MB26-22

Board Meeting 24 March 2026

Wallace Space 22 Dukes Road, London.

Members

Chris Boardman, Chair	Tom Gribbin
Natalie Daniels	Sarah Massey
Jason Fergus	Elena Narozanski

Executive Officers

Simon Hayes – Chief Executive Officer
Lisa Dodd-Mayne – Executive Director, Place
Phil Smith – Executive Director, Partnerships

Officers

*Nick Boulter – Strategic Lead, Loan Portfolio (item 15)
*Pat Brosnan – Strategic Lead, Football (item 17.1)
*Alex Butler – Interim Director of Digital, Data and Technology (item 11)
Greg Clements - Director of Partner Relationships (item 9)
Sarah Forster – Finance Director
Simon Macqueen – Director, Strategy
Hari Matharu – Head of Community Assets (item 12)
Frances Harrison – Director of Legal
Lizzie Hughes – Director of Investment
Denise Ludlam – Strategic Lead, Environmental Sustainability (item 10)
Hazel McCluskey – Director of Sporting System (items 9)
Jitendra Patel – Strategic Lead, Corporate Governance
Naomi Shearon – Strategic Lead, Strategy (item 9)
Viveen Taylor – Director, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Steve Welch - Strategic Lead, Place Development (item 13 and 14)

Attendees

Pippa Glucklich – ESDT Chair / Board Adviser
Simon Mason, Deputy Director, Sport, DCMS

**via MS Teams*

1. Chair's introduction

The Chair welcomed members and attendees. The Board noted the update from Simon Mason that the request to evolve the Board membership is at Minister level.

The Board supported the approach for Investment decisions proposed for Board to be considered at preceding Investment Committee meetings. In addition, a wider principle of refining the decision-making process to mitigate potential for duplication, particularly on investment decisions and business cases was noted.

2. Apologies for absence

Noted apologies from Michelle Cracknell and Vaughan Lindsay.

3. Declarations of interest

Noted that there were no new declarations from Board Members.

4. Minutes of Meeting of 09 December 2025

The Board **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting.

5. Matters Arising - Action Log

The Board noted the updated Action Log including the engagement with DEFRA in the AGP Recycling Task & Finish Group, supported by DCMS.

6. CEO's report

The Board noted the update, and Jason Fergus's assurance on the EDI report, including; the ongoing organisational restructure and consideration for additional support on the transformation programme; the All Colleagues Day; and the latest position on the Digital and Data with funding identified for the next 12 months, and the need to source longer term funding through a wider Business Case to support the programme's ambitions; the review of the Code for Sports Governance and the resultant role and responsibilities of Sport England.

The Board welcomed the offer of support and expertise from Pippa Glucklich on the Digital and Data programme.

The Board noted the creation of a smaller group, focussing on wellbeing and cultural change, to support the integration of diversity and inclusion within the broader organisational transformation. It was also recognised that the work of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan needs to continue at pace to ensure it is connected to organisational change and subsequent cultural change initiatives. The ongoing EPOC Board Fellowship programme was also noted, to strengthen diversity at SE Board, SCTC and potentially across Active Partnerships. The Board noted that an annual update on the DIAP will be provided at June Board.

Action 240326-01
Jitendra Patel to schedule a DIAP update for June Boad.

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.

Srah Forster, on behalf of Michelle Cracknell, highlighted: scrutiny over the Finance and Budget reports prior to recommending Board approval of the Budget for 26/27; approved increased procurement thresholds to support more agile and flexible ways of working; significant discussion on the Partners' Governance and Assurance Report, which Jason Fergus as IC Chair joined; noted that a review of the impact of the Code for Sports Governance is due later this year; approved the Internal Audit Plan 2026-27; and continued to have oversight over arena.

Jason Fergus highlighted key points from IC: approving the Lionesses Equal Game Fund, Active Norfolk and Safeguarding Case Management Programme investment, and requested further assurance on the Workforce Governance and System Development investment which was subsequently approved by correspondence.

Pippa Glucklich reported on ESDT, highlighting the assurance on media delivery for This Girl Can but recognising the challenge of moving from increased recognition and awareness to behavioural change amongst target audiences and lessons learned; and the change in the media buying agency necessitated by a change on the Crown Commercial Services framework.

Lisa Dodd-Mayne, on behalf of its Chair Geoff Wilson, reported on SCTC highlighting consideration of the Capital Plan prior to seeking SE Board approval; an Environmental Sustainability update; and the use of Bisham NSC facilities as training centre for the Euros 2028.

8. Finance Update

8.1 & 8.2 Finance and Cashflow reports

Sarah Forster highlighted that we are on track to meet our finance and cost control targets, and highlighted a request from DCMS to utilise admin underspend to Programme to make awards through the Movement Fund.

The Board noted the risks related to the delayed finalisation of the 5-Year Plan, and operationalising its delivery, adversely impacts the cashflow with delayed expenditure and increasing the lottery bank balance. The wider risk around forecasting and lottery award commitments, with the need for efficient cashflow noted.

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

8.3 Budget 2026-27

The Board noted that the context of the CSR which confirmed that efficiencies are expected in future years (no efficiencies expected on Capital with a 0.5% uplift) and ringfenced allocations are awaiting confirmation for future years.

The Board noted that the budget presented was affordable, although it was highlighted that additional capital is required for the Arena project due to project delays with a proposed solution subject to DCMS agreement.

The Board **approved** the budget 2026-27.

9. 5- Year Plan, Investment Portfolio and Transition Plan

Simon Macqueen, supported by the 5YP Team, set the context on the development and implementation of the 5YP.

It was noted that the plan builds on the previously approved investment framework, and the Board reviewed the next stage of the 5YP, focusing on the connection of strategic aims with objectives and key results, to support a new organisation-wide measurement framework with annual and more frequent dashboard reporting to track progress and inform investment decisions.

Board members raised concerns around data and evidence challenges, particularly with the reliance on annual Active Lives data, the need for more real-time and granular measures, and the importance of developing indicators and impact metrics to better inform decision-making and demonstrate value.

The Board discussed the portfolio design and transition, including an integrated portfolio approach with sub-portfolios and programmes, and the need for a phased transition process. The Board raised the need for clear communication and engagement with partners to manage expectations, ensure alignment, and manage change effectively.

The Board:

- **Endorsed** the overall direction of investment portfolio and transition of the 5YP, including the approach to the measurement framework, aligning priorities, objectives and key results.
- **Agreed** that May's Investment Committee should be deferred to allow oversight of the 5YP update prior to June Board.
- **Noted** the update on the 5YP with further detail and assurance on timelines, communications and deliverability of the investment portfolio to follow at the June meeting.

10. Every Move Strategy update

Tom Gribbin, as Environmental Sustainability Board Champion, and Denise Ludlam provided wider context for the paper, including the opportunities, risks and mitigations for Board consideration and discussion, noting the potential health considerations of microplastics with reference to AGPs and the impact of climate change affecting physical activity levels.

In addition, links to investment in ageing infrastructure as part of six priorities of the 5YP, strengthening ESG within the Code, and future funding decisions for partners predicated on having robust environmental sustainability plans, which needs to be articulated.

The Board noted the update on progress made in delivering the Every Move action plan and the recommendation to mainstream sustainability into the 5YP, including into investment decisions, rather than treating it as a separate initiative.

The Board discussed the challenges which remain, alongside the vision and commitments of the environmental sustainability strategy approved by Board in March 2024. The Board noted the resource capacity and capability constraints to deliver the strategy, and options for consideration aligned to the 5YP. The Board also acknowledged Sport England's role with investments made impacting overall carbon emissions and the footprint, including how that is currently measured.

The Board **agreed**:

- To a meeting, supported by Tom Gribbin and leads, to consider deliverability of the strategy, aligned to the 5YP.
- To support the approach which mainstreams sustainability into the 5YP and agreed that future funding for partners will be contingent on robust sustainability strategies, with a need for Sport England to define clear expectations, and incentivise partners to develop and implement environmental action plans.

11. Investment Technology Programme update

Lizzie Hughes provided an update, reporting progress on the Arena system, and highlighting the need for additional budget due to delays and expanded requirements, and the importance of the project for improving investment processes and data quality.

The Board noted previous discussion through ARGC and delays caused by additional functionality requirements, with need for more rigorous testing, resulting in a potential 5-12 week extension, with related additional budget costs.
The Board noted a request from ARGC on a fuller benefits realisation analysis at the June ARGC meeting, underpinning the project's role in reducing administrative

burden and improving data-driven investment decisions.

The Board **approved** the request for a proposed £512.500 increase against planned delivery spend in 2026-27, subject to DCMS approval in swapping GIA funding allocation.

12. Place Deepening

12.1 Birmingham Place investment

Lisa Dodd-Mayne set the context, and supported by Hari Murthy, outlined the rigorous internal review, and the steps taken to build local partnerships and alignment with 5YP priorities.

The Board discussed the associated risks, and advised the need to sharpen KPIs and measurable success criteria, with clear outcomes and ongoing monitoring to track impact.

The Board:

- **Approved** a Lottery award of £1,684,199 and an additional £758,113 in-principle to Birmingham Sport and Physical Activity Trust (Sport Birmingham), for their Place Deepening work across Birmingham (April 2026 – March 2028).
- **Noted** and agreed that £500,000 of the in-principle is subject to progress against agreed milestones, £258,113 is subject to confirmation of System Partner funding for 2027/28.

13. National Sports Centres capital investment plan

Lisa Dodd-Mayne set the context, and supported by Steve Welch, outlined the rationale a strategic approach to seek approval of a multi-year capital investment plan for National Sports Centres, subject to annual affordability and core capital availability.

Whilst noting the plan aims to move from annual to more strategic, multi-year planning, the Board noted that capital funding is allocated annually by DCMS, preventing the accumulation of reserves for long-term projects.

Due to confirmation of a change in the CSR settlement, the capital plan was adjusted from four years to three years, with a total ask of £13 million over three years.

The Board:

- **Approved** investment over a 3-year period from 2026/27 to 2028/29 of upto £13m to deliver capital projects across the National Sport Centres, subject to budget availability.
- **Noted** and agreed that the NSC, Capital, and Finance teams will align the annual

budget allocation to meet the demands of SE's overall corporate capital allocation. This may include applying to DCMS to switch between core and grant capital budgets.

14. Elite Training Centres Programme S2 Business Case

Lisa Dodd-Mayne set the context for the investment. The Board more widely discussed the nature of non-discretionary funding and the need to consider its resultant impact on RoI.

The Board:

- **Approved** investment in the Elite Training Centres Programme of upto £5m Exchequer Capital over three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29 subject to annual confirmation of the allocation from DCMS.
- **Approved** the flexibility over the three years to use upto £500k in principle from other Exchequer Capital in-year budgets (where it's possible to accommodate) to provide additional support to ETC projects by exception.

15. England Hockey impact fund

Nick Boulter provided context for the in-principle conversion of £2.21m of the investment to England Hockey (EH) to support the delivery of the Hockey Impact Fund. The potential future request from EH for £750,000 (not included as part of the £2.21m) to support recycling of pitches was also highlighted.

The Board noted that it was legal to send pitches to landfill with no current obligation to recycle. With context of the provision of the potential £750,000 which was proposed to be used as grant funding, the Board also discussed the wider strategic environmental sustainability aim of recycling Artificial Grass Pitches and the long-term solution.

The Board **agreed** for further clarification of the request to support understanding of the proposal, including the proposed change of usage of funds (to grant funding) previously agreed for usage on loans, and the conditions of the potential £750,000 grant to support recycling. The Board requested the decision to be agreed by correspondence.

Action 240326-02

Nick Boulter to provide further assurance and seek approval from Board by correspondence on the Hockey Impact Fund.

16. Recognition Policy Review and Recognition Decisions

16.1 Revised NGB and Sport Recognition Policy

Phil Smith set the context, and supported by Hazel McCluskey, outlined the recent changes to the revised Recognition Policy.

Following previous Board discussion, it was noted that the revised policy clarifies the distinction between recognising sports and governing bodies, streamlines decision-making, and addresses previous challenges.

The Board **approved** the adoption of the revised NGB and Sport Recognition Policy.

16.2 Recognition of Gaelic Games

The Board **agreed** to recognise the Gaelic Games Council of Britain (GGCB) as the NGB for Gaelic games in Great Britain.

17. Any other business

Ringfenced Funding

17.1 DiSE Funding 2026-27

Phil Smith set the context for DiSE funding, and provided assurance in response to concerns raised at the previous ARGC meeting on the Sports Aid Trust, which Board noted as being on an improvement journey due to rapid growth and administrative challenges.

The Board **approved** an in-principle award increase of £8,423,921 to the Sports Aid Trust for the continuation of the Diploma in Sporting Excellence programme in 2026-27.

17.2 Football Facilities investment

Pat Brosnan presented a recommendation to approve £68.35million of ring-fenced exchequer funding to the Football Foundation as part of the Government's £400 million commitment to community sport facilities. The Board discussed strategic alignment, risks, and environmental considerations.

The Board noted the investment aligns with Sport England's place-based approach and focuses on areas of greatest impact, and the strong emphasis on Women and Girls' participation.

The risks relating to microplastics and rubber infill were also acknowledged, with the significant investment in 3G pitches.

The Board supported the need for the Football Foundation to develop and establish an environmental sustainability action plan, and agreed a request for DCMS to work closely to address microplastic risks and ensure sustainable investment into AGPs.

The Board emphasised the importance of measurable impact and alignment with the 5YP, which will be captured as part of the RoI framework.

The Board **approved** an in-principle award of up to £68.35 million to the Football Foundation for 2026-27 (comprised of £18m baseline GIA funding and £50.35m multi-sport facilities funding) subject to confirmation of funding from DCMS for 2026-27.

Action 240326-03

Tom Gribbin to discuss with Pat and the team - consideration of the proposed investment into the Hockey Impact Fund and opportunity cost of wider AGP work.