

Board Meeting – Approved Minutes

4pm Thurs 4th November 2022 – The Granary and online via Zoom

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

CEO & Company Secretary: Stuart Younie.

Observers: Megan Griffiths (sportscotland); Pete Crane

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

BS welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed the attendance as follows:

- Attending in person at the Granary were BS / RN / PC / AT / SY
- Attending online were AW / DH / IT / NC

Apologies were noted from MG and JD. PC was welcomed as an observer in advance of his election to the role of Director for Access and the Environment.

2.0 Declaration of Interests

As an action from the previous meeting Directors were asked to ensure they submitted an updated declaration of interests form to SY as there were only four up to date forms on record. No further declarations of interest were noted.

3.0 Draft Minutes of the Full Board meeting of 11th August 2022

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

4.0 Actions and matters arising not tabled elsewhere in the agenda

BS referred to the action note circulated on 12th August 2022 and the outstanding action to circulate the link to the page of the sportscotland website which provided details on funding to sports bodies.

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/about-us/investment-reporting/>

SY reported on the actions as follows:

- No additional comments had been received on the operational report.
- £8k reserves figure was confirmed as the remaining amount in the bank after deducting committed reserves.
- SY still to progress revaluation of the Granary although not time critical

- The increase in membership subs had been agreed and was going forward for approval to the AGM.
- MScot was now a full member of the SRWA, and in discussion with OATS about a taking up a position on their Board. Staff meeting had been set up to discuss commitments relating to the POW Pledge on 2nd Nov.
- SY has set up a test Teams Channel with the FAG HM has received invite and asked if other directors could check they have received it.
- SMC were progressing a smaller scale “international” climbing meet limited to the CIC hut without support from BMC or MScot.

5.0 Call for AOCB

AT provided an update on the dissolution of the Mountain Safety Trust (MST). No further items were tabled.

Action: NC to update the Mountain Safety Group on the proposals to wind up the MST at the next meeting on the 5th Dec.

6.0 Operational report

BS highlighted the challenging circumstances that SY and the team had been working through due to the number of staff changes which had taken place over the last 8 mths and wanted to ensure it was recorded in the minutes that he felt SY, and the rest of the staff, have done remarkably well in the circumstances.

SY went on to provide a summary of headlines from this quarter:

- SY reiterated the challenges around the turnover of staff in the team but confirmed that the new staff were settling in well and was very positive about the appointments which had been made. There were still ongoing challenges in recruiting to the Finance Officer post.
- A meeting had been confirmed with the Minister for Public Health, Women’s Health and Sport on Tues the 8th Nov to discuss support for mountain safety and SY and BS were attending a dinner event with her on the 22nd Nov organised by the Scottish Sports Association.
- Membership has held up well although it had dropped below 16,000 as anticipated.
- An agreement had not been reached regarding winter vehicle access arrangements for Glen Strathfarrar and there was a need to draft a position statement for the website to inform members.
- A meeting with the Transport Minister and Network Rail had also been set up to discuss the closure of the level crossing at Dalwhinnie.
- The ClimbScotland competitions programme was going well, and discussions were ongoing with GB climbing regarding changes to the performance pathway.

- The summer mountain safety programme was coming to an end and bookings were coming in for the winter courses. The new womens winter skills courses in Glencoe was an addition to the programme this year.

SY went on to report that he had received confirmation that the joint application between MScot and the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland to the SMT Diamond Grant award for the “Its Up to Us” path campaign had been successful, and the project had been awarded to full £100k. There was a need to identify additional external support for the campaign.

BS emphasised the importance of hill goers contributing to the upkeep and maintenance of upland paths and the significance of the SMT awarding the full amount to the project. The announcement was confidential at this stage and a formal presentation of the award would be made at the Dundee Mountain Film Festival.

SY invited comments on the format and content of the operational report as it was the second time this format had been used to report progress and he wanted to ensure that it provided the level of information Directors were looking for.

Action: Directors to send any feedback on the report to SY.

HM joined the meeting online at 4.17pm

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Treasurers Report - Management accounts for Q2 to 30th September 2022

HM provided an update on the Q2 management accounts which were indicating a deficit of £15,545 which was an improved position because of additional grant income and slippage due to staff recruitment. Individual membership income had slowed, and the forecast had been adjusted but club membership remained strong.

Mountain safety is below budget however some costs still are to be recovered, and ClimbScotland was ahead of budget due to the additional grant income. Salaries were below budget due to slippage and a risk had been identified as the appointment of the Talent and Pathways position had been delayed and sportscotland may want to recall some of the underspend. Staff expenses were under budget and individual monitoring reports had been issued for Q2

7.2 2023/24 Budget and staffing

HM made Directors aware that Denise was looking to retire and had been flexible in reducing her working pattern to 10hrs a week and her ongoing commitment to supporting the organisation was gratefully acknowledged. Due to the current resource constraints the FAG had agreed to a top-down approach to setting the budget this year based on the scenarios which had been prepared to inform the setting of the membership fees.

SY reported that the Finance and Admin post had been readvertised at higher pay scale and only one application had been submitted, and the indications were that recruiting into this type of role was very difficult at present. He was investigating alternative options for outsourcing bookkeeping support with the company accountants which would involve moving away from Sage and onto the QuickBooks or Zero platforms. He also noted thanks to DL for her flexibility given the situation.

Action: SY to consider the suitability of the current application and continue to investigate alternative options to provide finance and admin support to the team.

7.3 Insurance – Update

SY confirmed that the current indication from Howdens that cost will increase by £10k to £60k next year as year 1 of the new, long-term agreement for 2023/24 which was in line with the increase anticipated in the budget modelling. Further increases are expected in year 2 and 3.

Howdens have also highlighted an additional request for clubs to report “near miss” incidents which is not something that has been asked for previously. SY suggested it may be beneficial to consider reconvening the insurance working group to consider the implications of both the cost increases and the request to report near misses.

HM agreed there was a need to review the current situation particularly in relation to the additional requests placed on clubs and BS confirmed that clubs are becoming more aware of the issues relating to insurance cover. It was noted that MScot was due to enter into a new three-year agreement which was out of sequence with the BMC and there may be a benefit in working more directly with them with a view to securing a more competitive arrangement. NC expressed concerns with committing to a 2-year agreement or tying into an agreement with the BMC.

Action: SY to reconvene the insurance working group and to discuss the implications of the costs increases and the additional requests being placed on clubs.

8.0 Governance

8.1 AGM 2022

BS confirmed that the venue had been booked, speakers had been secured and a site meeting had been arranged with AK Bell Library staff on 8th Nov. He then provided an overview of the programme for the afternoon

SY asked Directors to confirm their availability to attend and to send any key points they would like to include in the presentation on the annual report to HG or SY. Forty-four members had registered with half of those attending in person.

AT highlighted that the Perth Christmas lights switch on was due to take place that afternoon at 4pm so parking may be an issue.

8.1.1 – Decision on withdrawal of the draft E D & I Policy

BS invited IT to introduce the paper which had been circulated prior to the Board meeting following the discussion with clubs on Monday evening. IT reported that it had been comforting to see the level of “in principle” support for what the policy was trying to achieve but acknowledged there were concerns about the wording and how the policy would impact on the autonomy of clubs. Given the importance on getting the policy right, and the timing of the AGM the recommendation was to withdraw the policy from the vote and offer a further period of consultation with clubs and the wider membership. The recommendation was agreed.

Actions:

- SY to issue a communication to members explaining that the 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 would be sent out confirming the decision of the board.

8.2 Review of Mountain Safety

BS referred to the report which had been prepared by NC setting out an update on the progress in implementing the recommendations of the internal review of Mountain Safety. NC reported that he was very pleased with the detailed breakdown he was receiving on costs and thanked DL for producing the report. He also highlighted the additional capacity that had been created in the team to support the strategic work of the Mountain Safety Group (MSG) which he felt was progressing extremely well. The need to formally ratify a strategic framework with the MSG was noted.

BS highlighted the importance of ensuring MG and sportscotland were happy with the changes which had taken place and NC underlined the benefit of having MG on the

MSG so she receives quarterly updates on progress. NC went on to congratulate SY for the effort he had put in to implementing the changes and getting the new team in place. BS also highlighted the progress in improving partnership working through the MSG and it was noted that a representative from Scottish Athletics / Scottish Hill Runners Association was joining the MSG.

BS confirmed that NC would be stepping down from the Board at the next AGM and he would like to start the process of recruiting his successor early in the new year.

Action: BS/ SY to progress the recruitment of a successor for NC.

8.3 Scottish Mountaineer

SY provided an update on the tender process which had been taken forward by the working group with invitations sent out to seven identified suppliers. Four companies felt they were unable to submit a proposal due to the budget and three submissions were assessed one from Connect Communications which proposed a move to a fully digital publication. SY and AW explained the rationale for retaining the existing agreement with Herald and Times for publishing the magazine over the next year (4 editions) including a redesign and entering into further discussions with Connect Communications about the potential to undertake additional project-based work to support membership initiatives and campaigns. It was noted that it was important to start preparing for a move to a digital offer recognising that members preference was currently for the hard copy magazine.

8.4 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

The status report was noted and SY confirmed that a Development Audit by KPMG had been scheduled for 10th Jan 2023. Although several recommendations from the previous report had not been completed due to the impact of the pandemic there was evidence that progress had been made in these areas.

Action: BS and SY to confirm the requirements with the auditor and which Directors would be interviewed as part of the process.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register / Risk Management Policy

The updates to the register were noted and Directors were invited to review the existing risks in their areas and identify any risks which could be removed. Two risks had been identified for possible removal and it was acknowledged that a Risk Management Policy was required to guide the organisations and the draft Policy tabled previously at the board was intended to provide that.

Action: Directors to review the risks in their areas of the organisation's activities and SB/HM/SY to agree the final Risk Management Policy

9.2 Health & Safety – Review Report

SY reported that an external consultant had been commissioned to conduct a review which took place at the end of September and the report with recommendations had been circulated for information. No major issues had been identified however there was a need to identify a Director to take on responsibility for Health and Safety and for the Board to agree a new policy. AT agreed to take on the role as he held several relevant qualifications.

It was noted that in the consultant's report SY had been commended for his efforts in improving the H & S and the open and honest way in which he had contributed to the review.

Action: SY to work with AT to implement the recommendations of the review.

9.3 Child Wellbeing

SY reported on a potential concern which had been raised by the BMC and following an investigation involving both the BMC and Children First no further action was required.

Action: SY to provide a more detailed update to LF and identify if any further action was required.

9.4 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

SY provided an update on sportscotland mental health awareness training with SAMH that he had attended with HG on 2nd Nov. SY thought the session had been excellent and that Mountaineering Scotland should consider signing up to the SAMH sports governing body charter for mental health given the high profile that mental health has within the outdoor community.

SY went on to raise concerns about recent social media activity on the MScot Facebook account and inappropriate comments which had been posted following a post relating to layering. Immediate action had been taken to remove the posts and report them to Facebook and he thanked IT for the support which she had secured through her network and the many positive posts and comments this had generated online. SY had checked in with the member of staff involved to ensure they were ok and although this type of activity was unusual, the incident highlighted the importance of the online guidance that had been adopted and the need for an updated ED&I Policy.

AW highlighted the risks that are associated with using social media and stressed his concern for staff wellbeing. He credited the team for the swift action that had been taken in response to the situation and emphasised the need for our online guidance. IT expressed her relief that the member of staff was ok and highlighted the support which had been provided by the wider community to turn a negative into a positive. A new hashtag #HikeNotHate had been adopted. HM suggested having similar online advice and guidance for clubs would be helpful.

10.0 Future meetings 2022

- **Annual General Meeting** – Sat 19th November
- **Post AGM Christmas Meeting** – Thurs 15th Dec – It was agreed to look at the options for having an informal staff and Directors social event.

Proposed dates for 2023

- **FAG** – 4pm, Thurs, 16th Feb
- **Board** – 4pm, Thurs, 23rd Feb,
- **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

IT noted her thanks to the staff and as there was no other business identified BS closed the meeting.

Issued by Stuart Younie, CEO & Company Secretary

Draft 17/02/2023

Approved 23/02/23

