided in an appendix to the main report.

ALL/
DM

9.2 Risk Register (Top Risks)

JL explained that the team has reviewed risks, updating post-mitigation descriptions and scoring in the narrative. Some scoring questions remain, and a further meeting will address consistency across the organisation.

Teams were asked to highlight which risks should be escalated to the Board, rather than automatically reporting only the top risks.

It was agreed that there should be a paper brought back to a future Board meeting.

The Chair emphasised the importance of holding the Board accountable and providing input on risk mitigation and management, urging a strong focus on this area.

JL/
SMT

9.2.1 Audit & Risk Committee Report

JL confirmed that the paper can be taken as read. Confirmed that George Walker ARC Chair will receive Board papers to ensure consistency.

The Chair requested an amendment on point 5, suggesting a change to ensure that it does not read that the balanced budget is being created to avoid decrease in membership. It should be clear that the reason a balanced budget is created is because of good governance and the appropriate spending of money.

9.3 EDI Moving to Inclusion Framework

It was noted that there has been a lot of work which has gone into this. The table on page 2 is the starting point of suggested work areas and actions. Confirmed that there is to be a meeting this week and progress will be made off the back of this.

9.4 Public Affairs Plan

AD introduced the paper, noting that HP and the team have developed a strong platform. With the upcoming political season, there is a need to build on momentum from the engagement with government and politicians to date and the upcoming Commonwealth Games. AD sought views on balancing government engagement with holding them to account, noting the organisation has managed this well to date. AD suggested measured public pressure without damaging relationships.

JT queried whether focus could extend beyond Marie Todd to other ministers (social care, mental wellbeing, young people, public health). HF confirmed ongoing engagement with a broader list of ministers and civil servants and will update the paper to reflect this.

HF

HF highlighted the localised approach to elements of the plan, noting potential use of the SNP conference in November to increase pressure on local MSPs and the upcoming COSLA

conference in November. Additional plans include media engagement and publishing an open letter from athletes.

It was also noted that a meeting is scheduled with other water sports to align approaches and messaging when engaging government.

9.5 Management Report

JL drew out 2 points. One in relation to School Swimming, have an application in for funding from CashBack which uses proceeds of crime money from Scottish Government – there is a significant amount of money for distribution under this scheme, far more than normal. It is hoped that this application will be successful. JL thanked the team for their work on this area.

Also noted that there are 2 specific conditions on the award from **sportscotland** – one has been met, and the other will be at the end of September as per the time line requirements.

10. Reports from the Company

10.1 Legal Items – *verbal*

Noted that advice had been sought from Harper Macleod in relation to the publishing of a list of banned individuals, as detailed in item 6, the Safe Sport presentation, and also in relation to providing support to a club in an employment matter.

11. Aquatics GB Update – *verbal*

The Chair provided an update, noting limited progress since the last report. Overall results at international events were positive, aside from the World Championships where the camp was impacted by illness. Scottish athletes' performances were generally encouraging in the context of a post-Olympic year.

11.1 Aquatics GB / SS Board Meeting

The Chair noted that Aquatics GB holds one annual Board meeting in a Home Nation on a rotational basis, it being with us this year, the host nation presents on the Friday evening followed by dinner. This event is scheduled for 12th September in Glasgow, and invites will be issued directly from Aquatics GB.

JL, attending for the first time, is considering what Scottish Swimming should communicate to the Aquatics GB Board. The Chair encouraged thinking beyond performance, highlighting the value of wider representation and advocacy, which we do well, and other areas of joint interest.

12. AOCB

The Swimwear policy, approved in June, has proposed changes to both the general and technical swimwear policies, which SD explained.

EM noted that Sophie McCall and Rachel McCree have announced their pregnancies.

13. Next Meeting(s):

Friday 12th September – Aquatics GB Board /Scottish Swimming Board Meeting - Glasgow

Saturday 20th September – AGM & Awards Dinner - Glasgow

Sunday 23rd November – Stirling in person

cc Board & Council
Barry Cook, **sportscotland**

Editorial Board
National Chairs

Harper Macleod
George Walker