

BRITISH FENCING BOARD MINUTES

Date of Meeting 14th March 2024

Time 17.00 – 20.00

Location Online only

Present

Directors (Voting)

Mark Lyttle, Chair

Pat Aiyenuro, Anti-Doping Champion

Brian Brittain

Jade Clarke

Mary Cohen

Tommy Curran Jones

Yashmin Harun, Safeguarding Champion

John Troiano

James Williams

Chris Tidmarsh

Executive Attendees (Non-Voting):

Georgina Usher, CEO (GU)

David Moseley, FD (DM)

Observers/Home Nation Representatives (Non-Voting)

Caryl Oliver, England Fencing

Item	Item Description
•	Board Director Reserved Items • Apologies received from Tabatha Barton Board Director – New Declarations/Conflicts of Interest None • English Fencing have had the letter sent outlining the desire for an improved partnership. They have acknowledged receipt. • BF successfully applied for funding for a project to look at the relationship. The Steering Group (including representatives from Sport England and UK Sport) have met and the working group has met. • ML and GU shared the progress so far. Part of the initial work is completing a Roles and Responsibilities framework to aid discussion and understanding - the draft BF template available in the Board pack. • Over a number of years, the working practices have mis-aligned and clarity is now being sought with both organisations. • It is important to get the responsibilities and roles correct across the 2 organisations moving forward, via this clear process, to identify what English Fencing do, with credibility and what they will do, moving forward. • GU requested another BF Director attends the Working Group if JT is unavailable for support. • Nothing has been decided, thus far. • Board members held a discussion around how it should work moving forward, relating to both finances and administration. • Questions were invited
•	General Introduction Chair’s Opening Remarks – reminder of process Other Apologies Other New Declarations/Conflicts of Interest • Yashmin is now a London Sport Trustee • Action GU: Conflict of Interest log needs updating to reflect this Interim Decisions: <i>Inputs:</i> Interim Decisions • Disciplinary Code, BF Codes of Conduct, Chair Responsibilities, Unacceptable

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	Behaviour Policy, Delegated Authority and Matters Reserved. Noting of Policies / Papers for (Pre)Approval with no discussion anticipated: Inputs: Pre Approved Documents “Pre-approval” and for in-meeting in “For Approval” Board folder - Financial skills matrix – approved Noting of Papers for Information with no discussion anticipated in this meeting: Board folder “For Noting” These include Cardiff Event Reports, CPSU review content and outcome, most recent draft of BF’s Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, Draft guidance from MedCom – fencing in Pregnancy, Cadet and Junior comparison of results 2018 to 2023, Results overview from Cadet and Junior Europeans, Para Europeans, Paris qualification and zonal update, Latest Governance Code Gap assessment, Sport Integrity Service Jurisdiction document. Board members to follow up with any additional questions to executive team. The Board congratulated all the medal winners at the Cadet, Junior and Para European Championships.
•	Action Items - Agenda has actions marked as done 131-133, 127, 126, 123, 122, 113, 128 – 130 outstanding to be updated for end of year reporting. New Risks - None to note <i>Inputs:</i> Action List (below), Interim Decision (none), Risk Log
•	Approve Previous Board Minutes - Some inaccuracies on the initials and surname Curren - Nominated and seconded and approved.
•	Strategy Area: Sustainability (& Resource Management) Tactic: Continue to prepare and manage a managed budget Noting & Approval <u>Finance Part 1. 23-24 Q3 Management Accounts</u> Short verbal update of highlights, focussing on Events and Commercial <i>The Board is being asked to approve the Q3 Accounts.</i>

Item	Item Description
	Input – Q3 Management Accounts (copy in for approval folder) • The management accounts were shared and explained to the end of Q3 by DM • We are a little ahead of budget with a surplus £3500 • Events is slightly ahead and Commercial is slightly behind • There were no new events in Q3 and therefore no results and therefore it is relatively unchanged • Questions were invited. • Q3 management accounts were approved and seconded by TCJ and JT <u>Finance Part 2. 23-24 Q4 Forecast & Year End Outlook</u> <i>Input – Membership Financials, Other Income</i> • Membership income and corporate services are slightly better than budget • We should end the year on, or better than budget for the organisation, as a whole. • Questions were invited. <u>Finance Part 3. 24-25 Budget</u> Board to note progress. • DM ran through a detailed powerpoint and invited questions • AGRC discussed this in detail last week • It has been in development since the Autumn • Currently budgeting a better result in Events (excluding staff costs); this is our most important budget area. Last year we had a deficit of £15K. This year we are expecting additional income from sponsorship (WheelPower) for the Para events and increased entry numbers by maximising use of pre-existing venues for larger/additional competitions. We have kept entry fee increases modest. • Commercial budget is a negative variance of £12500 as sales/renewal targets are conservative with the departure of our Commercial Director. Coach Education will be an area of growth. ‘We are Forging Futures’ should produce a better margin than is shown. Membership fees have been increased by 5% based on 1st Jan 2024 fee increases. • Corporate Services is a positive variance. Some professional fees have changed, due to outsourcing to the Jockey Club having stopped. We have had to bring this in house with a new staff member. We are now receiving 5% interest on our cash

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	reserves, which is an increase from this time last year. This will help us mitigate some of the other costs. • Thanks was given to DM for a great summary. • It was asked if we need to spend cash reserves to get future funding from Sport England? It is usually UK Sport that ask for contributory funding, there is an expectation that NGBs maintain a minimum level of reserves and for the last number of years we have not been able to increase reserves. • ML asked if there were any concerns with the budget; • In accordance with the Governance Code for Sport, the Board reviewed the completed Financial Skills Matrix, and agreed (as proposed by AGRC) that the financial skills as summarised were sufficient for the organisation to deliver on the strategy and budget.
•	CEO Update • Stakeholder Update – Funding Bodies/BOA/BP – Site visits to Paris have been undertaken to support preparation. Our athlete results are not yet at the level to secure World Class Programme Funding. MOU in pack to work with UKSI to look at options for the future of the para world class programme, supported by funding from UK Sport to look at a plan for this. • Stakeholder Update – FIE/EFC – As an EFC Comex member, Hilary now on 2 EFC committees, one looking at Olympic qualification routes. The FIE will also be reviewing qualification routes and our objective is to remain close to the discussions as part of our International Relations strategy. There are elections later this year, for both the FIE and EFC. The presidential candidate is likely to be one individual for the FIE. There may be two candidates for the EFC Presidency. We are reviewing our succession plans for EFC/FIE Commissions and Councils. Proposals will go as usual to NomCom for approval. It was queried if Hilary was happy in her role; she is, but it will need to be reviewed in October 2024 at the end of the Olympic cycle. It is important that we have multiple BF members in positions to build long term relationships and maintain an ability to inform practice on the European and International Committees. Costs in this area are supported by UK Sport as part of our IR strategy. • Pathway/GBR – Selection Policies, Olympic Qualification - There is information and links in the pack. We have had some good medals / top placings in the EFC across a range of disciplines and age groups. Progress is demonstrated by comparison of Cadet and Junior results 2018 to 2023. 3 medals won in recent Cadet and Junior Europeans and the Para Team brought home multiple medals from the recent European Championships shoring up Paralympic qualification chances. Paris Olympic qualification and zonal update in pack – unlikely that any individuals will qualify directly. Camps have been focused on social media presence and competition etiquette. • Membership/Clubs/Customer Service – Events continue to run. There have been

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	some staff departures resulting in redeployment/relocation to backfill gaps. Community Award winners will be announced in April. New BF phone options launched after feedback. • P&P/Social Impact - We are increasing our presence in Welsh Schools • GB League/Events/Event rating project/ Ratings presentation at recent Board Away Day, ratings pilot rolling out to Epee. GB League badges sent out and exploring options to promote inclusion of seated fencing in the weapon leagues and a new club team GB league. Thanks due to Millfield for hosting the School Teams. • Para World Cup – We need to look at qualification through Home Nations due to expense of hosting big competitions. There is further information in the pack. Cardiff was a huge success with a 100,000 hits on social media; UK Sport have put us on the list to host 2 more events and possibly a world championships in 2027 with funding to deliver this. • Comms - Across the social board, reach has improved, total reach on Facebook in last six months has now hit 1 million views. The photo-sharing website (britishfencing.smugmug.com) for BF events and competitions has had over 180k total photo views since its launch at the end of December, proving particularly popular with athletes. Cadet & Junior athletes attending the European Championships in Naples were given media training covering interview techniques, photography and personal standards. The comms team is welcoming a new junior member of staff at the end of March to give us more capacity to cover events, develop our video offering and work on an improvement programme for the main BF website, ahead of the Olympics and Paralympics in the summer. • Environmental Sustainability - There is more information in the pack • Disciplinary/Sport Integrity – UK Sport Integrity service agreement has been signed and is in the pack along with new Disciplinary Code and Codes of Conduct now in effect. • Misc – Medical guidelines about pregnancy will be published on the website (thanks to the Medical Committee. Minor updates to Safety Guidelines will be coming through for Board approval. • GU was thanked for her detailed explanations • Olympic qualifying events / zonals will be attended, despite it being costly, to give athletes the opportunities in an Olympic year, despite not being ranked in the top 3. A panel meet to decide this. • Questions were invited. • JT raised concerns over use of discretionary selection for zonals. GU explained that the selection policy had a detailed breakdown on how to use any discretionary

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	factors. TCJ raised how great the Cadet and Junior results were; GU agreed, raising concerns about the time and high cost of getting a Junior World Class Fencer to performing at Senior level. (Safeguarding, UKAD, Diversity covered below)
•	<i>Information & Approval</i> <u>Board Sub-Committee Items: AGRC</u> (items not already covered above) None
•	<i>Information & Approval</i> <u>Board Sub-Committee Items: NomCom</u> - A meeting was held on Monday 11th March. - The Chair recruitment is underway, led by a sub group - We need to advertise for a new independent director - Chris Tidmarsh has joined the Board temporarily as a casual member, bringing much needed legal skills - Chair Appraisal has been halted with the pending election - CEO appraisal is happening Action: The new Chair will do the Board Evaluation following their appointment in the Autumn - NomCom reviewed and approved the succession planning document which is in the pack to note.
•	<u>Board Strategy Away Day</u> - Thanks was given to those who came to this. - ML summarised the key points and key strategic areas - The role of the Board was discussed in detail and how it can become more visible with calendaring, branding moving forward - It was asked why it was thought that the Board needs to be more visible. We are

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	the leadership and GU and the executive team needs support from us - Retaining an Independent Chair was agreed to be important - The promotion of respect between fencers, coaches, parents and volunteers, is a key focus. - Environmental Policy was discussed in that the working group needs to continue to move forward on this area, however there are limitations to what Fencing as a sport can do. The biggest challenge is the international fencing requires travel. - We are content with the finances and the reserves policy was touched upon. We need to continue to be prudent and we need to review investments in the short term where there are opportunities to increase returns. - The commercial strategy was discussed with the feeling we have come a long way. - From a strategy perspective, a club vision statement was devised, in the noting folder. - We had an interesting presentation on the rating system and the opportunity it provides for local events and how we can support some clubs to be performance based. - Questions were invited. - It was asked if there would continue to be a limit put on one team per club at competitions. A league was mentioned to allow competition between clubs with a mini team rankings introduced, along the lines of the BUCS model. This would then enable recreational fencers to compete more locally. - The World Class Programme has changed dramatically from an athlete point of view, with a holistic approach being taken. - KPIs will be adapted to take account of these changes to the world class programme. - There are questions over the future of the Wheelchair WCP currently hosted by UKSI, as UK Sport are keen to explore the option of BF hosting the programme in future. - Questions have been raised by members in relation to the role of BF in agreeing/overseeing selection policies and procedures for FIE Veteran World Championships as the recognised National Governing Body. This needs to be taken forward.
	<u>People Plan</u> GU presented the draft People Plan to the Board.

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	• The guidance needs to be followed to ensure robustness in the different areas. It is not sufficient to have the contents in different documents. • In line with the guidance a workforce analysis was undertaken alongside the different workforce categories, skills and competencies, to produce a 'matrix' for analysis, to create the people plan. These are all in the appendix. • Questions were invited. It is not yet finished. It was explained that Sport England require it and for it to be reviewed annually. • Does the Board feel we are lacking in any areas? • Do the clubs provide training or do we? We provide welfare training, but they train in other areas. Refereeing training is always a bone of contention. • The amount of paperwork the CEO is required to do to meet governance standards is becoming unmanageable and unviable. The Sport CEOs are addressing this with Sport England, in particular.
•	<u>Standing Item – Safeguarding</u> • The Balanced Scorecard has the updated information in it. • The CPSU annual audit has been done and our status is 'met'. • Both documents are in the pack. Questions were asked for • Brian Brittain has agreed to take on the Board Welfare and Safety role which includes being a conduit to the annual Safety Committee meeting. Yashmin retains her Board Safeguarding role. • There are a larger number of matters being referred, which aren't actually safeguarding, both to ourselves and more often direct to the police. This takes up administration time. • It was suggested that specific examples are added to the policy to give parents an idea of what is/isn't safeguarding. Unfortunately, people are just escalating issues straight to the police, without reading BF policies first. • Board members were reminded that they had a duty to report any welfare concerns. • GU briefed the Board on the case widely reported in the press of an alleged gang rape by Italian sabreurs at a fencing camp in Italy last year of an U18 female who competes on the international circuit. The Italian Fencing Federation have continued to allow the accused to travel and compete internationally despite ongoing investigations. GU explained the safeguarding measures taken so far to protect our fencers. A precautionary principle should pervade.

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	Action: GU to talk to CT about what we should say to members.
12	Information <u>Standing Item – Anti-Doping</u> - The annual submission is due in April. - UKAD ran testing for the Wheelchair World Cup - We ran an education programme alongside this - UKAD were pleased with the results - An anti-doping stand and information was at the training weekend for the Cadet & Junior European Championships team in February. - In the process of submitting our assurance framework documents, and a new template/format for our implementation plan, due in April. Discussions with the 4 home countries to whether we need to be 5 NGBs or 1 for this purpose. Our preference is the latter to avoid multiple versions of the same documents. - The Paris long list of fencers and staff are in the process of doing their mandatory online courses, eLearning followed by a scenarios workshop delivered by UKAD.
13	Information <u>Standing Item - Equality & Diversity</u> - Sporting Equals Race Representation Index consultation session taking place with Sporting Equals mid March. Support already requested to help develop up to date and consistent demographic data collection framework - without a WCP it isn't easy to identify scope. - DIAP update - progress delayed due to workload with Wheelchair World Cup - final stages of DIAP development being concluded with completion end of March 2024. Internal action plan developed alongside overview. - GU summarised the main activities set out in the draft Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) in Board Folder
14	AOB Sport England Governance – items not already covered - MC asked if she could talk about Breast Cancer fencing at the next meeting - MC / GU / ML to discuss this outside of the meeting

Item	Item Description
	Meeting closed at 19:45