

Board Meeting – Minutes - Approved

4pm, Thurs 23 May 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); Ross Cadie (MScot Senior Mountain Safety Officer)

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

Attending in person: SY, JD, AB, AT, FK

Attending Online: HM, PC, IT, DH, HA

Apologies: AW, BH, DoR

2.0 Declaration of Interests

None noted

3.0 Draft Minutes of the Full Board meeting of 29th February 2024

Approved with no amendments.

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

SY provided the following update on matters not included elsewhere on the agenda:

- Presentations to honorary members in progress

ACTION – JD to receive introduction and confirm Scottish Mountaineer date from HG.

- Options for new MScot website deferred to August as AW was not available for this meeting.
- Evaluation of granary now completed and awaiting report– 3 quotes were received and chose the lowest cost.
- Legacy donation – FK consulted with MMG regarding the recording and spending of the legacy donation received in Jan 24. They confirmed it should be recorded in the year it was received, separately to other donations. If nothing was stated in the will restricting the funds, it can be spent as the organisation wishes. If MScot wanted to designate it towards a specific project, MMG recommended this be detailed in a minute and approved at board level.
- Manifesto for the Mountains is now online and a PDF version heading out to DH and PH.
- Implementation of H and S actions being led by AT is ongoing. Recent focus has been on risk assessments for courses and events.

5.0 Call for AOCB

IT – Attended a session with SportsScotland on the new Equality and Inclusion Framework – we need to comply with new guidelines and will require a subcommittee (Equality working group). IT will circulate the required actions. SS will set the timings for scheduled online reviews and will help prioritise the areas of action. IT feels we are quite advanced and will benefit from the recent ED and I policy. Communications will be a strong thread. HA input that recent CS comps highlighted that our gender policy needs updated and is keen it applies to MScot not just CS.

Brought forward on Agenda:

8.1 Mountain Safety Update

RC gave a presentation on Mountain Safety activity for 2023-2024. (Slides shared with these minutes).

This included an overview of participant numbers which showed programmed total spaces on courses was 754 and actual participants total was 573. On specific courses, night nav struggled for numbers while student courses remain popular and sold out. JD asked where we sit compared to other organisations in terms of what we offer? RC felt that others are struggling to fill courses too and bookings are often last minute which is possibly a new trend since Covid.

Bespoke, expensive courses seem to do better while budget and core mountain safety courses are harder to fill, perhaps due to less affluent participants. RC continued by sharing course fees since 2019 which have been pretty stable and explained they are less expensive than many other providers. The challenge is that charities and sole providers can charge less. He explained that he tries to protect the base level safety courses and also aims to keep student charges low by using grants. He ran through the grants secured from BMRT and SMT to subsidise the student courses and a summary of the course formats. Ideally those grants are confirmed in advance to cover costs. AB suggested that formal thanks should be given to BMRT for their considerable contributions.

ACTION – AB to obtain totals from RC to send thanks to BMRT.

There was also a query whether other MRT's could be contacted for grants/donations.

RC then went on to share some of his teams work for the Mountain Safety Group. This included the SmartNAV survey which had a huge response of 3781 and he believed this survey has made a big difference in pulling together previously polarised views on the topic. RC also mentioned the Mountain Incident Survey and academic interest in the data collected and the current Microspikes survey. RC, SY, BH and Alfie Ingram had also met with the Scottish Government the same day to explore how they can help support Mountain Safety in Scotland. He finally noted the BMC committees he sits on and feels there are positive relationships at his level. Some questions followed and discussions around other courses currently on the market and ideas and suggestions of new and revamped course ideas.

JD thanked RC and noted it would be great to pull in what was discussed to the upcoming strategy work. Everyone was appreciative of the report and the work that Ross and his team do.

6.0 CEO & Operational report

SY wished to note a few key things from full his report which had been shared:

- Staff changes
 - DB reducing to 0.8FTE from 1st June.
 - BG is leaving around 10th June. Sad to be losing him and a direct replacement will be sought.
 - JD is commencing a Masters in Performance coaching in the autumn so his MScot role needs to be discussed.
- BMC- SY has had positive initial engagement with Paul Ratcliffe, CEO and there is a strategic summit in Wales on 6th June which SY hopes to attend.
- Liam Feely – is the new CEO at Mountaineering Ireland.
- Eurostar – On going problem of people being stopped carrying Ice axes– SY to write letter on behalf of MScot/BMC/MI.

JD gave positive feedback on the CEO report and the level of detail it included. AT was particularly pleased to see the membership numbers detailed but was concerned the about the time required to produce the full report. SY explained there is a good system in place with the team, so it is not too time consuming.

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Financial Report Q4 2023/24

HM reported that the P and L for the full year to 31st March 2024 is showing a forecast surplus of £1.7k. This is much improved on the budget and largely due to the £19.6k legacy donation received. But she noted even without that it was a good achievement and gave credit to SY and team. HM went on to give an overview of the report: Membership income £41k up on last year but down on budget. Mountain Safety down on £8k against budget but close to last years actuals due to lower than hoped course numbers and weather cancellations. ClimbScotland overall £4.5k increase on last year and £3.1k better than budget. Talent Coaches costs were overspent by £4.5k but is partly offset by income from Academies. In Access and Conservation costs, £3.5k was recorded last year but reclaimed from OATS in 23/24. Salaries are showing as £11k underbudget, mostly due to Kev's retirement in Dec 23. Previous payroll errors are largely now resolved with HMRC and pension amounts recovered. There is one net salary amount and it's treatment, to be confirmed and may still affect the outcome. Member services is £7.6k better than budget due to advertising income from Mountain Matters covering it's full cost plus some other marketing savings. Accrual amounts and

associated issues are ongoing for energy and IT and there have been savings on general office and photocopier costs. Reserves have been recalculated to reflect current staffing.

SY highlighted that despite the improvement on budget, the loss of income and membership situation was concerning and along with the cost of insurance are the 2 big areas of concern.

AT noted his concern regarding the legacy donation received in 23/24, but which will be spent later therefore making future period positions look worse. SY agreed further discussions will be required.

JD summarised that we are being hampered by decreasing membership and increasing insurance costs and we have plugged the gap with salaries savings and a member donation but we can't rely on those going forward. She noted that this tied in with the strategy feedback submitted which included a strong focus on financial sustainability.

HA didn't feel we needed to decide or spend legacy amount this year. He is also keen that CS balances out independently and sees Kevs post not being filled as appropriate action until the finances balance.

AT highlighted on the issue of sustainability, that we need to look beyond 24/25. BMC board have come under huge criticism for not taking earlier actions on the losses. We cannot run on the hope that membership stats will improve in time and we have to tackle the cost base. There is also a risk that the SS grant will reduce.

SY noted the biggest costs are insurance and staff. So savings have to come from insurance and capitalising opportunities on income.

DH asked where we are with previous discussions around linking insurance costs with membership fees. JD responded that it will tie in with the strategic review work.

PC – observed that members see Access and Conservation as a key role so DB going down to 0.8 is not ideal and will present challenges, but he doesn't see an obvious solution in the short-term.

7.2 Draft Budget 2024/25

HM provided an update on the draft budget which had also been discussed at the prior FAG meeting. The FAG have requested MScot teams to review their own areas and improve the draft budget. They will then meet again in June and aim to pass an improved budget to the board for review before the next meeting.

AT also reported that it had been discussed at FAG that it would be good to bring forward budget preparations next year so it can be approved before the new financial year.

8.0 Governance

8.2 Strategic Review

8.2.1 Google Questions – Response

JD explained that there was nothing too surprising in the responses submitted. Financial sustainability is the key theme.

This led to a discussion around memberships from clubs based elsewhere in the UK as we had been approached by a few based in the North of England. IT checked the Articles, and they include a clause stating that a club from out with Scotland can join, if the board deem it in MScot's best interests. Everyone present was in agreement in principle for SY to explore the idea.

ACTION – SY –To consider the idea of accepting non-Scottish clubs and look at requests already received.

8.2.2 Staff and Board away day session

JD initiated the item by saying she feels everyone should be involved in the process and that the framework exists from last time so this review should be more streamlined.

HA noted that he is meeting with CS team to look at their area. SY felt that we know the priorities and just need to apply the framework across all activity areas, with a few directors helping in each area.

After further discussion and sharing of thoughts, the 18th June was proposed as a Strategy day to include staff and board at the Granary, with a hybrid option.

ACTION – SY to share the date with the team and **ALL** to have individual team discussions before then in line with the strategy questions. **JD, SY, AB** to create an agenda for the day.

8.3 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

8.3.1 New Risk Management Policy

HM and SY have worked on the previously shared draft Risk Management policy and FAG had now agreed the Risk Appetite statement as a 'Medium level of Caution' following consultation with industry guidance.

SY requested policy approval and the revised Risk Management policy was **AGREED**.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register

SY explained the Risk register had been reworked and there was one added risk around obtaining an agreement of understanding with OATS.

ACTION – PC to liaise with SY around communication with OATS.

9.2 Health & Safety

9.2.1 Incidents and near misses

Nothing to report

9.3 Child Wellbeing

SY reported that there is 1 case ongoing. JD, IT, HA have created a support group for JS (CS) who is coordinating the investigation. JD asked about designated support from Children First and SY responded that we were unable to access full support from the service as we are not one of the pilot sports.

10.0 Future meetings 2024

- 1st Aug - FAG
- 8th Aug - Board
- 13 Oct - FAG
- 7th Nov - Board
- 9th Nov - AGM
- 12th Dec – Christmas Board/staff meeting

ACTION – SY to look at options of venues for AGM.

Minutes approved 08/08/24

