

Board Meeting 23 September 2025

The Main House, Lilleshall NSC

Members

Chris Boardman, Chair	Tom Gribbin
Mel Bound	Vaughan Lindsay
Michelle Cracknell	David Mahoney
Natalie Daniels	Elena Narozanski
Jason Fergus	Helene Raynsford*

Executive Officers

Jeanette Bain-Burnett – Executive Director, Policy and Integrity
Lisa Dodd-Mayne – Executive Director, Place
Lizzie Hanna – Chief Finance Officer
Simon Hayes – Chief Executive Officer
Nick Pontefract – Chief Strategy Officer
Phil Smith – Executive Director, Partnerships
Ben Wilson – Executive Director, Digital, Marketing & Communications (until item 14)

Officers

*Rosie Benson – Head of Clubs (item 11)
Greg Clements – Director of Partner Relationships (item 9)
Sarah Forster – Finance Director (items 10 and 12)
*Emma Heel – Head of Strategy Delivery (item 8)
Simon Macqueen – Director, Strategy
Frances Harrison – Director of Legal
Lizzie Hughes – Director of Investment (item 12)
*Jo Lea – Research and Evaluation Lead (item 9)
*Hazel McCluskey – Director of Sporting System (items 11)
*Kevin Mills – Director, Place Development (item 15)
Jitendra Patel – Strategic Lead, Corporate Governance
Adam Rigarlsford – Director, Place Relationships (item 14)
*Duncan Truswell – Strategic Lead, Talent and Performance (item 16)
John Vincent – Consultant (item 6)
*Tom Watts – Head of Partner Performance (item 9)

Attendees

Ben Dean – Director, Sport and Gambling, DCMS

*via MS Teams

1. Chair's introduction

The Chair welcomed members and attendees, including Simon Hayes, following his recent start as CEO and thanked Phil Smith for covering the CEO role in the interim period from the end of July. The Board noted that the meeting would be David Mahoney's last Board meeting.

The Board welcomed the initial response the Secretary of State's steer, noting the strong alignment to current areas of work and with the direction of organisational change, including future investment priorities and opportunities for a more joined-up system with partners (e.g. with Active Partnerships). It was noted that a further detailed response will follow in November, supported by engagement with DCMS.

The Board also **agreed** David Mahoney's continuation as ESDT Chair until the end of December.

2. Apologies for absence

Noted apologies from Sarah Massey.

3. Declarations of interest

Noted that there were no new declarations from Board Members. It was noted that Helene Raynsford's husband is a Performance Director for British Rowing (NGB).

4. Minutes of Meeting of 25 June 2025

The Board **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting, pending an amend to item 11 (Every Move Strategy update) to clarify Board agreed that a credible sustainability plan will be a requirement as part of the condition of funding from 2027 for System Partners.

Action 230925-01

Jitendra Patel to amend the minutes for 23 June 2025 to reflect agreement that a credible sustainability plan will be a requirement as part of the condition of funding from 2027 for System Partners.

The Board agreed for a progress update to the Every Move Strategy by the end of 2025/26.

Action 230925-02

Jitendra Patel to schedule an update on the Every Move strategy at a future Board meeting in 2025/26.

5. Matters Arising - Action Log

The Board **noted** progress on the action log and noted that Elena Narozanski will succeed David Mahoney as the Board link for the Recognition Policy and process.

6. CEO's report

The Board noted the update, including Jason Fergus's assurance on the EDI report. The following areas were highlighted:

- The evidence submission to the Covid inquiry.
- The signed MOU with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, to increase access to grassroots sport and physical activity across West Yorkshire particularly for those facing the greatest inequalities. The Board also noted the wider positive relationship with regional Mayors.
- The Chair's response to the Ofcom expressing concern about online abuse and its potentially damaging impact on all women and girls' participation in sport.
- John Vincent's update on the approach and progress of the Organisational Change programme, with a focus on the Medium-Term Plan, and further opportunities for discussion at November's Board Engagement Session.
- Recognition that the 'This Girl Can' campaign was named by ITV as one of the top advertising campaigns of the last 70 years.
- The need to operationalise the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to address workforce diversity challenges and cut-through all activities, including a consistent approach for Equality Impact Assessments.

7. Chairs' reports

The Board noted verbal summaries of recent Investment Committee (IC), Audit, Risk and Governance Committee (ARGC), English Sports Development Trust (ESDT) and Sports Council Trust Company (SCTC) activity.

Jason Fergus highlighted key points from IC: discussion on System Partner and the timeline and support for engagement on future decisions on System Partners from 2027 onwards; assurance on Place updates and School Games National Finals prior to Board decision; and planned engagement with Committee members as part of its effectiveness review in addition to alignment and consistency with ARGC where feasible.

Michelle Cracknell highlighted: assurance on financial targets and constraints and associated risks; the risks around lottery forecasts and organisational change costs; utilisation of the lottery bank balance; the recommendation for Board to approve the Annual Report and Accounts (subject to final sign-off by the CEO and ARGC Chair) which will require a restatement (balance sheet reclassification) of approx. £5.2m on SCTC fixed assets following a verification exercise and assurance agreed by ARGC; AI playbook and policy; Risk and Fraud (including systems for greater detection of fraud that will be strengthened by the Investment Processing System); assurance on Internal Audit aligned to the Organisational Change work.

The Board **approved** the updated ARGC Terms of Reference and **noted** the ARGC Chair's Annual Report to the Board.

David Mahoney reported on ESDT, highlighting the significant launch and success of the This Girl Can ad campaign. Assurance on the media buying approach in order to reach new audiences was also provided, with a focus on moving from awareness into action particularly with place-based pilots.

Lisa Dodd-Mayne, on behalf of its Chair Geoff Wilson, reported on SCTC highlighting the 3-year capital investment plan and training received by Trustees on their role, and operational updates from NSCs. The Board also noted the plan to support the reduction of overall SCTC Board members as agreed by the CRC.

The Chair updated on the CRC and acknowledged the support and expertise from Chairs, particularly regarding the Organisation Improvement programme. The Board noted the risks from the direction by Government on the reappointment of Board Members, beyond a single term, which are by exception only and that the Chair will propose a request to DCMS to mitigate the risks.

The Board **approved** the:

- Quoracy of the Board will be four members.
- Decisions agreed at the CRC, including the deployment of Board members to committees and subsidiaries.
- Continuation of Simon Hayes, in the role as CEO, to be the representative on the Football Foundation Board as an ex-officio member.

8. Performance Reporting

Simon Macqueen provided an overview of KPIs and the Performance Framework, highlighting the challenge on metrics, data, and systems for reporting.

The Board discussed the iteration and logic of the RoI framework and the design criteria. The constraints of the model were highlighted, and it was noted that, alongside other balancing factors, the model will be used to inform the Medium-Term Plan. The Board sought assurance on the usability of the framework in guiding decision making and the risk of data immaturity.

The Board also highlighted the need to upskill the sector to support required data readiness improvements. It was noted that all programme KPIs will change and adapt across the portfolio to reflect intermediary outcomes.

The Board **noted** the Performance Report.

9. System Partner Portfolio Performance and Evaluation

Phil Smith, supported by Greg Clements, Jo Lea and Tom Watts provided an update on System Partner investment, providing an overview of evaluation and performance, three years into the five-year investment.

The Board discussed and sought assurance on the 12 partners categorised as 'of concern', with challenges highlighted for the individual partners. It was noted that the related issues ranged from leadership, governance and finance to more temporary reporting or delivery issues.

The Board discussed the power and role of leverage that is open to Sport England for organisations that are flagged with concerns. The Board noted the need for strategic discussion to inform System Partner funding beyond March 2027, based on intended outcomes, recognising that there are challenges with the differential size and scale of individual organisations within categories, e.g. within NGBs.

The Board **noted** the System Partner Performance and Evaluation report and **agreed** that the Investment Committee provide scrutiny over the approach of the next System Partner funding cycle.

10. Finance Update (Finance and Cashflow Reports; Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25; Bank Mandate letter)

Finance and Cashflow reports

Sarah Forster highlighted that there were no material updates following August month-end, and that all financial constraints and targets were met.

The Board noted the unknown impact and variables of a developing Medium-Term Plan, linked to the evolving Organisational Improvement programme. The risk in the level of confidence behind the accuracy of Lottery cashflow forecasts was also noted, which continued to be mitigated through a cautious approach.

The Board **noted** the Finance and the Lottery and Exchequer Cashflow Reports

Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25

The Board noted a review of SCTC fixed assets register (around the classification of assets) was recommended, following completion of the SCTC audit. It was noted that a verification exercise had been conducted in August by the Finance Team at the three NSCs which had found that £5.2m of Fixed Assets had been disposed of or replaced.

Assurance was provided on the rationale for the requirement of a balance sheet entry only adjustment between reserves of £5.2m. The Board also noted a depreciation cost of £330k, and that the adjustment had not impacted on the valuation of fixed assets in the Sport England accounts. It was noted that the ARGC recommended Board approval of the adjustment following the NAO audit.

The Board:

- **Approved** the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25, subject to any non-material amendments.
 - **Approved** the amends include a balance sheet adjustment (£5.2m) regarding SCTC fixed assets, that has been agreed by ARGC, subject to NAO sign-off.
 - **Agreed** that further non-material amendments, if required, will be signed off by the CEO and ARGC Chair.

Letter of delegated authority (Bank Mandate)

The Board were updated on the requirement to update details to reflect the change in CEO with an instruction to support authority for bank accounts and noted the associated letter.

The Board **approved** the presented letter of delegated authority, for electronic signature by Executive Directors, Chair of the Board and Chair of ARGC

11. Sport & NGB Recognition briefing and update

Hazel McCluskey and Rosie Benson provided an overview, including the purpose of the recognition policy which supports Sport England's remit as a Sports Council and lottery funding distributor.

It was noted that the revised policy intended to be presented at the December Board meeting for approval but would be subject to the conclusion and timing of a 12-week statutory consultation period in Northern Ireland.

The Board **noted** the update on the review of the recognition policy and process.

12. Investment Technology Programme (ITP)

Lizzie Hughes provided an update on the Investment Technology Programme (ITP).

The Board discussed the risks, challenges and progress of the delivery of the ITP, and noted assurance of oversight through ARGC, including pre-ARGC briefings. The financial impact and budget reprofiling were also outlined.

The Board noted the ongoing work to realise benefits with consideration for integrating AI and other automation processes.

The Board noted that the programme is aligned with the wider Organisational Change work, and that Phase One delivery has been challenging due to a truncated timeline caused by contracting delays but that the ITP is on track for system go-live in April 2026.

The Board **approved** the:

- continued delivery of the into Phase Two.
- changes to the budget profiling, and subject to affordability, the increase of approximately £135k over the 5-year period.
- proposed commercial exploitation route and Provisional Agreement, subject to additional due diligence.

13. Risk, Assurance and Counter Fraud update

The Board **noted** the Risk, Assurance and Counter Fraud report, aligned to the updated provided earlier in the meeting by the ARGC Chair.

14. Place Update

Lisa Dodd-Mayne, supported by Adam Rigarlsford, provided assurance to the Board that planned Birmingham and Solihull deepening decisions had not met the level required to seek Board approval at this stage and outlined the related challenges.

An overview of the rationale for the Place Advisory Group was provided. It was clarified that the proposed group was not a formal decision-making group.

The Board **supported** the Place Advisory Group approach and suggested consideration of the Terms of Reference to incorporate an element of innovation.

15. Active Environments PRR

Lisa Dodd-Mayne, supported by Kevin Mills, provided context for the AE framework.

The Board:

- **Approved** a contract award valued at upto £4.5m over a 4-year period for a new multi-provider framework agreement, on a 2-year initial term with an option for a 2-year extension.
- **Agreed** that within the £4.5m contract, a total budget of upto £2m (£1.5m Lottery Award and £500K Sports Development spend) will be subject to approvals under the delegated authority policy.

16. School Games National Finals 2026

Phil Smith and Duncan Truswell outlined the context for the award increase into the SGNF 2026. It was noted that the Investment Committee had scrutinised the proposal prior to seeking Board approval.

The Board were provided with assurance of the event supporting the cohort of athletes and volunteers from less advantageous backgrounds, and the competing athletes' likelihood to win a medal.

The Board discussed the value for money and return on investment, mindful of

Government's support for the programme but also balanced against the need for efficiencies. It was noted that the cost was impacted by ensuring an accessible and inclusive event, in addition to supporting the integrity of the experience and the athlete enrichment programme.

The scope for exploring commercial sponsorship was also raised to support the cost of the event. It was noted that the BOA are an event partner due to potential opportunities of future commercial partnerships.

The Board:

- **Approved** an award increase of £2,980,009, over 2025/26 and 2026/27, to the Youth Sport Trust to deliver the 2026 School Games National Finals. This will take the total award to YST for delivery of both the 2024 and 2026 editions of the event to £5,855,674.
- **Advised** that the RoI model should be used to determine the value and return of the investment to strategically inform future SGNF decision making and consider a responsible exit strategy in due course if appropriate.

17. Any Other Business

The Board thanked and recognised the commitment, contribution, and valued counsel of David Mahoney during his time as a Board Member at Sport England.