
FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 09:00

MINUTES**In Attendance:**

John Coyne CBE (JC)	Chair and Independent Director
Richard Boreham (RB)	Vice Chair and Independent Director
Kerry Chown (KC)	Director nominated by Canoe Wales (<i>Virtual</i>)
Clare Dallaway (CD)	Director nominated by English Forum
Nick Donald (ND)	Independent Director
Martine Kushner (MK)	Independent Director (<i>Virtual - Partial attendance</i>)
Jim Miller (JM)	Director nominated by The SCA (<i>Virtual</i>)
Zoey Rowe (ZR)	Director nominated by English Forum
Greg Spencer (GS)	Director nominated by English Forum
Ashley Metcalfe (AM)	CEO

Apologies

Manpreet Sehmbi (MS)	Independent Director
----------------------	----------------------

Absent without Apologies

Gareth Mahood (GM)	Director nominated by CANI
--------------------	----------------------------

Also In Attendance:

Dee Paterson (DP)	President
Susan Hicks (SH)	Finance Director (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Rob Knott (RK)	Director of Communications (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Barry Wade (BW)	Director of IT and Digital Transformation (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Charmaine Collins (CC)	Executive Assistant to the CEO
John Harrison (JH)	UK Sport

1. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair (JC) welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everybody for attending in Lee Valley during the working week to coincide with the 2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships.

JC especially welcomed JM from the SCA, who would start the meeting as an observer prior to becoming a full member of the Board during Item 07. He acknowledged KC and MK who had also joined the meeting online. The Chair welcomed an external guest, John Harrison, Sports Advisor at UK Sport who was attending to observe the meeting. The Chair confirmed with Board Members that discussions would remain confidential through existing agreements we have in place with UK Sport around non-disclosure.

JC advised that several colleagues would join the meeting throughout proceedings including

Rob Knott, Director of Communications who would join the meeting to present item 08, the branding update and Barry Wade, Director of IT and Digital Transformation who would join the meeting to present item 10, the digital progress update.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from MS. The Board also noted that GM was absent and that apologies had not been received by the Executive in advance of the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

GS confirmed that he and JM were connected through their place of work.

4. Minutes of FB85

The Minutes of FB85 were approved as a true and fair record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising not covered by the agenda

There were no further matters arising.

7. Item 07 – SCA Director Nomination

JC proposed a slight adjustment to the agenda and moved straight to item 07.

[JM left the meeting]

JC stated that The Scottish Canoe Association had nominated James Miller to the Board of British Canoeing. He pointed to James' application for the SCA Director Role, which included an overview of his professional experience and qualifications, that was included at Appendix 1 to the paper. JC invited questions or comments from the Board.

The Board unanimously approved the following resolution;

The Board of British Canoeing resolved that James Miller, having consented to act, be appointed as an additional director of British Canoeing with immediate effect.

[JM re-joined the meeting as a full director]

6. CEO Report

JC introduced item 06 and invited AM to speak to his CEO Report.

Board & AGM 2024 dates

The Board noted and approved the dates for Board meetings in 2024. CD advised that she was unable to attend the meeting scheduled in June. The Board formally noted and approved the date for the virtual AGM on the evening of Tuesday 12 or 19 March 2024 (tbc subject to ND's availability).

Membership

AM shared a graph of membership trends over the past 10 years which showed the marked growth experienced over the last 3 years. He also showed that 2023 had seen above expected growth in membership numbers until July 2023 when numbers started to decline due to the poor weather. The Board noted that membership had dropped in July and August (down by almost 8,000). AM stated that the UK had experienced 50% more rainfall in July and August than seen in recent years and the weather had consequently had a negative impact on membership figures, alongside the cost of living crisis and an increased desire to take foreign holidays (as witnessed by Ryanair and Easyjet posting record number of seat bookings in August). He shared plans to introduce a membership review group to analyse data and look at things slightly differently. He assured the Board that we will continue to monitor and focus on chasing those slow to renew. The board welcomed the review.

The Board considered the reasons for the membership decline, feeling that the cost of living may have had more of an impact this year than previously anticipated. A Board member noted that different sub categories of people tend to join at different times throughout the calendar year. The Board discussed membership patterns and requested a deep dive project to explore the reasons why people have not renewed. A Board member suggested that the lifecycle of SUP may be starting to change.

Russian and Belarussian Athlete Participation

AM reported that the ICF were softening their position to allow opportunities for individual neutral Russian and Belarussian athletes to qualify for Paris 2024. AM stated that British Canoeing had lobbied hard internationally to relay our strong stance and express our disappointment with the decision. JC, on behalf of the Board, highlighted the importance of neutrality and advised that a clear definition of independence should be promoted which was robust enough to ensure that athletes are genuinely independent.

KKP Review

AM reported that an extensive review of the facilities at Lee Valley and HPP had recently been produced, including thoughts on a small number of potential alternative flat-water sites. The report suggested that overall Lee Valley works very well as a world class facility, with only minor upgrades required to IT infrastructures. Three key recommendations were proposed in relation to HPP in Nottingham;

- The current agreement needed to be managed more effectively to ensure a better service and value for money
- Clarity on the performance requirements deemed necessary to ensure HPP was appealing and attractive as a WCP venue.
- Work with Nottingham County Council /Serco to maximise the office space to ensure better value.

There was a discussion around the lease at HPP. The Board noted that approximately 10 years were left on the lease and that now might be a good opportunity to start conversations about the review of the lease. AM shared that there were opportunities to look at alternative sites, such as South Cerney, although any decision to invest into an alternative venue may be challenging due to the projected high costs involved.

AM reported that the HPP building had been checked for concrete issues but that to date, no concerns had been reported. The Board agreed to receive the report for discussion at their next meeting in December. This should include the executive opinion of the options available and the financial risks scoped with the help of the Finance & Audit Committee.

2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships

AM reported that the BBC would show the semi-finals and finals of the Slalom World Championships on the red button and iPlayer. The Board noted the profile of ticket sales and as at 21 September, 81% of event tickets had been sold and there was real optimism that targets could now be reached with positive on day sales. AM relayed that the risks around protests had been taken very seriously and that security would therefore be very tight.

Commercial update

AM reported that Hummel would be our exclusive clothing partner for the next 5 years until 2029. The Board noted the list of other commercial partners who continue to work with British Canoeing. AM reported that the primary objective of the sponsorship strategy for the Canoe Slalom World Championships had been achieved generating £100k of commercial income.

SUP Recognition

AM reported that British Canoeing were now in receipt of the signed written agreement from Sport England confirming the extra funding for SUP. He also confirmed that Canoe Wales had also received extra funding and have appointed a SUP lead. It was noted that The SCA had had joint SUP recognition confirmed but that no announcement had yet been made public. AM stated that CANI were due to resubmit their SUP recognition application shortly. There was a short discussion around the importance of exploring greater collaboration with SUP partnerships.

Transgender Policy Update

AM reported the Transgender Competition Policy continues to be reviewed internally, while we monitor international progress and that of other IF's and NGB's. He shared that the policy was unlikely to change ahead of Paris 2024. There was a discussion around the transgender policy. The Board recognised that we currently have an appropriate policy in place and that where we stand nationally may progress in December, as we also aim to align to any change in ICF policy. AM reassured the Board that we have an appropriate communication strategy in place to respond to any social media queries relating to the transgender policy.

Coach Licensing "Standards of Deployment"

AM reported that the project had progressed steadily and that we are exploring the benefits of joining a pilot cohort led by Sport England and CIMPSA to establish how a coach register may look and work. The Board noted that there are currently no timeframes set for implementation although an internal target of December 2024 had been discussed but may need to be pushed back. AM confirmed that British Canoeing were liaising with a number of clubs about how best to pilot the scheme, to help establish and resolve any issues ahead of a wider rollout. The Board requested that regular updates are provided at future meetings of the Board.

UK Code of Sports Governance

AM reported that UK Sport had verbally confirmed that British Canoeing is compliant with the UK Code of Sports Governance with minimum actions to complete by the end of the year. The Board noted the three new key requirements of the code; diversity and inclusion action plans; welfare and safety in sport and people planning. JH was invited to comment and shared that British Canoeing were in a good place and ahead of the curve.

Weir Safety

AM reported that following the recent fatal accident at Kempston Weir in Bedford, further weir safety information was updated on the British Canoeing and Go Paddling websites and also forwarded to all members in the members newsletter on 6 July.

Sports Commercial Review

AM reported that the commercial review had now been completed. The review identified six strategic initiatives to support British Canoeing with commercial development. It was agreed for updates to be shared at the December Board “away” day where greater time will be available for the Executive and the Board to explore initial thoughts in more detail. AM, on behalf of British Canoeing, thanked JH and UK Sport for part-funding the review.

Club Meetings

Following the disappointing Sprint results in Duisburg, AM reported that he had attended meetings with the Sprint community to answer questions around performance related concerns, covering our people, strategy, structures and continued level of results.

The Board noted that further follow up meetings would be planned for the coming weeks and months, especially as we progress with the UKS LA funding bid and new ideas and strategies are explored. AM shared that initial feedback from UK Sport suggests that paracanoe has the potential to increase funding in the LA cycle, slalom to remain stable and sprint to face a potential reduction. The Board were keen to ensure that we carefully consider how we mitigate against any potential reduction and to secure the legacy from previous cycles.

A Board member asked when the recent British Canoeing research into the best use of using SUP leashes on white water would be made public. AM confirmed that following the recent research and insight into the inherent danger of using leashes and pending further research, British Canoeing had issued strong recommendations that SUP paddlers do not use any leash system while paddling on white water. It was agreed to publish full details of the report as soon as it was appropriate and to continue to monitor this situation as further research unfolded.

The Board received the CEO Report and noted progress to date.

8. Branding Update

JC invited RK to present the branding update. It was noted that we also sought to get agreement to roll out across the four National Associations in 2024. It was noted that the provision of new Hummel kit for the international teams would be best branded in the new identity if possible. The recommendation to the board was to support the new brand identity.

RK outlined the reasons why a rebrand is being proposed and the extensive consultation process conducted. He unveiled the new logo design. He confirmed that the new design had received full support from the Chief Executives of the four UK National Associations. RK emphasised the importance of digital assets, confirming that the simplicity of the design is exciting in this regard. RK outlined next steps to include the development of rollout options and brand guidelines, and invited questions from the Board.

The Board welcomed the new design and agreed that it was a huge improvement in logo presentation since the last meeting in June. A Board member complimented the use of the negative space to designate the paddle, the simplicity in design and use of colour to represent the different home nations. The Board requested that how those colours represent themselves on screen are cross checked against diversity guidelines in the implementation. The consideration of how it played out across different media was welcomed.

The Board were interested to know how Paddle Australia gauged the success of their new brand, emphasising that it was important to define what success looks like. RK shared that British Canoeing had liaised with Paddle Australia and that they had achieved greater commercial success since their rebrand with no negative impact from a performance point of view. RK agreed to share the research from discussions with Paddle Australia.

RK confirmed that our new kit sponsor was ready to start design on the new kit in order to go into production soon ready for a 2024 rebrand.

There was an extensive discussion around English identity. Some concern was expressed that there was not a clear English identity within the new brand. JC highlighted that there is an English identity included within the new brand and it is how this component is managed and represented as part of the operational roll that will be key.

KC expressed disappointment that Canoe Wales and the SCA had not received a written response from British Canoeing to their letters expressing concerns around the English identity. AM reported that both those letters had been discussed extensively at the UK CEO Meeting on 12 September and agreed to issue a formal response. KC stated that she would welcome a meeting between the CEOs and Chairs of the UK National Associations to ensure full clarity on National Association operational plans to use new branding.

JM relayed that he was personally supportive of the new brand but the SCA do have concerns around how the England identity will be used and therefore do not feel ready to approve the new brand unless there are clearer proposals on how the English identity will be used.

AM highlighted that it is important to remember the reasons why all four nations are embarking on the rebrand, and not to lose sight of this.

JC noted that these issues are a consequence of the constitutional position we find ourselves in. He confirmed that British Canoeing manages the English responsibility and that Canoe England does not exist as an organisation. He recognised the need to provide operational clarity of how the England brand will be used as part of roll out to be shared with all National Associations. JC noted that the board is constitutionally competent to make the overall

decision to rebrand and that the use of an England brand and other brands created should be part of a detailed and agreed implementation plan.

JC summarised that the new brand has received universal verbal support from the British Canoeing Board but recognised that the full rebrand across all parties requires approval from all Boards in order for the National Associations to align to timescales. This would require agreement on the organisational clarity around the use of the English identity in the roll out. The Board agreed to empower AM to create that clarity of use to provide comfort to the Boards of each National Association, ready for the rollout discussion in December.

The Board noted that the current UK Agreement had been stalled by cross border safeguarding issues.

The Board received and noted the brand update and approved the new name and branding and the four associated brands for the National Associations. The Board agreed to discuss and agree plans for the roll out at their next meeting in December.

9. Annual Plan 2023-24

JC invited AM to present Item 09.

AM reported that the current annual plan remained on track. He pointed to the proposed new annual plan for 2023-24 that was shared with the Board in advance. The Board noted that the annual plan had been streamlined into 3 key areas; winning more medals, membership growth and strong organisational governance.

The Board noted and formally approved the Annual Plan for 2023-24.

10. Digital Update

BW presented the digital progress report that focussed on digital transformation projects and how they relate to the rebuild of the central site.

BW highlighted progress within the following projects;

- Creation of single sign-on (SSO) environment with User ID tracking
- Creation of an integrated event entry system
- In-house Learning Management System (LMS) with generative AI and eLearning store
- Created athlete management system, results and database
- Started website for new brand with bot help function

BW highlighted the key steps for 2024;

- Launch site and start second phase of website development
- To further leverage use of SSO to create member-only access to services in areas such as PaddlePoints and Awarding Body
- To start leverage SSO for personalisation in-site CTAs and messaging

A Board member relayed that some members had reported difficulty navigating to particular training modules on the website. BW assured the Board that there will be a fully working search engine on the new site.

The Board requested that we communicate and publicise 'new features' and digital projects through regular marketing initiatives.

BW formally apologised to the Board for the delay in these digital projects which was a result of the impact of covid. The Board noted the delay but were not dismayed and felt that it had become timely with the rebrand in prospect.

The Board received and noted the digital progress report and supported the direction of travel, noting how it times in nicely with the organisational rebrand.

11. Budget 2023-24

JC invited SH to present the budget for 2023-24.

SH referred to the detailed Budget including cashflow forecast attached as Appendix 1 to the papers. The Board noted that this had been considered in great detail on our behalf and approved by the Finance & Audit Committee. SH highlighted;

- The 2023-24 budget is a consolidation budget that has been calculated to breakeven
- Membership income has been cautiously budgeted at 85,000 with a price increase of £2 included from 1 March 2024.
- The budget does not change the volatility of our financial profile with Feb/March traditionally being the low point in the year, forecast to be -£750k at this point in the year in 2024.
- The current core reserves are forecast to exceed the minimum levels set out in the reserves policy by £170k.

SH stated that the financial profile of British Canoeing will likely always be subject to the weather, so it therefore becomes more important to diversify our income streams as the impact of climate change becomes more apparent. The Board empowered the Finance & Audit Committee to consider the ideas generated from the commercial review to make recommendations to help sensitively diversify our income streams and to manage income volatility.

The Board noted that there will be a membership review in 2024.

The Board thanked SH for the clarity of the report.

The Board noted the contents of the paper and formally approved the Budget 2023-24.

12. Finance Report

The Board took the paper as read.

SH updated the Board on the external audit retender process. The Board noted that we will look to change the internal audit partner within Haysmacintyre so that the appropriate check and challenge remains within the financial audit process.

JC thanked SH for the financial update and associated report.

The Board received and approved the Finance report and approved the Finance & Audit Committee's recommendation to stay with Haysmacintyre as company auditors but to seek to change the audit partner for the 2023-24 year-end.

13. World Class Performance Report

JC introduced the World Class Performance Report and invited AM to highlight the key issues;

- The LA cycle funding process is underway
- International results within Slalom and Paracanoe have been positive
- Despite a number of athletes producing PBs, there is huge disappointment that we have failed to qualify a quota place for Paris in Sprint at the World Championships in Duisburg
- The focus now shifts towards how we move forwards to try to qualify boats in Hungary next year and maximise opportunities within the LA cycle.

There was a discussion around the progress made towards the Sprint Strategy. The Board recognised that the Strategy was developed over two cycles, and that we are not far off where we expected to be at this stage. It was noted that more information would become available as we progress the LA funding submission and by December, the Board will receive further updates for check and challenge.

The Board sub committee on Performance Management (Chaired by Senior Independent Director Richard Boreham) had now formed and met for the first time. This committee would conduct detailed scrutiny of performance to inform the board.

The Board noted the international success in marathon, canoe polo and white water this season.

JC noted a concern in relation to the Athlete to Coach programme. The Board recognised that it provides one route into coaching, but it is not wholly exclusive and that other opportunities are available.

The Board received and noted the World Class Performance report.

14. Committee and National Association Reports

The committee and national association reports were taken as read.

14.1 Finance & Audit Committee

No further updates were received beyond those outlined in the paper.

14.2 HR & Remuneration Committee

No further updates were received beyond those outlined in the paper.

14.3 Governance & Risk Committee

No further updates were received beyond those outlined in the paper.

14.4 Nominations Committee

No further updates were received.

14.5 Canoe Wales

No further updates were received.

14.6 CANI

No further updates were received.

14.7 SCA

No further updates were received. [Post meeting note – JM circulated a written SCA update after the meeting]

The Board noted and accepted the Committee and National Association Reports.

15. Any Other Business

No other business was received.

16. Closed Session with Non-Executive Directors