

Board Meeting – Approved Minute

4pm, Thurs 23rd Feb 2023 – The Granary and online via Zoom

Directors: Brian Shackleton (President & Chair); Nigel Clark; Jo Dytch; Lucy Fraser; Pete Crane; Ilona Turnbull; Hazel Meehan; Dominic Hall; Alistair Todd; Andrew Walker; Pete Crane

CEO & Company Secretary: Stuart Younie.

Observers: Megan Griffiths (sportscotland); Derek O’Riorden (sportscotland);

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

BS welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- Attending in person at the Granary were BS, AT, PC, SY & JS
- Attending online were NC, AW, JD, IT, DH, HM, MG, LF and DO’R

A special welcome was extended to Derek who will be taking over from MG as sportscotland partnership manager in April and was attending his first board meeting as an observer. BS also welcomed Jamie Smith to the meeting who had been invited to provide an update on the work of ClimbScotland.

No apologies were noted.

2.0 Declaration of Interests

No further declarations of interest were noted.

3.0 Draft Minutes of the Full Board meeting of 23rd November 2023

The minutes were approved having been proposed by IT and seconded by NC.

4.0 Actions and matters arising not tabled elsewhere in the agenda

- No further feedback had been sent to SY on the operational report.
- A communication had been issued to members explaining that the ED & I policy would be removed from the AGM recognising the concerns expressed by clubs and MScots commitment to ensuring that these concerns were addressed. An update to clubs had also been sent out confirming the decision of the board to withdraw the policy from the AGM.
- BS/ SY to progress the recruitment of a successor for NC.

- Directors to review the risks in their areas of the organisation's activities and SB/HM/SY to agree the final Risk Management Policy
- SY has updated LF on the child wellbeing concern noted at the last meeting.
- Revaluation on the Granary still to be progressed.
- NC had updated the MSG on the dissolution of the Mountain Safety Trust.

5.0 Call for AOCB

No additional business had been tabled.

6.0 Operational report

SY provided a summary of headlines from this quarter:

- Meeting with the Minister for Public Health, Womens Health and Sport took place in early Nov to explore potential support for the work of the MSG. Currently awaiting an update from sportscotland. BS and SY also had the opportunity for an informal discussion with the Minister at a dinner organised by the Scottish Sports Association later in the month and provided a more general update in the work of MScot including the "Its Up to Us" campaign.
- KPMG Development Audit had been completed in Jan and we are still awaiting the report. Following the verbal feedback, several actions had been identified as anticipated, but no significant areas of concern had been highlighted and there had been positive feedback on both HR and finance following the audit testing in these areas.
- A review of the operational plan had been initiated and a staff away day session held on the 21st with the aim of tabling an updated plan at the May board meeting.
- SY noted the unexpected announcement about the planned closure of the Inverness Leisure Centre wall and the lack of consultation with the local climbing community about the decision. SY has written to High Life Highland and the response gave no indication that the decision would be reversed.

AW provided an update on the work taking place to update the Communications Strategy and the need to ensure this is aligned to the operational priorities. BS highlighted the 16 outcomes under the new strategy and AW confirmed that these provided the basis for the development of the Comms strategy.

JD felt the organisation had come a long way over recent years since the previous strategy and thought the way the team is reporting and how it aligns directly with the plan was now a much more tactical day to day approach and congratulated the staff on their efforts.

NC and LF also highlight a desire to ensure that the communications work taking place in Mountain Safety and ClimbScotland were integrated into the comms strategy. LF also expressed her concerns about the way the closure of the Inverness Leisure Centre wall had

been handled and the potential impact, thanking SY for writing to High Life Highland and for keeping her updated. MG confirmed that sportscotland had not been consulted on the closure.

SY provided some additional background to the communication that he had since the announcement of the closure and confirmed that 16 roped routes would be available to the public at the Ledge.

SY went on to report on some of the operational highlights as follows:

- Overall membership had dropped back to under 16000 during this quarter as expected but has picked up again and there is confidence that target will be reached again in the next few months.
- “Sofa to Summit” had been awarded a commended in the “Open Outdoors” category of the TGO awards though a public vote.
- Copies of Scottish Mountaineer Feb edition had just been delivered to the office and thanks were noted to Fiona McNicol for her work on delivering her first edition as editor.
- Beanies which were on sale before Christmas had generated £900 surplus
- SY had represented Mountaineering Scotland at the presentation of the Diamond Grant award for “Its Up to Us” and the award had generated media features on the Radio 4 PM programme, Good Morning Scotland the Kay Adams phone in on Radio Scotland.
- SY / AT/ DB are attending meeting on 9th March with SnowSport Scotland to discuss the ski touring issues at Glenshee.
- #SmartNav infographic was launched in early Jan and attracted a good amount of media interest and online engagement. SY was interviewed on Good Morning Scotland and Ross Cadie participated in his first radio interview on “Out of Doors”.
- RC working on a relaunch of BMC “Near Miss” webpage to share learning from peoples real experiences in the mountains.
- The winter skills programme was now fully booked the new women’s courses ran this week in Glencoe with very positive feedback.
- ClimbScotland update to be reported under Item 8.2

Following a comment from PC a short discussion took place about the future of maps and use of technology in the mountains. AW had attended a recent winter skills lecture and paid credit to BG for delivering such an engaging and informative presentation. BS asked for this to be noted and thanks passed on to BG.

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Treasurers Report - Management accounts for Q3 to 31st December 2022

HM provided an update on the Q3 management accounts and confirmed the projected out turn position was a deficit of £27k which was an improvement on budget. Although higher than budget individual membership had slowed but club affiliations had held up well. Consideration was being given to increasing prices for the mountain safety courses following a discussion at the FAG.

Salaries were currently below budget due to slippage on the appointment of the Talent and Pathways Officer however there will be an additional pressure of £6k due to recall of sportscotland funding which will offset this. Staff expenses continue to be closely monitored as a potential area of risk however the forecast for the remainder of the year was unlikely to be impacted by any additional pressures.

BS confirmed that the current forecast for the year end did not include the repayment of £6k to sportscotland which still had to be reflected in the accounts and that the projected deficit this year had been anticipated in the 3-year budget cycle linked to the fixing of membership fees over that period.

LF expressed her concerns about the sustainability of the current financial position and there was a short discussion on the reserves position with the agreement that this needs to be clear in the financial reports. BS noted that SY had limited financial support as DL was working on reduced hours and there had been challenges in recruiting a replacement.

Action – HM work with DL to review the presentation of the reserves in the financial reports.

7.2 2023/24 Budget and staffing

HM provided an update on the discussions at the FAG regarding the budget for 23/24 and that the starting point had been the scenarios that had been prepared to inform the decision on the membership fees. DL had prepared a draft budget incorporating the 15% uplift in fees however due to further cost increases the current forecast was a deficit of £37k which was a challenging start point.

HM confirmed that further work was required to review mountain safety course fees and the cost of producing the magazine which had increased to £10k per edition was another consideration for the Board. MG confirmed that a 3.5% uplift in sportscotland funding had been agreed for 23/24 to support staff pay increases.

JD suggested that establishing a cost per member for the magazine would be useful in exploring the option to increase fees for members who wished to retain the printed magazine. NC confirmed that an increase in course fees would have a limited impact on addressing the deficit.

SY confirmed that only one application had been received for the Finance Officer post and this did not meet the requirements of the role. He outlined plans to review the role and broaden the scope of responsibilities which would be advertised as “Office Administrator” and to explore the possibility of working with MMG accountants to provide additional backup support. BS highlighted that SY had put a considerable amount of time into recruiting staff who have retired over the last year, and it had been particularly challenging to find a suitable replacement for DL.

Action – SY to finalise the role description and go live with the advert in the next fortnight.

7.3 Insurance - Update

SY provided an update on the renewal process and confirmed that the renewal of the policy had gone through with the cost coming in slightly below the budgeted figure. Several insurance related questions were discussed at the club call on the 20th Feb which had highlighted the need to revisit the insurance arrangements.

SY stressed the need to secure expert advice to evaluate the potential options and the associated risks and impacts of any changes to the cover. SY also highlighted that although the base cover had been agreed with Hiscox there were risks with the additional excess layers as they were renewed annually.

NC suggested that a fundamental review was required as the current costs presented a significant financial threat to the organisation and a specific meeting was required to explore the options. SY agreed and reiterated the need for good quality external advice to inform any future decisions about insurance and DM asked if a paper could be prepared to provide a summary of the situation. HM suggested that exploring the current pros and cons of the insurance and some of the assumptions and uncertainties would provide a good framework for the briefing paper.

Action – SY to reconvene the insurance working group. Directors were asked to put forward any views and / or suggestions on how the current situation could be addressed and BS would prepare a briefing paper with the support of HM.

8.0 Governance

8.1 Recruitment of Directors

BS confirmed that along with LF/NC he would be standing down at this years AGM and there was a need to initiate the recruitment process to fill the vacancies. BS highlighted the option for any of the current Directors to stand as President and invited anyone who may be interested to contact him in the next 2 weeks. If none of the current Board came forward, then the vacancy would be advertised along with the other two vacancies

Action – SY, NC and LF to finalise the role descriptions for Mountain Safety and ClimbScotland. BS to confirm whether the Presidents role is to be advertised to the membership.

8.2 ClimbScotland

8.2.1 Pathway Update

SY explained that in discussion with BS it had been agreed that each of the four board meetings was to have a focus on the four different areas of Mountaineering Scotland to provide an opportunity for the staff to reconnect with the Board post pandemic. JS then went on to deliver a short presentation and an operational update on work relating to equality diversity and inclusion.

Highlights included the established partnerships with Urban Uprising to engage with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the Common Wheel a charity supporting people experiencing mental health challenges. An inclusive climbing workshop had also been delivered with Able to Adventure to promote climbing to people with a disability alongside a range of webinar events the first of which was a focus on neurodiversity.

JS then went on to provide an update on the changes to the GB Talent pathway and the impact of the decision to remove the GB Development Squad which has required the creation of a Scottish Talent Squad and the employment of 4 new talent coaches to support this work. SY highlighted the impact of the changes had created a considerable challenge for JS and the team over the last few months.

JD ask how receptive the community had been to the EDI work and JS confirmed that it had been very positive and highlighted that the indoor climbing scene reflected a very mixed demographic and there was further work being undertaken with clubs to establish interest. IT welcomed the update and congratulated the team on the EDI work which was going on and thought it should be shared more widely to help support some of the conversations with clubs about breaking down barriers to participation.

LF thanked Jamie for attending the board and for the presentation highlighting the importance of communicating the work which was taking place by the team and this was supported by AW

Action - Due to time pressures it was agreed to circulate the link to the route setting video following the meeting

8.2.2 Climbing Development Group (CDG) – Terms of Reference

SY gave an overview of the purpose of the CDG which was intended to provide wider support to the climbing community across the disciplines with a focus on outdoor recreational climbing. The project was being supported by Glenmore Lodge and the

initial draft TOR was being shared with Directors for initial comments at this stage. BS highlighted the need to specify who would chair the group in the TOR and whether there was capacity in the organisation to deliver the project given current pressures although SY had confirmed there was a need to deliver this initiative to help mitigate the loss of KH from the team given his knowledge of Scottish Climbing.

AT highlighted the importance of having representation from three independent climbers and it was agreed that it would be advantageous to have representation from climbers who were not currently members of MScot. NC cautioned against underestimating the resource requirements required to establish the group and the need to ensure it was a group which advised and was supported by all of the constituent partners who were involved.

Action – Directors were invited to share any comments on the draft TOR with SY

8.2.3 Facilities Strategy – Update

SY provided an update on the draft which required some further editing to incorporate suggested changes following feedback from LF. The updated strategy would incorporate the previous strategy and additional position statement into one document and provide a reference point for the staff and sportscotland to guide future developments. LF highlighted the need to consult with sportscotland and MG confirmed that she would share it with the facilities team.

Action – Directors were invited to submit any comments or feedback on the draft to SY and once the amendments had been made it would be shared with the sportscotland facilities team.

8.3 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - Policy Update

BS provided a summary of the timeline leading up to the meeting held with the ED & I network on 13th Feb and with clubs on 20th. SY added that the consultation on the strategy had received over 200 responses include 19 from clubs which had highlighted the diversity of the views which had been expressed by members. A revised draft had been produced to address the key themes which had come out of the consultation, and this had been shared with the EDI network and with the clubs in the follow up call.

IT went on to report that the EDI network meeting had been very positive and supportive and the feedback from the club call had highlighted the need to progress the adoption of the strategy with the membership. The overall feedback was in favour of adopting the policy and although no significant dealbreakers had been identified on the club call some questions remained about the code of conduct and the section on dealing with complaints.

JD supported the direction of travel with the policy and the value of the learning which had taken place regarding the different views of clubs on the issue of ED& I. AW commented on

the importance of acknowledging the views of clubs but it was important the policy applied to the whole organisation. The need to continue to communicate the reason for having the policy and the intent behind it was acknowledged.

AT highlighted the risk of clubs resigning and the importance of trying to bring all member clubs on board with the policy. SY highlighted some of the risks and the importance of stressing the policy and associated guidance was intended to help clubs to meet their requirements under the Equalities Act and deal with potentially difficult situations. PC highlighted the other sports which were already being proactive in this space and that MScot was falling behind.

Action – BS/IT/JD/AW/SY to progress the revision of the policy and produce a final version to be taken forward for approval by the membership at a general meeting.

8.4 Review of Respecting Scotland's Mountains

SY talked through the SBAR report prepared by Davie Black setting out the suggested approach to reviewing the current version of Respecting Scotland's Mountains which had been agreed with DM and PC. PC added that the intention was this document would sit below the Strategic Framework. The recommendations in the report were approved by the Board.

Action – An updated draft of Respecting Scotland's Mountains to be tabled at the May board meeting.

8.5 BMC Definition of Mountaineering Disciplines

BS introduced the paper which had been produced by the BMC with input from JS/SY and has been shared with the board for discussion and approval SY explained that following the enquiry into the Haverfordwest paddleboarding accident in 2021 where 4 people lost their lives.

An inquest into the accident has made several recommendations which has prompted a review of the definitions of the activities that sports bodies are responsible for. Should the board agree to adopt these definitions the BMC / MScot would then write formally to sport England and sportscotland to ask that the formal register is updated accordingly.

MG advised that it was important to ensure the wording of the definitions reconciled with the wording in the company articles of association. Following a question for LF a short discussion took place around activities out with the definitions and MG confirmed that there were a range of activities that do not currently have a governing body. It was agreed to support the definitions as they were set out in the document with some further work required on the presentation.

Action – Directors to forward any comments on the proposed definitions to SY and the final definitions to be shared with sportscotland.

8.6 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

SY confirmed that the schedule would be updated following receipt of the KPMG Audit report recommendations. Directors were asked to review the schedule and respond to the comments SY had added to the document to identify any policies which could be removed, amalgamated, or may need to be added to the current list.

Action – Directors to review the policy review schedule and feedback to SY on the policy requirements relating to their portfolio area.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register

The additional risks highlighted by SY and the need to have an overarching risk management policy were noted.

Action – AT to review the risks relating to health and safety.

9.2 Health & Safety

Having agreed to take responsibility for H & S AT set out the organisational requirements relating highlighting the need to agree a new policy statement and to ensure that a consistent approach was being taken to risk assessments. BS suggested producing a flow chart to help Directors understand the requirements and relationships between the different elements. SY had circulated the draft Directors responsibility's and it was agreed to move forward with adopting these along with a new H & S policy.

Action – AT / SY to progress the adoption of the relevant policies and procedures relating to H & S

9.3 Child Wellbeing

SY provided an update on a recent wellbeing concern and outcome of an investigation which had taken place. The investigation had been conducted working in close co-operation with the BMC and LF had been fully briefed as the lead Director for child wellbeing. No further action had been identified by the case management group. BS stressed the importance of understanding whether the individual felt they had been adequately supported and whether we are confident that we have taken action to avoid a similar situation in the future.

10.0 Future meetings 2023

- **FAG** – 4pm, Thurs, 11th May
- **Board** - 4pm, Thurs, 18th May
- **FAG** – 4pm, Thurs, 3rd August
- **Board** – 4pm, Thurs, 10th August

- **FAG** – 4pm, Thurs, 26th October
- **Board** – 4pm, Thurs, 2nd November
- **AGM** – TBC
- **Post AGM Christmas Meeting** – 4pm, Thurs, 14th December

Issued by Stuart Younie, CEO & Company Secretary

Final version issued – 12/05/23

Approved – 18/05/23

