

## BRITISH FENCING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	14.03.23
<b>Location</b>	Linklaters and Zoom
<b>Present</b>	<p>Board Directors: PA, JC, MC, TCJ, FG, YH, JL, TM, FW, JW, TB</p> <p><b>Directors (Voting)</b>            Mark Lyttle, Chair            Pat Aiyenuro, Anti-Doping Champion (PA)            Tabatha Barton (TB)            Jade Clarke (JC)            Mary Cohen (MC)            Tommy Curren Jones (TCJ)            Francesca Gliubich, BF Charity Chair (FG)            Yashmin Harun, Safeguarding Champion (YH)            Jochen Losch, Senior Independent Director (JL)            Tom Murray (TM)            Francis Wilkinson (FW)            James Williams (JW)</p>
<b>In Attendance</b>	<p><u>Executive Attendees (Non-Voting):</u>            Georgina Usher, CEO (GU)            David Moseley, FD (DM)            Virginia Bailey, Participation Director, (VB)            Rick Rogers, Inclusion Officer (RR)</p> <p><u>Home Nation Observers –</u>            Jack McGill (JM), NIF            Peter Howes (PH), ENG</p> <p><u>Athletes Rep Panel</u>            Will Deary (WD),            Billy Shepherd (BS).</p>
<b>Apologies</b>	
<b>Board Papers</b>	BF External Board Directors Share\Board Meetings\2023\2. 14.03.2023

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**Chair Opening Remarks:** Chair opened the meeting with a welcome and confirmed the attendance in the room and online.

He reminded all that the streamlined process was being used to cut down on the number of governance related activities and admin time.

Three folders were in the dropbox for approval or discussion.

**Apologies/New Declarations of Interest/Conflicts of Interest**

There were no apologies.

No conflicts of interests reported for the meeting.

No new interests raised.

CEO reminded directors of their responsibility to review and update the register.

**Risk Items:** None raised.

**Interim Decisions:** There were 3 interim decisions:

- Approval of the underwriting of the Para World Cup to unlock UK Sport funding.
- Approval of the Terms of Reference for the BF Honours and BF Safety Committees.
- Performance reviews processes are unchanged with:
  - CEO performance review to be conducted by Chair and to be reported back initially to Nom Com
  - Chair evaluation to be conducted by SID and to be reported back initially to Nom Com
  - Board evaluation to be conducted by Chair and to be reported back initially to Nom Com.

**Policies for Approval:** There were no policies for approval in this meeting.

## 2. ACTION ITEMS

- The Chair reviewed the action items – no queries were raised.

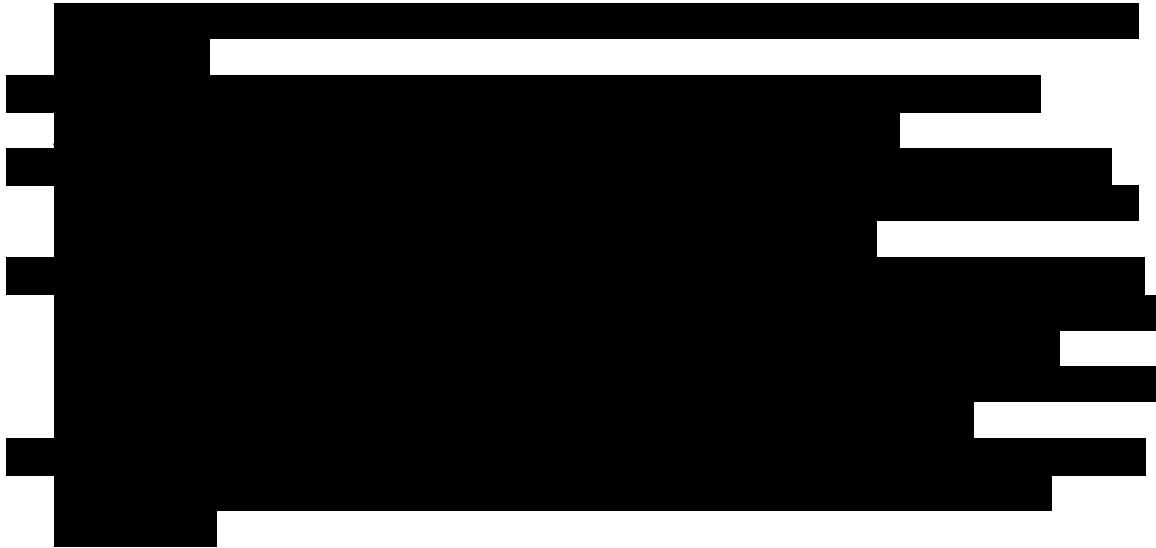
## 3. APPROVE PREVIOUS BOARD MINUTES

*Decision/Approval: The minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were approved.*

## 4. RUS/BLRUS POSITION

- Background papers are in the pack.
- Detailed discussion took place on the FIE's decision to allow RUS/BLRUS athletes to compete under some form of neutrality arrangement. Most European counties (incl. GBR) did not vote for that decision, consistent with GB's long standing position on this.

[REDACTED]



- In summary, it was agreed that:
  - The situation remains fluid with details not yet agreed by IOC, FIE, EFC and DCMS.
  - There was consensus that BF was disappointed with the decision of FIE and a statement should be released to that effect.
  - Senior athletes would be supported in their decision to compete or not as the situation evolved.
  - Guidance for Juniors and Cadets would be considered when competition details emerged.

*Action: Release Board statement on RUS/BLR position*

*Action: Exec to provide additional guidance for Junior and Cadets with regard to the RUS/BRUS position would be considered when competition details emerged.*

## 5. FINANCE PART 1. 22-23 Q3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

FW went through the Q3 management accounts up until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. The headline figures were:

- The results for the unfunded department show a loss of £34,785 to Q3.
- The budgeted result for the period was a surplus of £7,167, there being a variance of approx £42,000 from budget.
- It was felt that the variance at the end of Q4 will not be materially different from the budget which was forecasted for a deficit of approx £3,000.
- The key reasons for the variance were:
  - A large negative variance in Events of approx £23,000.
  - Improvement in membership of approx £19,000
  - A variance on the commercial budget of almost £23,000 (relating to the lead time that schools are taking to sign up to the licensing programme and changes in staffing).

- DM added that the Eden Cup had sustained big losses and Commercial whilst likely to recover long term, will be behind on this budget. Membership was almost back to pre-Covid levels, despite an average 5% membership fee increase. Corporate services was behind budget due to increased costs eg, professional fees, safeguarding costs etc.
- Of the £26,000 loss in events, £22,500 of that was related to the Eden Cup.
- The schools' package was discussed, there being a number of products in the range, with discussions being held with the more affluent schools about the higher level products being sold.
- Package deals were being considered with groups of schools as opposed to buying individually.
- The Chair brought attention to a note he had drafted (in the folder) after the last Steering meeting about the commercial side of things and outlined the number of schools that had been signed. He commented on the appointment of the salesperson to sell the commercial packages to schools, which whilst slower than thought, was working. To cover the sales person salary, around 25 schools were required.
- It was suggested that the Association of Muslim schools be approached. Further work with the Scouting associations was also suggested.
- **Decision/Approval:** The Q3 accounts were approved.

## Draft Budget

- [REDACTED]
- The draft budget was discussed at AGRC where questions were raised about the level of commercial surplus.
  - The number of schools signed up in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, was double that of those budgeted for next year.
  - DM stated the contracted income helps the situation.

- [REDACTED]
- Next year's Eden Cup hasn't been budgeted for.
  - To reduce next year's deficit, it was suggested that the ¼ly publication of The Sword was stopped.
  - The option of an annual hardback edition was discussed and an enhanced membership package suggested.
  - TCJ provided feedback from the membership around rising costs, people not making the link between rising costs generally and fencing, and why competitions in Europe were cheaper.
  - It was agreed that a balance between the cost reduction measures (e.g. around The Sword) and reducing the deficit in Events needed to be struck.
  - DM reported that if the budget broke even this year, the reserves would be £410,000. Any loss would reduce those further. Rather than using the reserves for growth, they were currently being used to sustain the governing body.

- [REDACTED] The Board also determined that a budgeted deficit next year [REDACTED] was too high given the state of the reserves as cost increases were not temporary. It was agreed that reserves should not be spent on running BF. [REDACTED]
- The draft budget was discussed at AGRC where questions were raised about the level of commercial surplus.

## 6. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: NOMCOM

- NomCom approvals covered earlier in the Introduction.
- Staff salary increases had been discussed with GU working on a proposal to bring to the April interim Board meeting where the budget will be approved.

## 7. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: AGRC

### Jockey Club Services

- FW reported that the Jockey Club has given notice that they will be ceasing the outsourced financial processing service to NGBs. There is a 3 month notice period and a 9 month extension allowed which provides time to source alternative solutions.
- DM has been investigating systems, the 6 NGBs affected, having formed a side group to look at possibilities. Further updates will be provided by DM as they occur.

### Auditor Update

- A list of auditors is being compiled to replace Haysmacintyre, a smaller company sought with more manageable fees.
- A shortened list will be circulated to the Board, with a tender process needing to be gone through.
- The results of the tender will need to go to AGRC for review and then to the Board for formal approval and appointment.

## 8. CEO UPDATE

The CEO updated the Board on the following:

- UK Sport – Formal notification received about the termination of the Named Athlete programme.
- Series of working groups has been initiated by UK Sport – with the Chair and CEO involved.
- Sport England – Update to the Governance Code, BF required to undertake a form of self-assessment. A Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan is required, much of the work already embedded into the Sport England funding bid. Other governance areas will require more resourcing to undertake.
- Junior Europeans almost passed without incident, but nothing at the level where formal follow-up disciplinary action was required.
- Environmental Sustainability - website has been updated with details of new Environmental Sustainability Working Group (ESWG) featuring the policy previously signed up to. An action plan is being developed to support policy.
- The Event Rating project, detailed discussions around APIs taking place. Looking to socialise the concept of event ratings at the BYCs. This is at pilot stage and being led by Paul Abrahams.
- The British Open is going ahead in June with the closed Nationals in April.
- JW undertook a site visit to Medway, noting that prices quoted from JW's team are similar to prices quoted from other venues. JW agreed to provide competitive costs with regard to other venue quotes.

- Letter (in pack) signed by BF and other NGBs which went to Government seeking help for venues with their rising costs.
- There was discussion about the reserves policy, especially in relation to any funding bids.
- The ESWG has drafted a report and is preparing guidance document for the Fencing community. Questions were asked around
  - Were any reserves being used in any funds which fund fossil fuels
  - Ethical investment in BFA
- GU stated that this could be addressed at the next investment/AGRC meeting.  
*Action – AGRC to consider the issues raised by the ESWG.*

### 9. UPDATE ON STRATEGIC BOARD INITIATIVES

- Board noted the strategic initiatives running over the past year, with updates provided by GU in Dropbox, including the focus on membership numbers.

### 10. SAFEGUARDING

- Training for ADP athletes and parents was progressing, with log in details and passwords provided in the pack for any Board members who wished to undertake the training.
- The results of the CPSU audit process are in the pack, the Board noting that a pass had been achieved.
- The Ann Craft Trust audit has also to be completed focusing on adults at risk. This will be completed by GU and Liz B over the next 6-8 months.
- GU reported on higher caseloads due to more reporting, but hard to manage from a resource perspective.
- The pack contains a Welfare Audit, commissioned by the Board on the status of Welfare officers in clubs. The first draft has been received, GU providing headline findings:
  - Aim was to look at how to target support to clubs with limited resources
  - At the end of February, 156 clubs had responded
  - Further work was required with those who had not responded
  - Largest response was from clubs in the southeast with University clubs having the lower response rate.
  - Only 5.7% had no welfare officer, predominantly from community clubs.
  - 4.5 of clubs were willing to admit that they were not compliant in their coaches being trained on safeguarding which was a concern.
  - Clubs provided more detail about the type of support they required, predominantly around help with training. There were still challenges in the booking process for online training which need to be investigated.
- Thanks to the responses, some data pruning/updating has been carried out and Liz B is working on restructuring the content of the safeguarding courses.
- GU explained the categorisation of safeguarding threshold levels, the current case managing system being used, guiding users through the categorisation process – Levels 1 and 2.
- Nothing of significant concern was brought to the Board
- GU expressed concern that some adult cases now being brought to BF's attention were ones that should be taken to the police yet the victims did not wish to go to the authorities. This has been raised with Sport England around the role of NGBs in community welfare/care.
- Liz B has signposted people to the options available regarding the reporting of concerns.

- In response to a question, GU agreed to check progress around an action discussed at a previous Board meeting regarding all club committee members needing to have welfare training. She also agreed to pick the issue up around clubs not being insured if they didn't meet the minimum standards.
- The Board was also reminded by the Chair of having an obligation to report anything they were aware of that may be causing a safeguarding concern.
- MC suggested that all clubs (dependent on their venue) could have a safeguarding flowchart displayed in their premises which allowed members to see the process to follow if they are being bullied or have concerns.

*Action: GU to check the action around club committee members having welfare training.*

*Action: GU to confirm minimum standards required for insurance cover.*

## 11. PATHWAY -DISABILITY INCLUSION

- Rick Rodgers (RR) updated the Board on work taking place around disability inclusion and the aims going forward. He covered:
  - The Strategy
  - The challenges being faced as an NGB
  - Successes so far
  - The resources built
  - The Level Access Survey
- Key points regarding the above:
  - Current focus is on wheelchair fencing being the Paralympic programme although there are significant challenges being faced by other users.
  - The aims of the strategy are:
    - To increase the wheelchair fencing population from current 0.25% to 2%.
    - Improve disability confidence across the coaching workforce eg staff, coaches, referees, volunteers etc.
    - Increase the number of clubs providing disability inclusive opportunities
    - Ensure that the disabled community feels welcome and that fencing is for them.
  - The key principles for activities (SEAS) are:
    - Showcase, Educate, Advocate, Support. These underpin all activities that are being developed.
  - RR explained the above more clearly.
- He further covered explained the outcomes short term – 12-18 months:
  - Development of cost effective equipment
  - CPD training
  - Creation of online resources - welcome me video set (6)
  - All competitions relevant to wheelchair users to be inclusive including having 2 dedicated wheelchair user events
  - Continue ASD pilots – targeting other sectors of the disabled community
  - Successfully deliver the IWAS Para fencing World Cup (January 2024).
- 5 Year outcomes:
  - Increase the current wheelchair fencing population to between 100 to 200

- members.
  - At least 20 clubs providing wheelchair opportunities
  - Roll out the ASD pilot project
  - Build a base of University fencing provision
- 10 year outcomes:
  - Develop Blind and VI fencing disciplines
  - Develop physical disability fencing disciplines
  - Increase number of disabled fencers to 300-400 across all disciplines
- Work to date includes challenges around:
  - A lack of data about inclusive practice.
  - Lack of data around accessibility of venues
  - Equipment cost barriers
  - Increasing the confidence of coaches
  - Lack of website and marketing assets.
- Successes to date:
  - Creation of a website landing zone to support the confidence of coaches
  - Level Access survey has been released
  - Secured Wheelpower funding for coaches' CPD training
  - Two community discussion events delivered for coaches and athletes
  - Three web pages have been built including an accessible venue page
  - Terminology sheet – last review in progress
  - Inclusion review matrix – self assessment of policies and venue.
- RR outlined and explained the Level Access survey sent out to 403 clubs with 94 returns – 23% of all clubs. The results are being analysed with a summary report expected by the end of March. A video was provided to aid the survey and increase returns.
- Discussion followed around the strategy and in particular, the challenges faced around equipment and storage, with easier to store frame systems being developed.
- TB outlined a range of funding opportunities being progressed including:
  - Ongoing discussions with Welsh fencing to draw down capital funding from Wales for equipment.
  - One central bid to Sport England around collaboration between clubs for equipment
  - UK Sport for the purchase of 6 frames
  - UK Sport funding for the World Cup and the Welsh Government
  - Worshipful Company of Cutlers support for some of the online resource costs.
- RR was thanked for his presentation and continuing work.

## 12. Q&A WITH ATHLETE PANEL MEMBERS

Will Deary (WD) and Bill Shepherd (BS) joined the meeting for a Q&A with the Board.

- Chair asked for update on previous Board meeting. WD acknowledged that the AP had not provided content for webpage/survey/email and requested further reminders from Exec Team. (Action: GU to arrange for reminder emails)
- The Chair summarised the earlier discussion held about the Board's position regarding the RUS/BLRUS situation.
- WD stressed the need for BF to put something out via social media on the situation



## BOARD MEETING MINUTES 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023

- The difficulty of athletes being self funded was stressed, not being easy to say whether they can or cannot fence RUS/BLRUS athletes. Most fencers have said they will complete regardless of RUS/BLRUS participation.
- The Chair reminded those present of the context of the FIE voting on the proposal.
- With regard to the Paris Olympics, GU stated that the IOC was strongly in favour of allowing a neutrality arrangement, a meeting scheduled for the end of March to discuss what that means.
- The status of the European Games is that Poland will not let RUS/BLRUS athletes in.
- GU expressed concern about the social media backlash should any athlete choose to fence against RUS/BLRUS. She felt it needed to be considered in advance and agreed to pick this up as a separate action with WD/BS, Directors to discuss what support and guidelines could be provided.
- WD mentioned that there was still a need for a big social media push from the athlete panel with regard to communication with other athletes. It was noted that feedback from people known, has been mainly negative, around pricing at events and discretionary places.
- WD agreed to email GU with the specifics of the above.
- Discussion was held around the cost of event entries, the Chair providing context on the losses that the BFA has incurred on fencing events, the level of loss not sustainable long term.
- BS/WD were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting at 7.51pm.

*Action: GU to remind AP to provide email/survey/webpage content*

*Action: AP to provide email/survey/webpage content*

*Action: AP to email athlete concerns about event pricing and selection*

*Action – GU/WD/BS/Director to discuss support and guidelines for athletes who compete against RUS/BLRUS athletes.*

*Action: WD to email GU with the specifics around negative feedback with regard to event pricing and discretionary places.*

### 13. STANDING ITEM - ANTI-DOPING

- Letter from UKAD is in the pack.
- PA provided a brief report on the work of the team over the last 12 months:
  - Maintenance of the website with up-to-date anti-doping information
  - Active on social media
  - Training and education sessions online for BF members at all age groups
  - Series of webinars held delivered by international testing agencies
  - Shared information relevant to the senior fencers
  - In regular contact with athlete support teams
  - Now have 5 Anti-Doping Educators with more training being put forward from UKAD to get more.
  - CPD workshops and training webinars held with UKAD and ITA.
- It was suggested that it should be mandatory for all athletes to undertake anti-doping training.
- GU outlined the process undertaken by BF should there be any issues around an athlete failing a doping test.

- It was agreed that a session could be run for coaches, athletes and parents leading up to the European Games.

#### 14. STANDING ITEM - EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- The balanced Scorecard was in the pack and noted by the Board.

#### 15. AOB

- BF Medical and Safety Dashboard was in the pack with the other balanced scorecards
- The passing of Allen Jay was noted, with condolences sent to his family and friends.
- The Cadet and Junior Championships were held successfully, with some good performances from the athletes. It was noted that athletes who had moved up an age group had produced promising performances, especially from the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Juniors.
- This Girl Can – GU recommended watching the video, emphasising the amount of work undertaken to keep the project alive., The BF playing a prominent role.
- BF Charity – Trustees will be contacted for support for funding for wheelchairs.

The meeting closed at 20.03 – next meeting 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023

#### 16. CONFIDENTIAL ITEM - DIRECTORS ONLY

- Directors and GU had a wide-ranging discussion about how costs rises were affecting the sport.