

Board Meeting –Approved Minutes

4pm, Thurs 29 February 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 (minutes)

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

JD welcomed everyone to the meeting:

- Attending in person at the Granary were AB, JD, AT, AW, HA, SY
- Attending online were IT, HM(Delayed) , DH, PC, BH, DO’R, FK

2.0 Declaration of Interests

Nothing to declare

ACTION – Those who have not completed a declaration of interest form are asked to do so and return it to the CEO to be held on file.

3.0 Draft Minutes of the Full Board meeting of 2nd November 2023

Approved with no amendments.

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

- 2/11 - 6.0 -DH/PC update on The Old man of Hoy –The outcome of the consultation was published and Sam Percival is looking into funding options.
- 2/11 – 8.1.2 – SY has contacted the BMC regarding their President and Chair role descriptions ans is awaiting a response.
- 2/11 – 8.1.4 – SY replied to Ferranti Club’s email and following the response from BS at the AGM has had no further communication.
- 2/11 – 9.1 – Following full board approval of the Risk policy, the Risk register is to be maintained by FAG and reported to Board.

5.0 Call for AOCB

None

6.0 CEO & Operational report

SY provided the following updates:

- Davie Black has indicated he would like to reduce his hours to 4 days p/wk and is looking at retirement within the next 2 years.
- New certificates had been designed for Honorary memberships and Brian was happy to sign these on behalf of MScot.
Action: Presentations to be arranged with recipients.
- Climb Scotland replacement website work is going well. Next will be the MScot website and options with costs will be shared at the May meeting. AW highlighted the MScot website will be more complex and the task should not to be underestimated. JD – asked about timing- AW answered that will depend on scope but possibly by end of 2024.
Action: Paper on the website to be prepared for the May Board meeting
- The campaign against the current SRN plan is going well with rare collective agreement from all likeminded organisations. SRN are currently promoting a mountain safety benefit to combat negativity.
- AMMH – AB and SY have recently been involved in a problematic situation regarding renovation work and are working with the volunteers on the management committee.
- North face carpark – A meeting with Kate Forbes is to be held on 3rd April with representatives from the SMC.
- Stats are included at the back of the operational report. They include Mountains Safety course participant numbers for 23/34 which show not all courses are selling out. It is now a competitive environment for courses with many other providers operating in this area.
- Presentation and thanks to outgoing directors is still required. Support with suggestions and contributions welcome from Directors.
- SY/ FK met with MMG Accountants to discuss the possibility of some accounting support and a move to an online accounting system which would deliver time efficiencies.
- AW wished to note that regarding Outcome 1d) He and HG have discussed the Membership Strategy and it will be revisited this year for consideration by the Board..

7.0 Finance Report

7.1 Financial Report Q3 2023

HM had been delayed joining the meeting so FK provided a summary of the financial report to end of Dec 23.

- Overall, the forecast for the full year was looking around £2k better than the budgeted deficit amount which was an improved position from Q2
 - This is largely due to IUTU and St Johns costs now being removed from forecast.
 - In addition a £10k budgeted in December for magazine costs was not paid until January
 - Membership income higher than last year and close to budget
 - Mountain Safety net income about £8k under budget
 - ClimbScotland net income about £5k under budget
 - EDI currently underspent by about £3k
 - Property, office and IT all currently under budget and still not received energy or IT invoices. An application to claim the electricity account with EDF has now been submitted.
 - Salaries are overspent due to Payroll errors which French Duncan have apologised for and are working to resolve.
 - A Legacy donation of around £18k was received in January from Peter Currie Mann. SY added that he had spoken to Peter's sister to gain some insight into his interests to help guide the use of funds. He had a background in education and was passionate about conservation so it was suggested that his donation could be used towards student courses or passed onto OATS for IUTU.
- ACTION - FK/SY** – check with MMG whether a legacy donation can be passed on to a third party.

7.2 Insurance update

SY confirmed that insurance cover had been renewed for 2024 and as previously discussed the public liability cover has increased from £15m to £20m. This had resulted in increased costs of £5.5k for the calendar year. SY thanked AT for offering to lead an insurance working group to investigate possible savings going forwards. AT suggested that bringing the renewal timetable forward by 6 months would be advantageous as details could be shared at the AGM and tied in with membership fee decisions. HA – offered to work with AT in the working group and acknowledged that climbing walls could be a significant factor as they hold their own insurance cover.

8.0 Governance

8.1 Strategy review discussion

JD introduced the item and invited SY shared an overview of the proposed plan. This included an outline of stages required and timescales with a final draft complete in November and signed off in Feb 2025. He summarised that challenges within the strategy will include ensuring financial sustainability and balancing the requirements as a governing body with being a representative body. JD continued, suggesting some key strategic priorities, and added she'd like to weave a community feeling throughout the new strategy.

SY posed some questions for discussion on how to move forward and what to consider. Answers and thoughts included:

- AW – the critical priority? – which one is most important and how to simplify the current priority list.
- AW –in relation to driving up membership – who do we want to attract, and it must include a focus on EDI
- PC – vital to look at sustainability –both in relation to members behaviour and as an organisation so the mountain environment is preserved for the future
- IT –noted the slow increase in female membership numbers and the opportunity to improve this with our new female chair and president. She also highlighted the strong responses from the members survey regarding sustainability.
- HA – Felt a key is to engage more people in core activities and everything else follows from there.
- AT – Highlighted that everything has to be underpinned by financial sustainability which is not currently positive over 3 years. With the database of 16000 members, and the majority of participation being in walking, the focus of efforts should be in that area. He also made comparisons to other countries with much bigger memberships and we should aim to double and triple membership for financial sustainability. HA noted that in Europe the cost of mountain rescue is a key driver for membership of national mountaineering organisations which provide insurance cover.
- DO'R picked up the theme of financial sustainability and continued by leading into Item 8.2.

8.2 SportsScotland annual return and investment proposal 2025 – 29

DO'R went on to give an overview of the current and future situation regarding investment. SS are looking at a standstill budget for next year which effectively results in an 8% cut. Lottery income has reduced so SS are using lottery reserves to maintain investments. He noted that even if investment levels are maintained, there will be no additional uplift to assist with cost-of-living increases. Public sector finances will suffer in next few years, and he suggested it might be prudent to plan for and model a reduction in investment in the medium and long term. He acknowledged that SS will be first to cut costs and savings won't be passed on until they are essential.

AW asked–what % investment could a planning model be based on? DO'R replied that initial investment going forward looked flat and beyond that there were several possible scenarios depending on lottery and government funding. He stressed it was important to remain pragmatic – particularly towards 2029. He also noted that they were keen to increase support into development programmes.

DO explained his own role of building a strong relationship with the organisation. This is mostly with SY through discussions, autumn presentation, and the annual tracker/return. He noted that this had

all been very positive. He then builds a case for support going forward and scaffolds the demand in future years. He has a meeting next week to confirm next year's investment.

He advised to progress the new strategic framework and was encouraged by the notion of an external eye being cast over it and by the communication with the membership.

JD thanked DO and concluded items 8.1 and 8.2 with the suggestion that the key strategic questions are shared in a google document and answers collated.

ACTION – SY to share question and **ALL** to respond.

8.3 Manifesto for the Mountains – Final Version

SY stated that the Manifesto for the Mountains had been presented at the AGM and a consultation completed. He was now seeking approval of the final version. PC observed the positive engagement it has had from stakeholders. AW – suggested there are opportunities to use it to our advantage. After some further discussion around how it can be used going forward the document was **approved**.

ACTION – SY to continue the conversation on its application going forward and final versions of the document are to be produced.

8.4 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

SY explained that he had been working on streamlining and updating the schedule. JD queried which documents require board input. SY felt that going forward most document drafts don't need to come to the Board, and only final drafts ready for approval.

ACTION - SY/ IT to go through and update the register.

8.4.1 Approval of updated ClimbScotland Facilities Strategy

Following a brief discussion the final document was **approved**.

8.4.2 New Risk Management Policy

SY was seeking feedback on this updated policy and posed the question of 'What level of risk do we wish to accept as an organisation?'. Directors to consider the suggested rewording and comments on the draft document

ACTION –ALL to provide feedback to Stuart within 3 weeks = 21st March.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Management

9.1.1 Updated draft Risk Register

SY reported that he had updated, rescored, and rated everything on the register.

ACTION - HM, AT, IT to review and feedback to SY.

ACTION – HM – to look at how to quantify the level of risk we are happy to adopt.

9.2 Health & Safety

9.2.1 Approval of updated H & S Policy

AT reported that he has done a lot of work with help from John Morris Safety Ltd. The policy is crucial to ensure safety of staff and volunteers. A manual has been drafted and there are also some things to be addressed regarding staff training, risk assessments and fire doors.

The updated policy was **approved**.

ACTION: SY to work with AT on implementing the recommendations from the H & S review

9.2.2 Incidents and near misses

There were 2 recent incidents to report:

- There had been a slip on a winter skills course in Glencoe on February 1st which resulted in a sprained ankle – the incident was reported to the insurance company.
- There was a break down in the late back procedures on a St Johns Mountain Safety student course on February 11th. Ross is investigating the incident and how the procedures can be improved.

AT mentioned that Inverness Backcountry had a good late back procedure which worked well and suggested BH may have some advice.

ACTION – AT to ask **BH** if he is happy to engage with RC on the late back procedure.

9.3 Child Wellbeing

There were 2 live cases to report:

- Concerns had been raised regarding a young person at a ClimbScotland event. These have been passed onto the relevant local authority.
- Complaints have been made about the conduct of a specific club/centre staff/volunteers. Jamie has sought support from Children 1st but it looks like we will need external support to help with an investigation as the situation is complex. It was noted that a cost might be occurred.

9.3.1 Approval of new Codes of Conduct for Competitions

HA/SY reported that they have looked at BMC and SS codes of conduct and that this document aligns with those approaches. The new codes of conduct were **approved**.

10.0 Future meetings 2024

Amendments in bold

- 22nd Feb - FAG
- 29th Feb - Board
- 9th May - FAG
- **23rd May – Board**
- 1st Aug - FAG
- 8th Aug - Board
- 13 Oct - FAG
- 7th Nov - Board
- **9th Nov – AGM - AGREED**
- 12th Dec – Christmas Board/staff meeting

AOB

- AT shared that Declan Phelan of Eagle ski club had sent an email of thanks regarding the work around the ski touring code and the difficult negotiations around it.

Issued by FK 14/03/24

Approved 23/05/24

