
WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2023 AT 09:00

MINUTES**In Attendance:**

John Coyne CBE (JC)	Chair and Independent Director
Richard Boreham (RB)	Vice Chair and Independent Director
Kerry Chown (KC)	Director nominated by Canoe Wales
Clare Dallaway (CD)	Director nominated by English Forum
Martine Kushner (MK)	Independent Director (<i>Virtual - Partial attendance</i>)
Zoey Rowe (ZR)	Director nominated by English Forum
Manpreet Sehmbi (MS)	Independent Director
Greg Spencer (GS)	Director nominated by English Forum
Ashley Metcalfe (AM)	CEO

Apologies

Nick Donald (ND)	Independent Director
Gareth Mahood (GM)	Director nominated by CANI

Also In Attendance:

Dee Paterson (DP)	President
Susan Hicks (SH)	Finance Director
Rob Knott (RK)	Director of Communications (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Ben Seal (BS)	Head of Access & Environment (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Nancy Squires (NS)	Director of Governance
Gemma Wiggs (GW)	Head of Events and International Affairs (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Charmaine Collins (CC)	Executive Assistant to the CEO

1. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair (JC) welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everybody for attending in London during the working week.

JC advised that several colleagues would join the meeting throughout proceedings including Ben Seal, Head of Access and Environment who would join the meeting to present item 07, the Facilities Strategy update and Gemma Wiggs, Head of Events and International Affairs who would join the meeting to present item 08, Future Hosting Opportunities. The Board noted that Rob Knott, Director of Communications would join the meeting during the branding project update within the CEO report. JC also confirmed that Nancy Squires, Director of Governance would join the meeting for item 09, the #SaferTogether Strategy.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from ND and GM.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no further declarations received outside of those already previously submitted.

4. Minutes of FB84

The Minutes of FB84 were approved as a true and fair record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising not covered by the agenda

There were no further matters arising.

6. CEO Report

JC moved straight to item 06, the CEO Report.

Fatalities at Kempston Weir, Bedford

The Board noted that British Canoeing were assisting the MAIB with their investigations into the two fatalities near the weir embankment in Kempston in Bedfordshire during April. AM agreed to keep the Board updated on progress. The Board requested that we encourage our community towards completing our weir education eLearning module. The Board also supported our work with the Environment Agency to help influence the safe construction of weirs.

Russian and Belarussian Athlete Participation

AM reported that the ICF position has moved more in line with the IOC to allow eligible Russian and Belarusian athletes who are not in support of their State's actions in Ukraine to compete as individual neutral athletes, subject to the LOC acceptance. The Board noted that the ICF are happy for the UK to maintain a strong position, similar to Germany (hosting Sprint/Para World Championships) and Poland (hosting 2023 European Games). AM shared that the DCMS had recently issued updated guidelines stronger than the position of the ICF with neutral athletes unable to be government funded. As the safety of all athletes and coaches could not be guaranteed, the Board agreed that their current stance was still appropriate and agreed to maintain its strong position aligned to the UK Government and UK Sport expectations not to allow athletes from Russia or Belarus to participate in the 2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships at Lee Valley in September.

2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships

AM reported that the budget deficit for the event had improved slightly and was now circa £22k subject to contingency funding access or an increase in revenue. The Board noted that to date, 27% of tickets had been sold but that recent market trends show that most tickets are sold 6 weeks prior to an event. RK shared that ticketing for the event was being led by a third party with extensive experience in international events. The Board agreed that they were comfortable with the current position.

AM reported that the ICF have not yet released the broadcast rights for the Championships but the commercial team continue to try to attract broadcasters to screen the event.

The Board noted that the ICF have released the rights for bib sponsorship and that a commercial partner had shown initial interest.

AM reassured the Board that the event organising team have risk assessed against security issues and potential protests that may occur during the Championships.

[Martine Kushner joined the meeting]

World Class Performance Update

AM shared the positive results from the ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup in Augsburg and the ICF Canoe Sprint and Paracanoe World Cups 1 and 2 in Szeged and Poznan respectively. He congratulated and thanked all athletes and coaches as well as Adam Miles and Martin Hook who were appointed as officials for the event in Poland.

AM reported that the recent National Regatta at HPP was in terms of performance a great success with a number of closely contested finals and new course records set. There was a discussion around the competition structure to help develop both paddler and volunteer opportunities. AM confirmed that a Volunteer Lead would be appointed following a small internal restructure to help review and develop these opportunities through a different lens. JC requested that the Board receive a report at a future meeting updating on the formal conversations that have taken place with the discipline committees in relation to any competition structure review. The Board noted that the ECA through their sub-committees were starting to look at discipline development, and they hoped that this would lead to further modernisation.

Transgender Policy Update

AM reported that the Transgender Competition Policy continues to be reviewed internally, whilst monitoring international progress and that of other IF's and NGB's. He relayed that consultation has been pushed back to at least September to avoid clashes with the forthcoming World Championships, qualifying regattas and the competition season, especially as athlete involvement in the consultation is critical. The Board noted that the ICF have not yet determined their own policy and that there is a meeting scheduled within the next few weeks. AM agreed to share with the Board what the consultation will look like and committed to sharing further updates with the Board as the policy evolves. The Board agreed that it was a complex issue that was better to get right, than progress too quickly.

Coach Licensing "Standards of Deployment"

AM confirmed that the #SaferTogether strategy sets out our future direction in this area and would be discussed later on the agenda. The Board noted that an internal group has established draft principles for the minimum Standards of Deployment and that discussions are taking place with Sport England & CIMSPA to be part of their pilot scheme and to consider deadlines for implementation. AM confirmed that an internal deadline of December 2024 had been set for completion but British Canoeing remain agile to align with SE and CIMSPA requirements. The Board noted that there would be lots of consultation over the coming

months and that standards of deployment would be discussed at the next meeting of UK CEOs on 13 June.

Branding Update

RK confirmed that an external agency has been appointed to deliver the branding project for the organisation, with a hard deadline set for completion at the end of September. He advised that a working group has been formed and there is a session planned with the UK CEOs and SLT on 12 June.

There was a discussion around the approach to consultation and the establishment of a clear English identity within the new brand. The Board noted that the brand agency was undertaking independent conversations as part of the consultation but also emphasised the need to connect with and listen to the right people, including recreational paddlers. KC emphasised the importance of the Welsh language in any new brand.

RK highlighted the key reason for the rebrand to grow our business and to become more inclusive as an organisation. AM relayed that the ICF have also committed to changing their name away from 'canoeing'.

The Board noted the tight timelines and the requirement to approve the rebrand at the next meeting in September to enable progression with a new teamwear partner.

AM encouraged the Board to share their thoughts with the team prior to September and committed to keeping the Board updated as the project progresses.

Sport England Objectives

AM outlined the funding schedule received from Sport England and reported on the targets agreed that link directly with our Stronger Together strategy and to our annual plan. He notified the Board that we have achieved all of our Sport England objectives for Year 1 with the exception of recruiting a paddle-ability lead, which still very much remains an option. AM confirmed that Sport England were pleased with our progress and had recently notified British Canoeing that our 2023/24 in-principle exchequer funding has been confirmed. There was a brief discussion around Sport England funding and the opportunities available to our clubs and community. The Board noted the pleasing progress to date.

UK Code for Sports Governance

AM reported that British Canoeing submitted evidence in support of its compliance with the revised Code for Sports Governance by the 30 April deadline. It is expected that British Canoeing will achieve full compliance subject to some additional work required around the Volunteer People Plan due by the end of the year.

NS reported that the assessment against the requirements for a diversity and inclusion action plan had been outsourced to a third party. The Director of Governance and EDI Lead are engaging in this process currently and it is anticipated British Canoeing will either have compliance confirmed or there will be limited action required to attain compliance.

AM reported that UK Sport were due to launch their strategy for LA funding on 8 June. JC confirmed that he had represented British Canoeing on the Organisational Health project facilitated by UK Sport.

Medal Bonus and Recognition Olympic Event

AM confirmed that British Canoeing has agreed to follow the precedents set at previous Olympic and Paralympic Games and to modestly financially reward medal winning athletes at Paris 2024. He confirmed that the bonus pot would be shared between medal winners and the funds would come from within the 3 World Class Programmes and importantly from earned income during the Paris cycle. There was a brief discussion around athlete recognition for medals and its connection to welfare. It was noted that the informal practices that had been in place previously had caused issues and that it was best to have a formal, clear and transparent policy in place. JC recognised some discomfort but assured the Board that it is not a new policy and that athletes had been consulted.

The Board received the CEO Report and noted progress to date.

7. Facilities Strategy Update

SH outlined the British Canoeing facilities strategy and pointed to the recommendations in the paper relating to the owned and leased places to paddle sites.

Washburn

BS stated that there have been zero releases or events at Washburn since 2021 and since 2019 activity has been vastly curtailed due to Yorkshire Water (YW) capital works, increased ecological pressures and drought. The Board noted that amendments to the Reservoir Act 1991 (Jan 2023) now require YW to apply for an Environmental Agency permit for water releases (scour valve releases). Paddling events fall outside the scope of the present permit. BS confirmed that Yorkshire Water are investigating whether a new permit for paddling releases can be secured and it is unknown whether this will be granted. The Board noted the time and effort spent on the site by volunteers. He shared that our interaction with Yorkshire Water had been with the Board of Directors.

The Board noted that the Woodyard may have commercial value for holiday or residential development, should the permit be refused. The sale of the asset could create an investment fund that would not only support the improvement and development of the other places to paddle sites but allow for increased investment in any further proposed slalom sites in Yorkshire.

There was a discussion around Washburn and the Woodyard.

The Board approved the recommendation in the paper to investigate the commercial value of the freehold land and Woodyard for consideration pending the outcome of the EA permit.

Linton

The Board noted that this course, whilst in existence, has never been opened due to on-going safety concerns. After more than 6 years in construction, Linton white water course remains unsafe for use by paddlers. Remedial work undertaken by the Hydro company to repair failed pilings has been unsuccessful. A serious hazard to entrapment remains at the end of the course. BS confirmed that the site remains off limits to all British Canoeing, CRT and EA staff.

The Board noted that despite repeated efforts by British Canoeing the relationship with Linton Hydro had broken down and we are currently working through breaches by Linton Hydro to the Capital Grants Award Agreement.

The Board approved the recommendation to note the on-going legal negotiations with Linton Hydro to recover the invested funds and remove all British canoeing liability from the site.

BS briefed the Board on the status of the other Places to Paddle sites, including the success of Hoarworthy and Broadway Meadow that were both generating income. The Board noted the challenges with Symonds Yat but recognised that robust management is now in place to oversee operations.

The Board requested that weir safety signage is improved across all relevant sites and encouraged collaboration with the Environment Agency on the design of weir safety. The Board welcomed the sensible set of recommendations.

The Board noted the report and approved the recommendations as outlined in the paper.

[MK left the meeting]

8. Future Hosting Opportunities

JC invited GW to present the report that outlines the future hosting aspirations for British Canoeing.

Paracanoes

GW highlighted that Great Britain are the world's most successful nation with Paracanoes and that in and by itself justifies exploration of hosting an international event on home soil.

Canoe Slalom

GW stated that subject to confirmation of the LA 2028 qualification process, it is proposed to bid for either a World Cup slalom/kayak cross event (2027) to maximise world ranking points, or the kayak cross qualification World Cup event in 2028.

Canoe Sprint

GW reported that pending the completion of HPP facility strategy, if a World Championships are not possible long term, then British Canoeing could consider the 2028 ICF Sprint World Cup which includes 2028 ICF Paracanoes World Championships (some investment in the finish

tower, lane lines, start huts, start buckets and power would still be required). The Board noted that a bid for an event in 2028 would need to be submitted in 2025.

Future Hosting Opportunities

The Board discussed the proposals noting that it deviates against their initial agreement of aiming to host an event every year. The Board recognised that our choice of hosting events must support the wider British Canoeing Strategy, Stronger Together.

GW confirmed that British Canoeing have been liaising with the Discipline Committees in relation to event hosting opportunities. The Board noted that Canoe Sailing does not have a formal discipline committee in place and the ICF do not have a formal bidding process for these events. GW shared that a proposal to establish a formal discipline committee for Ocean Racing would likely come to Board in the near future.

The Board accepted that HPP is not currently fit for purpose for hosting a national regatta but hoped that a bid for an ICF event in 2028 might help focus and advance development at HPP. GW stated that it would require a great deal of preparatory work in advance of any bid. The Board noted the multi-discipline opportunities across other sports, such as triathlon and rowing.

GW confirmed that the ICF were currently undertaking event consultation with their discipline committees, with a proposal due to be presented at congress in 2024.

The Board agreed that they still have an aspiration to host an event each year but are mindful of capacity and resources. Instead, the Board expressed an ambitious appetite to explore what an event programme could look like, to include a Kayak X elite series, Short Course Marathon and SUP events. They also agreed to keep on top of Canoe Polo developments in England and Northern Ireland.

GW confirmed that by the end of the year, we should have a clear indication of what we are recommending following the completion of a piece of work that had been commissioned to scope the potential around Lee Valley and beyond.

The Board received and noted the future hosting aspirations and approved the direction of travel.

9. #SaferTogether Strategy

NS outlined the contents of British Canoeing's Strategy for Safeguarding, Safety, Welfare and Performance Wellbeing - #SaferTogether, which had been developed in line with our commitment to welfare within Stronger Together. NS reported that the strategy had been formed after extensive consultation across all staff and the executive teams within British Canoeing, discipline committees, welfare officers, coaching advisory groups, including input from the National Associations.

The Board noted that #SaferTogether remains work in progress but is due for publication later in the year with a wrap-around communications launch. NS committed to sharing the final draft with the Board for comment prior to publication.

The Board noted and discussed the lifecycle of the strategy aligning to the end of Stronger Together (2026). The Board recognised that the strategy is ambitious and requires some investment, but is achievable. JC stated that he liked the timeline of the strategy and noted how it will be a living document that is likely to structurally evolve.

NS shared that our strategy benchmarks well against other NGBs, although it looks different as it is bespoke to British Canoeing and therefore appropriate for an organisation of our size. NS confirmed that the Board will receive annual updates in December to track progress against the ambitions.

There was a discussion around the key learnings acquired from the consultation, including understanding and realising the challenges within clubs and appreciating the distinction between welfare and safeguarding. A director emphasised how training style is important in conveying the right messages.

The Board expressed that they would like to see consistency across the National Associations and requested that a commitment statement is included from each home nation.

The Board noted that the Governance and Risk Committee had reviewed the strategy in its early stages of development and requested that they also approve the final version prior to launch.

The Board received and noted the strategy and formally approved #SaferTogether subject to the agreed minor adjustments.

10. Finance Report

SH updated the Board on the financial performance of British Canoeing at the half year stage. The Board noted that the financial profile is starting to improve and that membership income in May achieved £523k, 3% up on the prior year. SH reported that retention average throughout May had been 66% with 4,600 new members joining in the month. The Board noted that membership as at 6 June was 92,582 and if the positive trend continues, the budget should be achieved in June.

The Board noted that coaching awards and qualifications income had been lower than budget and last year for the first 6 months and recognised the challenges in this space.

SH reported that the cashflow forecast for the next 12 months would predict a stable cash position, but the investment strategy, currently authorised at £2m, is scheduled to roll in and out of fixed term deposits over the next 12 months.

Following the concerns around income in April, SH confirmed that the temporary pause on some larger areas of expenditure was still in place in the non-grant funded areas but was due for review shortly.

A Board member queried the recruitment deferment applied in response to April's management accounts and the potential impact on the decision negatively impacting objectives set out in our annual plan. AM stated that due to the nature of the financial year, the budget was always going to be a challenge. He noted that we are still carrying a deficit of £500k at the half year point and with the unknown impact of the cost-of-living crisis, on-going inflation and a reliance on much improved weather, he preferred to closely and regularly monitor the financial position and remain cautious in approach whilst ensuring there was no negative impact on achieving the ambitions set within the Stronger Together strategy.

JC thanked SH for the financial update and associated report.

The Board received and approved the Finance report.

11. World Class Performance Report

JC relayed apologies from KW and invited questions from the Board.

The Board recognised the positive improvements in the Culture Feedback survey results within the Sprint Programme.

RB updated the Board on progress in establishing the new Performance Sub-Committee. The Board noted that recruitment for the committee had been completed. RB shared that there had been a good number of high-quality applications from people of different experiences and expertise across sport. He confirmed that two independent candidates had been appointed and that KW was investigating the possibility of co-opting an ex-athlete and a member of the paddling community as additional co-opted members.

JC requested that the Committee meetings are scheduled early enough in advance of the Board meetings.

The Board received and noted the World Class Performance report.

12. Committee and National Association Reports

The committee and national association reports were taken by exception with only the key issues highlighted.

12.1 Finance & Audit Committee

SH stated that the next meeting was scheduled for 14 September.

12.2 HR & Remuneration Committee

No further updates were received beyond those outlined in the paper.

12.3 Governance & Risk Committee

The Board referred to the written paper circulated in advance. JC requested that the Board receive a proposal to deliver the 2024 AGM in the autumn.

12.4 Canoe Wales

No further updates were received beyond those outlined in the paper.

12.5 CANI

No further updates were received.

12.6 SCA

JC reported that Brian Chapman is no longer the Chair of the SCA. He also confirmed that the SCA continue to make enquiries to fill the current vacant Scottish role on the Board of British Canoeing.

The Board noted and accepted the Committee and National Association Reports.

13. Any Other Business

JC reminded Board members to respond to the VIP invitation to attend the 2023 ICF Canoe Slalom World Championships in September.

JC informed colleagues that in order to improve our security posture, the Digital Team are blocking everyone from accessing their British Canoeing Google Workspace account using personal mobile devices (phones and tablets). He confirmed that users will still be able to access their accounts using a Windows and Apple computer\laptop.

It was agreed that British Canoeing would facilitate a further meeting to explain all future requirements.

14. Closed Session with Non-Executive Directors