

SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 10:00

MINUTES

In Attendance:

John Coyne CBE (JC)	Chair and Independent Director
Richard Boreham (RB)	Vice Chair and Independent Director
Clare Dallaway (CD)	Director nominated by English Forum
Nick Donald (ND)	Independent Director
Martine Kushner (MK)	Independent Director
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

Also In Attendance:

Chris Furber (CF)	Performance Director Flatwater (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Susan Hicks (SH)	Finance Director
Keir Worth (KW)	Director of Paddlesport (<i>Partial attendance</i>)
Charmaine Collins (CC)	Executive Assistant to the CEO

Apologies

Kerry Chown (KC)	Director nominated by Canoe Wales
Dee Paterson (DP)	President, Paddle UK

1. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair (JC) welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everybody for attending. JC noted the busy agenda which reflected some exceptional work that the executive had been undertaking.

JC advised that several colleagues would join the meeting throughout proceedings including Keir Worth, Director of Paddlesport and Chris Furber, Director of Performance (Flatwater) to present item 06, the Sprint Review Results and item 11, the World Class Performance report. Susan Hicks, Director of Operations would present items 07, 09 and 10, the Constitutional Change update, the Declining Membership Risks and the Finance Report.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received in advance from KC and DP.

3. Declarations of Interest

No further declarations were received outside of those already submitted.

4. Minutes of FB90

The Minutes of FB90 were approved as a true and fair record of the meeting subject to a minor amendment in the phrasing of paragraph 4 within item 14.

5. Matters arising not covered by the agenda

AM agreed to share a copy of the latest Paddle UK SUP Advisory Group minutes with the Board by the next meeting in November.

There were no further matters arising.

6. Sprint Review Results

JC welcomed CF to the meeting to provide an update on the Sprint Programme as the funding cycle draws to a close. The Board noted that it is a critical time to reflect on the goals and progress of the Canoe Sprint World Class Programme across the Paris Cycle.

CF highlighted the following points;

- Paddle UK just had their most successful Paralympic Games ever; the largest team ever qualified, the paracanoe team won the most medals ever by any nation, they won the most golds ever by a nation and topped the medal table for a third consecutive Games
- CF thanked the Paddle UK Board for their support and also recognised the support received from the International Panel, Performance Committee, SRC and the BPA.
- CF outlined the international sprint competition pyramid that showed the hierarchy of events that we are trying to move our athletes through to demonstrate how they can progress through the events.
- In 2024, GB athletes competed in 7 events; 118 athletes selected (43%-57% female/male split), 66 unique paddlers, achieved 34 A finals and won 4 medals.
- Paddle UK also sent athletes to the World University Championships and World Non-Olympic Championships.
- Performances for senior athletes fell short of the UK Sport milestone targets, as no GBR paddlers qualified for the Olympic Games. This was the first time that GBR athletes had failed to qualify since the introduction of UK Sport funding (1997) and is a significant disappointment. This led to the European Olympic Qualifier (EOQ) Review
- CF outlined the principles and scope of the review, together with the review elements and overall findings, including what went well, the barriers, and what could have been even better if certain aspects could be improved.
- CF recognised the leadership lessons to be gained from the review.
- CF outlined the recommendations from the review and the Ways of Working (The GBR Way) to be adopted.

- The GB Flatwater vision outlined in the Canoe Sprint Performance Strategy should be kept alive and the WCP will play their part in this; “A United and inspired community from club to podium working towards unprecedented performances”.

The Board noted that the Performance Committee had not yet seen or discussed the findings from the sprint review. JC entrusted the Performance Committee to agree the way forward on behalf of the Board.

The Board noted that fewer athletes would be selected on UK Sport funding over the next four years.

CF stated that he was confident that the coaching team understand what it takes to win and the aspects that need to be improved, although acknowledged that how all the athletes and the clubs buy in to this thinking remains work in progress. CF stated that historically, we have lacked credibility to gain the full trust from athletes and their club coaches and this will take time, alongside an uplift in results to turnaround.

The Board discussed the impact of the removal of the 200m sprint race from the Olympic programme, and debated whether we were the only country to have been affected. The Board recommended that we do not focus on any single distance in the future and that there was a broader focus across all distances, with an emphasis on developing and qualifying crew boats.

CF recognised the challenges of training at HPP but also acknowledged the success of the paracanoe team who train in the same conditions. He explained that the team work hard to be cost effective when training overseas but noted that there are benefits to being at HPP, including improved access to the UKSI gym which was now more accessible to increased numbers of athletes. JC noted the Schengen visa limitations imposed on athletes when training overseas.

CF reported that recruitment for the high performance coach would commence shortly as soon as the new organisational structure within the programme had been agreed.

JC expressed confidence that the senior leadership were exploring all options in the correct manner, with the aim of strengthening the team and enabling high levels of performance despite the challenging environment and reduced funding. The Board will continue to take an interest in this arena.

The Board noted and discussed the contents of the report.

11. World Class Performance

The paper was taken as read. It presented an update on activity within the World Class Performance programme as well as across the disciplines, since the last meeting of the Board in June.

JC invited KW to highlight the key issues from the report;

- The intensity of a Games year cannot be underestimated; it has been a tough period for athletes, coaches and staff
- Mark Ratcliffe had stepped down as Performance Director for Slalom and Kayak Cross after overseeing the best ever World Championships (2023) and Olympic Games (2024). He will return in an interim role in November to support the coaching team.
- The WCP now enters into a period of intense review, where further changes will be inevitable
- Key areas of focus for the WCP now include strengthening community engagement; re-motivating and going again in a very successful paracanoe programme; developing a whole sport plan in grass roots slalom development, coach development and improving IT infrastructure to collect and store data
- Non-Olympic disciplines have had a very successful international season. Paddle UK would soon be undertaking an annual review of support for disciplines which would shape activity for the coming year
- Plans to deliver the international event strategy continue with good progress made on a 2026 ICF SUP World Cup and an initial bid to UK Sport for a Slalom World Cup in either 2027 or 2028, with a Paracanoe International also being explored.
- Simon Amor to stand down from the Performance Committee due to new work commitments in the US. KW formally thanked SA for his hard work, commitment and support.
- The Sprint review findings and strategy would soon be shared and discussed with the Performance Committee.

The Board were advised of the GB results from the 2024 Canoe Sailing World Championships. KW confirmed that Paddle UK do not fund or have any current active relationship with the discipline, although would be open to discussion if they wished to explore the options.

The Board expressed their sincere appreciation for MR who has been a highly regarded inspirational coach that through hard work, commitment and complete dedication led the slalom team to enormous success in Paris. The Board formally recognised the demands of the PD role and how much MR has contributed to the success of the programme over his tenure.

JC also recognised the terrific success across the Olympic, Paralympic and non-Olympic disciplines this season (winning 144 international medals). He thanked KW and colleagues for their support in achieving this level of success. The Board welcomed the broad range of coverage across all disciplines this year, including the reporting on the Devizes to Westminster race. KW warned that there is a finite level of resource available within Paddle UK and to cover all events at every level was increasingly challenging given the current levels of resource.

The Board received and noted the World Class Performance report and thanked KW for his attendance.

7. Constitutional Change Update

JC invited SH to provide an update on the constitutional change project. Based on the results of the survey, SH outlined the latest developments in the constitutional change proposals since the last Board meeting in June;

- Recruitment of English Directors – the ability for the Board to shortlist the candidates had been removed. Applications will be open to all Paddle UK (English) Members with the Nominations Committee assessing the skills desired against the role profile and board skills matrix.
- Introduction of Paddle UK’s England Assembly to be established in 2025 as a mechanism to ensure the voice of English members is heard.
- The Paddle UK Board would be empowered to recruit and appoint a Patron to represent Paddle UK, to replace the current President role.
- Retain the Vice President honour system but seek to establish further roles that would be ambassadorial in nature.

A Board Member expressed a view that the process to elect any new Board Directors recruited through the Paddle UK (English) membership should remain independent on the Board. After discussion, the Board agreed that it was in agreement that ahead of any election for Paddle UK England non-executive Directors, for the Nominations Committee to assess and confirm the skills desired against the role profile and board skills matrix.

SH added that a robust two-stage member consultation process had been completed, having been led by an external consultant. The Board noted that the survey received 1852 responses (with 1502 received within the first 24hrs). SH highlighted that 94% of those who engaged in the survey had not previously engaged in the AGM. The Board wished to encourage as many of the survey respondents as possible to engage in the General Meeting.

SH confirmed that our articles do not currently allow for members to vote electronically prior to or post the meeting. Members can either vote at the meeting on the day, or by proxy in advance. The Board agreed that we should therefore make proxy voting as simple as possible.

The Board discussed the timing of recruitment for new directors, including the Chair, Senior Independent Director and Director recruited through the English membership. The Board entrusted the Nominations Committee to stagger the recruitment process accordingly.

The Board requested that the roles, responsibilities and objectives of Paddle UK’s English Assembly are clearly identified from the outset. The Board agreed that nominations to the Assembly be sought ‘through’ representative groups, rather than ‘from’.

The Board proposed that the first objective when referencing the reasons for changing the Articles is rephrased to “A Board that is diverse in skills, experience and background and that is truly representative of our *community*”.

SH outlined the proposed approach to the General Meeting on 25 November;

Proposed Article Changes;

- Appointment of English Directors - The Board agreed to keep the changes to the articles simple with reference to the regulatory processes
- The Board agreed to add a new article to reference 'Paddle UK's Paddle England Assembly'
- Appointment of a Patron – The Board agreed to state that the Board has “the power to appoint a patron”
- Vice Presidents – The Board agreed that no changes were required

Proposed Motions;

- Motion 1 – Aim to amend the process for appointment of English Directors, to include the Paddle UK's Paddle England Assembly
- Motion 2 – Aim to remove the President and clarify the process for the appointment of a Patron

Communication & Process;

SH outlined the communication plan in the lead up to the General Meeting, including proactive engagement with all those that had participated in the member consultation, together with the role of the Governance Committee to approve the Article changes and accompanying motions.

MK formally thanked GS and SH for all of their hard work in progressing the constitutional change project.

The Board noted the constitutional change report, progress to date and approved;

- **The proposed changes to the Articles of British Canoeing**
- **The recommendation to call a virtual General Meeting on 25 November.**

8. CEO Report

JC introduced item 08 and invited AM to speak to his CEO Report.

Chair Recruitment

AM reported that the Nominations Committee had shortlisted 6 candidates for interview in October. He advised that the interview panel would be chaired by MK to include several board members plus representation from UK Sport. He relayed that the recruitment consultancy had been impressed by the strong set of high-quality candidates and that there had been unanimity in the shortlist, in that the top four highlighted by the Nominations Committee were the same top four anonymously scored by the recruitment agency.

Paris 2024 – Olympics & Paralympics

AM highlighted the phenomenal success over the summer period for our GB athletes across Olympic, Paralympic and non-Olympic disciplines. He formally recognised and thanked the staff team and all colleagues for their efforts both in Nottingham and Lee Valley.

The Board noted the Team GB medal haul in Paris. GB athletes won 65 medals finishing 7th overall in the medal table. He shared that both the BOA and UK Sport had been targeting a top 5 finish and that the only slight concern was around the conversion rate of medals won

into gold. AM reported that the GB Slalom team won more medals than any other country (4) but finished 5th in the medal table as they did not convert any into gold.

AM shared the GB Olympic medals table by sport, which showed paddlesport was in a good place, in terms of value for money (pounds per medal) in comparison to other NGB's.

AM celebrated the brilliant achievements from the Paralympics reporting that our Para team won 27% of all the medals available and 40% of all gold medals. AM compared these results favourably with other sports.

AM reminded the Board about the Paris recognition dinner taking place in Nottingham on Friday 29 November and encouraged members to rsvp, if they had not done so already.

The Board noted the confirmed allocation of the athlete medal bonus pot based on the principles previously agreed. There was a short discussion around future allocations with agreement that this would be revisited at the appropriate time within the LA cycle.

Sport England Talent Indicative Funding Confirmation

AM reported that extra funding had been requested to support the development of Kayak Cross. The Board noted the indicative funding figures both for the next cycle of our Talent Programme and the delivery of Sport England objectives over the next two years. AM reported that funding for Governance and Systemic NGB programmes would remain in place until March 2027.

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 progress had been made since the last board meeting;

Winning More Medals

- Development of Kayak Cross and equipment challenges; AM confirmed that the semi-permanent ramps are now in place and being used at HPP.
- Improved digital transformation of programme data; AM confirmed that there is work still to be done in this area with some initial scoping complete but further avenues need to be explored.

Growing Membership

- AM advised that this area would be discussed in greater detail within item 09 on the agenda.

Strong Governance

- Develop & publish a Volunteer Strategy - AM reported the current volunteer strategy had been reviewed with a questionnaire circulated to gather insight and information regarding volunteer needs, wants and challenges. The Board noted that this information is now being used to identify key actions as part of a revised strategy/action plan and to aid the appointment of a Volunteer Lead. The Board

agreed that this area of work now requires a dedicated resource to help drive it forwards.

Senior Leadership Team Refresh

AM reported that the new Executive Leadership Team had been moving forwards in a positive manner and that the Board can expect to have sight of the new strategic focus, annual plan and budget for 2024/25 at the next Board meeting in November. AM confirmed that the role of Special Projects reports into the Director of Operations.

Seven Trent Water

AM reported that he had recently met the CEO at Severn Trent to discuss the organisation's plans to clean up waterways under their management, to offer our views and advice as well as constructive challenge, with a promise to maintain future engagement. AM shared that it had been a positive meeting with a number of actions agreed providing confidence that they are proactively moving forwards with funds available to invest in reducing the number of spillages to under the Government recommended levels. AM shared that Severn Trent confirmed that despite current challenges the water is far cleaner now, than it was 30 years ago. The Board recognised the serious issue.

Event Safety Review

It was suggested that the Event Safety Review information could be of benefit to other recreational events that occur outside of the disciplines.

BCE Ltd

The Board approved the proposed action to make the company dormant at the next BCE Board meeting scheduled for 8 October.

Facilities/HPP

AM confirmed that the initial feedback from the external strategic review into the HPP site would be received in mid-October.

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

9. Risk – Decline in Membership Levels

JC invited SH to initiate a discussion among Board Members around the risks in the decline in membership.

The Board discussed membership levels pre, during and after covid, citing the potential reasons for the variation and the current decline in membership figures. SH confirmed that clubs had experienced a slight drop off in club membership but not to the same levels as Paddle UK. The Board noted that there are currently 2,000 associate members affiliated with Paddle UK. It is estimated that there are between 30-75k members of clubs who are not members of Paddle UK. A Board member suggested that there are a lot of people paddling, but they are just not engaged with Paddle UK.

There was a discussion around the insurance provision and the challenges when seeking craft insurance as a fundamental part of the member journey. SH explained the reasons behind the change and that unfortunately, the previous option offered by Towergate was no longer available to us due to regulatory changes that meant we were no longer compliant. The Board advised that they would wish to see potential solutions explored.

The Board discussed data and the need to capture the breath and depth of member/audience profiles to fully understand the lifecycle of the paddler. A Board member suggested that the new Paddle UK England Assembly could be tasked with undertaking this piece of work.

The Board agreed that data analysis is fundamental to understand what the data is telling us so that we can make informed decisions to find the right solutions. A Board member suggested that data analysis be ingrained in our culture whereby every communication on each platform is analysed for click through rates to establish what is resonating with our audience.

The Board briefly considered a number of new initiatives and ideas and looked forward to receiving further updates and exploring innovative options to help turnaround the current trend in membership figures.

The Board noted and discussed the decline in membership levels and recognised it as a real and serious issue in searching for solutions. The Board requested a further update at the next meeting.

10. Finance Update

SH referred to the August accounts circulated in advance and provided a verbal update on the financial position through to the end of August. SH reported that the end of year financial forecast for 2023-24 is positive. SH confirmed that the budget for 2024-25 would be presented at the next Board meeting on 30 November. She advised that the 2024-25 budget would present a number of challenges including declining membership levels; the proposed indicative funding levels suggested by UK Sport, which are due to commence on April 1; the stand-on Sport England funding for both Talent and the delivery of projects; high inflation and rising costs; and indications of a 9% increase in the cost of the waterways licence. The Board recognised the challenges but wished to see a good balance of realistic and aspirational targets included within the budget for 2024-25.

The Board noted that the World Cup funding application for Slalom & Kayak Cross would likely require the Board to agree to underwrite the event. It was agreed that this was extremely difficult to approve at the current stage and would need to be reviewed closely nearer the time of decision ahead of committing to any events.

The Board agreed to be very clear in the phrasing and terminology used to communicate how Paddle UK would meet its NGB co-funding requirement (£580k).

The Board noted and approved the Finance report.

12. Committee and National Association Reports

The committee and national association reports were taken as read.

12.1 Finance & Audit Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

12.2 HR & Remuneration Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

12.3 Governance Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

12.4 Nominations Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

12.5 Performance Committee

No further updates were received outside of those already discussed.

12.6 Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG)

SH reported that the IAG last met on 4 September. She relayed that the Vice Chair wanted to formally record congratulations to the Governance team for successfully completing the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). The Board noted that the new Head of Governance had been appointed and would be starting on 28th October. MS confirmed that 16 young people had been appointed to the Youth Forum. She invited board members to let her or SH know if there were any new areas or projects worthy of consideration.

12.7 Paddle Scotland

JC relayed the latest news in relation to Paddle Scotland. He advised that Stuart Smith (SS) had recently been made a director of the company. The Board discussed the proposal for SS to fulfil an observer role on the Paddle UK Board until such time as a new Director can be nominated for a fixed term. The Board agreed to invite SS to be an observer of the Board for a maximum of 9 months, reviewed on a meeting by meeting basis. The Board noted that Paddle Scotland would be holding an EGM in mid-November.

12.8 Canoe Wales

No further updates were received.

12.9 Paddle Northern Ireland

No further updates were received.

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

13. Any Other Business

ZR formally recognised and thanked Chantelle Grundy, Access & Environment Lead, for supporting the recent River Clean Up event undertaken near their Head Office by Jaguar Land Rover.

14. Closed Session with Non-Executive Directors