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**THURSDAY 08 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 17:30**

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**MINUTES****In Attendance:**

John Coyne CBE (JC)	Chair and Independent Director
Kerry Chown (KC)	Director nominated by Canoe Wales
Clare Dallaway (CD)	Director nominated by English Forum
Nick Donald (ND)	Independent Director
Martine Kushner (MK)	Independent Director
Jim Miller (JM)	Director nominated by The SCA
Zoey Rowe (ZR)	Director nominated by English Forum
Manpreet Sehmbi (MS)	Independent Director ( <i>Partial attendance</i> )
Greg Spencer (GS)	Director nominated by English Forum
Ashley Metcalfe (AM)	CEO, British Canoeing

**Apologies**

Richard Boreham (RB)	Vice Chair and Independent Director
Dee Paterson (DP)	President

**Also In Attendance:**

Charlie Barwis (CB)	Flatwater Pathway Lead ( <i>Partial attendance</i> )
Chris Furber (CF)	Performance Director, Flatwater ( <i>Partial attendance</i> )
Peter Gorman (PG)	Independent, Performance Committee ( <i>Partial attendance</i> )
Susan Hicks (SH)	Finance Director
Nancy Squires (NS)	Director of Governance ( <i>Partial attendance</i> )
Keir Worth (KW)	Director of Paddlesport ( <i>Partial attendance</i> )
Charmaine Collins (CC)	Executive Assistant to the CEO

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**1. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The Chair (JC) welcomed all to the virtual meeting and thanked everybody for attending. He advised that the meeting would be recorded to assist in the production of the minutes.

JC advised that several colleagues would join the meeting throughout proceedings including Nancy Squires, Director of Governance who would join the meeting to present item 08, the Constitutional Update; item 09, the AGM and item 10, the Sprint & Paracanoe IP Update. He confirmed that Nancy would also help steer us through items 12 (the UK Agreement - Appendix 3) and item 17, the EDI Strategy Update.

JC also confirmed that Keir Worth, Director of Paddlesport, would join the meeting to present Items 13 and 14, the Sprint Strategy Update and World Class Programme Report. He advised that Chris Furber (PD for Flatwater), Charlie Barwis (Flatwater Pathway Lead) and Peter

Gorman (Independent member of British Canoeing's Performance Committee) would also join the meeting during Item 13, the Sprint Strategy Update.

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received and noted from DP and RB.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

No further declarations were received outside of those already submitted.

## **4. Minutes of FB87**

The Minutes of FB87 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. Financial Accounts 2022-23 and Finance Report**

### ***Financial Statements 2022-23***

SH presented the British Canoeing Financial Statements for 2022/23 that consisted of the financial summary, British Canoeing and BCE Statutory Accounts, the Audit Findings Report prepared by Hays Macintyre and the revised Letter of Representation.

SH reported that the yearend trading position for the central operations was a surplus of £179k. The Board noted that despite a drop in member numbers, the surplus was generated from bank interest and tight overhead control. SH confirmed that the consolidated result for the financial year ended 31 October 2023 was a surplus of £180k.

The Board noted that the finances had been well managed over the year in light of the challenges that had been faced during the summer months to enable a surplus to be achieved at year-end.

### ***Consolidated balance sheet***

SH reported a consolidated cash balance of £8.5m. The Board noted that the cash balance does include grants received in advance and when accounting for this deferred income it left a net cash balance to cover operations of £2.1m.

### ***Reserves***

SH relayed that the consolidated balance sheet shows reserves of £2m, mostly held in cash, which includes designated reserves of £30k (Maurice Rothwell Legacy Fund) and £172k (Stronger Together Fund). SH reported that an additional £200k was added into the Stronger Together Fund during the financial year, with a total of £264k awarded to projects to deliver the ambitions of Stronger Together 2022-26.

### ***Discipline Committees***

SH reported that the financial results of the discipline committees were mostly losses this year as inflation in international trip costs put increased pressure on the committee reserves as well as a higher financial burden on athletes. The Board noted that the £12k surplus in Slalom was a result of releasing unrequired accruals following a change in treasurer. SH relayed that those RDT committees that manage facilities generated financial revenue providing a level of financial independence for their RDT teams.

### ***BCE Ltd***

SH reported that British Canoeing Events Ltd delivered a small £5k surplus in the year, a result of a £5k administration fee levied on the Canoe Slalom World Championships and the release of older, unrequired accruals.

### ***Canoe Slalom World Championships***

SH reported that the accounts for the Slalom World Championships were still to be finalised but were anticipated to breakeven, without having to draw down on UK Sport contingency funding. SH advised that UK Sport had awarded the full £50k for innovation projects with permission to hold it for the future delivery of the two outstanding innovation projects (kayak cross ramps at several sites and solar panels on boat sheds at Lee Valley).

### ***Financial Statements***

SH referred to the set of accounts circulated in advance that were in the main ready to be published, subject to a couple of amendments; grammatical errors in the text would be corrected and Note 4 and Note 20 would be correctly updated to be numerically consistent with the income figures. SH advised that the final version of the accounts to be signed would therefore be slightly different to the version circulated with the Board papers but with no material differences.

### ***Audit Observations***

SH explained that in addition to the note regarding a high level of zero valued assets, a new point was included in the report this year around the mini-bus provision, in place for many years, which had reached a level of £68k. SH advised that this high level triggered the auditors to query whether this met the definition of a provision. The Board felt assured that the amount was immaterial and the financial statements remain unadjusted by this amount, and were overall content with the explanation.

### ***Letter of Representation***

SH advised that in line with previous years, all members of the SLT have formally signed to attest to each statement, where appropriate, within the Letter of Representation. The Board noted that the CEO and Finance Director have attested to all statements within the letter presented to the Board for approval and signature.

ND noted that the financial year had been more challenging than the previous year but commended the financial acumen among the team to manage our finances so well.

JC highlighted the importance of recognising the net investment made to the paddling community through the Stronger Together fund.

JC thanked SH for the financial update and associated reports.

**The Board received and formally approved the finance report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 October 2023, subject to the grammatical corrections and the numerical consistency within Note 4 and 20.**

## **7. CEO Report**

JC introduced item 07 and invited AM to speak to his CEO Report.

### ***Membership***

AM reported that member total remains steady during a traditionally quiet time of year, with the current figure at 87,210.

### ***Risk***

AM reported that the risk register remains unchanged with 3 risks featured with a rating of 15 and above, with all 3 risks flagged as static trending over the last 12 months;

- Retention of performance coaches continues to be the highest rated risk
- The size of the coaching pool across non-Olympic disciplines is small and lack of governance checks across volunteer coaches remains a concern
- Ageing facilities and plans to address at HPP in particular which has seen a recent loss of training days. The Board noted that this will be picked up in the facilities action plan.

### ***Branding Update***

AM provided the Board with a branding update. He confirmed that the branding assets, although finalised, would not be shared with members until the AGM in March. The Board noted that members had received notification of the new brand via email on 15 January with an open rate of 55%. AM confirmed that members were given the opportunity to feedback via a link. The Board noted that negative feedback had been low in numbers (0.1%) and had been balanced out by a similar number of positive comments from the broader recreational paddler community, including SUP. AM confirmed that he had spoken directly to a handful of long standing members who had expressed concerns around the new brand. AM thanked colleagues in the National Associations for their support and alignment to the rebrand. He agreed to check that the brand assets had now been appropriately shared with the National Associations.

### ***UK Sport System Master Planning Project***

AM reported that British Canoeing represented by the Chair and CEO have been actively involved in the UKS programme to explore a new sporting framework to manage how key stakeholders (UKS/SE/BOA/BPA/ HN Sports Councils and NGB's) can work differently and more effectively to guarantee the long term success of the sector. AM advised that discussions are likely to progress over the next twelve months ahead of proposed changes implemented from 2025 onwards.

### ***Sport England***

The Board noted that Sport England were now 3 years into their 10 year strategy, Uniting the Movement and were making good progress. AM reported that British Canoeing had played a

key part in contributing to the delivery of the strategy through recreational initiatives to encourage more people to become active on the water in local communities. He reported real success had been seen particularly in Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford and London Docklands. A Board member relayed that Sport England had recently acknowledged British Canoeing's continued contribution to their successful results over this period.

### ***Standards of Deployment***

The Board noted that the Standards of Deployment Policy continues to evolve through a variety of consultations with clubs, communities and recreational groups. AM outlined the revised timelines of the project encompassing a new phased approach with safeguarding the priority for 2024, with all the standards hopefully met by the end of 2026. The Board noted the confidence British Canoeing had in delivering to these new timescales.

### ***Annual Plan 2023-24***

AM highlighted that work continues on deliverables within the Annual Plan for 2023-24 with considerable progress being made in a number of key areas;

### ***Winning More Medals***

- 7 quota spots secured for Paris Paralympic Games
- Slalom & Kayak X athletes formally selected for Olympics
- Sprint – final qualification opportunities in May in Szeged, Hungary
- Introduction of club support scheme to fund pathway projects (application close in March 24)
- Introduction of coach development programmes (All disciplines)
- Introduction of Kayak Cross discipline including semi-permanent ramp at HPP & improved facilities/equipment
- Scoping of improved sport digitisation project to improve data capture and insight
- Further development of the quality & quantity of entry-level competitions to feed into the competition pathways with the scoping of new events, consultation with disciplines, and initial delivery all on track.

### ***Growing Membership***

- The new brand roll-out on track and scheduled for March 2024
- New "Club Associate" membership to be launched to include digital wallet & Applepay.
- There are currently 53,000 club associate members linked to 400 clubs
- Review of coaching membership underway aligned to new Standards of Deployment
- 'Outdoors For All Manifesto' launched with 42 access/environment organisations signed on to support with a Westminster event scheduled in early March.

### ***Strong Organisational Governance***

- Successful CPSU review
- Standards of Deployment project on track
- Strengthened Safeguarding Case Management Group
- Development of a Volunteers Strategy underway with priority around attracting and retaining volunteer workforce

- Work started and on track to fully embed the competency framework into staff recruitment, development and role descriptions.

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

## **8. English Review and Constitutional Update**

JC invited NS to provide an update on plans for consultation with members around constitutional and governance changes.

NS invited the Board to reflect on the summary captured from the SLT/Board weekend in December shared within Appendix 1 and to consider their appetite for change.

NS outlined next steps around the process for change together with timeframes to include the creation of a task and finish group, consultation and an EGM in the Autumn.

The Board agreed to immediately establish a Task & Finish Group to consist of members of the Board and the Executive to develop a solution that was workable accepting that it may encompass scope for refinement. It should be simple and inclusive. MK agreed to actively monitor engagement in the process via her role as Chair of the Governance Committee.

The Board agreed to share details of the process for change and consultation through the CEO Report at the forthcoming AGM to reassure members that the main focus would be on initially developing a framework, which allows members themselves to develop and influence the longer term strategy.

**The Board received and noted the contents of the report and approved the direction of travel as presented with a proposal to be presented for Board approval at the June meeting.**

## **9. AGM 2024**

NS confirmed the practical arrangements for the AGM on Tuesday 12 March 2024. The Board noted that there had been no motions received from members this year.

NS outlined the agenda to include the approval of JM as SCA Director, the re-appointment of MK as Independent Director, the approval of the Annual Report 2023 and the draft changes to the Articles.

NS explained the proposed changes to the current wording of section 3.1 of the British Canoeing Articles of Association. JC shared his thinking behind the proposed revision to not inhibit our reach and opportunity across all paddling activity in markets, such as SUP, whilst still accurately reflecting the purpose of the organisation. The Board noted the revised draft of the objects section of the Articles proposed at Appendix 2, an explanation of which would be published with the AGM papers.

The Board noted that following the conclusion of the formal business of the AGM, members would be invited to stay on the call for the launch of the new brand.

JC observed that appointing an independent platform to handle the voting provides assurance of integrity in the process. A Board member commented that an evening weekday AGM would hopefully attract more members to the meeting.

The Board noted that ND was now serving on a new ICF finance commission.

**The Board noted the progress made in the preparations for the virtual AGM and;**

- **Approved the AGM agenda including the re-nomination of Martine Kushner as Independent Director and James Miller as Director nominated by the SCA for AGM approval**
- **Approved the proposed changes to the Articles as outlined in Appendix 2**
- **Approved the structure of the Annual Report 2023.**

## **10. IP Update**

*[KW joined the meeting]*

NS presented the report and Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Sprint and Paracanoe International Panel that highlighted the key changes proposed to the IP and the consultation that had taken place. The Board noted the timeline for recruitment.

There was a discussion around the IP's independence from the World Class Programme, the purpose of a casting vote and the need to have WCP staff on the panel given their role, knowledge and access to WCP data. The Board agreed that the proposed solution for the WCP PD to hold the casting vote was appropriate but noted that any perception of bias from WCP staff to programme athletes would need to be addressed by building trust with the community outside of the IP.

The Board, in noting those observations raised, felt assured by the discussion together with the clarity and content in the paper.

**The Board received and formally noted the IP update and approved the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 1.**

## **11. ICF Board & Committee Nominations**

AM presented the paper which outlined the proposed nominations of several individual members of British Canoeing to become members of the Discipline Committees and the Board of the ICF. These positions would be elected at the next Congress of the ICF. It was noted that the ICF Congress would be held in November 2024 in Turkey.

AM emphasised the importance of British Canoeing maintaining a strong international voice, aligned to both UK Sport aims and our own International Relation Strategy. He stated that we had been fortunate to have had some individuals in post already as Chairs of ICF Committees, who also had a seat on the main ICF Executive Board.

There was a short discussion around one of the nominations in terms of any implications following the recent disbandment of the Slalom Committee by the SCA in Scotland. JM provided some background to the Slalom issue in Scotland. The Board considered those related nominations and agreed that there was no reason at the current time not to approve it.

The Board reviewed and discussed the nominations and approved the recommendations within the paper noting that further information would be provided at a future meeting in relation to the SUP Committee status and the electoral process once confirmed by the ICF. The Board also noted the names of individuals that had been put forward by the discipline committees as ITO nominations for 2024 ICF events. AM confirmed that British Canoeing has an international relations budget provided through UK Sport to help fund these appointments.

**The Board endorsed and approved in principle the nominations identified within the report although accepted there may need to be further discussion ahead of the ICF electoral deadlines to confirm preferred candidates if there are multiple nominations for any individual committee.**

## **12. UK Agreement – Appendix 3**

NS presented a revised Appendix 3 for approval by the Board which would enable sign off of the UK Agreement, which had been delayed pending this revision.

**The Board approved Appendix 3 and endorsed sign off of the UK Agreement by the Chair on behalf of the Board. The Board noted the status of the UK Agreement more generally and agreed to be kept updated on any appetite for future review under the new National Association brand names.**

## **13. Sprint Strategy Update**

JC welcomed KW to the meeting to present item 13 along with Chris Furber (PD for Flatwater), Charlie Barwis (Flatwater Pathway Lead) and Peter Gorman (Independent member of British Canoeing's Performance Committee).

JC reminded the Board that the Sprint Strategy was launched in January 2022. It was developed in conjunction with the Sprint Racing Committee, community figures and other stakeholders, including UK Sport. JC invited KW to pick out the key highlights from the report.

KW stated that the strategy is very detailed, highly ambitious and demanding for the whole sport to deliver, although there isn't a large team exclusively resourced to deliver it. KW noted that there have been positive changes in the relationship with the sprint community with far more engagement and discussion than previously (a shift from 'doing to' to 'doing with'). KW shared that both sides were listening, sharing and taking actions to make things better to deliver the strategy. KW invited CF to share his thoughts.



CF thanked the Board for the opportunity to join the meeting. He emphasised the size of the strategy, the limited in-house resource available and therefore the importance of engaging with the community and stakeholders to successfully deliver it. CF reported good progress in the past two years against the WCP owned parts of the strategy - Action Plan 1 (providing the best possible athlete experiences) and Action Plan 5 (sharing insight and knowledge). CF shared that a key focus of his work had been to get the culture right within the programme by creating a sustainable system, building trust with athletes to best support them, and to bring an element of challenge too within a high performance sport environment. He pointed the Board to the actions taken in Para 4.2 of the report since the Duisburg World Championships.

JC invited PG to speak to the report.

PG thanked the Board for inviting him to join the meeting. PG observed that the programme is looking better than it had done in a long time. He agreed that the strategy is a huge undertaking to implement, that it will take time but that it has got support and the direction of travel is looking good.

JC affirmed that the Board remains very committed to the Sprint Strategy. He invited comments from CB in his role as Flatwater Pathway Lead.

CB believed that the strategy is gaining good traction. The Board noted that there is broader engagement with the Junior development squad and there has been increased outreach work to create programmes and initiatives to meet the needs of clubs. CB reported that he senses that the community is more engaged and wanting to collaborate with British Canoeing, although he also welcomed the right challenge. He emphasised that success would take time.

There was a discussion around how best to utilise paid resource to make the biggest difference within clubs. By the end of the Talent Club Partnership programme in March 2025, CB shared the ambition to start to work with clubs to create revenue streams to bring in extra financial resource. He expressed an aspiration to fund new clubs, while mitigating against the risk of not investing in the existing TCP clubs. PG stated that both Wey and Norwich Canoe Clubs had both previously been on talent programmes that had ultimately helped them to understand what they want and how to operate well. The Board were made aware that there is better coaching at Clubs now than 5 years ago, with more resources available from British Canoeing.

A Board member asked how we will know when the culture has shifted into the 'brave space' that we are hoping to achieve. CF responded that psychological safety is a large part in an environment where there is high challenge, honest conversations but also vulnerability and trust. He shared that he had role-modelled those traits through his own leadership and also encouraged coaches to do the same. The Board suggested there could perhaps be a BCAB module for recreational coaches around this 'brave space' model.

There was a discussion around the UK Sport Culture Health Check, the range and type of questions asked to measure any shift in culture and how we develop our culture based on the feedback from the annual surveys.

KW confirmed that there is a lot of cross-team working within the WCP monitored through the Performance Leadership Team (PLT) which straddles across all programmes; Sprint, Para and Slalom.

The Board felt reassured by the progress made towards the sprint strategy over the past 12 months. CF extended an open-invitation to Board members to visit the WCP at HPP to view the environment for themselves.

**The Board received and noted the contents of the sprint strategy update.**

*[MS left the meeting]*

#### **14. World Class Performance Report**

JC took the paper as read that presented an update on activity within the World Class Performance Programme since the last meeting of the Board in December.

The Board noted the tremendously demanding period across the whole team within paddlesport, including funding submissions and the extra work in driving the Sprint Strategy.

The Board commended the team for their continued hard work during the challenging pre-Olympic and Paralympic preparations.

**The Board received and noted the World Class Performance report.**

*[KW/CF/CB/PG left the meeting]*

#### **15. Facilities Action Plan**

JC pointed to Appendix 1 which outlined the first stage of an action plan, extrapolating the recommendations outlined in the KKP facilities report. The Board noted that an internal working group would be established to identify priority actions, staff responsible and a timescale for completion for each of the actions.

There was a short discussion around what world class facilities should look like and the challenges faced by most sports. The Board recognised the potential opportunities that may arise through a new political change of direction at the forthcoming general election.

**The Board received and noted the contents of the Facilities Action Plan and agreed to monitor further updates as they progress.**

#### **16. Staff Survey and People Strategy Update**

JC referred to the recent staff survey that had overall produced excellent results. The Board noted the areas where responses had been very strong, particularly around how employees felt that their work is valued by their team and line manager.

KC, as Chair of the HR & Remuneration Committee recognised the pleasing results underpinning the optimism that we would achieve the targets within the People Strategy. The Board showed appreciation of British Canoeing's leadership in achieving such high level results.

**The Board formally received the results of the Staff Survey 2023 and noted the pleasing progress made towards delivery of the People Strategy.**

## **17. EDI Strategy Update**

NS pointed to the progress report on year one of #WePaddleTogether, British Canoeing's strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion.

NS explained that the Code for Sports Governance requires us to have a diversity and inclusion action plan (DIAP) and to report annually on progress made. The Board noted that whilst we are still going through the DIAP compliance process, British Canoeing would submit this report as evidence of compliance with this element of the Code.

NS highlighted a key area of challenge in developing the EDI strategy was a lack of specific targets available around diversity data. She confirmed that the next iteration of the strategy should have meaningful data targets included since a lot of work is currently being undertaken to understand the barriers and demographics within paddlesport.

JC recognised the volume of work involved to obtain the benchmark data. He highlighted how focused and effective the Stronger Together fund investments had been in progressing EDI through the projects they had supported. He also commended the power of the narrative within the strategy.

JC shared that British Canoeing had recently received a formal letter from the Women's Rights Network in response to British Canoeing's recently revised Transgender Competition Policy. It was agreed to share the letter in confidence with the Board and to take any learnings from an alternative point of view.

**The Board received and noted the progress made towards the delivery of #WePaddleTogether, British Canoeing's EDI Strategy.**

## **18. Committee and National Association Reports**

The committee and national association reports were taken as read.

### **18.1 Finance & Audit Committee**

ND confirmed that the Finance and Audit Committee had had to postpone their January meeting due to personal circumstances. He confirmed that no further updates were received outside of those already presented.

### **18.2 HR & Remuneration Committee**

KC advised that the HR & Remuneration Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Board in December.

### **18.3 Governance & Risk Committee**

MK advised that the Committee were now very much focused on business as usual, rather than dealing with controversial matters which was testament to the good work of NS and the Governance team.

### **18.4 Performance Committee**

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

### **18.5 SCA**

JM reported that the SCA Board had unanimously approved the rebrand to Paddle Scotland. He reiterated that the Scottish Slalom Committee was in the process of being disbanded. The Board noted that the SCA had very recently recruited a new Head of Pathways and Performance.

### **18.6 Canoe Wales**

KC reported that the Canoe Wales Board had recently approved the rebrand to Paddle Cymru. She confirmed that Canoe Wales were committed to the rebrand but that timings of the launch were unknown at the moment due to potential financial implications.

### **18.7 CANI**

No further updates were received.

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

## **19. Any Other Business**

### ***Nominations Committee Composition***

JC highlighted that there would be some vacancies arising on the Nominations Committee with the departure of JC, CD and RB in March 2025 as those Directors come to the end of their second terms of office. JC invited members to express interest in joining the Committee by speaking to himself or NS after the meeting. He advised that the Nominations Committee would meet on 16 April to discuss the recruitment of the Chair and Senior Independent Director of the Board.

No other business was received.

## **20. Closed Session with Non-Executive Directors**