

Board Meeting – Minutes - Approved

4pm, Thurs 31st October 2024 – The Granary and online via Zoom

Directors: Anne Butler (President); Jo Dytch (Chair); Ilona Turnbull; Hazel Meehan; Dominic Hall; Alistair Todd; Andrew Walker; Pete Crane; Brendan Hughes, Hugo Allan,

CEO & Company Secretary: Stuart Younie.

Observers: Derek O'Riordan (SportScotland); Fiona Kerr,

1.0 Welcome and Apologies:

In person: SY, AT, AW, IT, AB, FK

Online: JD, HA, BH, HM, DH

Apologies: DO, PC

2.0 Declaration of Interests

None

3.0 Draft Minutes of the Full Board meeting of 8 August 2024

Approved with no changes

4.0 Actions and matters arising not tabled elsewhere in the agenda.

- Overpayment from AAG now received
- 4% pay award paid in August and backdated to April
- Partner agreement with OATS carried forward. SY will pick up with PC.
- JD and BH had a call with a club and insurers following the incident on Rum to help advise on safety policies and specifically solo walking. BH noted that safety advise and policies to clubs needs updated. **ACTION: JD and BH to pick up and discuss with new director of clubs.**
AT added he had updated a document offering advice to clubs and should now be live on website. This can be used as an interim reference document to point clubs to.
- Students involved in the incident which was reported at the last meeting, are presenting at SMART weekend on their experience.
- Report of concern via a wall has been referred back to the wall by NICAS.

5.0 Call for AOCB

None

6.0 CEO & Operational report

SY highlighted the following main points from his quarterly report:

- Staffing updates- LR has started and making positive impact. MH now in post as MSA. HM started last week as CS comps officer. Agreement has been made to hold the vacant RDO post until SportScotland investment is confirmed. FM last day today.
- Non-member survey is now complete and will help with strategy work.
- Cotswold Outdoors penny scheme launched in September for IUTU.
- Next Scottish Mountaineer has just been finalised and looks great. It contains a response to the contentious article in the last issue.
- ClimbScotland were involved in the Maree Todd MSPs visit to The Ledge. Busy YCS rounds recently with around 120 participants at some venues, which is record numbers.
- Access and Environment – response from Minister regarding SRN programme. DB is now in discussion with partners on how to take it forward. DB also following up with Highland Council on Reiff parking issue. Tak it Hame day on Ben Lomond was a success.
- Mountain Safety – winter courses now live, though later to go online than last year due to staff capacity. RC doing lots of work around near miss and incident survey which had about 700 responses.

AW reported that he attended recent SSA dinner which focussed on discussions around women participation in sport. JD asked about possible collaboration with other sports and AW thought there were opportunities.

AT shared a recent update regarding SRN network- Laggan Community Council had objected to a mast, reporter attended and rejected the objection. Letter has now been sent to the MP from the Community Council.

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Financial Report Q2 2024/25

HM ran through the key points from the Q2 Profit and Loss report following the quarterly FAG meeting:

- YTD surplus of £64k with full year forecast close to break even but still some costs to come through that will impact the position.
- Membership income is ahead of budget with clubs slowing due to early renewals now levelling.
- MS income is below budget mostly due to winter courses opening later.

- CS is above budget but costs still to come through to give full picture.
- EDI budget is currently underspent.
- Salary costs are underbudget due to vacancies.
- Member services – Magazine Costs will come through in Q3
- Energy account nearly resolved.

HM also reported that the FAG had discussed reviewing expenses policies to ensure they are clear and correct.

SY added that there had been a recent meeting with Connect and the advertising income is looking £4-5k short. And he also noted that the 2nd instalment for 24/25 from SS was being processed. JD asked what Connect's thoughts were if advertising did not improve? SY replied we were committed to the next issue but may need discussion beyond that. AW felt a threshold should be identified before it is reached, on what's viable.

ACTION: AW to lead discussion on recommendations about magazine options going forward.

7.2 sportscotland investment proposal

SY and JD had presented the proposal to SS panel on 24th October. The panel gave very positive feedback however, there are no guarantees, and they should indicate amounts in January for sign off in February. AW wished to note how good the proposal was, and JD thanked SY and JS for all their work on it.

7.3 Finance Review

JD informed the meeting that AB, SY, AT, JD, met recently to look at overall finances of the organisation. Some key points of focus were identified:

- Membership strategy to drive income.
- Staff expenses which involves HR/contract reviews
- Bank accounts to benefit from better interest rates
- Complete a review of the online shop
- Look at course participant fees
- Utilities/ office contracts reviews

JD will circulate more detail and actions around these points.

AT recommended a cash flow forecast should be done by the accountants.

8.0 Governance

8.1 Strategic Review

8.1.1 Updated version and operational priorities

A draft was completed in order to be included in the SS investment proposal. Further views now need collected and discussed. Various opinions and feedback were shared, including:

- Positive comments on it being member focussed and clear.
- AB suggested bringing the participation pathway slide to the top.
- AW questioned if there is a level of priority to the Strategic outcomes? And does it allow the team to prioritise workloads?
- BH suggested the blue strategic outcomes were strategic priorities and it's difficult to order these. And yellow operational priorities are operational deliveries, and these can be prioritised and sequenced. He also suggested swapping the direction of arrows on 4 detailed slides.
- DH queried the size of the bubbles.
- AW felt still too many 'priorities'? SY also noted it needs to be clear and apply to staff roles and operational plans.

ACTION- All - Feedback by next Friday 8th Nov. JD and SY - next steps to engage with staff and create a timeline of sharing with key partners and membership.

8.2 AGM update

SY thanked AB for leading the organisation of the event with the office staff and confirmed that papers have gone out. Some questions had come in from clubs about fee increases and SY and AT have met with the Eagle Ski Club President. There is a club call next week where more questions are expected. AT reminded the group of some key points around the required increase and of the Q and A's he and HG have prepared.

JD noted there is an AGM planning meeting coming up.

BH suggested circulating key points to clubs to help inform them in advance of voting.

8.3 Appointment of Chair and Commercial Director

JD shared a suggestion to add a new director role to help drive income.

She also proposed that the chair should be an independent role without a director portfolio, and to retain the currently split roles of president and chair. SY added that discussion was required and if taken further, the articles of association would need to be revised.

Opinions were shared around the roles in question and board structures more generally with most being positive about the suggestions.

Votes were taken on each proposal:

On the Chair being a separate role without Director portfolio: For = 7, Against = 0

On exploring a new role of 'Commercial' director: For = 7 votes but several 'in principle' following clarification of the role and title.

ACTION: Role of Commercial Director to be clarified and a report back to Board with proposed timeline and next steps.

8.4 Membership Strategy

AW reported that a workshop had taken place to explore updating the membership strategy. He would like Comms and Membership to be more focussed on growing membership and align with the full strategy. Informally agreed a focus on targeting female and younger members and it is hoped the new appointment will facilitate that. The importance of the commercial aspect was also noted with membership needing to drive income and financial sustainability.

ACTION: AW - Draft Membership Strategy to be shared at February board meeting

8.5 Mountain Safety Strategy

A draft had been shared in advance and BH also gave a presentation of the work and thinking behind it. He explained the key problems, with responses and actions to address them. The actions covered wider requirements around communication and data plus more specific actions to tackle issues like slips and trips as the major cause of incidents in the hills. The overall focus is around prevention, to reduce incidents.

There was lots of positive feedback and SY noted how far MSG had come over recent years and the work BH had put into the draft strategy.

BH added that the next MSG is 11th November where it will be discussed, and partner feedback obtained.

ACTION – ALL Any comments from MScot perspective to SY or BH before Fri 8th Nov.

8.6 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

SY had 3 points to report:

- He had attended meeting with new SS auditors who are BDO.
- His next focuses are an HR review to look at updating contracts and manuals/ policies and has a call scheduled with SS's HR partner to discuss that.
- Other next focus is IT and cyber security policy which BH offered to help with.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register

SY – Nothing to report

9.2 Health & Safety

9.2.1 Incidents and near misses

SY reported that AT had been contacted by Howdens after a serious member accident. No claims involved but is a recorded incident.

AT highlighted the outstanding issues of a new fire door and fire drills.

ACTIONS – AT to obtain 3 quotes and have a date in diary for door replacement by the end of the year. SY to plan fire drills ASAP.

9.3 Child Wellbeing

9.3.1 Update on Climbing Club inquiry

SY updated that the first part of the inquiry should be complete by the end of November and 3 main areas have been identified:

- Best practice in relation to safeguarding
- Basic coaching conduct and how it is managed
- Club governance

He noted that support measures for the club need to be put in place. JD added the process has been slow but hard to accelerate. Also, some directors may be required as panel members. It has highlighted the requirement for support from Children 1st and there needs to be a plan for any future incidents.

IT noted some immediate support actions for JS which she will pick up with SY and JD.

9.3.2 Children First – Case Management Support Service

SY noted that JS has done great job in preparing the ground to join second cohort following an intervention by DO'R. Child wellbeing policy needs updating and aiming to get that to the board by year end. Also need a data sharing agreement which requires updating the disciplinary policy and adding an investigations procedure. Both will go to board for sign off and will allow access to helpful resources and will provide support if future need arises.

SY also referred to HA's earlier note that separate legislation on child protection exists in Scotland so support from Children First is more relevant than BMC's child wellbeing officer.

AOB

JD – reported that John Leftley had been nominated for an Honorary membership for his many years of service to the Huts Advisory Group. Everyone agreed and SY and HG will move forward.

JD also shared that she had spoken with the new Huts convener and there are 2 main points to be taken forward which are tourist tax and the Short-term Letting licence.

She also gave thanks to DH and HM who are standing down as directors and cannot attend the AGM.

SY thanked everyone for their support and help over the last few months.

10.0 Future meetings 2024

- 23 Nov - AGM
- 12th Dec – Christmas Board/staff meeting

2025 Draft meeting programme

- 13 Feb FAG
- 20 Feb Board
- 8th May FAG
- 15th May Board
- 7th Aug FAG
- 14th Aug Board
- 30th Oct FAG
- 6th Nov Board
- 29th Nov AGM
- 11th Dec Board & Staff Christmas social

(FAG usually starts at 4pm scheduled for 1hr 30mins and the Board also usually starts at 4pm and normally scheduled for 2hrs 30mins)

