

**Minutes of the Sport England Board meeting of 28 October 2021**  
**Sport England Offices, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London**

Members	Chris Boardman (Chair) Azeem Akhtar Rashmi Becker (by v/c) Natalie Ceeney Ian Cumming Chris Grant David Mahoney
Officers	Mike Diaper - ED, Children, Young People and Tackling Inactivity Jon Fox - Strategic Lead, Investment Design Louise Hartley - Head of Legal Tim Hollingsworth - Chief Executive Officer Serena Jacobs - Director, Finance (items 1-8) Dan Johnson - Interim ED, Digital, Media and Communications (by v/c) Richard Mabbitt - Board Secretary Simon Macqueen - Director, Strategy (by v/c) Rachel Musson - Interim Director of finance (items 1-8) Lisa O'Keefe - ED, Insight Chris Perks - ED, Local Delivery Nick Pontefract - Chief Operating Officer Naomi Shearon - Strategic lead - Strategy Phil Smith - ED, Sport Viveen Taylor - Director, EDI
Guests	Adam Conant - Head of Sport, DCMS
Apologies:	Charles Johnston - ED, property Andy Long (Board member) Tove Okunniwa (Board member) Karen Pickering (Board member)

**1. Chair's introductory comments**

- 1.1 Chris Boardman welcomed attendees. Some were attending remotely, with Sport England continuing to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on capacity and delivery, and the effectiveness of its hybrid working model.
- 1.2 Board members welcomed Adam Conant (observing the meeting on behalf of DCMS), and Rachel Musson who had recently been appointed as Sport England's Interim Director of Finance.

## **2. Apologies for Absence.**

- 2.1 Board members Andy Long, Tove Okunniwa and Karen Pickering had tendered apologies. Chris Boardman would relay Andy Long's feedback on papers during the meeting and would follow up if required with absent members after the meeting.

## **3. Declarations of interest**

- 3.1 No additional declarations of interest were made additional to those already registered.
- 3.2 Chris Boardman reminded members of their duty as public appointees to provide disinterested and objective review of funding proposals, with this being particularly relevant to the discussion of investment in key partners (at item 11). He would retain the option to ask for members to recuse should the discussion move away from decision making at a principled and strategic level towards the merits or otherwise of funding specific bodies in which members had declared an interest, Given his own declared interest in the British Cycling Federation, he would take Vice Chair Natalie Ceeney's steer on recusing himself and cede chairing to her for that discussion if required..

## **4. Minutes of previous meeting**

- 4.1 The Board agreed the minutes of its meeting of 9 September 2021 (paper MB21-71) subject to minor typographical corrections.

## **5. Matters arising**

- 5.1 The Board reviewed the log of decisions and actions (Paper MB21-72).
- a) Action 10.5 from the meeting of 15 June 2021 (Annual Report and Accounts). Board noted that Grant Thornton (acting for NAO) remained in discussion with the LPFA on the Sport England pension valuation, and changes to this might be required. Sport England was working with DCMS also to complete outstanding post-event assurance requirements.
- b) Action 7.5 from the meeting of 5 May 2021 (Sport England/DCMS framework agreement). The Board noted that while formal ministerial sign off remained pending, the agreement was effectively operational as the working basis of the sponsor relationship with DCMS, with both parties having agreed it at senior officer level and a first review meeting

held.

c) Action 7.6 of the meeting of 5 May (Subsidiaries and Committees) Board noted that an internal audit of how the Board worked with and through subsidiaries was being undertaken as part of the Internal Audit programme, reporting initially to Audit Risk and Governance Committee.

5.2 The Board was otherwise content that that actions were complete, satisfactorily in hand, or would be addressed under future agenda items.

5.2 The Board noted the corrections to paper MB21-65 (on system partners) from the meeting of 9 September 2021 as set out in paper MB21-87. They noted the remedial action taken with no further comments.

## 6. CEO's report

6.1 The Board noted the CEO's report (MB21-73) and officers' supplementary oral updates on the following topical issues.

6.2 The Board felt that the **Comprehensive Spending review 2022-25** flat settlement (plus 1% uplift for 'levelling up' activity outside of London and the South East) was a favourable and deserved outcome for Sport England, based on sound evidence and a case to Government well made by officers. The Board noted that some areas outwith the principal settlement were not yet finalised, including school sport funding, and funding for the administration of the Sport Survival Package and National Leisure Recovery Fund.

6.3 The Board welcomed Government's wider Budget commitments to sport and physical activity, including active travel; community sports facilities; gyms and leisure providers; bids for major sporting events; and other areas of synergy with *Uniting the Movement*. Members noted also the substantial new funding for sports pitches and other youth services via the Football Foundation. The importance of Sport England's continuing engagement with the Levelling Up Fund was flagged.

6.4 The Board had been briefed separately on the results of the Active Lives (Adult) Survey for mid-May 2021 to mid-May 2022 (published 21 October 2021) as part of the launch communications plan.

6.5 The Board was pleased with the constructive way in which the Sports Councils Equality Group's Trans Inclusion in Sport guidance had been received. Board members noted their appreciation of the diligence,

commitment and collaboration with stakeholders that Sport England officers and colleagues had put into developing and sharing the guidance.

- 6.6 The new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities had launched on 1 October 2021. Board welcomed Sport England's early engagement with this important new stakeholder, and the strong consensus about the complementarity of public health and levelling up agendas to *Uniting the Movement* emerging from initial discussions.
- 6.7 The Board was content with the approach being taken on Sport England's London office move and the potential new office arrangements that had been identified. It recognised the planning uncertainties that lay outside Sport England's Control. It was keen that the physical office environment and associated ways of working built on the learning generated under the more flexible models that Sport England, and comparable organisations had been operating with considerable success over the lockdown periods.
- 6.8 On safeguarding, the Board noted plans within the 2022-25 implementation plan to scope jointly with UK Sport a clear position on sectoral regulation. This also offered opportunities to develop thinking on the prevention and treatment of serious injuries and illnesses in sport.
- 6.9 Board noted the programme of Chair and CEO meetings with Key stakeholders

## **7 Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report**

- 7.1 Viveen Taylor, introduced paper [MB21-74](#) and Rashmi Becker (as Board EDI Champion) provided further commentary.
- 7.2 Board members were content with progress here as reported and
- a) emphasised the need to ensure that Sport England's own Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan led to real outcomes in values, behaviours and experiences rather than just processes and outputs. It was noted that the all-staff survey (November-December 2021) had been designed to explore inclusiveness;
  - b) welcomed work in collaboration with partners to submit a consultation response to the Government's *Shaping future support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*;
  - c) noted and supported the wider work of the Disability Team and Sport England colleagues to address the obstacles faced by disabled people

- in getting physically active as opportunities return post-lockdown.
- d) were pleased that work on improving inclusion in the talent system (learning from TRARIIS research) was in train and embedded in wider implementation planning.
  - e) noted the initiation of work to hold an EDI Conference in June.

## **8. Finance report**

- 8.1 Serena Jacobs introduced the Finance Report (paper [MB21-75](#)). The Board reviewed and was content with the key financial measures presented (Lottery income; forecast spend against core and Sport Survival Package grant-in-aid allocations; exchequer cash deferrals; lottery bank balance and lottery administration targets).
- 8.2 The Board felt that the supplementary Gambling Commission data on lottery income and projected Returns to Good Causes, including returns on marketing investment by the lottery operator (provided for information at [Annex 2](#)) showed a positive picture overall for Sport England.
- 8.3 The Board reviewed and **AGREED** the delegated authority policy set out at [Annex 3](#), further to its review and endorsement by the Audit Risk and Governance Committee at its meeting of 30 September 2021. Action: **Rachel Musson** to progress adoption and embedding of the policy.
- 8.4 Board members noted that this was Serena Jacobs' last Board meeting as Director of Finance. They thanked her for her long and dedicated service, and for her contribution to the organisations' successes, and wished her well in her new role.

## **9. COVID-19 Response update**

- 9.1 Phil Smith introduced paper [MB21-76](#) updating Board members on the Respond Goal, particularly impacts and learnings to date. The paper was supported by a cross-response overview at [Annex 1](#).
- 9.2 Board members welcomed the efforts to capture impacts and learning and were pleased that this was feeding into the ongoing management of the Respond goal and into wider strategic planning. It emphasised the important of not only assessing what Sport England and partners were doing differently, but also the differences in outcomes that doing so supported. The Board noted the intrinsic difficulties in counterfactual analysis (i.e. "what would have happened had Sport England not acted as it

did?") exacerbated in this instance by the scale, rapidity, and novelty of COVID-19's effects on the sector. Nonetheless, the feedback and evidence from stakeholders very strongly suggested that without Sport England-led actions, many parts of the sport and physical activity 'ecosystem' would not have survived, or survived only in much diminished form; and that sectoral recovery would have been significantly less effective. The Board therefore asked for further consideration of proxy indicators and evidence from stakeholders to demonstrate Sport England impact against counterfactual baselines, and to provide fair context to quantitative and qualitative performance measures.

- 9.3 Board members noted that that ongoing and knock-on COVID-19 impacts continued to present clear risks across the sector, with Active Lives confirming marked disparities across social and demographic groups. Further government interventions to mitigate COVID-19 risks and impacts over winter remained possible, and the sector as a whole was far from pre-pandemic levels of activity. Board members noted the effects on volunteers, both in terms of non-return of established volunteers (particular the older demographic) and of fewer new volunteers.
- 9.4 Conversely, they felt that Sport England and its partners needed to embed and sustain the positive outcomes (in terms of collaboration, flexibility and innovation, for example) that the disruption to certain unhelpful sectoral norms had stimulated. Moreover, Board members agreed that the COVID-19 response had been an extreme testing ground for different ways of working within Sport England itself. The enforced operational and behavioural change had provided genuine and fresh insights into Sport England's future culture and potential structure and operating model.
- 9.5 Board members felt it would be helpful to have further exploration of Sport England's approach to innovation across the piece, including and beyond the Innovation Open Call and Design Council partnership reported on here. Board members reflected on the need for a holistic and outcome-driven conception of innovation that included digital and technological solutions but saw these as tools to support innovative behaviours relationships and ways of thinking. It was suggested in the first instance that happen at a future meeting of the Investment Committee.
- 9.6 Board members noted the value of case studies such as those collated in the paper, for both evidential and communications purposes.
- 9.7 The Board thanked officers for the volume and effectiveness of their work

under the Respond priority. It asked them to take on board members' feedback in considering the infrastructural changes needed to as Sport England and its partners moved from crisis management to more sustainable longer term relationships. **Action: Phil Smith** to feed back to officers accordingly and schedule time for Investment Committee discussion of Innovation and technology.

## 10. **Uniting the Movement: Strategy Implementation 2022-25**

- 10.1 The Board Reviewed paper MB21-77 and annexes. These introduced the near final draft of the *Uniting the Movement* Implementation Plan for 2022-25.
- 10.2 The Board commended the extensive collaboration across Sport England and with partners that underpinned the Plan. It felt that this collaborative generative process itself modelled the way in which Sport England should be working. Board members were pleased to have been given the opportunity for strategic steerage and input to the Plan as it was iterated. Investment Committee had discussed the Plan in some detail at its meeting of 21 October, with the Committee having:
- a) concluded that while evolutionary in its approach, the Plan was nevertheless rooted in an ambitious desire for change;
  - b) agreed that the Plan would give due weight to quantitative and well as qualitative outcome measures – although this work needed to be ongoing as the plan was implemented;
  - c) flagged the challenges intrinsic to a more mature pattern of relationships with partners and the resource and skills sets needed to nurture and grow those relationships. It was comfortable that Sport England was aware of this and taking appropriate steps to plan for the management of these challenges.
- 10.3 Board members discussed the plan, noting:
- a) the importance across the three roles set out in the plan ('Building the Movement', 'Meeting People Where They Are At', and 'Being the Change') of Sport England establishing a clear identity as a trusted and authoritative advisory body, as well as an enabling disburser of funding;
  - b) proposals to create a 'single front door' for funding, and the user-focussed approach this exemplified;
  - c) the scope provided for in the plan to build on the evidence around better sport and physical activity outcomes in Local Delivery Pilot areas, and from case studies of success;

- d) The importance of measuring impacts all the way through programmes and at an appropriate level of granularity, not least because of the criticality of making another strong and evidence-based cases to government, building on the positive 2022-25 Comprehensive Spending Review discussions and settlement;
- e) the useful clarity on areas of activity that would be stopped.

10.4 Overall, the Board **SUPPORTED** the Implementation Plan, and the high-level plan on a page as drafted. The Board was content with the indicative investment approach and assumptions, and with the approach to impact measurement provided. While parts of the Plan remained articulated somewhat technocratically (lending useful conceptual clarity to Board-level discussion) the Board was confident that copy editing and final formatting of the public-facing document would render it properly accessible to its wider readership. The plan on a page was likewise a useful boardroom tool, but could be made still punchier for public facing purposes. **Action: Naomi Shearon** to incorporate the Board's feedback into the final draft of the plan and progress to copywriting and final design, with a view to publication in December.

## 11. Investment in key partners

- 11.1 The Board reviewed proposals at paper MB21-78 and annexes for investment in key partners invited to participate in the system partners process agreed by Board in at its meeting of 15 June 2021 (paper MB21-47 refers). The current proposals related to soliciting a second tranche of 54 partners additional to the first tranche agreed for solicitation at the Board meeting of 9 September (paper MB21-65 refers), with a final tranche of solicitation as due for agreement at the Board meeting of 14 December 2021. Final investment approvals for the majority of the first tranche would be sought from the Board at its meeting of 14 December with further approvals thereafter.
- 11.2 The Board remained satisfied with the process and underlying principles on which these recommendations had been generated, and their alignment with *Uniting the Movement*. It noted that the approach aimed to help partners shift from simple ownership of deliverables to a more responsive ownership of outcomes and impacts. While it was not possible entirely to divorce resource considerations from discussions about partners' missions, the process had been successful in positing funding as a means to an end, rather than as a driver (i.e. "What can you do to help *Uniting the Movement*?", rather than "What can you do for x amount of funding?"). The Board was

pleased that partners had felt confident in presenting a fully-rounded picture of their strengths and areas for improvement, providing a richer evidence base on sectoral capability and gaps in provision.

- 11.3 The Board therefore **APPROVED** the solicitation of **up to £259,375,045** for a second group of 54 key partners, as set out in the paper.
- 11.4 Looking ahead, the Board felt that the robustness of decision-making at this point set solid foundations for productive future relationships with key partners. Nonetheless, the true success of the approach would be manifested in how well organisations aligned and adjusted to the *Uniting the Movement* paradigm. Ongoing relationship management – and effective Sport England resourcing of this would be key, and the Board asked for Investment Committee to feed into proposals for doing so. **Action Jon Fox** to schedule.
- 11.5 The Board was keen that Sport England guard against any reversion to more transactional dialogues under stress of exigency. It would be important to test throughout each partnership the will and capability of partner's leadership to commit to being key partners under *Uniting the Movement* principles, rather than, simply as recipients of Sport England funding.

## **12. Sport Survival Package (SSP) Future Portfolio Management**

- 12.1 Tim Hollingsworth and Natalie Ceeney as members of the SSP Independent Board briefed Board members on developments
- 12.2 The Board noted that the SSP Independent Board and its supporting Sport England-led team was increasingly moving away from initial investment decision-making (to which purpose the Board's and team's skill set were well aligned) toward the management of a highly complex and volatile portfolio of loans (which was well outside the scope of current structures and expertise and closer to the mission of the mooted successor SSP governance body).
- 12.3 Board members agreed that the significant SSP –related risks discussed at the Board's meeting of 9 September 2021 (and relayed thereafter to senior officials within the DCMS) were now beginning to crystallise.
- 12.4 The Board noted that the constitution of the SSP Independent Board was a matter for the Secretary of State and not Sport England. Both Natalie Ceeney and Tim Hollingsworth, who are on the SSP Independent Board as

representatives of Sport England, might decide to withdraw from it if they considered they could no longer fulfil the functions required of them under these changed circumstances (Notwithstanding Tim Hollingsworth also sitting as the Accountable Officer for Sport England and therefore responsible for any grant decision remaining to be made.) The Board agreed that it would be comfortable with any such action taken by Natalie Ceeney and Tim Hollingsworth.

12.5 The Board also recognised the similar challenges faced by Sport England staff supporting the administration of the SSP. The Board remained concerned that in the absence of an appropriately skilled SSP independent Board with a clear remit and an agreed exit strategy, Sport England as a whole would be exposed to unacceptable levels of risk of the kind described at the Board's meeting of 9 September 2021.

12.6 The Board was therefore keen for:

- a) urgent strengthening of the SSP Independent Board with specialist expertise . It felt that Natalie Ceeney's subject knowledge and expertise would be helpful to the Independent Board Chair and DCMS in identifying potential candidates to strengthen the capability of the SSP Independent Board in the short term;
- b) urgent clarification by Government of the role of the SSP Independent Board (and/or any successor governance body), and Government's assurance of sufficient resource and support to enable Sport England and partners to support the SSP Independent Board and effect a managed transition to any new governance arrangements.

The Board asked for these views to be raised as a priority with DCMS: **Action Tim Hollingsworth/Adam Conant**

12.7 The Board recognised the dedication and hard work of the SSP Independent Board and the supporting Sport England-led team in managing the SSP to date. It noted that contingency planning was in place to cover the eventuality of an uplift in COVID restrictions over the winter months. It acknowledged the shifting financial landscape in which SSP operated. This included the further complications to loan book management of significant private equity funding to some sports and organisations.

### **13 Powerlifting National Governing Body (NGB) recognition**

13.1 The Board reviewed proposals set out in paper MB21-79 (with tandem

submissions to the Boards of other Home Country Sports Councils (HCSC)) reflecting advice from the HCSC's Officer Recommendation Panel that British Powerlifting was now the most appropriate body to be recognised as the NGB for the sport. The Panel had also advised that British Weightlifting should remain the recognised NGB for Paralympic powerlifting.

- 13.2 The Board was content that both bodies met NGB recognition criteria. While the separate governance lines for Paralympic powerlifting added administrative complexity, the Board nonetheless agreed that this arrangement was the best practical option at this time. The Board therefore **SUPPORTED** the Panel's recommendation that British Powerlifting be recognised as the NGB for powerlifting in in all four Home Nations, with British Weightlifting remaining the recognised NGB for Paralympic powerlifting. **Action: Phil Smith** to progress.

#### **14 Snooker and Billiards NGB recognition**

- 14.1 The Board reviewed proposals set out in paper MB21-80 reflecting officers' advice that EPSB Limited (trading as the English Partnership for Snooker and Billiards) be recognised as the NGB for snooker and billiards in England. This was a matter for Sport England Board agreement only because snooker and billiards was already recognised as a sport and the applicant body was seeking to govern only in England with NGBs in other home countries already having been recognised.
- 14.2 The Board **AGREED** that EPSB Limited be recognised as the governing body for snooker and billiards in England. **Action: Phil Smith** to progress.
- 14.3 The Board reiterated the importance of well documented evidence and a clear audit trail of discussions and decisions in respect of recognition agreements across the piece, and thanked Richard Clarkson for his work managing these complex processes and relationships.

#### **15. Modern Slavery statement.**

- 15.1 The Board **AGREED** the text of Sport England's Modern Slavery Statement for 2021-22 as set out in paper MB21-81. The statement would be reviewed on an annual basis. Board members noted that for Sport England, the main area of risk for modern slavery lay in its procurement and supply chain management. Board members asked for further consideration by Audit Risk and Governance Committee of the most appropriate approach for supply chain assurance. **Action Louise Hartley** to progress Statement to adoption

and revert to ARGC in due course.

## **16. Any other business**

- 16.1 Board reflected on Sport England's position on climate change action, including sectoral alignment with the UN Climate Framework, and asked for this to be considered at a future meeting post COP-26: **Action: Tim Hollingsworth** to progress.
- 16.2 Papers MB21-82 (Minutes of Investment Committee of 2 September 2021); MB21-83 (Summary of Investment Committee 21 October 2021); MB21-84 (Draft minutes of Audit, Risk and Governance Committee of 30 September 2021); MB21-85 (Draft Minutes of ESDT meeting of 20 September 2021); and MB21-86 (Minutes of SCTC meeting of 22 September 2021) had been circulated for members information. No comments on these were raised.
- 16.3 With no further items of business being raised, Chris Boardman thanked attendees and closed the meeting. A short debrief session for members and CEO would follow. The Board was next due to meet on 14 December 2021. At this stage, a further live meeting was anticipated.

**[These minutes were agreed at the Board's meeting of 14 December 2021]**