

Minutes of the Sport England Board Meeting of 26 September 2023

Pitch/Pool rooms, Sport Park. 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough LE11 3QF

Members Chris Boardman, Chair

Rashmi Becker

Mel Bound

Michelle Cracknell

*Natalie Daniels

Jason Fergus

David Mahoney

Tove Okunniwa

Officers Jeanette Bain-Burnett – ED, Policy and Integrity

*Emma Bernstein – Strategic Projects Lead ([item 13](#))

*Nick Boulter – Strategic Lead, Loan Portfolio ([item 12](#))

Greg Clements – Strategic Lead, Partnerships & Investments ([item 9](#))

Lisa Dodd-Mayne – ED, Place

*Sarah Forster – Director, Finance ([item 7](#))

Lizzie Hanna – Chief Financial Officer

Tim Hollingsworth – Chief Executive Officer

Denise Ludlam – Strategic Lead, Environmental Sustainability ([item 8](#))

Richard Mabbitt – Board Secretary

Simon Macqueen – Director, Strategy

Nick Pontefract – Chief Strategy Officer

Adam Rigarsford – Director, Place Relationships ([item 10](#))

Ed Sandham – Strategic Lead, Active Partnerships ([item 9](#))

Phil Smith – ED, Partnerships

*Andrew Spiers – Strategic Lead, Research and Analysis ([item 9](#))

Duncan Truswell – Strategic Lead, Talent and Performance ([item 11](#))

Viveen Taylor – Director, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Guests Adam Conant – Head of Sport, DCMS ([items 1-11](#))

Anne Storey – Positive Dynamics

*Attending remotely via Teams

1. Chair's Introduction

- 1.1 Chris Boardman welcomed Board members and staff to Sport England's head office. Natalie Daniels was attending for her first meeting as a Board member. Adam Conant was observing for DCMS. Anne Storey was observing as part of Positive Dynamics' leadership development work with ELT.

- 1.2 Chris Boardman reported on his engagement with sport and non-sport stakeholders over the summer. He felt this had provided further evidence of the significance of Sport England's work across a range of government and wider agendas. Since the last meeting, the Government had launched its sport strategy *Get Active* and a National Physical Activity Taskforce, on which he would sit (as Active Travel England Chair) alongside Tim Hollingsworth for Sport England. He felt that *Get Active* aligned well with *Uniting the Movement* and the cross-government and sectoral representation on the task force was to be welcomed.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Helene Raynsford was unable to attend but would be briefed by Chris Boardman following the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 David Mahoney declared a new interest in Netball England and also reported that he would shortly be leaving the England & Wales Cricket Board. Mel Bound (declaring her interest in *This Girl Runs*) would observe, but not participate in discussion or decision-making related to the Relationship Framework at item 9. Jason Fergus (declaring his interest in Active Essex) would observe but not participate in discussion or decision-making relating to the expansion of place-based working at item 10.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 4.1 Board **AGREED** the minutes of the meeting of 28 June 2023 (MB23-59).

5. Matters arising

- 5.1 Board was content with progress against the log of actions (MB23-60) but asked for more specificity on expected closure dates in future iterations.
Action: Richard Mabbitt to relay to action holders.
- 5.2 The Board had made between-meeting decisions by correspondence relating to the Swimming Pool Support Fund (paper MB23-57); Moving Communities (MB23-56); School Games Organizers 2023-25 (MB23-55); and Audit Risk & Governance Committee (ARGC) Terms of Reference (MB23-54).

6. CEO's report

- 6.1 Tim Hollingsworth introduced a new-style CEO's report (MB23-61) as a step towards a future consolidated 'management pack' providing for Board review a regular set of indicators better aligned with Sport England's wider cadence of governance and delivery reporting. Given Sport England's complex and fast-moving operating environments, a contextual overview and key topical updates would still be included, with dedicated updates on Finance and EDI replacing the items hitherto presented separately. The Board supported this overall approach. **Action: Tim Hollingsworth** to provide future reports as briefed.
- 6.2 Tim Hollingsworth and Nick Pontefract updated on the development new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) focussed specifically on the work and impact of Sport England and replacing the information provided in the current quarterly reports. These KPIs would be agreed concurrently with DCMS as the measures by which Sport England was accountable to Government through its Framework Agreement. Paper MB23- 61a was tabled for further information The Board noted DCMS endorsement of this approach. Members were pleased that development of the KPI framework was in train, with agreement of specific KPIs scheduled for Investment Committee (28 November 2023) and Board (11 December 2023) with a further in-depth Board discussion scheduled for 1 November 2023.
- 6.3 David Mahoney, as chair of the English Sports Development Trust (ESDT) , briefed the Board on ESDT and officer discussion of the approach proposed for developing Sport Englands campaigns activity, further to Investment Committee discussion thereon (ESDT meeting of 12 September 2023 and Investment Committee meeting of 5 September 2023: paper IC23-26 refers). The Board was content with the broad approach as summarised below:
- a) Sport England needed to start with the 'exam question' of how can campaigns best support the Government's Sports Strategy, and delivery of *Uniting the Movement*.
 - b) Initial analysis had shown that *This Girl Can* remained Sport England's best vehicle to achieve meaningful change quickly, because of the brand recognition;
 - c) There might be a very different approach to *This Girl Can* going forward. Sport England needed to do more work to understand the demographics it was targeting and what has and hasn't worked in the past.
 - d) Any future work was predicated on achieving s27 support from

Government. Making that case was therefore the priority. Clarity was also needed on the Government's approach for their Children and Young People's plan.

Board members noted that capability for and sustainability of delivery (including ESDT's role) had been raised at Investment Committee. David Mahoney welcomed further input from members with interest and expertise in public engagement and campaigns work. **Action: Ben Wilson** to follow up with interested members, with a view to discussion with officers.

- 6.4 The Board provided feedback on the EDI report. It felt that, while organisational buy-in to Sport England's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan was good, and processes were in place, Sport England was not yet seeing the changes it wanted to see in terms of representativeness of staff against the population as a whole. The Board felt that continued and responsive effort was needed on: (i) how Sport England permeated the EDI agenda more substantially across the organisation and beyond; (ii) corporate, and individual senior leadership accountability in respect of 'internal' and 'external' EDI. **Action: Tim Hollingsworth** to lead further consideration.

- 6.4 Summary financial information was noted with no further comments.

7. Annual Report and Accounts (ARA)

- 7.1 Board noted the suite of ARA papers at MB23-62, and Michelle Cracknell summarised the review of similar papers by ARGCC at its meeting of 21 September 2023. ARGCC had asked for its feedback at the meeting to be incorporated into the ARA and for ARGCC to review the full draft report again. Subject to such final review, ARGCC would be content for delegation of ARA sign off to Michelle Cracknell as ARGCC Chair and Tim Hollingsworth. The Board **AGREED** this approach. **Action: Sarah Forster** to progress completion of ARA.

- 7.2 The Board noted and was context with the ARGCC Chair's annual report (MB23-63) provided alongside the draft ARA documents.

8. Environmental Sustainability

- 8.1 Denise Ludlam spoke to paper MB23-64 outlining Sport England's proposed strategic ambition on and commitments to environmental sustainability, prior to a strategy and action plans being presented at the Board's meeting of 11 December 2023. Pre-circulated information paper MB23-58 also refers.

- 8.2 The Board welcomed Sport England's acceleration of work in this area. They noted that environmental challenges and the need for mitigation and adaptation actions were already having significant impacts on Sport England and its partners' work and that this was likely to increase. The Board therefore strongly supported the complementary approaches proposed of (i) improving Sport England's own environmental performance (especially in the National Sports Centres); and (ii) working with the sector to improve its environmental performance and build resilience to a changing climate.
- 8.3 The Board felt that:
- a) national and international agendas for Net Zero provided compelling end targets. Nonetheless, Sport England needed to set credible staging points in order to deliver with effectiveness, pace and credibility;
 - b) although carbon reduction and Net Zero were totemic and overarching concepts, sustainability embraced a range of inter-related issues and was characterised by complex interactions with human behaviours and values, economic drivers, and policy agendas. A holistic approach was therefore required.
 - c) Sport England's most impactful contribution was likely to be in the way of influencing the sector. Initial analysis suggested that Sport England's own carbon footprint was relatively small, and mainly from procured goods and services. Nonetheless, leading by example, support, and guidance would still be an important element of this and Sport England's own performance therefore needed to be visible and convincing.
- 8.4 The Board reflected further on how Sport England's influence might be exercised, including the conditioning of grant funding to environmental targets and plans (similarly to how adherence to the *Code for Sports Governance* was required of partners). It was noted that the *Code* itself had introduced a requirement for leadership action on environmental sustainability. The Board felt that 'quick wins' were important to build momentum for tougher challenges ahead. It noted that considerable pro-sustainability activity was happening already in the sector, and this might be better co-ordinated and amplified. There was also potential for quick-win exemplification through the National Sports Centres.
- 8.5 The Board noted that Sport England was a member of the Sport Environment and Climate Coalition (SECC). Board members acknowledged that the coalition's strength lay in a committed and active membership but felt that Sport England and UK Sport could reasonably play a leading role,

by virtue of their status as Sports Councils. Members were pleased that Sport England would be launching a sustainability resource pack at the Sport Positive Summit on 3-4 October 2023.

- 8.6 The Board was supportive in principle of Sport England signing up to the Sports for Climate Action Principles and Targets. The Board also noted the potential for B Corp or other corporate sustainability certification, but felt this should be explored in an outcome-focussed way rather than seeing certification as a goal in itself. Board noted the publication of Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures disclosure application guidance applying to financial report periods from 2023-24. This would need to be addressed by Sport England in future ARA rounds. **Action: Richard Mabbitt** to share with members for information
- 8.7 The Board noted that while there were some areas of specific sustainability expertise within Sport England (notably active environments) this was not a core area of expertise across the organisation. It welcomed the exploratory work currently underway to scope short, medium and long-term targets and how best to work with the sector.
- 8.8 Overall, Board **STRONGLY SUPPORTED** the stronger and more strategic approach to addressing environmental sustainability internally set out here and in the pre-circulated position paper MB23-58. Board:
- a) **ENDORSED** SE's proposed strategic ambition for environmental sustainability, prior to December approval of strategy and action plans aimed at: (i) improving environmental performance of SE operations and estate, especially NSCs; and (ii) working with the sector to improve its environmental performance and build resilience to a changing climate. **Action: Denise Ludlam** to progress with ELT, ensuring Chair kept aware of developments.
 - b) **APPROVED** adoption of the corporate Environment Policy set out in the paper. **Action: Denise Ludlam** to progress.

9. Relationship Framework and Investment in New Partners

- 9.1 Phil Smith, Greg Clements and Ed Sandham introduced a combined stage 1 and 2 business case (MB23-65), setting out proposals for how Sport England initiated new, strategic, funded partnerships with organisations strongly aligned to our mission, addressing the gap in our funding provision between (i) targeted, long-term "system partner" funding in place for organisations fundamental to the delivery of *Uniting the Movement* and (ii)

small scale, open funding.

9.2 The Board:

- a) was keen that addressing these gaps proceeded at pace, noting that a number of organisations with potential to contribute substantively to *Uniting the Movement* were awaiting funding application opportunities;
- b) supported the broadening of funding to a wider range of organisations but noted the risk of opportunistic applications and 'gaming the system' by strongly value-led applicants. In evaluating and managing funded organisations and projects, it was therefore important to learn from the system partner and Together funding experience such that alignment to *Uniting the Moment* was maintained;
- c) asked for due attention to assessing potential beneficiaries' commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and that funding was used to drive improvement here where necessary;
- d) Noted the risks of overreach in portfolio management, and of perceptions of privileged funding relationships. It was important that consideration was given to how that portfolio evolved as Sport England initiated new partnerships with organisations critical to our mission.

9.5 Board therefore **APPROVED** £17.5m lottery funding over 2023–2025 as follows:

- a) £10m to initiate additional strategic, funded partnerships, beyond System Partners, with organisations who demonstrate strong alignment with our mission and ambitions and ability to deliver impact now for priority audiences;
- b) £7.5m to test a new investment approach to those partners not suitable for the above but who could contribute to achieving Sport England objectives that would then, in time, be built into the approach to Open Funding;

and **DELEGATED** the final approval of individual awards to the Chief Executive Officer or below (individual awards would not exceed £2.5m).

9.7 The Board also discussed the strategic direction for open funding set out in paper MB23-66 in line with the commitment for a 'single point of entry' for potential partners in *Uniting the Movement*, and as earlier discussed in detail by Investment Committee (paper IC23-25B refers).

9.8 The Board acknowledged the proposal's reflection of the 'simple as standard' principle, and its potential efficiency and accessibility benefits. It supported the staged roll out of the approach and the aim of delivering a

responsive and adaptable process that was also easy to understand and trusted by stakeholders. Board members noted the steering and delivery role of the newly set-up Open Funding Service Team that aimed to challenge constructively established grant-making culture and process, aligning any new approach with system partner and place-based investments, and integrating it with the new investment processing system.

- 9.9 Board therefore **AGREED** the proposals outlined in the paper for developing the new approach to accessing Sport England's open funding, currently budgeted for £25m per year from 2024/25. **Action: Andrew Spiers** to progress.

10. Expansion of place-based working

- 10.1 Building on prior discussion at Board and Investment Committee, Lisa Dodd-Mayne and Adam Rigarlsford spoke to paper MB23-67. This sought principled approval of the list of 50 new areas in which expansion of Sport England's place-based commitment would be taken forward, with solicitation of individual applications being subject to separate approval under Sport England's investment decision-making framework.
- 10.2 The Board was supportive of the Place Expansion Priorities, expansion model, Measurement, Evaluation and Learning Framework, and Communications Plan all provided in the paper. The Board felt that *Get Active* and interest from other agencies and authorities provided further endorsement of Sport England's place-based focus.
- 10.3 Board members noted that Sport England had consolidated lessons learned from the Local Delivery Pilot experience and had developed a set of tools including a maturity matrix of conditions for change, which provided for direct appraisal by a range of stakeholders. A community of practice was well developed and work was under way to expand this into a cluster model, with local delivery organisations at the heart of those clusters. Board members noted that leadership capability remained key to successful delivery, and were keen that good practice, expertise and learning was shared.
- 10.4 Board members reflected on the sometimes difficult political and administrative context for delivering place-based change – as exemplified by the effective bankruptcy recently declared by Birmingham City Council. Board members also noted the range in quality and maturity of active partnerships. They highlighted the need for: learning from where past place based approached had been less successful; having in place robust processes to ensure such bodies were ready and able to progress in line

with this new approach; building-in resilience at the outset; and systematic evaluation of progress against improving and building connections and community impact.

10.5 The Board

- a) **SUPPORTED** the evidence led process that had resulted in the recommended mix of whole local authority places and places with areas of need at the middle super output area (MSOA) level;
- b) **APPROVED** the list of new priority places as set out in the paper; and
- c) **APPROVED** solicitation of applications for funding as the work progresses in each place. Subsequent approval would progress in line with Sport England's decision-making framework.

Action: Adam Rigarlsford to progress.

- 10.3 Board felt that this way of working exemplified the principles of *Uniting the Movement* and suggested it could more actively be communicated to the sector. **Action: Ben Wilson** to consider further.

11. Talent Portfolio 2023/24–2028/29

- 11.1 Phil Smith and Duncan Truswell introduced the suite of papers at MB23–68. Board members had also been provided with contextual briefing through pre-circulated paper MB23–58a*. Together, these papers provided a high-level overview of Sport England's sporting talent strategy and aspirations and how this aligned with *Uniting the Movement*. The papers presented proposals on the funding envelope(s) and processes for key pillars of Sport England's approach to creating accessible and inclusive talent pathways and/or progressing time-critical investments into key partners in respect of talent and performance.

*Due to a paper numbering error this was initially circulated as paper MB23–59

- 11.2 The Board noted the proposals' emphases on positive, transformative and life-enhancing development experiences for all participants, not just those who progressed to highest levels. It noted the significant disruption of the COVID period and the opportunity to refocus and re-orient programmes and approaches better to align with *Uniting the Movement* principles.

- 11.3 Board members discussed:

- a) in respect of the Commonwealth Games (CWG) preparation programme, the wider community engagement role of CWG England

and the CWG (as exemplified by Birmingham 2022). The recent decision by the Victoria Government to withdraw its hosting role meant the future of the next CWG was uncertain and Board felt that the developments in the next six months would be critical for future CWGs. Board asked to be kept aware of developments, mindful of the Commonwealth General Assembly in November. **Action: Phil Smith**

- b) with regard to the School Games National Finals, potential opportunities for encouraging a more diverse participant and volunteering base. They felt there was scope for better alignment with School Games Organisers and the NGB talent-led system. Nonetheless Board felt it right to support the Games with a view to leveraging more inclusive outcomes. Members noted potential learning from the East London talent pathway programme;
- c) (across the piece) the impacts and optics of spend on talent development. Board members noted the importance of
 - Integration and sharing learning with the other talent programmes highlighted in the paper;
 - fully integrating disability sports into these approaches and monitoring participation and progression;
 - Joining up talent pathways with place-based approaches.
 - Insight and understanding about the non-financial barriers faced in talent development pathways.

11.4 The Board therefore **AGREED** proposals for awards of:

- a) up to £60m (Exchequer/Lottery) for Summer Olympic & Paralympic sports (approx. 35 partners) for 2025-29;
- b) up to 50.5m (Exchequer/Lottery) for Summer non-Olympic & Paralympic sports (approx. 11 partners)for 2025-29;
- c) up to 2.88m (Lottery) for Youth Sport Trust (School Games National Finals) (approx. 12 partners for 2023-25;
- d) up to £3m (Lottery) for CWG England CWG preparation programme onward grant (approx. 22 partners) for 2024-26;
- e) Up to 1.5m (Lottery) for The Football Association (“Squad” and “Discover my talent”) for 2023-27;

each as set out in paper MB23-68. **Action: Duncan Truswell** to progress.

11.5 While mindful of the breadth and complexity of the information presented on this occasion, and the time needed to absorb and discuss the proposal, Board **SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE** dealing with ‘clusters’ of related issues in this way. The video-briefing approach was well-received (though accompanying written material was also useful for members who preferred that mode of learning) and the content of the presentation was felt clear and helpful.

12. England Hockey – Hockey Impact Fund

- 12.1 Nick Boulter introduced a stage 3 Investment recommendation (MB23-69) for financial support to develop and deliver this fund to support behaviour change and wider participation, volunteering, and workforce impact in the sport, whilst also supporting multi-sport opportunities, all through the delivery of interest-bearing loans to deliver new and improved artificial grass pitches, in partnership with social and wider investment partners.
- 12.2 The Board remained supportive of the rationale of the fund and its potential to encourage wider and more diverse participation in the sport. It noted that applicants would be required to demonstrate community need and wider engagement in hockey and multi-sport as well as the ability to repay loans. The Board noted stage-gating arrangements; the tying of Sport England funds to private or other social investment; and the engagement of an expert loan book manager as mitigations of loan-making risks.
- 12.3 The Board welcomed the principle of testing in practice new models of investment and expanding Sport England's loan-making and partnership capability. The Board was hopeful that the loans scheme application process would encourage partners to take a more rigorous approach to the environmental as well as economic sustainability of their choices: managing microplastic pollution, for example, would increasingly be an issue for partners using artificial pitches.
- 12.4 The Board therefore **agreed** the investment recommendation of £5.775m over 4 years with an initial award of £315k as set out in the paper. **Action: Nick Boulter** to progress in line with Board feedback.

13. Swimming Pool Support Fund Evaluation

- 13.1 Emma Bernstein provided an update on swimming pool support fund evaluation, including Government's approvals of the use of Sport England's Moving Communities service to measure and evaluate the impact of the Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF).
- 13.2 Board **APPROVED** the non-tendered expenditure authorisation request at MB23-70 for adding measurement and evaluation services for the SPSF to the Moving Communities Year 3 contract, which Board had previously authorised. The Total value of £252,250 was to be contracted by 31 March 2024. **Action Emma Bernstein:** to progress.

14. Active Lives (adult and child surveys)

- 14.1 Nick Pontefract introduced the non-tendered expenditure authorisation request (paper MB23-71) to exercise the option to enter into a fifth year of the Active Lives Adult and Child surveys, with a value of up to £2,900,000.
- 14.2 The Board agreed to the request in the terms set out in the paper (**Action: Andrew Spiers** to progress).

15. Any Other Business

- 15.1 The potential for Board members to play a more active advocacy role on behalf of Sport England was raised. **Action Chris Boardman/Ben Wilson** to consider a more systematic approach to Board advocacy on strategic issues.
- 15.2 Summaries of the September Investment Committee (MB23-72); ARGC (MB23-73); and ESDT (MB23-74) meetings and look-ahead to October SCTC meeting (MB23-75) were noted. Minutes would to be circulated in due course.
- 15.3 With no other matters of business being raised Chris Boardman thanked attendees and closed the meeting. A short members and CEO ‘wash-up’ session would follow. The next Board meeting (scheduled as an informal meeting) would take place on 1 November 2023 at a London venue. The Board would next meet formally on 11 December.

[These minutes were agreed by the Board at its meeting of 11 December 2023]