

Board Meeting

Approved Minutes

3pm, Thurs 4th February 2021 – Online via Zoom

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

CEO & Company Secretary: Stuart Younie.

Observers: Megan Griffiths (sportscotland);

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

- KJ had been delayed in joining the meeting.

2.0 Declaration of Interests

No declarations had been submitted.

3.0 Draft Minutes of the meeting of 5th November 2020

The minutes were approved.

- Action Note from board Covid – 19 Coms meeting on 3rd Dec 2020.
The action note was approved

4.0 Actions and matters arising not tabled elsewhere in the agenda

Actions from 5th Nov

- Development of online training / member engagement included intro to navigation webinar and the Nature of the Hills webinar. Both events had been successful and more online events were being planned.
- Action to engage with the ski resorts deferred due to closure as a result of lockdown

Actions from 3rd Dec

- The minutes from the AGM and write up of questions has still to be published online.
- Action to continue monthly FAG meetings now changed to run on 6 weekly cycle in line with the board meetings. Updated schedule to be sent out.
- Review of the risk register and development of risk management policy to be progressed.
- Directors' handover meetings and induction process had been completed.

5.0 Call for AOCB

No additional business was tabled.

6.0 Strategic and Operational report

SY reported that the financial position projected for the year end was looking positive and this would be covered in item 7. Staff wellbeing was an ongoing consideration and home workplace assessments had now been completed. Staff Christmas gifts had also been sent out and a number of the team wanted to pass on their thanks to the board for these. SY also noted his thanks to the board for supporting his participation in the HIE leadership programme which was coming to its end.

SY had been working with MG on behalf of sportscotland to support the establishment of a CEO group for the outdoor sports. Core group members include Snowsports, Scottish Canoe Association, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, RYA Scotland and orienteering. MG highlighted the link between this group and the wider CEO Forum which all sports are invited to participate in.

BS invited comments on the new format for the operational report & NG fed back that it would be useful to provide a clearer connection between the report headings and the bullet point actions in the existing strategic plan. JD welcomed the inclusion of the aims from the strategic plan and the structure of the report against these headings and AT highlighted the absence of some of the quantitative reporting that was included in previous plans and particularly membership targets. This was supported by IT who also welcomed the new format. LF supported the high-level summary nature of the report.

SY confirmed that quantitative elements would be included again once the sportscotland targets which had been set aside as a result of Covid -19 were reinstated and also highlighted that the table with the membership data had been included at the end of the report.

Action: It was agreed that the new format and approach to the report should be retained and SY is work with the team to develop it in response to the feedback from directors.

6.1 Covid -19 Communications

KJ joined the meeting at this point.

SY reported that following his meeting with the Scottish Govt in Jan a member update from BS/SY had been sent out highlighting actions and next steps. A recent feature on BBC Radio Scotland's Drivetime show was highlighted which had focussed on recent incidents where climbers and walkers had been fined as a result of breaking travel guidance. The report also clarified that within the travel restrictions mountaineering activity was permissible and listeners were directed to Mountaineering Scotland's website for further information. SY welcomed any

thoughts from the Board on how Mtn Scot should be positioning itself and the approach to communications over the next few weeks.

HM commented on the BBC coverage and the frustration that the way the incidents were reported suggested that climbers and walkers were being charged because they were unprepared rather than as a result of breaking lockdown restrictions. NC reflected on discussions that had taken place at the MSG and the need to balance communications with members whilst following the Government advice. BS highlighted that he had been contacted about the reluctance by some landowners around Edinburgh to open car parks as well as messaging by the Police which appeared to be discouraging people from leaving home.

LF referred to the public consultation undertaken by Stirling Council which had resulted in repairs and investment in the access infrastructure to support people getting outdoors. KJ highlighted the 4 harms of Covid – 19 and the importance the Scottish Government was placing on physical activity and the focus should be on positive messaging. AT felt that pressing Govt too hard at this stage could be counterproductive as in relative terms Scotland had taken a more flexible approach than elsewhere in the UK allowing limited travel. RN fed back on the amount of work taking place on access issues that DB had been involved in. Further comments on the approach to policing the restrictions and the closure of carparks outside Edinburgh were noted.

MG supported the approach suggested by AT and referred to the closure of the ski centres which was as a result of a BBC report suggesting overcrowding on the slopes which had been seen by the First Minister. There was a risk that negative press could result in tighter restrictions being applied. MG also updated in the work being taken on visitor management and offered to feedback any concerns about inconsistencies to the Police Scotland rep on that group.

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Treasurers Report - Management accounts to Q3

HM reported on the Q3 report which was looking more positive than forecast and was now projecting a surplus position as a result of strong membership performance. An adjustment had been made in relation to club membership to take into account the expected drop in university club affiliations. Mountain Safety courses had performed well despite a number of cancellations with some refunds still to be processed. Variations on expenditure included the additional expenditure on the video and a reduced spend on office and admin costs due to home working.

The forecast was to deliver a £10k surplus which was noted as a significant achievement given the challenges this year. SY added the potential risks around membership in the last quarter of 2020/21 as lockdown continues.

7.2 Budget 2021-22

HM reported on the detailed discussions which had taken place at the FAG meeting and the three scenarios which had been developed based on different assumptions about membership performance and also the resumption of courses and activities dependant on lockdown restrictions easing.

Projections were based on actual figures from the same period last year to provide a more accurate comparison. It was noted that during Q1 this year, memberships dropped significantly, and led to a 4.6% decrease, however rather than a continued decline this recovered to an overall drop of 1.1% at year end.

All three scenarios currently project a deficit position resulting from continued fixed costs and a drop in membership and activity income and it was noted that some loss of income in relation to activities was offset by a reduction in expenses. LF highlighted the risks relating to the uncertainty of delivering competitions and Fundas courses.

JD highlighted the importance of the marketing spend in relation to increasing membership and the potential to look in more detail at cost per acquisition of member. A number of directors commented on the importance of membership growth as part of a long-term financial strategy.

Action: It was agreed adopt Scenario 2 for the purposes of next years budget plan with a revised figure on membership growth to reflect a more positive position based on actual figures for 2020/21.

8.0 Governance

8.1 Review of Strategic Plan

BS introduced the item and reflected on his year in post stressing the importance of the new strategy in prioritising the recovery from Covid -19 but also on how the organisation engages with both its members and its stakeholders. Future challenges included improving governance and the understanding of how the organisation is financed and also the role of Mtn Scot as both a governing body and a representative body.

8.1.1 Key strategic issues for Directors portfolio areas

MG provided an overview of the funding provided through sportscotland from Scottish Government and also the national lottery. Priorities for the Government are on promoting inclusion and encouraging sports organisations to broaden their reach particularly supporting those from under represented groups including those from more deprived and less affluent communities. Changing Lives is an initiative sportscotland are promoting to demonstrate the wider positive impact of participating in sport.

It was acknowledged that not everything that Mountaineering Scotland is involved in needs to meet these targets however there would be a requirement to demonstrate impacts in these areas that sportscotland funding is to be allocated to. This currently includes climbscotland and mountain safety.

Another consideration for sportscotland was to move staff away from direct delivery by building capacity through a network of individuals and providers who may be able to deliver on our behalf. Stakeholder engagement will be an important part of developing the new plan both with existing partners and those organisations we may wish to connect with in the future. The board may also wish to extend the duration of the plan beyond the next 3 years potentially to the next 4 years.

MG had forwarded on some example strategies from other sports which also had a recreational element to their participation and said that the focus over the next 12 mths would be on qualitative reporting given the impact of Covid -19 based on the uncertainty that was likely to continue. The importance of evidencing the impact of activities by asking the “so what” questions when looking at performance reporting was also highlighted.

KJ asked what percentage of our work should be allocated to working with under represented groups and MG advised that the start point is looking at the information currently available and there is no fixed number or requirement, the important thing was to evidence a direction of travel towards engaging with new participants.

8.1.2 Review process and timeline

SY confirmed that the funding submission to sportscotland was due at some point in Oct 2021 and in discussion with BS the intention would be to take the new strategic plan to the AGM later in the year. The focus over the next 3 mths will be in initiating the planning process and looking to engage with key partners and stakeholders including the staff. The members survey due to take place in Sep is to be brought forward to May to fit with the timescale in developing the new plan.

BS suggested the board is split into two groups one focussed on stakeholders and partners and the other on the membership. The first group would involve NC/AT/LF&HM & SY with the second group including BS/IT/KJ/JD/DM &RN.

HM suggested developing some challenge questions to assist in structuring the group discussions based on issues previously brought up at the FAG. SY asked MG to confirm whether the sportscotland requirements would be set out more formally so they can be circulated to the board.

Action: MG to confirm how sportscotland funding requirements will be communicated formally to SGB's

NC raised the question of how the mountain safety courses are delivered and considerations about the role as a governing body and as a representative body. KJ highlighted the impact of more people in the countryside and also climate change.

Action: It was agreed to initiate the review of the strategy on the basis of the two groups meeting and BS would develop a set of challenge statements based on the issues which had been flagged by directors.

8.2 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

SY confirmed the Child Protection Policy/ Children First MOR/ MSG TOR /Financial work Instructions and Events Protocol had been updated.

It was suggested that a prioritised list was developed starting with a new Risk Policy and that the process could be simplified by identify key themes under which current documents could be grouped eg IT and Data security, The Granary General Governance Equalities etc.

Action: SY to arrange separate meetings with IT and HM to discuss taking the policy review forward

8.3 Policy on use of Social Media and online discussion rules

A new policy relating to the use of social media was tabled for consideration. AT asked whether a particular incident or issue had prompted the development of the policy and SY confirmed that it had been developed following discussions last year and the increasing use of social media to market and communicate with members and the wider public and to ensure acceptable standards were being maintained by those engaging with and on these platforms.

AT suggested that an abbreviated version may be helpful for clubs. The issue of whether by adopting a policy it was then required to go to the AGM and would by default apply to clubs, was raised. KJ highlighted the need to ensure that the positive opportunity to promote the organisation was not lost and that individual members of staff were aware that even on personal accounts they were still representing the organisation.

IT highlighted previous experience of these issue in membership organisations and agreed with the need for a policy but supported the comments made by KJ.

Action: KJ and IT to feedback comments on the policy to SY for approval at the next board in May.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register

Risk register has been updated in relation to the break in and theft.

9.2 Health & Safety

Nothing to report

9.3 General Data Protection Regulation

Nothing to report & BS asked whether this item could be dropped from the agenda and HM highlighted that it was on the risk register.

9.4 Child Protection

SY reminded directors about the need to complete the online CP Training module if they have not already done so. Directors were made aware of recent press coverage following the conviction of a Scottish outdoor sport instructor for child sex offences.

10.0 Future meetings 2021

The FAG schedule had been built into the revised table and a correction made to the March meeting date.

- Full Board - Thurs 4th Feb
 - Intermediate FAG Thurs 18th March
 - Intermediate meeting – Thurs 25th March
- FAG – Thurs 29th April
- Full Board - Thurs 6th May
 - Intermediate FAG – Thurs 10th June
 - Intermediate meeting – Thurs 17th June
- FAG – Thurs 29th July
- Full Board – Thurs 5th Aug
 - Intermediate FAG – Thurs 9th Sep
 - Intermediate meeting – Thurs 16th Sep
- FAG – Thurs 28th Oct
- Full Board – Thurs 4th Nov
 - Intermediate FAG – Thurs 9th Dec
 - Intermediate meeting - Thurs 16th Dec

Issued by Stuart Younie, CEO & Company Secretary
Approved – 6th May 2021

