Minutes of the Sport England Board Meeting of 28 June 2023
Room 1.14, 10 South Colonnade London E14 5EA

Members

Chris Boardman, Chair
Rashmi Becker
Mel Bound
Michelle Cracknell
Jason Fergus
*David Mahoney (items 1-7 only)
Tove Okunniwa
*Helene Raynsford

Officers

Jeanette Bain-Burnett – ED, Policy and Integrity
Pat Brosnan – Strategic Lead, Football (item 16)
Lisa Dodd-Mayne – ED, Place
*Sarah Forster – Director, Finance (item 8)
Lizzie Hanna – Chief Financial Officer
Tim Hollingsworth – Chief Executive Officer
Jeremy Lemarchand – Head of Children & Young People (item 14)
Richard Mabbitt – Board Secretary
Simon Macqueen – Director, Strategy
Kevin Mills – Director – Capital Investment (item 17)
James Morris – Principal Planning manager, football (item 15)
Nick Pontefract – Chief Strategy Officer
Adam Rigarlsford – Director, Place Relationships (items 12-16)
Phil Smith – ED, Partnerships
Jackie Smyth – Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing manager (item 10)
Viveen Taylor – Director, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Vicky White – Strategic Lead, HR and Development (item 10)

Guests

Juliette Inverdale – Head of Sport Participation, DCMS

*Attending remotely

1. Chair’s Introduction

1.1 Chris Boardman welcomed attendees and set out meeting priorities.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1 All members were in attendance. David Mahoney would be absent for the latter part of the meeting but had shared commentary on key papers with
Chris Boardman and Tove Okunniwa and was content for them to report accordingly. Chris Boardman welcomed Ben Wilson to his first Sport England Board meeting, and Juliette Inverdale, observing for DCMS.

3. **declarations of interest**

3.1 Chris Boardman drew members’ attention to the consolidated register of members’ interests on the Admincontrol portal and reminded members of the need to keep this up-to-date.

3.2 Board members noted David Mahoney’s interest in the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) which was a partner subject of item 15. He would not be present for that item and had not seen the paper in question.

3.3 Board members noted Jason Fergus’s interest in Active Essex, but were content that he participate fully in discussions at items 12 to 16 which related to Active Partnerships (inter alia) at a strategic level only.

3.4 No other interests posing a substantive conflict were identified, and no interests additional to those already registered were declared.

4. **minutes of meeting of 28 March 2023**

4.1 The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting of 28 March 2023 (MB23–34) subject to correcting the figure cited at para 15.5 for conditional year 2–4 system partner funding for Swim England to match that stated in the original decision paper. The Board was content that minutes relating to the formal Recognition of Sports / NGBs be temporarily redacted pending other Sports Councils’ decisions on these matters.

5. **Minutes of Meeting of 18 April 2023**

5.1 The Board agreed the minutes of the meeting of 18 April 2023 (MB23–35) with no amendments required.

6. **Matters arising**

6.1 The Board reviewed the actions log (MB23–36) and was content with progress overall.

6.2 Board had agreed by correspondence before the meeting (i) proposals at paper MB23–32 on the reappointment for a further term of a Trustee of the
Sports Council Trust Company; and (ii) proposals at paper MB23-33 relating to the contract for collective evaluation and learning for system partners; as set out in the actions log.

7. **CEO Report**

### ‘Holding up a Mirror to Cricket’ ICEC report

7.1 The Board discussed and gave immediate reactions to the findings of the Independent Committee on Equity in Cricket (ICEC), which been published the day before the meeting. Board members noted the rigour of the report and the breadth of testimony assembled. They agreed in the strongest terms that the widespread and deep-rooted racism, class-based discrimination, elitism and sexism reported was unacceptable, and that further systemic change at all levels in the game was urgently needed.

7.2 The Board noted the role of the ECB as the National Governing Body of the sport and the need for its further and decisive action. Board members acknowledged that ECB itself had commissioned the ICEC review as a necessary step in building and repairing trust with those who has suffered or been excluded from the sport. The Board also acknowledged that, at the highest level, ECB was implementing changes to its systems and culture and was seeking to reform county-level governance arrangements. David Mahoney provided further background and would circulate summary information (Action: David Mahoney). Nonetheless, the Board felt that accelerated work here was needed, and that the specific recommendations of the report provided a clear direction for ECB to follow.

7.3 Board members noted the report’s conclusion that in, addition to specific cricket related issues (including a legacy of class-based, colonial and gender social structures around the game), the problems faced by cricket were reflective of wider social conditions and prejudices in the sport sector and in the UK as a whole. The Board felt that this underscored the continuing importance of Uniting the Movement’s focus on building inclusion and fairness. It was likewise imperative that Sport England’s work with ECB remained (as recognised positively in the Report) insight-based and outcome-focussed.

7.4 The Board expressed the hope that this harsh light shone on the sport would stimulate sustained change towards a safe, welcoming and empowering environment for everyone in cricket. It asked to be kept aware of
developments and for further, in-depth discussion on the issues raised in the report and the sectoral responses to them. **Action Phil Smith** to convene.

**CEO’s updates**

7.7 Tim Hollingsworth introduced the CEO’s report (MB23-37):

7.8 The Board welcomed ongoing engagement with DCMS on the Government Sport Strategy, including around the future of sport regulation. The Board supported Sport England’s seeking of independent external legal counsel on the bounds of its remit and powers as a Sports Council, both in respect of the strategic question of the wider regulation of sport, and the immediate challenges of managing the increasing number of complaints and FOI requests relating to issues on which Sport England’s role was at variance with the perceptions of those seeking action or redress. The Board was keen to discuss and feed into how Sport England would progress in the light of this legal opinion. Members flagged that, with no regulatory body extant, the sectoral expertise and reach of Sport England might make it appear to some in Government and elsewhere a stronger candidate for taking on this role that was the case in reality – and this should be guarded against. **Action Tim Hollingsworth** to convene.

7.9 The Board noted the update on Subsidiary directorships. On the understanding that long term English Sport Development Trust directors would be appointed when ESDT resumed its role overseeing the delivery of paid media campaigns work, Board **RATIFIED** the appointment of Nick Pontefract as an interim director of the ESDT, and **DELEGATED** to the CEO (in discussion with David Mahoney as ESDT Chair) appointment of a further interim director. **Action Tim Hollingsworth** to progress.

7.10 The Board noted routine updates on Board membership, external communications and advocacy, matters to be dealt with outside meetings, internal policies, and Chair and CEO stakeholder engagements with no further observations.

8. **Finance report**

8.1 The Board reviewed and was content with the overall Finance Report 2022-23 (MB23-38a). The Board noted that total Exchequer and Lottery out-turn underspends were both within agreed tolerances.

8.2 The Board reviewed and was content with the Finance report for May 2023 (MB23-38b) The Board noted that figures included an agreed one-off
payment to staff in July, with corresponding cost savings elsewhere not yet having been identified. The Board noted that exchequer admin underspend and lottery cost targets forecast in the report were outside tolerances. To mitigate this a reforecast process had commenced, taking into account the business planning process and potential pay award increase. A revised forecast, within cost targets, would be brought to Audit Risk and Governance Committee in September.

9. **EDI report**

9.1 Viveen Taylor, with Rashmi Becker (as Board EDI champion) presented paper MB23-39 highlighting key external-facing EDI developments.

9.2 Board members:

a) were pleased that the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) support project across Tier 3 partners was well under way after a delayed start to the programme. They noted that the process for developing DIAPs would take longer for some partners than others, but that Sport England staff and contracted support providers were monitoring progress. The risks of compromising quality and embeddedness for the sake of speed meant that some flex in target timescales was anticipated;

b) noted ongoing work on measuring inequality and underlined the potential of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) – when done right – to shape and assure fulfilment of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Board members also noted Sport England’s own focus on improving its approach to EIA;

c) noted the update on Tackling Racism and Racial Inequalities in Sport and plans for a symposium in October 2023 coinciding with Black History Month.

9.3 The Board was keen that across its work on tackling inequalities, Sport England remained impact rather than process focussed. It felt that ensuring DIAPs and EIAs were proportionate and clearly presented to partners as a proven means to organisational improvement rather than a check box requirement would mitigate some concerns and delays in adoption by partners. **Action: Viveen Taylor** to feed back to team.

10. **Sport England staffing and diversity**

10.1 Nick Pontefract, Jackie Smyth and Vicky White spoke to paper MB23-40. The Board noted progress to date including the review of Sport England’s recruitment practices conducted by Pearn Kandola.
10.2 Board members discussed approaches to best practice in diverse recruitment, highlighting:

a) full and smart use of existing networks and collaborative relationships to broaden reach and penetration to target audiences;

b) granular and intersectional digital targeting within ‘general’ social channels, rather than / in addition to targeted channels;

c) ensuring that progression as well as recruitment was inclusive, and development in-role was supported;

d) further consideration of recruitment platforms that used innovative ways to remove bias in applications;

e) better visibility to would-be applicants of Sport England’s offer on flexible and part time working;

f) analysis of employer brand perceptions. This could be supported by further use (at various stages of the recruitment process) of storytelling from representative staff about their experience of Sport England. Essex County Council’s ‘working for us’ website was cited as an example of good practice;

g) clear ownership of macro and micro-level EDI targets. Board members noted that Sport England’s leadership behaviours model required specific inclusion goals in the performance and development review process;

h) analysing candidate drop-out patterns as recruitment and assessment progressed. Members noted the contrast here between statistics for candidates from culturally diverse background and for candidates with disabilities.

10.3 The Board acknowledged Sport England’s operating constraints as an NDPB, particularly its limited scope to exercise creativity within the Government pay remit, and on pensions. Board members were pleased that, while turnover was relatively high, discrimination, bullying, and harassment were not cited as reasons for departing (or reported in ongoing pulse surveys), and noted that there had been some returners.

10.4 The Board discussed Sport England’s public commitment to becoming representative of the population and the people it served, at all levels within the organisation, including through a target to double the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic background staff in Sport England. The Board was content that the Executive Leadership Team decide whether this target should be a precise 18.3% (ONS published figures) or a round 20% (a target published by Sport England that predated 2022 census data), noting that either would require significant increases in the recruitment and retention of Black, Asian and minority ethnic background staff. Members recognised that success would not be instant or guaranteed but were keen
that measurement milestones were in place, with progress and ‘run rate’
regularly reported to the Board, and that there were no delays in rolling out
processes to support this aim.

10.5 **Action:** Nick Pontefract, Vicky White, Jackie Smyth to consider Board
feedback and report on progress at the next meeting.

11. **Performance Overview and 2023/24 Business Plan**

11.1 Simon Macqueen and Nick Pontefract presented paper MB23-41. Board
members welcomed the parallel presentation of the 2023/24 Business Plan
with the Q4 2022/23 Performance Report and the latest Active Lives Survey
Adult Report as a major step towards a more fully integrated and evidence-
based approach to business planning and performance tracking.

11.2 The Board focused its discussion on the Business Plan. Board members

a) endorsed the cross-business approach that has been taken in generating
the report and the enhanced central oversight of the process, as a
significantly better (if administratively and culturally more challenging)
way to identify priorities, synergies, and areas of duplication;

b) recognised the Executive’s ongoing efforts to migrate some key delivery
and transformative functions into multi-disciplinary “service teams”;

c) welcomed the interactive presentation of the business plan and the
efforts made to embed in and make it meaningful for staff. The plan on a
page was considered very helpful.

11.3 The Board additionally advised that officers:

a) give further attention to mapping the business plan against the risk
framework;

b) continue to focus on prioritisation and mechanisms for managing
mission creep, and more responsive ‘dialling up or down’ of activities;

c) in operationalising the business plan, maintain an emphasis on what
Sport England would achieve, rather than on what it would do;

d) monitoring how the work felt for staff. There would doubtless be some
disorientation and uncertainty about where individuals’ familiar areas of
work ‘fitted’ against the business plan. Leadership was needed that
encouraged and supported staff to ask instead “what needs to be done
to fulfil business plan objectives?”
11.4 Chris Boardman thanked staff across the organisation who had developed the business plan. He asked for a brief update at the September meeting, including clarification of KPIs, and progress against them. **Action Nick Pontefract and Simon Macqueen.**

12. **Expansion of Place-based working**

12.1 Adam Rigarlsford and Lisa Dodd-Mayne presented an update on progress since the last meeting (MB23-42).

12.2 Board members:

- a) endorsed activity completed to date on the development of a measurement and Evaluation Framework, noting the importance of baselining;
- b) discussed the ‘road map’ towards implementation, and highlighted the need for officers to be mindful of pinch points in partner and sport England capacity;
- c) supported the model of expansion, governance model, approach to greatest need indexing, and approach to deepening engagement in existing Local Delivery Pilot areas as set out in the paper;
- d) reflected on the relationship between digital and place-based communities community platforms and the potential for mutually supportive engagement.

12.3 **Action: Adam Rigarlsford** to feed back to colleagues and follow up with Mel Bound for specific feedback about digital community engagement.

13. **Small Grants criteria changes and budget increase**

13.1 Lizzie Hanna introduced paper MB23-43 which set out continuity arrangements for ensuring Sport England can maintain an effective small-scale open funding offer, while work continues on our Simplified Open Access Funding ‘Now’ Commitment.

13.2 Board **APPROVED:**

- a) an increase to the small grants award budget of £9m enabling a £1m per month award budget from July 2023 to the end of March 2024;
- b) a widening of what the programme could fund, with greater focus on projects that support UTM more broadly and that reflect the current
economic environment (subject to observations set out at paragraph 13.3);
c) a different approach to assessment, focusing on how a project enables an organisation to achieve UTM aims from that organisation’s perspective, rather than its ability to fit the project into the existing criteria.

13.3 While supporting broadening the range of activities eligible for SE funding, Board noted a range of possible unintended consequence. It asked therefore, that:

a) a broadening of scope be guided by the classification of physical activity monitored in Active Lives;
b) it was made clear that the extension of fundable activities was limited to this specific small grants programme; and

c) learning was fed back into emerging thinking on open funding

**Action: Alison Selfe** to progress accordingly.

13.4 Board asked to revisit Sport England’s broader approach to new or previously out-of-scope forms of sport and physical activity in due course, with the proposed position paper on new forms of sport flagged in the CEO’s update being a useful kick off point. **Action: Phil Smith**, in discussion with ELT colleagues, to progress.

14. Regional/local welfare officers

14.1 Jeremy Lemarchand introduced paper MB23-44 setting out proposals for funding a professionalised national network of regional/local welfare officers in England, as part of Sport England’s response to the Whyte Review. It was proposed to invest in the network of 42 Active Partnerships enabling them to recruit and deploy up to 59 officers to support the 48 National Governing Body system partners (with the option of a further 11 officers based on local insight and need during delivery).

14.2 The Board discussed the risk that providing support that was perceived as external might inhibit partners’ own ownership of welfare. It considered the need for improvements in welfare to happen at pace and systematically, and the capacity challenges faced by smaller NGB in making and sustaining this change. The Board also noted that Active partnerships were not all equally well resourced or effective. The Board noted potential crossover and learning from welfare issues in the talent pathway. The Board was content that these risks and opportunities had been addressed in the
design of the scheme and its ongoing evaluation.

14.3 The Board therefore **APPROVED** a Lottery grant investment of £14.83 million as set out in the paper, and **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** to Tim Hollingsworth, Jeanette Bain-Burnett and Jayne Molyneux to approve investment components within respective delegated authorities. **Action: Jeremy Lemarchand** to progress.

14.4 In addition, prompted by this specific discussion, the Board asked for a more general briefing/discussion on the effectiveness of Active Partnerships at a future meeting. **Action: Phil Smith.**

15. **Community football, tennis, and multi-sport facilities: grass pitch quality**

15.1 Phil Smith and James Morris spoke to paper **MB23-45**.

15.2 The Board agreed to **DEFER CONSIDERATION** of paper **MB23-45**, pending discussions with the partners. **Action: Phil Smith** to keep Board members aware of developments.

16. **Investing in multi-sport facilities**

16.1 Pat Brosnan introduced paper **MB23-46** which proposed broadening the scope of two workstreams in the *Uniting the Movement 2022–25* implementation plan (non-football PlayZone facilities and activation of PlayZone facilities). They would be combined into one flexible award budget to cover all strands of the multi-sport programme to better respond to community needs. The network of Active Partnerships would play a key delivery role. Board members noted that feedback from Investment Committee had been taken on board in finalising these proposals.

16.2 The Board supported the proposals. It **APPROVED** a total of £8.75 million (of lottery funding and operational exchequer expenditure) to deliver a flexible multi-sport budget. It **AGREED** delivery through a hybrid approach as set out in the paper. The Board also **SUPPORTED** alignment with the Football Foundations PlayZone areas and place-based priorities (SE’s emerging Place expansion and Active Partnerships priority places) as the favoured approach to place-working. **Action: Pat Brosnan** to progress.

17. **Design and Technical Framework**

17.1 Kevin Mills spoke to paper **MB23-47**, briefing on how the Design and
Technical Assurance framework enables Sport England and sector partners to efficiently and flexibly access a range of specialist built environment, design, and technical expertise.

17.2 Board **APPROVED** the process for securing Multi Provider Frameworks over the four-year term; utilising external procurement support during this procurement stage to provide additional capacity as agreed with Sport England Procurement and Finance colleagues. Board **DELEGATED** to CEO at the end of this procurement process authority to enter into framework contracts with the successful bidders.

**18. Any other business**

18.1 The Board was briefing on and agreed to consider by correspondence upcoming decisions related to (i) The Swimming Pool Support Fund (**Action:** Lisa Dodd-Mayne); (ii) Swim England (**Action:** Phil Smith); (iii) IPS System (**Action:** Lizzie Hanna).

18.2 Chris Boardman thanked attendees. The next meeting would take place on 26 September, provisionally at Sport England’s head office in Loughborough.

18.3 The meeting would be followed by a short wash-up session for members and CEO only.

*Agreed by the Sport England Board at its meeting of 26 September 2023.*