
SUNDAY 14 APRIL 2024 AT 10:00

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 (<i>Virtual</i>)
Clare Dallaway (CD)	Director nominated by English Forum
Nick Donald (ND)	Independent Director
Jim Miller (JM)	Director nominated by Paddle Scotland (<i>Virtual</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, Paddle UK

Apologies

Martine Kushner (MK)	Independent Director
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Also In Attendance:

Dee Paterson (DP)	President (<i>Virtual</i>)
Susan Hicks (SH)	Finance Director
Sandy Drummond (SD)	Marketing Manager
Darryll Shaw (DS)	Interim Head of Membership & Partnerships
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, including those that had joined the meeting remotely (KC, JM and DP).

JC advised that several colleagues would join the meeting throughout proceedings including Darryll Shaw, Interim Head of Membership & Partnerships to present item 07, the membership pricing strategy and Sandy Drummond, Marketing Manager who would join the meeting to present item 12, the brand update. He confirmed that SH would also help steer us through items 10 and 11 (the Finance Report and the NGB co-funding discussion).

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from MK. JC advised that MK had shared her views on the agenda items in advance.

3. Declarations of Interest

No further declarations were received outside of those already submitted.

4. Minutes of FB88

The Minutes of FB88 were approved as a true and fair record of the meeting.

5. Matters arising not covered by the agenda

A Board member enquired about progress against the English Review and constitutional consultation agreed at the last meeting of the Board. JC confirmed that a nominations committee meeting was scheduled for 16 April to approve next steps. AM acknowledged that we were slightly behind schedule but that plans were in place to ensure that we consult appropriately before reporting back to the Board at the next meeting in June. The Board noted the timelines were tight for an EGM to be held in October.

The Board noted that MK had agreed to Chair the nominations committee from 1 May 2024, given three of the outgoing directors currently sit on the nominations committee.

There were no further matters arising.

5A. Approval of AGM Minutes & Reflections

JC invited members to reflect and provide feedback on the recent AGM held on 12 March 2024. JC pointed to the draft AGM minutes that were circulated in advance.

The Board agreed to check directly with David Belbin that he felt his question in relation to Stronger Together funding had been answered correctly in the draft minutes. The Board recognised the importance of committing to sharing with the membership exactly how and in what financial year the ST funds had been spent.

The Board formally approved the AGM minutes as a true and fair record of the meeting subject to any amends suggested by David Belbin to be published on the website.

The Board reflected on a successful AGM that ran smoothly, recognising that members are still keen to engage even if they do not fully agree with all decisions, such as the rebrand. JC acknowledged that on reflection, more time should have been spent discussing the rebrand post the AGM in 2023. JC expressed some disappointment that over 200 members had registered to attend the event but only 100 actually attended. He hoped that interest would naturally improve next year with the election of a new Chair. There was a short discussion around how to increase member engagement, including the suggestion of hosting breakout discussions on topical subjects. The Board agreed for Paddle UK to cross-check how other similar organisations were running their meetings to aid best practice and consider how the event could be scaled up if necessary.

The Board agreed that the format, technology and platform used at the AGM worked very well.

CEO Report

JC introduced item 06 and invited AM to speak to his CEO Report.

Finance Update

AM reported that the cumulative deficit to the end of February was (£645k), better than budget by £43k, which was a very similar position to the figures reported for February 2023. He highlighted that Sport England have converted our 2024/25 in-principle exchequer funding into a hard commitment.

Membership

AM reported that despite the miserable weather throughout winter, membership income to the end of February was 20% higher than budget. He advised that membership numbers were holding steady with 86,499 members as at 4 April, which represents a small fall since the end of February.

Risk

The Board noted that the same three risks were appearing on the risk register rated 15 or above, with all three risks flagged as static trending over the past 12 months;

- Retention of performance coaches
- The size of the coaching pool across non-Olympic disciplines and lack of governance checks across volunteer coaches
- Ageing facilities, at HPP in particular.

UK Sport LA Funding Submission

AM reported in confidence the LA indicative funding figures received from UK Sport for the World Class Programme. AM stated that UK Sport are fully aware of our position across all three programmes, including the risk that we may not qualify for sprint at Paris 2024. The Board noted that the final decision would be made in December 2024.

There was a discussion around the feasibility of running a sustainable programme based on the indicative funding figures. AM reported that the team were assessing cost controls with a view to maintaining the same level of resource to ensure delivery.

The Board thanked the CEO, Director of Paddlesport and Performance Directors for all their hard work in submitting the funding application on time.

The Board discussed the ageing facilities at HPP and the impact it was having across all disciplines, including Canoe Polo who recently had to relocate a national competition from the ski-tow lake. AM reported that Serco had shown reluctance to invest in the site post the recent flooding. He also shared that a meeting had been held with an external property advisor who would provide an independent view on the prospects for the development and improvement of the site.

AM reported that various options were actively being explored to enable all of our competitive teams to optimise their performance and training at HPP.

Paddle UK Website Update

AM reported that the first phase of website development was launched on 13 March. He stressed that this is Phase 1 and it should not be seen as a finished product answering all concerns but a base to build on through 2024. JC reaffirmed that the new website does not show a diminishing of non-Olympic disciplines, it is purely a reflection of the phased approach to the website build. JC commended those Clubs who had already embraced the new brand onto their own websites.

AM reported that CANI had now confirmed their new name change to Paddle Northern Ireland. He also thanked JM and colleagues in Scotland for rebranding in parallel with Paddle UK. AM showed appreciation to Canoe Wales for exploring their potential new name change for later in the year.

UK Sport Master Planning

AM reported that momentum continues with UK Sport Master Planning and that he was scheduled to attend a further meeting next month. He advised that UK Sport representatives had been invited to attend the next Board meeting in June to provide a more detailed update. The Board noted that the project encompasses the whole sport sector, not just Olympic and Paralympic programmes. AM advised that a paper providing an update on our own organisational health would be shared prior to the June Board meeting.

International Relations & Russian & Belarussian Athlete Participation

AM reported that Paddle UK had recently visited the ICF headquarters in Lausanne and subsequently hosted the ICF in London for their Board and Committee meetings in April. He advised that following the ICF Board announcement in April to allow eligible Russian and Belarussian athletes who are not in support of their State's actions in Ukraine to compete as individual neutral athletes, there had been a recent DCMS update supporting neutral athletes in principle but with set conditions. AM stated that there had been no further official IOC/ICF updates. The Board noted that recent discussions with the ICF suggest there may be as many as 12 Russian / Belarussian athletes looking to qualify at the European qualification event in May. AM shared that no official confirmation or statement explaining the eligibility of these individuals had been indicated. The Board noted that athletes from these countries can have the status of independent athletes but the terms are so precise that it might mean they then have to apply for asylum. Some may end up in a 'refugee' team.

The Board thoroughly discussed their position and approach in relation to Russian and Belarussian Athletes participating as individual neutral athletes. The Board expressed concerns that whilst those athletes had been suspended, they would not have been subject to the same anti-doping testing routines that other nations would have abided by.

Noting the views shared by MK ahead of the meeting, the Board unanimously agreed to forward a letter to the ICF seeking confirmation that the clear and strict criteria proposed by the IOC, IPC and the DCMS would be strictly adhered to, with results shared openly and transparently with all member federations. The Board agreed that they would want to see the list of athletes competing with a clear history of each athlete, including in WADA and other related tests, which would help alleviate any lack of confidence in the system.

AM reported that development groups continue to establish the new ECA Strategy launched by the President Jean Zougrana. The Board noted that all changes would need approval at the 2024 ECA EGM in November (ICF Congress). AM reported that the current Secretary General of the ECA would be standing down.

The Board noted that the ICF were very pleased and appreciative of the welcome they had received in London for their Committee and Board meetings. AM reflected on a positive week, that provided Paddle UK with many international networking opportunities which had overall been very well received by the ICF. The Board agreed to support further opportunities to host the ICF in the UK within the next cycle if funding allowed.

The Board agreed to discuss our international relations strategy in response to the new UK Sport approach for 2025-29 at the Executive/Board Away Day in early December.

SUP Update

AM advised that Paddle UK were close to establishing a new SUP advisory commission to explore how the sport and recreation can be best regulated and developed. He anticipated that it would be set up and approved by June. AM shared that a SUP Youth Forum had been established to allow a voice for those U25. He confirmed that some important meetings had been held with key SUP influencers alongside conversations with the ICF SUP Chair, Naomi Horvath. The Board noted that the President had been confirmed as the GB nominated SUP ITO for the World Championships.

The President encouraged greater engagement with the SUP community and questioned how the finances for SUP events are managed. JC emphasised that Paddle UK are the joint NGB for SUP, alongside Surf England and that we must respect the political environment in which we must work together.

JM shared that some of the re-directs on the new website are not working within the incident reporting tool. AM resolved to ensure these were repaired. JM commented that the Offshore Winds work had been really well received and actively shared by members of the SUP community.

Transgender Competition Update

AM reported that the updated Paddle UK policy was now “live” but no further updates or any added scientific evidence from ICF had been received to support or direct current discussions. AM reported that a number of UK paddlers and coaches had expressed concerns to the recently amended policy, wishing to protect the integrity of elite sport. The Board felt there could be value in exploring two policies, one for recreation and the other for competitive performance, noting the challenges around the distinction.

Annual Plan 2023-24

AM reported that work continues on deliverables within the Annual Plan for 2023-24 with considerable progress being made in a number of key areas. He highlighted a couple of areas where there was more work to do;

Winning More Medals

- Canoe Sprint still to qualify quota places for Paris (RAG rating - Red)
- Coach Development – new online/face to face opportunities available (Amber)
- Improved digital transformation of programme data such as results /tracking (Amber)
- Development of Kayak X and equipment challenges (Amber)
- Facility concerns (flooding/loss of training days/ lack of quality provisions) (Amber)

Growing Membership

- Development of Club associate system (Amber)
- Growth of coaching membership stalled by Standard of Deployment project (Amber)

Strong Organisational Governance

- CIMPSA Workforce Governance Project – Amber
- Development of Volunteer Strategy - Amber

Leadership Team Structure

AM outlined the proposed structure and responsibilities of a new Paddle UK Executive Leadership team, reducing the number of CEO direct reports from 9 to 6. He explained that this was to streamline the leadership to enable greater agility and strategic decision making. AM proposed that a senior operational team would sit beneath the ELT that would be accountable for delivery. He also confirmed that a Director of Special Projects would lead on exclusive campaigns and projects.

The Board recognised that these changes are an operational matter within the remit of the CEO brought to the Board for information.

A Board member commended the approach citing improved simplicity. AM clarified that IT infrastructure would fall under the remit of the Director of Digital Innovation.

AM explained that the timelines to implementing these changes remain work in progress and that nobody would be at risk. He advised that the Board Committee structure would remain unaffected.

The Board noted the new structure and thanked the CEO for sharing transparently. It was noted that the HR and Remuneration Committee may have a role to ensure that HR policies and processes are followed should there be HR issues emerging during the change.

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

6. Membership Pricing Strategy

JC welcomed DS to the meeting to present a proposal for a new membership pricing strategy. DS outlined the proposal in greater detail, including the strategic impact and associated risks. He recommended that from 1st May, the pricing strategy for Paddle UK Membership should be that the lowest price is retained for our most committed renewing members and any price increase in 2024 would only be applied to new members.

DS invited comments from the Board.

The Board discussed the new approach and the potential impact it may have on retention rates. The Board noted that Paddle UK broadly loses up to a third of its membership per year. A Board member suggested that we may need a higher anchor to improve overall retention rates (behavioural economics).

A Board member commented on the refreshing approach, noting that it was really important to reward loyalty so that members feel valued.

The Board wished to explore options to improve the current offer for family membership. DS confirmed the intention to maintain the existing discounts currently open to carers, students, youth and club associates.

The Board discussed the promotion of retailer discounts for members currently available at a premium of £2.50. DS confirmed that a rewards package would be included in the new membership pricing strategy. He also suggested that for new members, the go green option would be the default membership category.

The Board noted the membership challenges related to licenses but reiterated the need for a club associate member to buy a waterways license to access the coaching scheme.

The Board considered the operational implementation of the new strategy and the grace period given between membership lapse and renewal. DS confirmed that there is a mechanism in place to help incentivise direct debit payments and to manage the grace period.

A Board member suggested that the difference between the cost of membership for new and existing members is well explained and communicated via a 'joining fee'. It was agreed to develop this view.

There was a discussion around club associate membership. It was noted that clubs have to pay an associate fee per member to Paddle UK and that currently, Paddle UK can only communicate with 1500 club associate members that have been declared to Paddle UK.

The Board briefly discussed day tickets and the importance of public liability insurance. The Board noted that Paddle Scotland promote their membership and benefits very well on the homepage of their website and that Paddle UK should mirror this approach.

The Board noted, discussed and approved the proposal to change the membership pricing strategy from 1 May 2024 and authorised the membership team to further analyse the considerations captured within this discussion.

7. Sprint & Paracanoe International Panel Update

JC invited RB as Chair of the Performance Committee to provide an update on the recruitment for the Sprint & Paracanoe International Panel.

The Board noted the declaration of conflict of interest issue and that it would be managed appropriately by the panel in line with their Terms of reference. RB confirmed that there is still one vacancy on the panel for a further independent director.

JC explained that it was important that at all times, the right candidates are appointed to the IP. He reflected on the issues raised during the 2017 sports resolution report and that at that time, the Board took a view not to formally appoint or re-appoint those senior figures who were named in the report or were at the time in key roles at British Canoeing now or at any stage in the future. The Board agreed to stand-by this decision and delegated to the Governance Committee to take the appropriate steps to ensure this is recorded appropriately.

The Board noted that the IP had met briefly to plan and discuss aspects of selection ahead of the upcoming regatta (13/14 April) and at the meeting it was unanimously agreed that Andy Maddock (Head of Performance Operations) should be nominated as chair. The Board also noted that this would create a consistent position as the individual also Chaired the IP for Slalom.

The Board received and formally noted the IP update and approved the contents of the paper, including the appointment of Rachel Lovell to the Sprint & Paracanoe International Panel (IP) and Andy Maddock (Head of Performance Operations) as Chair of the IP.

8. Anti-Doping Update

JC invited AM to present the report which provided an update on anti-doping activity in 2023 and outlined the actions required for Paddle UK to achieve compliance in 2024.

AM advised that as required by the annual UKAD Assurance Framework, NGB Boards are required to have Anti-Doping as an agenda item on at least one meeting annually. He confirmed that Paddle UK, and all National Associations, achieved 100% UKAD Assurance Framework Compliance in 2023 in line with funding stakeholder expectations and are on track to achieve this for 2024. AM thanked MK for her role as Board Ambassador and for being in the process of undertaking her UKAD training.

AM reported that Paddle UK successfully educated 65 elite athletes & 12 coaches with 21 athletes aligned to UKAD testing pools (5 Slalom/ 7 Sprint / 9 Paracanoe). The Board noted that in 2023/24, 3 athletes had filing failures or missed tests and felt reassured that management was in place to ensure no further missed tests.

The Board received and formally noted the contents of the report and the requirement outlined in 1.3 to enable Paddle UK to be compliant under the UKAD anti-doping framework.

9. Finance Report

SH referred to the February accounts circulated with the board pack and provided a verbal update on the financial position through March. SH reported that membership in March

exceeded budget by £1k. However, she reported that membership numbers were gradually starting to decline, with cash receipts decreasing year on year. She highlighted that the membership budget increases over April, May and June so the potential impact on the bottom line may start to appear more significant. SH advised that the executive team remain aware and ready to mitigate with consideration to wise overhead spend. She assured the Board that the impact of the 1st May membership joining fee would be appropriately tracked.

The Board considered whether it could be feasible to de-couple membership renewal from the seasonally colder weather to avoid lower retention rates in the winter months.

The Board noted that both UK Sport and Sport England year-end reports showed a slight underspend in the World Class Programme. SH advised that the indicative investment funding for the LA Funding cycle was previously shared with the Board in March. SH confirmed that the budget planning process is underway within the two performance programmes and a detailed financial budget, staffing structure and NGB funding is required to be submitted to UK Sport by the 17th May 2024.

The Board noted and approved the Finance report.

10. NGB Co-Funding

SH reported that UK Sport have indicated that there will continue to be an expectation for NGB to co-fund the WCP but in a more “holistic way” and within the context of each sport. There is a requirement to share the planned NGB revenue streams for the 2025-2029 period with an indication of the percentage of those revenue streams that will be used as a co-funding contribution. SH relayed that the guidance provided by UK Sport states that the contribution is expected to be “reasonable and a sustainable contribution” from the NGB.

The Board discussed the NGB co-funding contribution in some detail. They debated how best to invest in grass roots to produce a long term successful programme, fulfil the NGB contribution into the elite programme, and the acceptable level of comfort of investing membership funds into the World Class Programme. The Board agreed that they would prefer to invest commercial income to underpin the WCP, rather than use membership funds.

JC confirmed that to date, membership fees have not been used to fund the world class programme and this has been made very clear through our audit processes. The Board were keen to ensure that a mandate is received from the membership, should a situation arise in the future whereby members revenue would need to be used to fund the WCP. A Board member proposed that membership fees of the elite athletes be the first ‘pot’ to be used. There was a discussion around NGB commercial opportunities and their relationship to Team GB partnership deals. On behalf of the Board, AM and JC agreed to make clear recommendations to UK Sport on how the BOA commercial strategy could work better for NGBs.

The Board recognised that Paddle UK do currently invest in the non-Olympic competition disciplines using membership revenue. It was agreed for the Finance & Audit Committee to analyse this contribution. It was also noted that the World Class Programme encompasses a

GB team, and therefore a contribution may be considered from the National Associations which has never previously been officially called upon.

The Board discussed the UK Sport requirement for NGB co-funding for the LA Funding cycle and agreed to keep the percentage contribution open for the time being.

12. Brand Update

JC welcomed Sandy Drummond, Marketing Manager, to the meeting to provide an update following the launch of Paddle UK on 13 March 2024. SD shared key information and data on the first week of the launch;

- Website provides an improved customer journey with a dashboard for members (to replace the members hub).
- Data from the digital launch had been positive
- On launch day there were over 14,000 page views on the website
- Average daily pageviews in March 2023 (2,400) vs current daily views (6,000)
- 60% open rate of enews announcement to members on launch day (against our norm of 50% and an industry standard of 20%)
- Over 16,000 impressions on social media from 2 launch videos which are also now available on the website and YouTube
- People increasingly searching for Paddle UK organically
- Some negative feedback had also been received, particularly around the use of the Paddle England brand where there is still work to do
- Commercial and Industry partners supported, shared and covered the rebrand launch
- The first edition of the new Paddler magazine with a Paddle UK insert had been published, with a new arrangement with SUP Mag to start shortly
- Paddle Scotland launched in parallel on 13 March
- Paddle NI announced their new name on Friday 12 April.

SD outlined next steps for Phase 2 which was already underway;

- Working with Delivery Partners and Clubs - the Paddle UK Delivery Partner scheme launched with assets shared. A Paddle England Affiliated Clubs logo has been developed.
- Meetings with the Competition Disciplines Group has been held to develop a consistent brand identity, including a Paddle England version. There has been some early adoption with marathon taking the lead
- Other areas of consideration include British Canoeing Awarding Body and signage for Places to Paddle sites
- Chair's piece explaining the rebrand process to appear in the next edition of Paddle UK insert in SUP and Paddle Magazine
- Campaign promotion via brand assets: Safety (orange), Environmental (green), Membership campaigns (yellow). Performance (red, white and blue)

SD reported that a SUP event was held in early March with a package of content sent out ahead of the rebrand launch date. The #ShePaddle ambassadors had also been briefed in advance.

The Board commended the simplicity and clarity of the new logo and brand assets.

The Board were keen to receive details of how the new brand would be commercially leveraged to optimise the return on investment. The Board agreed to receive details of this at the next meeting of the Board in June.

The Board noted the contents of the report and thanked SD for the brand update.

13. World Class Performance & England Talent Report

The paper was taken as read and for information only. It presented an update on activity within the World Class Performance and England Talent Programme since the last meeting of the Board in February.

JC invited comments from the Board for AM to respond to during the meeting, or to be minuted for a later response from the Director of Paddlesport.

A Board member pointed to paragraph 1.4 citing ‘the largest risk to the future of our flatwater and slalom talent teams is the facility at Nottingham’. There was a discussion around the level of severe disruption caused to training time (over 50%) due to flooding, water quality and poor facilities. JC stated that it underpins the reason to commission a major facilities review.

The Board noted that the lack of strength and depth in coaching also represents a risk to the World Class Performance & England Talent Programmes.

The Board received and noted the World Class Performance & England Talent report.

14. Committee and National Association Reports

The committee and national association reports were taken as read.

14.1 Finance & Audit Committee

ND reported that Paddle UK had recently undergone a BDO financial governance audit required and arranged by UK Sport every four years. The general conclusions were that the incidents of good practice outweighed any findings. SH reported that the audit was well run and the feedback received very useful.

14.2 HR & Remuneration Committee

JC referred to the report circulated in advance, highlighting that the recommendation for a staff salary increase was approved by the Committee.

14.3 Governance & Risk Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

14.4 Performance Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

14.5 Paddle Scotland

JM referred to the report shared in advance. He highlighted the ongoing situation and action plan regarding the independent investigation into the unauthorised constructions in the River Tay at Grandtully by members of the Scottish Canoe Slalom Community and the resulting disciplinary processes. He reported that a decision may be expected the following week. The Board urged the community to find a resolution for the benefit of all. JC thanked the Paddle Scotland executive team for the successful launch of the new brand in parallel with Paddle UK.

14.6 Canoe Wales

JC pointed to the report circulated in advance, highlighting that the next meeting of the Canoe Wales Board would take place on 26 April when the brand discussion would take place.

14.7 CANI

JC referred the Board to the report included in the pack.

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

15. Any Other Business

The Board noted that the Standards of Deployment announcement and roll-out to clubs had been delayed by the Executive team to ensure the communication is exact and correct.

AM confirmed that the criteria for the Stronger Together funding would be launched as soon as a date is confirmed. AM agreed to consider future opportunities for in person paddling community conferences.

JC relayed that he had been asked to check the Board's appetite for the Canoe Foundation to partner with a lottery provider to help raise funds for the charity. The Board agreed to engage with the Canoe Foundation to consider how we can work with them to better generate funds but felt it was inappropriate for the foundation to engage in any relationship with a competitive lottery organisation. The Board noted that the Canoe Foundation had recently agreed to change its name to Paddle UK Trust.

ZR thank Ben Seal for the recent school presentation and invited Paddle UK to visit Jaguar UK to promote the work that we do.