

BRITISH FENCING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Date of Meeting	20.06.23
Location	Linklaters and Zoom
Present	<p>Board Directors: PA, JC, MC, TCJ, FG, YH, JL, TM, FW, JW, TB</p> <p>Directors (Voting) Mark Lyttle, Chair Tabatha Brown, Board Equality Champion Jade Clarke (JC) Mary Cohen (MC) Francesca Gliubich, BF Charity Chair (FG) Yashmin Harun, Safeguarding Champion (YH) Jochen Losch, Senior Independent Director (JL) Francis Wilkinson (FW) James Williams (JW)</p>
In Attendance	<p><u>Executive Attendees (Non-Voting):</u> Georgina Usher, CEO (GU) David Moseley, FD (DM) Virginia Bailey, Participation Director, (VB)</p> <p><u>Home Nation Observers</u> Hugh Kernohan (KH), George Liston (GL)</p> <p><u>Senior Athletes Representatives Panel</u> Piers Gilliver (PG)</p>
Apologies Received	Tommy Curren Jones, Tom Murray, Pat Aiyenuro, Peter Howes
Board Papers	Board Pack in the Board Folder

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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

Apologies/New Declarations of Interest/Conflicts of Interest - Apologies were received in advance from Tommy Curren Jones, Tom Murray and Pat Aiyenuro

New Risks - none raised

Interim Decisions: 2023 Safety guidelines approved, 2023 EG Nomination panel approved.

Noting of Policies for (Pre) Approval - Twelve documents were briefly discussed as having no changes, and four documents with minor changes only; all being in the drop box and recommended/approved by appropriate board sub-committee. Questions were invited and taken as approved.

Noting of Papers for Information

- Balanced score cards
- Previously approved Governance factcheck and compliance statement with additional back up documents to note.
- Draft Funding Award Letter for Wheelchair World Cup
- 2023.05.31 Sport Org Briefing Note from UK Sport
- Board Equality survey responses

Questions were raised.

MC requested an item for AOB relating to Fencing Sessions for people with breast cancer.

2. ACTION ITEMS

Marked as 'Done' on the agenda, no queries were raised.

3. APPROVE PREVIOUS BOARD MINUTES

In the Board pack. Approved by the Board, being proposed by Francis Gliubich, seconded by Jochen Losch

4. EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS / EUROPEAN GAMES UPDATE

The Chair gave an update on recent EFC/FIE decisions in relation to RUS/BLRUS participation and consequences.

A brief update was provided by GU. Originally European Games (EG) was designated the European Zonal Championships by EFC, which in turn means team and individual competitions eligible for world ranking points counting for qualification for Paris 2024. The FIE then decided to re-admit RUS/BLR athletes for individual events under a neutral status. EG host country and EOC would not permit neutral status RUS/BLR athletes to compete. FIE would not then permit FIE ranking points to be awarded for the EG individual event.

The result was that the FIE and EFC announced a new European Individual Championships with less than 3 weeks notice. Very short and compressed timescale to enable this to happen.

Senior Athlete Panel were very helpful in supporting decision making and communications with athletes during this time.

A Selection Policy was not in place due to the short run up and so we selected from the Worlds and European Games selections that were in place. There have been no objections to this.

Piers Gilliver shared that the athletes felt it was the best decision and that this approach was the best that could have been done in the short timescale.

Ultimately there were few Russian competitors there, under a neutral flag (AIN).

The Board commended James Davis and Caiti Maxwell on their last 8 performances.

5. STRATEGY AREA: SUSTAINABILITY (& RESOURCE MANAGEMENT)

Finance Part 1. 22-23 Q4 Management Accounts & Part 2. Q1 23-24 Update

A short verbal update of highlights was provided. The Board was asked to approve the Q4 Accounts, in the Board pack.

DM presented the spreadsheet and showing that Q4 had finished largely on budget, which is a good result, finishing ahead of budget in membership which meant we could mitigate the events and commercial budgets; the focus is now Q1

Questions were taken

AGRC has already discussed and proposed that cash reserves should be retained in a high interest account, there is nothing precluding this in our funding agreements. The Board agreed with this approach.

Events - The 1st 3 competitions finished broadly on budget, the Senior Championships were slightly less than budget but the Senior Open had a lot less entry income than expected, which means we are around £10K adrift, currently. Jade Clarke emphasised that the British Championship Event gave a loss and The Board needs to be aware of this; the commercial team needs to be able to counteract this; strategy and competitions have been adjusted to take this into account.

Commercial - Commercial started a little slower than expected; with the schools programme slow to start, with not much take up yet and we must keep an eye on this.

Jade Clarke shared a presentation, which highlighted the different areas in good detail, showing how a loss of commercial income will affect financial reserves.

The Chair clarified that being £18K under budget, was to be expected, in part due to events under performing by £11K.

Questions and suggestions were invited.

The Chair explained that a sales person has been added to commercial, to try and increase sales. The fact we are losing █████ in total on events is a concern, particularly the lower entries for the GB Open as this can't be sustained and we need to set a threshold on it, as discussed at AGRC.

GU shared the different competition levels that take place across the year, leading up to the National Championships and International Competition. A deep dive is being undertaken for each competition area.

Points raised - BYC is the most costly event to support with staff time, over the 12 regions. Purpose of qualifiers is in part to increase local participation, but that isn't working in all regions with some regions opting not to hold events for various reasons; Schools Team Competition was taken out as it lost money, but do we need to consider the potential lost membership, because of this. The lack of State Schools Individual British Championships is a gap which needs exploring - as teams need 3 members of the same weapon and age group which can disadvantage schools that don't have large fencing facilities. We can do this cheaply, with a festival style offering, as opposed to using world class venues, equipment and referees. This would likely increase access, opportunity and diversity in the sport. Second competitions could be held after the main events, but on the same day, to increase revenue, as they do in Italy, using the empty pistes. Veteran age group tournaments can also be considered. Timely marketing/promotion of events also key.

Action DM/GU to take suggestions and look at overall events strategy and mitigating actions (as actioned in AGRC)

A threshold for the events portfolio deficit needs to be set in September 2023 once the variables are known. Rising costs makes this awkward but we can't avoid the deficit carrying forward year on year.

JL stated that the events are one of the main the reason for British Fencing's existence and should be the last area used to save money, if possible, with a close look at the least important events or investigation around the events being done cheaper, by finding different venues, in different areas, or perhaps by using big school premises

It was agreed that Commercial income can help fund events, but we need to be conservative with our expectations here.

MC queried if the U16 and U18 Youth Categories overlap could be investigated as a money saving area; Georgina Usher explained that this has been looked at over a number of years, but it won't save money due to the related lack of memberships. MC queried if BYC should be replaced with a State Schools Event - this would increase portfolio loss, as with the levy the BYC does not lose the same amount of money as the other events.

Venues over a 4 hour drive from London cost more money to use as a result of significant increase in travel costs and equipment courier fees. There is a significant lack of affordable good quality large sports facilities across the country due to a lack of government investment. Entry numbers need to be

conservative in light of this, with qualifying standards and national rankings being required in the future, which then allows us to use smaller venues and control costs easier.

Piers explained that the communication to the athletes is an area of concern, with word of mouth not always working. Better communication could lead to better entry numbers.

6. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: NOMCOM

Updates were given on items not already covered in agenda:

- Election Timetable/paperwork (available in the Board pack to view) and Skills/Diversity Statement following analysis of skills matrix - financial, legal, fundraising, sports development in disability sport are all areas of skills identified.
- Board/Chair/Individual Board Director Evaluations - underway
- CEO Performance Review - underway
- Staff Performance Reviews - underway
- Honours Recommendations approved. Posthumous Awards not awarded as previously recognised during life – looking at ways to recognise in a different way.
- NomCom approvals recommended to Board covered earlier in the Introduction.
- Interim approval of staff salary increases and bonuses noted.

Questions were asked for – none raised.

7. BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE ITEMS: AGRC

Updates were given on items not already covered in agenda:

- Jockey Club Services Update – none
- Risk Management - Annual review conducted of the effectiveness of BF's risk management and internal control systems – conclusion was that they provide reasonable assurance.
- Auditor Update – FW explained the appointment process, agreed by Board. As incumbent auditors resigned; a tender was put out, 3 companies responded, they were interviewed by DM, GJ (Gabriella James, financial controller) and 2 members of AGRC, it was unanimously agreed by interview panel that HB&O should be recommended to Board as the new auditors. Additional notes, they also audit British Equestrian; cheaper than incumbent, can make our audit deadlines. Further information in Board pack. Board approved appointment of new auditors.

8. CEO UPDATE

Funding Body Stakeholders

- CEO attending UK Sport hosted event on 12th July in Manchester, looking at the next 25 years at the wider system and structure of sport in UK.
- Staff joined Sportscotland workshop - 'Guidance for Transgender Inclusion in Domestic Sport' – Tuesday 20th June.

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- Good (mutually supportive) working relationship with UK Institute for Sport (EIS renamed) continues.

European/International Stakeholders

- 12 athletes are travelling to compete in the European Games in Krakow this weekend.
- EFC appointed 3 BF members as delegates to European Games – GU (Safeguarding Officer), Jon Willis (DT), Peter Huggins (Semi).
- EFC workshop on Event Safeguarding was led by GU, supported by BF Lead Safeguarding Officer very successfully.
- EFC Congress to on 23 June.
- 5 BF representatives scheduled to attend online FIE Council and Commission meetings in July. GU has been involved in FIE Statute & Rule changes to improve safeguarding and gender equity.

General Operational Points to Note

- Renewal figures for insurance have been received, initially a significant increase – after work managed to secure renewal more in line with inflation.
- Para National Championships to be held in July as part of Para Festival in Wales.
- EFC/FIE Selection policy consultations have shown some misunderstandings held amongst coaches, athletes and parents; the athlete panel will be involved in helping to move this forward, as already agreed.
- Membership/Clubs – highest ever end of March 2023, with over 10,000, which then dropped slightly.
- P&P/Social Impact - London Youth and 2 other NGB are training coaches together and linking new data collection systems. Muslim Girls Fencing has a coaching planning date scheduled with a re-structure of support being considered. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) project is in the pack and the report shows that fencing as an intervention, enhances ASD wellbeing.
- Work continuing on Events/Event rating project/Para World Cup.
- GB League is not progressing as planned - there are staff performance issues that are being managed.
- Wheelchair Fencing – Level access survey results in Board pack. We are developing seated fencing frames, that are less expensive, to get into clubs. PG to have an input on this. Wheelchair fencing was a success at the British Open in April. PG fed back to the Board. Looking at opportunities for standing fencers (those who traditionally participate in the non wheelchair events) to join in, as they have done successfully in France, at events that don't require classification, as the standards are very narrow for this.
- Customer Service – The new part time manager has been a great help in first line support with new processes in place. Our answering machine transfers callers direct to staff members and head answer machine messages are delivered to a shared mailbox to be picked up by next available member of team. Some members still expect a person sitting in the office answering the phone, and won't leave answer messages; but this isn't practical or financially sustainable.
- Updated approach to Discretionary selection being worked on in response to Senior Athlete Panel feedback.

9. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

This agenda item was moved to earlier in the schedule BF Head of Communications, Sophie De Vooght, joined the meeting, with John Stanley (JS), who is her Maternity Cover.

Georgina introduced the background to this item – cost of producing every edition of Sword as a printable PDF is financially not sustainable and the content is not as accessible. Therefore as part of the reduced budget approved by the Board we needed to look at alternatives.

The BF website has a new sub domain called The Sword Magazine - on the website, as of July 2023, with a focus on athletes; their stories, categories, archived content, diversity sections, coach content etc. Member login will be required, with single sign in required. Free 90 day membership will exist so people can access content without paying. The Friday News will also be able to signpost to this for articles, alongside existing news stories.

Two editions a year – likely October and April will still be printed, potentially with a small charge direct to the member – print on demand. Considering October being the official end of previous season edition – just considering how to get in Veteran Worlds (mid October), due to type setting deadlines.

Questions were invited.

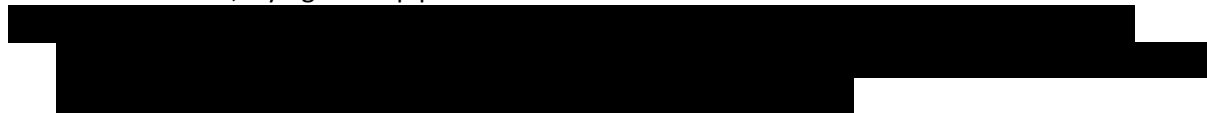
Follow-up points: Current editor (Karim Bashir) will continue to do this, managing set content required, at set times, we also do want to promote user generated content in the future. This has been done within the reduced budget.

11. UPDATE ON STRATEGIC BOARD INITIATIVES

The Chair asked for questions/updates on items not already covered in Agenda.

12. SAFEGUARDING

- Balanced scorecard to be noted as in the Board pack.
- SafeGuard - A new education programme has been launched, with modules in place for all, on the BF website, trying to keep prices low to be accessible.



- Risks Log has been updated.

14. STANDING ITEM - ANTI-DOPING

- Supported clean sport week on social media and at public events.
- European Games (EG) requires an online course to be done by all athletes, and they have all done

it, some athletes have struggled to see the importance of it, which we are working on.

15. STANDING ITEM - EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- Balanced Scorecard in the Board pack.
- Diversity Action plan currently being drafted due end Sept 2023.

16. AOB

MC explained that in France there are 12-week courses for post operative breast cancer patients to increase chest and shoulder movement; and asked if BF can look at this.

GU commented that we already looked at this project a number of years ago – at the time challenge was that the original research was in French and it was felt to be limited, not sufficient for BF at that time to access funding for something similar. Happy to look into again.

Action - MC to pick up offline with GU.

NEXT MEETING 12 SEPT 2023