

## Minutes of the Sport England Board meeting of 16 July 2020

The Board met remotely by videoconference.

**Members** Nick Bitel (Chair)

Natalie Ceeney  
Azeem Akhtar  
Rashmi Becker  
Ian Cumming  
Chris Grant  
Sue James  
Andy Long  
David Mahoney (Items 9 - 10)  
Tove Okunniwa  
Karen Pickering

**Officers** Mike Diaper ED – Children, Young People and Tackling Inactivity

Ali Donnelly, ED – Digital Marketing and Communications  
Carol Fraser, Strategic Lead – Customer insight (item 8)  
Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive Officer  
Serena Jacobs, Director–Finance  
Charles Johnston, ED – Property  
Hannah Kerly, Assistant Board Secretary  
Richard Mabbitt, Board Secretary  
Simon Macqueen, Director – Strategy  
Lisa O’Keefe, ED – Insight  
Chris Perks, ED – Local Delivery  
Nick Pontefract, Chief Operating Officer  
Phil Smith, ED – Sport  
Naomi Shearon, Strategic Lead – Strategy (Item 8)  
Andrew Spiers, Strategic Lead – Research and Analysis (item 8)

**Guests:** James Wurr, Head of Sports Participation – DCMS

### 1. Chair’s Welcome and introductory comments

- 1.1 Nick Bitel welcomed members and officers to the meeting, held remotely under ongoing COVID-19 social distancing measures. This meeting had been added to the Board meeting schedule to:

- a) allow further discussion of the emerging Sport England strategy, and the future landscape in which it would operate, including Sport England's ongoing response to COVID-19
- b) provide a parallel opportunity to discuss in detail Sport England's approach to inequalities and racism in sport and physical activity
- c) review of outstanding elements of Sport England's 2020-21 budget, the schedule for agreement of which had been extended as a result of COVID-19 related issues.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 David Mahoney would attend the latter part of the meeting only. Otherwise, All Board members were in attendance.
- 2.2 Anna Deignan (DCMS director of sport) was unable to observe the meeting and James Wurr (DCMS Head of Sports Participation) was attending on her behalf.

## 3. Declarations of Interests

- 3.1 No declarations of interests were made by members additional to those already registered. Tim Hollingsworth had registered previously his role with the Football Foundation (in respect of the matter discussed at [Item 6.4](#)).

## 4. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 4.1 The Board **AGREED** the minutes of the Board meeting of 16 June 2020 (paper [MB20-40](#)).

## 5. Matters arising

- 5.1 The Board reviewed the log of decisions and actions (paper [MB20-41](#)). In respect of the decision on 'Rolled-forward' funding ([minute 7.8 of the meeting of 16 July](#)), the Board noted that the name of one potential recipient organisation had been incorrectly rendered as "Association of Colleges" rather than "AOC Sport Ltd". The Board was content for this to be duly amended in the record. **Action: Nick Pontefract**

- 5.2 The Board was otherwise content that matters arising from previous meetings were either complete, satisfactorily in hand, or to be addressed under later agenda items.

## 6. CEO Report

- 6.1 Tim Hollingsworth drew members' attention to paper MB20-43 outlining the purpose and process for the matters to be discussed under items 7, 8 and 9, and briefed Board members on other key issues and developments since their last meeting.

### British Gymnastics

- 6.2 The Board noted that serious concerns had been raised (and in many cases brought into the public domain) around the treatment of athletes and participants in gymnastics, and the role played by British Gymnastics as its National Governing Body. The Board acknowledged the gravity and wider implications of the complaints and:

- a) supported the action taken by Sport England with UK Sport, to initiate an independent review process, following concerns that neither an internal review nor a British Gymnastics-commissioned review would be seen as offering a sufficient level of independent scrutiny;
- b) welcomed Sport England's work with partners including the British Athletes Commission and Child Protection in Sport Unit to set up and fund a dedicated support helpline for people who had raised concerns or had been involved in the matters under review;
- c) agreed that while Sport England itself was some way removed from the specific allegations, it was right that its officers carry out internal checks to confirm that similar concerns had not been raised to Sport England or by it to British Gymnastics.

- 6.3 The Board felt that the surfacing of these concerns could well prompt wider discussion about the culture and capability of sports coaching at grass roots as well as elite level, and stimulate further debate about the way in which sport was regulated, and professionalised, particularly in respect of children and young people. The Board therefore asked officers to monitor the situation and factor any developments on the wider questions around coaching culture and regulation into its ongoing delivery and forward strategy development. It asked to be kept aware of key developments.

**Action: Phil Smith**

## Active Through Football

- 6.4 Tim Hollingsworth advised the Board that Sport England was keen to expedite roll-out of the Active through Football programme. The business case for this had been agreed at the Board's September meeting, and grant approval (which in this instance also required Board level sign-off by virtue of the size of award) would be sought shortly by correspondence. The Board agreed to this approach. **Action: Chris Perks and Phil Smith**

## Places for Growth

- 6.5 Tim Hollingsworth and Charles Johnston reported on discussions with DCMS and the Government Property Agency. With the lease on Sport England's London premises due to expire in November 2022, a range of options were being investigated. These reflected Sport England's learning on flexible working from the COVID-19 lockdown period. In the meantime, Sport England continued to work on the basis of a partial and phased return to offices from September 2020. An update would be shared with the Board in due course. **Action Charles Johnston**

## 7. Budget

- 7.1 Serena Jacobs presented for the Board's approval the outstanding element of the 2020-21 Budget, relating to the Lottery Award (paper [MB20-43](#) refers). Board members noted that discussions at the Board meeting of 16 June 2020 had supported the principle of creating flexibility for decisive responses to future exigencies (including those brought about by COVID-19) and to provide for an adaptive approach to implementing the new Sport England strategy (including in relation to inequalities in sport and physical activity).
- 7.2 The Board noted the paper's breakdown of lottery funding into broad investment areas, and how these had changed since the previous meeting. This had followed an intensive period of review with officers that had included robust scrutiny of commitments and checks for optimism bias. Reductions in commitments had been made in some areas. These reductions had been partially offset by increases to work on local delivery; core partners; campaigns and workforce/volunteering. The Board was content that the budget had been prepared with a reasonable degree of certainty on lottery income, which the evidence showed was holding up well, despite the COVID-19 context.

7.3 The Board emphasised the importance of controlling optimism bias in programme management behaviour. It highlighted the need clearly to explain internally and externally the rationale for any increase in operational flexibility. Otherwise the Board felt that the proposed Lottery Award Budget of £329m, (a reduction of £31m) reflected its desire to respond flexibly and with impact in uncertain times and at the outset of a new strategy period. The Board therefore **APPROVED** the budget as presented in the paper

## **8. Sport England's approach to addressing racism and racial inequality in sport and physical activity**

8.1 The Board discussed paper MB20-44. Further to initial discussion at the Board meeting of 16 June, the paper set out Sport England's approach to this critical concern; its alignment with past and current activities; and its central role in Sport England's strategy development.

### **Overall approach**

8.2 Board members acknowledged that while recent events had dramatically raised wider public consciousness of racism, the social and economic inequalities underlying racism, under-participation, and under-representation in the sport and physical activity ecosystem were systemic and needed to be addressed strategically. They felt it right that Sport England should critically evaluate its own effectiveness in this area and explore what it could do better and differently. Nevertheless, they recognised the commitment to this agenda that already existed within the organisation and that tackling inequalities was emerging as a dominant theme in the feedback to the strategy framework Sport England now had to build on this to support fair treatment and better representation of the wider BAME community at every level of sport and physical activity on the grounds of the clear diversity dividend to the sector, and society in general.

8.3 The Board:

a) acknowledged Sport England work already in train from which new activity could develop and lessons learned. These included: research and insight (notably on 'Sport for All?'); the leadership and governance partnership with Perrett Laver to diversify the pool of non-executive candidates; work developing a more diverse talent pathway; the Tackling Inequalities COVID-19 fund; and other targeted investments;

- b) remained supportive of the four broad areas of activity that Sport England was taking forward, and with the opportunities for integration between them as they progressed;
- c) supported the guiding principles explained in the paper ("nothing about us without us", "guided by our values", and "whole system approach");
- c) agreed that although the paper focussed on inequalities and inclusion in terms of race, these issues needed to be addressed as part of a broad approach to all experiences of inequality, including those of disabled people, women and people from low socio-economic backgrounds. It felt that recognising intersectionality and cumulative disadvantage and discrimination was key;
- d) acknowledged the balances to be struck in advancing these work areas quickly, but effectively and comprehensively. It was content with the indicative delivery dates set out in the paper for the Governance Code Review and the Race in Sport Review, and (subject to the discussion later in the meeting under item 9 relating to publication of the Strategy) for strategy development. Some work under the 'internal work' heading would be dependent on external factors but the Board was keen that this should not hold up progress on those areas of internal-facing activity where advances could be made quickly. It suggested that interim milestones be reported on as well;

8.4 The Board agreed that Sport England's ambitions for change needed to be set out clearly and publicly, and that targets, if used appropriately would help it and other organisations to stimulate, formulate and prioritise effective action. The Board noted the galvanising effect of gender targets for participation in sport and physical activity on Sport England and its partners delivery. Given the urgent need for action, and the importance of showing early leadership, the Board agreed that the formulation of at least some targets - including internal ones - could progress alongside the strategy development process, with the aim of being Integrated within it in due course;

8.5 The Board felt that the four broad ambitions set out In the paper (closing the race gap in levels of participation in sport and physical activity for specific BAME groups; supporting identification and development of talented athletes from diverse backgrounds, including BAME; a more representative leadership and workforce within sport and physical activity; and Sport England's own representativeness) could all usefully be cast into more specific targets;

8.6 The Board advised that targets:

- a) should be seen as means to an end rather than as ends in themselves. They should be ideally be used in a formative rather than punitive way but still being effective, and formulated to avoid perversely incentivising negative behaviour;
- b) needed to be developed on the basis of evidence and insight. Given the lack of data in some areas they would need to be cast with sufficient flexibility to be adapted to new opportunities and problems that emerged;
- c) required ownership by accountable officers, who would need to explain and justify the reasons behind the relative success or otherwise in meeting them and take that evidence and take responsibility for integrating that learning into future initiatives;
- d) needed to factor in demographic and geographical variations. Internally, this might include specific targets in respect of Sport England's offices and their local demographic characteristics;
- e) in respect of internal diversity, targets could be made clearer and more ambitious. The Board supported BITC's principles noted in the paper as a sound basis for developing such targets.

8.7 The Board therefore **SUPPORTED** the overall approach to addressing the issues of racism and racial inequality in sport and physical activity and the underlying principles set out in the paper. It asked for a further update at the next Board meeting. **Action Nick Pontefract**

### **Internal Diversity**

8.8 Given the importance of the issue, the Board welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise Sport England's proposals here at this fine grain of detail. The Board expressed broad support for the proposals overall. It liked the framing and terminology used for exploring these issues in a way that was systemic rather than siloed. The Board agreed that addressing representation internally had to be early on the critical path to success in wider and external- facing activities.

8.9 Further to the matters raised in the paper, the Board:

- a) acknowledged that the current employment market made it difficult for Sport England (and other bodies) to address rapidly internal diversity through additional recruitment: it was noted that Sport England's staff turnover was currently near-zero. However, it felt that this should not preclude Sport England from developing and putting new recruitment

measures in place as soon as possible. Moreover, it noted that recruitment was only part of the solution and was pleased that improvements to internal progression and talent development were also under consideration;

- b) felt that a deeper understanding of the Sport England "employee brand" was vital. It was important to understand what people outside the organisation, and particularly outside its immediate sphere of influence felt about it as a potential workplace, and -where necessary- to work on addressing misconceptions and enhancing the brand;
- c) highlighted the importance of robust qualitative data to identify:
  - if and where in the recruitment cycle the diversity of candidates was being filtered out, and why;
  - where would-be applicants from currently underrepresented groups felt unable or reluctant to engage effectively in the process;
- d) felt that Sport England needed to consider not only the process by which it assessed candidates, but the inclusivity of the pools from they were drawn. Was, for example, Sport England looking hard enough at candidates who had relevant and transferable skills gained outside the 'traditional' sports management career development routes. Exit Interviews were also suggested as a source of rich information about career progression, development, and the overall employee experience at Sport England;
- d) noted the value of learning from other organisations' approaches and successes in seeking to address the challenge of improving employee diversity and representation;
- e) supported a thorough proofing of current recruiting practice for unintended consequences which militated against strong candidates from currently under-represented groups. Members acknowledged that it was not possible to eliminate the subjective element to recruitment decisions and Sport England should not seek to do so. Rather it should focus on understanding conscious and unconscious biases and build in corrections and mitigations. The Board advised additional consideration of the appropriate balance in recruitment processes, between relevant experience (including lived experience) and qualifications, and how sifting criteria could be better structured and sequenced;
- f) reiterated the importance of an intersectional approach, and highlighted the protected characteristic of Religion or belief, which was commonly linked to that of race and ethnicity;
- g) noted the Importance of building confidence among BAME employees that measures were in place to minimise the likelihood of them being placed in unfair or inadvertently disadvantaged positions regarding

recruitment, promotion or development, and to mitigate or remedy the impact of this should it happen.

- 8.10 The Board was supportive of an executive review of how Sport England structured, managed and led its work on diversity and Inclusion.
- 8.11 The Board expressed its thanks to the Sport England BAME employees' network for its support, advice and challenge to the work being developed in this area and was reassured that these employees' voices were being listened to. The Board noted that the group had been clear that aspirations on inclusion had to feel 'real', and that visible representation of BAME people in Sport England's workforce at all levels and across all functions was key to this. At the same time, the group were clear that this was not an issue to be siloed or for BAME employees to lead alone. The Board was therefore pleased that clear ownership for implementing improvement lay with the Executive Team, and that additional resource was being identified to support improving Sport England's internal diversity. The Board advised that it was important to sustain this safe space for BAME employees to reflect their sense of how Sport England was changing and what further needed to be done.
- 8.12 The Board **ENDORSED** the broad approach set out in the paper. Nick Bitel thanked officers and Board members who had provided additional advice outside the meeting and asked the Executive Team to consider the Board's feedback in taking these activities forward. **Action Nick Pontefract**

### **Governance Code**

- 8.13 The Board discussed the review of the Code for Sports Governance. It felt that, four years on from its Introduction, a review was in any case timely, but supported the proposed additional emphasis of the Code that supported equality, diversity and inclusion. These included a focus on the boards at all levels of sporting organisations, and representation on them of people of those from BAME backgrounds. The Board felt it was correct to review these holistically as part of the wider review of the Code, based on experience of the code's application in practice, and against current governance best practice from other sectors,
- 8.14 The Board additionally noted:
- a) the links that would be made by commentators between the effectiveness of organisations' governance arrangements and wider

issues around poor coaching culture. The Board was content that the present review would focus on organisational governance rather than specific operational matters and was reassured that Sport England was addressing the coaching issue through other activities and Initiatives, including diversity-related work;

- b) that the current Code set a specific target for gender representation but did not set explicit targets for representation from BAME communities on the boards of organisations for which compliance was required. The Board understood that this approach had reflected concerns from the sector and expert bodies about tokenism. However, it agreed that the changing weight of evidence and opinion meant it was particularly timely to review this element of the code;
- c) that while BAME representation on Boards was totemic, it needed to be accompanied by concerted action at all organisational levels alongside efforts to improve diversity across the piece in terms of protected and other characteristics;
- d) Sport England's substantive influence in stimulating diverse recruitment in National Governing bodies, through Key Performance Indicators in individual funding agreements;
- e) Sport England work in hand building on the Perrett Laver partnership to support organisations required to comply with the Code. This included support for developing diversity policies and practices, and for developing more diverse talent pools from which senior executives could be drawn. It also included scoping potential research on the 'diversity dividend' as it pertained to partner organisations.

8.15 The Board felt that this was a propitious time for seeking to strengthen the Codes provisions in respect of diversity, and that to do so would be well received by the bodies subject to the requirements of the Code. The Board felt that the Code should provide clear, consistent red lines on minimum standards to be met, but also credit best practice, and innovative approaches. It should also provide the framework for challenge and support to those organisations who were struggling to cascade improvements at national level to grass roots organisations.

8.16 The Board therefore **ENDORSED** the broad approach set out in the paper. Nick Bitel thanked discussants and asked that the Boards comments be fed into the review process for the code, and for the Board to be consulted and engaged in decision making around the review of the Code, including approving the revised version in due course **Action: Nick Pontefract**

## Race in Sport Review

- 8.17 Further to the proposals initially brought to Sport England and UK Sport by Chris Grant, the Board reflected on potential options for a review into racism in sport and physical activity, and on developments since this was discussed at the Board meeting of 16 June 2020. Board members noted the potential for unhelpful duplication and overlap as a number of bodies sought to respond to the calls for action prompted by the recent Black Lives Matter protests and campaigns. Most notable was the announcement of a Government Commission on Race Inequality. The wider sport and physical activity sector was also seeking to respond, with independent reviews already proposed for football and cricket.
- 8.18 The Board:
- a) was pleased that Sport England and the Home Country Sports Councils (HCSC) had held constructive discussions on how best to respond quickly and effectively. It welcomed the participation here of Chris Grant and Arun Kang (Sporting Equals). The Board was reassured that the reception from the HCSCs had been positive and thoughtful, with commitment to joined up action. On balance, an all-nations grassroots-to- elite approach would add substance, reach and value to what Sport England could do alone;
  - b) felt that that while a review might be a strong signal of commitment to addressing a difficult problem and enhance Sport England's licence to act; it should not simply re-tread old ground. While understanding of the issues was incomplete, there already existed a persuasive body of evidence from which more immediate action could spring;
  - c) recognised that systemic change across the piece was a long-term challenge and required concerted engagement and collaboration but felt that Sport England and other HCSCs could and should initiate some actions immediately.
- 8.19 The Board noted the approach outlined in the paper. This involved immediate and concerted efforts by all HSCSs to build trust with BAME communities and stakeholders across the UK in order to improve engagement and secure a better understanding of the lived sport and physical activity experiences of different BAME individuals and communities. The Board welcomed:

- a) the joint commitment to “involve, listen and learn” through an independent and rapid review, to report back by December 2020 with an analysis of existing data and insight arising, and of key data gaps;
- b) the aim of creating an opportunity for communities and individuals facing barriers to participation in the mainstream sport and physical activity sector to provide testimony and insight to the HSCs as stewards of much of the sport and physical activity ecosystem across the UK;
- c) the engagement of an external advisory team to help HSCs CEOs to scope and commission the work and develop terms of reference and timelines for future phases of the work, to be progressed jointly and through individual strategies and partnerships.

8.20 The Board therefore **SUPPORTED** the aims of the review and the Initial plans for taking It forward with the Home Country Sports Councils as set out in the paper. Nick Bitel thanked discussants and asked for the Board to be kept aware of developments and engaged as appropriate. **Action: Nick Pontefract**

### Strategy Development

8.21 The Board noted that the focus of Sport England’s next strategy was shifting towards the issue of tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity. It agreed that much of the longer-term work to resolve the issues raised in the paper would be shaped by the emerging strategy development process to be discussed under item 9.

## 9. Strategy

### Understanding the Impacts of COVID-19 on Sport and physical Activity

9.1 Board members noted the work being undertaken by Sport England to understand the impact of COVID-19 on sport and physical activity (and the wider social and economic context within which this occurred) and on how that work was informing Sport England’s immediate response and its longer-term strategy development. Paper MB20-45 refers.

9.2. Focusing on public health and the economy as two key determinants of patterns of supply of and demand for sport and physical activity, Board members undertook a confidence mapping exercise to identify Sport England’s position as it entered the next strategy period. Oral and online

responses were recorded by officers, with strong consensus forming around the challenges posed by:

- a) significant disruptions to habituated behaviour across the piece, but especially in newly engaged audiences, or audiences facing other barriers to participation;
- b) a relative shift to outdoor and recreational activity including by some target audiences, and some opportunities to sustain and build on this in these areas;
- c) the corresponding fall-off in activity around team sports, communal indoor activities and activities that required specific facilities, with disproportionate impacts on underrepresented target audiences;
- c) Continuing inequalities in levels of engagement, plus exacerbation of disadvantages to some groups, especially those with disability or longer-term health issues. While opportunities for some groups might open up as a result of changing working patterns, Board members feared that overall, the socio-economic polarisation of engagement in sport and physical activity was likely to increase;
- d) Significant differences by suppliers in willingness and capability to innovate, and a marked variation in risk appetite across the sector. Even in respect of those suppliers that had sought to innovate (e.g. more flexible gym membership packages directed at existing customers) a tendency to retreat to core markets was noted;
- e) Significant variations in the risk knowledge and risk appetite of consumers, again with the likelihood of further exacerbating structural inequalities;
- f) A restriction to the ability of the sector to respond due to the huge economic shock brought about by COVID-19. Evidence from the banking crisis of 2008 suggested that recovery in the sector would likely be slow and incremental;
- g) Dramatic negative impacts on children and young people's activity levels, linked to school closures; competing demands on child-carers, and lack of facilities;
- h) the grave impacts on the supply side should community-led and local authority provision be inadequately supported by central government. These impacts would be particularly severe for more excluded communities.

9.3 The Board highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of these issues. Significant variation was noted by sector; socio-economic characteristics, demography, and location both in terms of stakeholder capability and motivation and in terms of the opportunities available to engage in sport

and physical activity. Moreover, the determinants of this variation were inter-related and subject to rapid and unpredictable change. The Board recognised the artificiality of a neat hierarchy of scenarios by either likelihood or impact and felt an approach of tracking COVID-19 impacts and their knock-on implications across a number of fronts was appropriate. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Board retained a degree of optimism related to a shared sense of challenge across sectors and increased willingness to work in a more collaborative way. It was noted that pockets of real innovation and inclusion had been prompted by COVID-19.

- 9.4 Overall, the Board felt that the executive's evaluation of threats and opportunities presented by COVID-19 was sound, and supported the broad analysis of changes in demand for sport and physical activity; potential behavioural impact of changes in demand; and changes in the supply of sport and physical activity. In terms of shaping the future strategy, the Board
- a) agreed that horizon scanning of broader trends in the sport and physical activity sectors and in wider society remained crucial to Sport England's strategic planning. It noted Sport England's ongoing programme of work here and was content with the amended list of 34 trends to be monitored;
  - b) advised that Sport England should seek to capitalise further on the current Government focus on public health and the impetus this gave to promoting physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle;
  - c) felt that the strategy should also seek to maximise the opportunities presented by sectoral disruption. It noted increasing recognition amongst providers that established business models and ways of working needed refreshing, with wider participation and a view to the wider vitality of the sport and physical activity infrastructure key parts of this;
  - d) emphasised the importance of carefully managing and phasing interventions on the bases of evidence and insight, prioritising areas where there was the greatest need and likelihood of impact and identifying nodes of high connectivity and influence.

9.5 *[redacted]*

### **Shaping Sport England's future Strategy**

- 9.6 The Board noted further engagement with the strategy framework "Shaping our future, and discussed emerging messages, and proposed next steps. Paper MB20-46 refers.

9.7 The Board was pleased with the breadth and depth of interest that the engagement programme had stimulated, and the rich feedback garnered. It felt that the approach to consultation had been effective and demonstrated clearly Sport England's desire to foster a collaborative and inclusive ethos across sectors and stakeholders. The Board was satisfied that the overwhelming weight of responses indicated support for the strategic direction set out in the framework. It was reassured that Sport England could now confidently build on the successes of the current strategy in bold and different ways, with an emphasis on shared values, engagement and inclusive tone and language.

9.8 The Board discussed the strong support expressed for:

- a) A long-term (10 year) and paradigm-shifting strategy supported by evidence-led implementation plans to deploy resources effectively in the shorter term and in the more immediate context (including the still unpredictable shorter-term impacts of COVID-19). The Board agreed further collaborative work was needed to refine and project the relevance of the vision; and to effectively support partners to embed longer term and more holistic thinking in their own operations and relationships. The Board was further persuaded that the desired paradigm shift was fundamentally linked to a more explicit focus on addressing inequalities. Board members nevertheless emphasised the to maintain momentum and urgency through supporting life-changing activity 'on the ground': the strategy needed to be demonstrably real;
- b) An increased emphasis on Tackling inequalities. The Board noted the consensus in the feedback that this meant not only directing resource (in the broadest sense) to where the need was greatest. It also meant recognition and meaningful ownership by partners of the systemic inequalities and barriers to participation inherent to the current Sport and Physical activity ecosystem, and - by implication - to aspects of Sport England's role. The Board was encouraged that this acknowledgment of the need for systemic change represented a significant early step in what was likely to be a difficult journey of change;
- c) Sustaining and evolving the collaborative approach taken so far in developing the Strategy. The Board welcomed the appetite for further co-productive work;
- d) Place based approach within a coherent national strategy. The Board welcomed the acknowledgement of place and community specific needs of stakeholders, while noting that enabling effective local action

required national join-up as well, especially where other national funding streams were involved;

- e) A flexibility, responsive and risk-based philosophy. The Board noted the positive responses to the idea of '*stubborn in the vision, flexible on how we get there*' and the potential efficiency and inclusion gains of a well-informed risk-led approach.

9.9 [redacted]

9.10 [redacted]

9.11 [redacted].

9.12 The Board was content that this approach was in line with its Charter remit and as a Lottery funder. Correcting inequalities in activity levels was not contradictory to increasing sport and activity levels across the whole population. Indeed, sustaining total growth levels was itself likely to require extending and diversifying the participant base by working to address the barriers to participation currently obstructing non-engaged groups and individuals.

9.13 The Board agreed that clear and consistent messages about the importance of tackling inequalities were predicated on mutual understanding of what tackling inequalities meant under different circumstances. Board members discussed at length potential definitions of equality in sport and physical activity. On balance, the Board felt that a definition based on "Every person should have the same chances to live an active life and the benefits that brings" was a sensible starting point. However, context was critical. There was also a place for an understanding that reflected a sector-oriented approach (with a focus on equality of opportunity to access sport and physical activity); and an audience-focussed approach (that targeted the people most disadvantaged by systemic inequalities in quality of life and life chances). The Board felt that identifying 'sweet spots' of maximum transformational potential militated against an over-prescriptive formulation of inequality and emphasised the importance of evidence and insight including from local delivery pilots.

9.14 The Board supported an approach to tackling inequalities that looked at demand and patterns of consumption as well as supply. A strategic approach required recognition that more immediate targeted interventions needed to be accompanied by upstream preventative and steering

measures with substantial but longer-term impacts. Focussing on the children and young families could be key to the generational shifts required.

- 9.15 The Board reviewed the proposed strategy development timeline. On balance, having in mind the evidence received so far and based on the various strategy-related discussions it had held, the Board felt that Sport England could justifiably advance the launch date of the strategy to January 2021. It felt comfortable that to do so would not unduly compromise the collaborative approach that had served it well thus far. Given the consensus about the high-level vision set out in the strategy, early clarity would be well received by the sector and those it served.
- 9.16 Nick Bitel thanked discussants. The detail of the discussion and supplementary online commentary during the meeting would be recorded by officers and fed into the strategy development process. Board members were invited to respond further in correspondence with officers if necessary. The Board would revisit the strategy at its meeting of 8 September, and the Investment Committee of 3 September also offered an opportunity for focussed scrutiny of key elements of the strategy. Board members felt the discussions had been productive and thanked officers for their facilitation. While there remained much work to do on at a methodological level, and on targets and indicators, they felt the strategy was now crystallising into clear commitment and approaches. **Action Simon MacQueen** to take into account Board input to the content, presentation, and timing of the strategy in readiness for further discussion at Board and Investment Committee.

## 10. Any other business

- 10.1 With no further substantive items of business being raised, Nick Bitel closed the formal meeting. Board members would meet privately for a short debrief.
- 10.2 The next meeting of the Board would take place on 8 September 2020.

**[Agreed by the Sport England Board at its meeting of 8 September 2020]**