

Board Meeting – Minutes - Approved

4pm, Thurs 8 August 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 (sportsotland); Fiona Kerr (MScot);

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

In person: AB, JD, SY, HA, FK

Online: IT, HM, DH, AW, PC, BH, DOR

Apologies: AT

2.0 Declaration of Interests

None

3.0 Draft Minutes of the Full Board meeting of 23 May 2024

The minutes were approved with no changes

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

- JD noted that Safeguarding training still to be completed by a few Directors.

ACTION – To be completed by the end of next week- SY stressed this is a compliance requirement

- Honorary members – SY reported that presentations had taken place and were shared on the website and will appear in the next Mountain Matters.
- Thanks to Braemar MRT for contributions to student safety programme – AB confirmed this had been done.
- SY has followed up with the club from the North of England about membership.
- SY- AGM venue has now been provisionally booked for Birnam Arts for 23rd November.

5.0 Call for AOCB

None

6.0 CEO & Operational report

SY noted some key points from his report which was shared in full in advance by email:

- BG finished up in June and his leaving presentation and meal are scheduled for 19th August. Follow up still required with AAG.
- LR now in post as Head Setter and is already a great addition to the team.
- SY attended (online) a joint mountaineering councils strategic meeting on 3rd June hosted at Plas y Brenan. It was a positive meeting and reflected the approach that new BMC CEO is taking in being open and collaborative.
- North Face car park is still being held up by planning. Transport Scotland have objected to the Torlundy access point.
- The Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd is visiting The Ledge next week. A SportsScotland representative plus JS, HA and AB will attend.
- Planning is continuing for the winter climbing meet with HG, KMc and AT.
- Recent news of 3 GB climbers who had qualified for the Olympic finals.

JD queried the overpayment from AAG and SY reported that it is overdue and is chasing.

AW wished to call out how busy a period it had been for the Comms team recently, especially regarding media. There were some challenging issues which had impacted greatly on the team, particularly FM. SY added that there is a short piece in the next Mountain Matters to acknowledge the response to the article included in the last edition of Scottish Mountaineer.

PC asked that since DB has moved to 4 days- are he and SY managing with the increasing workload resulting from current pumped storage and SRN proposals. SY answered yes for now but the workload is likely to increase as further projects arise and some other partner organisations are reducing support for access and conservation work.

6.1 Absence arrangements – CEO

JD provided an update on cover arrangements for SYs upcoming period of absence. Plans assume a period of around 8 weeks and incorporate how to support the team during that time. Plans will be finalised in next week or so and shared with staff and board.

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Financial Report Q1 2024/25

HM reported on the accounts for the 1st quarter to end of June. The bottom line is positive contributed to by the following:

- Early renewals of clubs
- Mountain Safety has had a strong first quarter and also CS due to large competitions
- Salary costs are less than last year due to current reduction in overall staff
- Energy and IT accounts are still not resolved so accruals are ongoing

SY added an update on EDF billing- invoices backdated to November 2022 have now been received totalling £16k. However, the readings these are based on are not correct, so FK is communicating with EDF to clarify and update the account.

It was also noted that the Granary residents are looking to move Factors because of the problems they have caused around energy suppliers.

DH asked to clarify the membership income budget forecast asking if the Q1 increase is due to early renewals, why is the full year forecast also up? HM explained that the full year shows an increase due to increase in fees and modest increase in numbers.

JD asked where the AAG repayment would sit – SY confirmed it would be included as income.

7.2 Final Budget 2024/25

HM confirmed that Version 3 of the budget for 24-25 had been circulated by email in advance and majority approval had been received. HM thanked everyone for their input and JD for the summary notes. Despite it being approved she recognised there is a lot of work still to do on sustainability and strategy.

DH queried time requirements for longer term financial strategy work. SY reported that support from MMG and QuickBooks have been positive for the operational side of things but we remain stretched in addressing the bigger financial picture. DM clarified his main concern was actions around sustainability and reinforced a standing offer to help. SY explained that AT is leading on insurance. JD confirmed she intends to pick that up with HA and AT on his return from leave.

SY also reported that the BMC are looking at another large insurance increase which will likely affect ours. As a result, the BMC plan to increase membership fees to over £50.

AW noted that membership strategy should drive an income to make the organisation sustainable.

7.2.1 Approval of staff pay award (SY and FK left the meeting for this item)

HM reminded the board that the agreed budget included a proposed staff pay increase of 4%, backdated to 1st April 24. Other options were available, and she invited opinions. A discussion followed.

DO'R noted the requirement to become Fair Work First compliant within the current year which will include an assessment or audit of salaries and how we align with National Living Wage.

A vote was taken and there was a majority in favour of the 4% increase as included in the budget.

HA noted a separate query around family discount pricing after he recently renewed his membership and it seemed to be a low price.

ACTION- AW agreed to follow this up

8.0 Governance

8.1 Strategic Review

JD reminded everyone that some staff and board took part in a strategy day on 18th June where lots of ideas and opinions were gathered. The aim today is to look at the updated slide deck which had also been shared in advance and JD proceeded to run through this. The final version of the strategy for 2025 – 29 will be signed off in February 25 with a draft presented on 3rd October and the funding application for SportScotland due by 24th October.

A discussion followed, particularly around aims and outcomes and the structure of those. Also around the Vision and Mission and whether both are required or could be replaced by a single ‘ Purpose’. Several agreed that it should be kept as simple as possible with as few words as possible.

SY shared an option he had created that could cover everything in 1 statement. JD also shared other options from the strategy day.

DOR highlighted that the behaviours and activities of the organisation need to reflect the mission/ vision i.e. it should mirror the energy and pragmatism that are required, and they are not just words.

ACTION Send further thoughts and ideas by the end of the week and SY and JD will consolidate and circulate.

SY summed up by clarifying that the structure on first 2 slides is a confirmed working draft. The outcomes need reviewed and there is one preferred statement as a base to work on.

8.1.3 SportScotland investment proposal and staffing structure

SY reported that he and JD had met with DOR about the upcoming investment proposal. Work is ongoing in preparation for that including a proposed new staffing structure which needs costing. He plans to create a team’s channel so that HA, JS and team can start working on it.

8.2 Annual Report

The Annual report had been shared in advance of the meeting. Feedback was positive and thanks was noted to HG for pulling it together

8.3 AGM & Directors recruitment

As previously mentioned, JD confirmed that the 2024 AGM has been scheduled for 23rd November at Birnam Arts. 5 directors are coming to the end of terms. HM and DH have both indicated they will be stepping down and have offered help in the recruitment process. JD needs to step down as she has completed the maximum time available. AW and IT are at the end of a term but are eligible and willing to extend. Job descriptions are just being finalised and will be published shortly. AB and JD will lead and if anyone can help let her know.

8.4 Process for board approval of policies, procedures and other documents.

Due to the length of time between board meetings JD posed the question – Were Directors happy to have draft papers circulated in between meetings and approve papers by email? SY added he would like to avoid bringing draft papers to meetings to make them more efficient. Everyone was in agreement.

8.5 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

SY reported that progress is ongoing.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register

SY noted that it has been updated to remove the risk of not having a risk policy! There is still the outstanding risk from lack of formal agreement with OATS. PC agreed that it's still needed but noted that we need to look at what stage 2 of the project might be and how it continues beyond the original 3 years.

ACTION Progress an agreement with OATS on It's Up to Us and initiate a discussion on next stage.

9.2 Health & Safety

9.2.1 Incidents and near misses

SY reported 2 incidents that had occurred:

- The fatality on Rhum involving a club member. The club have done a great job in very difficult circumstances, liaising with Howdens and looking at their own procedures.
- Accident within a University Climbing club where a member abseiled off a rope which was too short. The club are providing Howdens within the required paperwork.

Neither are resulting in claims but still need reported to Howdens.

9.3 Child Wellbeing

9.3.1 Update on Climbing Club enquiry

SY reported that the investigation is ongoing. Other threads have materialised which require additional investigation and may incur additional costs.

HA asked IT if she could be the support contact for JS in SY's absence, to which she agreed.

DOR reported that he is seeking further support from Children First for JS and ClimbScotland in recognition of the complexities of the case. He also acknowledged the potential financial impact and expressed a willingness to be flexible on reclaiming gaps in posts at the end of year.

SY shared that a new complaint had recently been received via NICAS relating to activity in a climbing wall. It is hoped it can be resolved between those 2 parties, but it poses wider questions about aspects we don't directly have control over.

10.0 Future meetings 2024

- Mon 28th Oct - FAG
- Thurs 31st Oct - Board
- Saturday 23rd Nov - AGM
- 12th Dec – Christmas Board/staff meeting

Minutes approved 31/10/24

