

# BRITISH FENCING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

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Last Updated: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	24.11.2020
<b>Location</b>	By Video Link
<b>Present</b>	Chair, JC, TC, MO, PAb, TCJ, CH, YH, PAi, JW
<b>In Attendance</b>	CEO, KR, DM, FG, JM, MR (Part), President

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, with an extra welcome to the new Board Directors joining their first meeting. Chair also noted that in the last two months, given that there were no events the activity from the executive team has been amazing. There has been a great deal of work done during the period, including working with stakeholders, lobbying DCMS and holding community events, 63 news items between June and September 2020 and the last 2 months alone there have been 73 news items. It was acknowledged that it has been a tough couple of weeks with the run up to Christmas and these times can have an impact on well-being.

Chair has had two AGRC meetings, two ADP meetings, two Sport for Social Change Group meetings, a Commercial sub group meeting and a deep dive risk register meeting.

**Apologies:** CO

**New Declarations of Interest:** No new declarations of interest. New Board Directors have submitted their declarations.

**Conflict of interest:** None

**Interim Decisions:** Board had agreed the leadership statement submitted to UK Sport as part of the Progression funding investment bid for the next cycle. Board also completed the (external) diversity survey. Board members were circulated a note about the BBC Panorama programme on eating disorders.

**Notable results:** None.

**Action Items:** 70 and 71 done, 64 DM waiting for another quote from Haysmacintyre, once received DM will take to the AGRC.

**New Risks:** None

## 2. APPROVE PREVIOUS BOARD MINUTES

The minutes of September 2020 were approved.

### 3. STRATEGY AWAY DAY

The suggestion is to break up the Board away day into 3 1.5 hour zoom sessions.

The topics that we should look at discussing are:

- What is important to the in terms of restarting/recovering for
  - The sport
  - The community
  - BF
- Safeguarding, impact of Covid, wellbeing issues and concerns
- Culture - is the BF culture appropriate and what do we need to do to improve our gender and ethnic minority in our sport?
- Increasing diversity and inclusion in the sport
- Do we have the right environment in place?
- Review last years' priorities and possibly restruct/prioritise them

JC pointed out that the 3 session would be more manageable. We need more detailed conversation around black members of our community.

PAb agreed agenda items good. We have failed to grow the membership anywhere near targets that we set ourselves when he joined the Board 7 years ago. Membership revenues are key to the organisation. We need to look at how we systematically grow the membership and put a strategy in place to do that.



YH – opportunity to do some work on why females do not engage in the sport as much.  
YH asked if we need to focus on mental wellbeing in the next strategy.

CH – the ADP are doing a really good job at dealing with mental wellbeing.

### 4. PRESIDENT UPDATE

IR activities less than usual

FIE congress was due to be this month in Moscow but due to the current situation it has been postponed until next year after the Olympic Games. It will take place in Moscow next year in November unless the Olympics do not go ahead in which case it will be brought forward to May/June. We will know in March when the final decision will be made about Tokyo.

There will be an online vote tomorrow (25<sup>th</sup> November) agreeing which countries will host the major events in 2022. There is only one candidate for each of the events: The Juniors and Cadets will be held in the UAE, the Seniors in Cairo and the Vets in Croatia.

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Competitions were due to restart in January 2021 which is looking unlikely – with best guess being in February.

Olympic qualifying events to take place in March.

EFC held the ordinary annual congress which took place online which included changes to the statutes and rules, and election congress which is postponed until June 2021.

The EFC congress was originally due to take place in September in Sochi. Where GB along with other EU nations unable to travel to Sochi at the time – 6 of those countries got together and agreed to write to the EFC asking them to postpone it as many countries would not be able to attend. At a late stage we received an email saying that they would be postponed until next year.



IRC committee: we have 3 members, President and the CEO and one other person nominated by the President and CEO. Until now PJ has been that other person but as he is now happy to stand down and become part of the wider IR group we would like to nominate PAi as the 3<sup>rd</sup> member of the committee. PAi has many contacts with the international community with events and is part of our international liaison team.

TC asked how the committee interacted with the work the President was doing with the EFC.

President pointed out that there was no real overlap other than the sharing of the information of what we are doing. President updates the CEO and PAi on the work that they are doing.

From the Presidents answer TC was happy with the proposal.

Board approved the change to the IRC committee.

Chair asked the President about the chances of the OG's going ahead.

President thought that every effort would be made to hold the last Olympic qualifying events in March and that the OG's were likely to go ahead.



CEO added that the latest from the BOA is that the IOC and TOCOG are concern at the number of sports and athletes that have not completed the qualification process and are working to overcome that recognising that some of the qualification process may lead to changes.

## 5. CEO UPDATE

As indicated by news stories a lot of activities in the last few months.

- Sport is waiting on outcome of comprehensive spending review – indications are that sport as a whole will get a one-year settlement. UK Sport are optimistic that they can get a four-year settlement. It matters because if UK Sport only get a one-year settlement and it is no bigger than now – we are bottom of the pile. We are sitting with a progression bid funding to start the process of athletes and coaches to 2032. It would be disappointing if we did not secure the funding.
- The Government announced a sport winter recovery fund to be split between a number of sports. Important for the Board to note that we did not apply for the funding as we have not lost spectator revenue.
- Messages to continue to support clubs are ongoing – BF have written to DCMS with their response on the Call for Evidence. Information in Board pack.
- #SaveOurSport our sport recovery fund. A lot of work has been done and we continue to lobby on behalf of our clubs.
- [REDACTED]
- UK Sport – The Continuity Funding Part 2 is complete. [REDACTED]. Have had a positive feedback from phase 3 progression bid, as well as phase 2. UK Sport PLX conference has been run online this year. More staff got to get involved.
- BOA updated on Tokyo. Main point being that it is going ahead. Preparations are underway for Paris.
- BVF update: Gillian Aghajan has stepped down after 6 years as Chair of the BVF. Mark has written to Gillian on behalf of the Board and we have sent her some flowers from HO.
- DCMS Sport Integrity Group – no update as yet.
- Waiting for clarification on tier guidance.
- 2020 governance review has been performed. 4 arising actions have come out of it and the details are with AGRC to manage.

JC asked about the funding as she was unclear on which phase was received.

CEO – All Paris cycle phases were well received, phase 3 progression particularly well received.

Continuity Funding (Part 1 & 2) a separate funding process.

Chair asked about the mood of the community.

CEO – in September it was a little more optimistic but with the second lockdown people are general not as happy (including staff wellbeing).

JW said that it was felt that the younger members felt that they are losing the ability to compete in age group categories and events. Is there something we can think about that we can do for them?

CEO we will have a special edition of the Sword magazine (an extra edition) which celebrates athletes and what they have missed, and we will mark the occasion.

JW asked about doing something physical and practical.

CEO once it is safe to do so we can certainly think about doing something practical. We are

delivering many sessions through zoom etc, but restrictions are still in place which prevents most group activities

Chair – we will add the discussion to our January Away Day.

## 6. FINANCE PART 1 20-21 Q2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

### **Finance Part 1. 20-21 Q2 Management Accounts**

The management accounts results are better than expected in the sense that membership revenues for the year so far are better than budget. When the budget was written we were cautious, and the experience is that membership revenue had not fallen as much but also has not recovered as much.

There is a deficit of £27,000 against a £41,049 budgeted deficit. To be viewed with caution as we are expecting to be worse of in next half of year particularly with the second lockdown and the impact it has had.

[REDACTED]

Commercial slightly ahead of a very low revised budget.

Broadly on budget for Corporate Services.

### **Finance Part 2. Forecast against 20-21 Budget**

The budget has been revised as the first revised budget (in March) assumed that there would be a recovery in the autumn and is now showing a deficit of £49,815.

Commercial variance is expected to be £20,000, Events £13,000 and Corporate Services £45,000.

Commercial budget has been revised down to £20,000 from £43,000 due to the non-existent face to face deliveries. We have moved coach education delivery to a live online delivery, which will not be a replacement but has been done to manage the current situation.

Events – an improved position because all the events have been taken out due to not being run in this financial year. [REDACTED]

Corporate Services – most important change is the membership revenue. The current budget is showing as a deficit of £50,000 but we do not know if we will finish on that. Membership income breakdown is in the Board pack and is showing as a month-by-month revenue in cash terms and revenue recognition terms. Preparing next years' budget as significant part of deficit will ease into next year. AGRC will be updated regularly.

PAb expressed how impressed he was with the work done by DM on the budget. We need to be aware of when things will recover. The next financial year will face many challenges and must be mindful of the revenues in getting membership and events up again.

TCJ – asked if any other reason for the drop in membership in recent months – is it only due to the second lockdown.

DM – after the first lockdown people were coming back and keeping up with membership, but the second lockdown caused members not to renew with the realisation that there was no confirmation of when they would get back.

Chair – the test will be January, February and March, depending on how quickly things start up.

CEO – we will possibly go back into hard times for Jan and Feb if further lockdown

[REDACTED]

Chair – it is important to note the current budget deficit has a knock-on impact with the Home Nations.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Chair thanked DM.

## 7. INFORMATION

**Commercial** – no update. Commercial revenue dropped as explained in the financial section. Working on online propositions such as core coach and safeguarding and how to market it. We have had a Commercial steering group meeting to discuss.

**P&P** – no significant change in the main programmes they are as they were in September.

**Social impact:** YH reported that due to the lockdown we had not made as much progress as hoped. Had interest externally but all on hold. Hope to have project by the end of December.

Change foundation - not sure if we can restart due to the current situation. Had a discussion about bringing in an intern to support the work. MGF event at the weekend successful. We are now liaising with SE to get funding.

**Events** – Senior nationals have been cancelled. Cadet and Junior championships have not changed. Ranking and ranked events are still suspended.

The GB league our new project with an initiative to recover with funding from UKSport. Working on return to competition guidance.

Social change strategy objectives sitting in the Board pack. Board should feedback offline if they have any issues with it.

Referee development pathway going well.

Developing People Programme undergoing.

TCJ asked if the commonwealth games coming to London will have an impact of BF.

CEO - it will cost England Fencing financially but it is a good thing for fencing in UK and we will support where we can.

HP – it is a good thing – in terms of our awareness there is a small reputational risk. Need to be aware that it will impact on BF as internationally there is not a distinction between BF & EF.

## 8. BREAK

## 9. GBR ATHLETE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT (ADP)

SK reported on ADP with the following points:

- Ran another camp online for 150 athletes
- Ran 6 face to face camps
- Conversion with UK Sport on return to fencing
- Launched pathway standards on website which links to return to fencing work
- UK Sport – phase 3 submitted
- Mental fitness check list document
- Consultations on the Cadet and Juniors championships
- TAP vulnerability workshop delivered

Chair asked if the questions on the survey involved diversity.

SK - no – the surveys are about fencer experience. We have started a workshop of culture and values.

Chair asked if we could do an annual survey for people attending ADP camps around culture and their experience to get a feeling for what their environment is like.

SK - yes we can and we need to look at the discrimination work we are doing also.

We are building more understanding and fencers are sharing more.

JW thanked SK and reflected that more trust is coming from athletes.

## 10. SAFEGUARDING

CEO reported that communications are improving, though this does not make the issues less.

Welfare procedure changes from the last version are coloured in yellow. Thanks to AC-S and TC with their work on this.

Board approved updated Safeguarding Case Management procedure.

Summary of progress against case numbers. No significant variations from the last quarter.

CPSU Audit – questions how cases are managed. Liz Behnke and CEO are making notes against any case that is in motion, so it is clear what we have done and what decisions have been made.

### 11. CLUBS AND MEMBERSHIP

HG reported on Clubs and memberships with the following points:

- Since last meeting we have done a Club Poll following on from the BF Club snap-poll.
- 3 polls have been sent out to club administrations designed to give us a snap-shot of where clubs are. September and October, we had 256 clubs where 55% of those reported some level of activity. Average no of participants in those club activities were around 26.
- Access to venues and places to store equipment were a couple of the issues from those that did not report some level of activity. The November Poll was changed to ask about what we could do to help clubs return and we had 70 responses. Funding and risk assessment being two of the main concerns.

#### **Community discussion events**

- We have moved into doing a range of topics based on what has come in on the polls.
- Looking at doing a digital welfare check
- Also looking to do help on welfare and admin

#### **Playwaze**

- had a successful launch with over 500 members starting to engage on the system. We have a strong relationship with Playwaze which will play a part on the GB League when it gets underway

#### **Regional Governance Review:**

- Since the last Board a projected has been presented to England Chairs.
- Looking at 4 regional Chairs to be involved in the regional group to look at where regions stand with their governance.

#### **Membership Numbers**

- Summary of membership numbers available for the Board.
- Numbers show numbers are falling in our most popular months. Compete and intro membership have the biggest numbers.

TCJ asked if there is any sense of finance difficulties with clubs.

HG nothing concrete but clubs are looking at funding which is an indication.

The FIE small club grants – we are looking putting categories around it so that clubs can apply for that funding. England Fencing have also put together a grant scheme for clubs.

The FIE amount is 4,000 euros which we topped up to make a £5,000 pot.

We are also encouraging clubs to apply for the Sport England and other funding body funding.

Chair thanked HG.

### 12. SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN



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SDV gave an update including the following points:

- BF comms landscape includes licensed partners, partners and funding bodies, current members, recently lapsed members, fans and followers, non-members, commercial audiences, teachers and sports delivery companies.
- Range of platforms and social media channels that we use including hidden channels.
- We have a newsletter that people subscribe to
- We have Zoom community discussions available to member of BF
- A whatsapp channel that we give information to a group of people
- Our audience by size: approx. 150 users of our website that we can track but believe the amount is much larger than that, 20k that we have permission to email, social platforms that are going down in size. Instagram is one that is growing, facebook one that is slowing. We are also focusing on YouTube and LinkedIn.
- 24 hr tweets
- Membership activity
- Current key messages around how we are working for members. We are here to support the members to ensure a return to fencing.
- We have had membership community discussions and have Covid guidance resources
- The weekly digest of news posts is sent out to those that have signed up for it – perhaps that audience are not on social media.
- #Fit2fence emails that have come out of the pandemic – looking a way to serve members – dealing with mindset, fitness etc.
- University club officers – offered a private chanel for them
- Operational updates to members to summarise what they are doing
- Member only content: Safeguarding and coaching online sessions for compete members, online coach register tutorials, community discussions on Zoom which is all audience specific, #fit2fence email series, club resources and marketing assets for the club membership level
- BF awards celebrations
- Trying to keep a sense of community going whilst getting these messages out
- Future comms activity to the end of the calendar year, focus on hope and connection, encouraging members and the wider community by sharing ways they can stay fit and ready to fence.
- GB League launch options, which includes points for sharing on social media

PAb thanked SDV for the presentation and suggest we wait until January 2021 to launch the GB League date.

### 13. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: NOMCOM

JC noted the elections of the new Board Directors, Pat Aiyenuro and James Williams and noted their induction is ongoing. JC will have a conversation with both of them.

JC also noted that NomCom need to replace a voting member on the committee as Ann-Catrin had now left the Board and it was proposed that Pat Aiyenuro join the committee.

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The Board approved PAi replacing ACS on the Nominations Committee.

It was also noted that the Board composition means that we will lose 4 current Board Directors next year and the skills that come with them.

It was noted that IT, Digital, HR and Legal skills are needed and will be added to the next election criteria.

### 14. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: AGRC

Budget and Finance covered.

Decided to keep the reserves policy the same but to keep an eye on it.

Sorting out bank accounts

No new Risks

### 15. STANDING ITEM - EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- Next steps will be on gender discrimination (discrimination in its wider sense rather than just gender)
- Christmas camps are coming up. We are working with Pat on that
- Have added items agreed with our athletes (during BLM movement) to the equality and diversity plan

### 16. AOB

CH made Board aware that elite training at the Leon Paul Centre has been happening, with very strict controls. 14 fencers are training. Jon Salfield and Johnny Davies are making sure fencers follow all the instruction. The systems put in place are very rigorous.

CEO we have put in place an onboarding procedure.

CEO also pointed out that we had not excluded epee. The top epeeists are currently abroad. We have supported Philip Marsh to train as part of Modern Pentathlon's elite group.

The Chair summarised all the points made during the meeting. Including whether or not to focus on specific subjects and not cover everything.

**Meeting closed at 20.16**

**Date of next meeting – March 2021 (with the Board Away day taking place in January 2021)**