

## BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2026

<b>Meeting</b>	England Hockey Board Meeting				
<b>Venue</b>	Bisham Abbey				
<b>Date</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2026	<b>Start Time</b>	12:30	<b>End Time</b>	17:00
<b>Lead</b>	Kath Russ, Chair (KR)				
<b>Present:</b>	Rich Beer (RB), Kuldeep Kaur (KK), Shelagh Everett (SE), Damian Smith (DS), Simon Mantell (SMa), Claudio Borges (CB), Angela Durnin (AD), Janet Grant (JG), Anne-Marie Garner (AMG)				
<b>Invited in:</b>	Jacqui Barlow (JB), Bobby Crutchley (BC), Heather Williams (HW), Charlie Wells (CW), Stuart Guise (SG), Andy Tapley (ADT) (Online for Item 2), Don Williams, GB President (DW), Keith Carder, Head of Sport, (KC) joined for items 3.2, 4.1 and 5.1.				
<b>Notetaker:</b>	Michele Townsend (MT)				
<b>Apologies</b>	Alex Danson-Bennett (ADB), John Harrison, UK Sport Representative (JH), Nicky Ponsford (NP)				

### Opening Comments from the Chair

KR expressed thanks to the Exec for their hard work in the successful launch of the Euros27 Champs at the Stoop.

KR welcomed the new GB President, Don Williams (DW), and clarified for the Board that the GB President is invited in as an observer. DW introduced himself to the Board.

### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Other than the standing declaration from JG in respect of performance discussions, no other declarations were made.

### 2. RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP – FOR APPROVAL, ACTION AND INFORMATION

#### 2.1 Finance

The Board were provided with the Audit Findings Report, the 2025 Final Accounts and the requisite Letter of Representation. KK referred to the papers and confirmed that approval was being sought for the Final Accounts and the Letter of Representation

- i. No specific flags were raised in the Audit report and all questions raised by the Auditors were answered well. Worthy of mention is the Euro27 Champs policy and the identification of chargeable income.
- ii. ADT confirmed that no issues were raised and clarified that all grant income should be handled in the same manner going forward.
- iii. KR expressed thanks for a clean audit report and reminded the Board of the importance of keeping track of the big items going forward.
- iv. **The Board agreed and approved the Final Accounts and the Letter of Representation.**
- v. **ACTION - It was agreed to prepare communication for the upcoming AGM – RB/CW**
- vi. KK presented more detailed December Management Accounts as previously requested and highlighted two key areas: the target for Pro League above break even, which is currently tracking behind and the unsecured sponsorship income.
- vii. KR asked for an update on longer-term planning, particularly post Euros. RB explained that more projection is required around events and this will be reviewed again in March to include variables and assumptions.
- viii. **ACTION – It was agreed to present a long-term budget to the Board in April – RB/KK**
- ix. RB confirmed that he and KR are discussing how this budget planning relates to the strategy day.

## BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2026

### 2.2 Membership Model – FOR INFORMATION AND APPROVAL

SG confirmed that the paper is presented for approval of the recommendation to take a resolution to the AGM to increase the membership fee for the 2026-27 season in line with inflation.

#### Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. SG reminded the Board that the recommendation is to include an annual inflation rise to membership costs, including insurance and to increase junior fees as well as teens and adult fees and team fees.
- ii. He explained that the proposed increase is in line with what was communicated to the membership last year. The long-term budget has been worked through and there will be no increase proposed for the state school fund as a bid has been prepared for Sport England asking them to match the investment in this area. Confirmation will be known prior to the AGM.
- iii. SG confirmed that the budget has been realised through savings and any impact has been mitigated by redirecting funds. He added that the 2026-27 forecasts have assumed some appeals, although there is more confidence in the accuracy of the data now, therefore lessening the number of likely appeals.
- iv. The Board discussed how the money is to be used; where the real benefit for clubs is and how they can help with coaching in schools. SG explained that the SGO project has proven very successful and will enable us to share the data with clubs; thereby helping with growth. He added that it is important to communicate with clubs around what they want to start, stop, continue.
- v. The Board discussed the State School Fund, the role of the Areas in hosting festivals and how we can better show the whole state school picture for the benefit of the sport. RB agreed that this is something we can talk to at the AGM.
- vi. JG asked for better understanding of the drop off in championships entries. RB agreed that more work needs to be done in this area.
- vii. ADT expressed thanks to SG in managing the slight budget shortfall acknowledging the difficulty in judging the level of appeals at the beginning of the process.
- viii. **The Board approved the recommendation to increase fees for all categories in line with 1) inflation and 2) to cover personal accident insurance costs on player fees for the 2026-27 season.**

### 2.3 Safeguarding Implement Update

The papers provided the Board with an update on progress against the key actions set out in the Safeguarding VMOST and shared with CPSU for the current period and sought the Board's approval for the updated Safeguarding Policy.

- i. KK highlighted the key actions from the CPSU meeting and progress made to date.
- ii. The next review with the CPSU is 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 and both AMG (Board Safeguarding Lead) and KK agreed that whilst there is still some work to be done before then, progress has been good.
- iii. Of particular note is the amended Safeguarding Policy for which approval is being sought.
- iv. After discussion, the Board agreed some minor changes to the policy, namely:
  - 1.1 - Highlight more of the training and education offered to clubs and associations.
  - 4.3 - Amend the wording to add **strongly recommend** a named welfare officer in non-sanctioned events and organisations.
- v. The Board discussed the responsibilities of clubs and organisations in the sport and the breadth of welfare responsibilities, including adults. RB agreed that communication to Chairs and Secretaries is planned to highlight this.
- vi. KR emphasised the importance of working with the CPSU to meet their standards, highlighting that this is a requirement of our funding agreement, but above all it is the right thing to do. She sought assurance that enough had been done to satisfy their requirements, referring to the data around trained welfare officers as an example. SG and KK assured the Board that whilst there are still some things to put in place, there is good evidence of the changes already made and the proactive work being undertaken.

## BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2026

- vii. SG clarified that every club must have a named welfare officer to affiliate through the membership process; however, our data shows that not all of them have been trained. The free safeguarding training as part of the membership process will help to address this.
- viii. KR reiterated the importance of progressing this at speed.
- ix. **The Board approved the Safeguarding Policy, subject to changes highlighted above.**
- x. **ACTION - It was agreed to provide the Board with an update following the meeting with CPSU on 4<sup>th</sup> March – KK**
- xi. The Board discussed the reference in the Policy to 'unsanctioned events'; recognising that some are beneficial and follow our guidelines, but some do not. RB confirmed that work being done through the Areas and the governance review to address anomalies and misrepresentation in this area.

### 2.4 Data & Tech Implementation Plan

- i. HW presented to the Board an overview of progress against the VMOST and the link with the UK Sport project. She explained that work has been done to understand the current infrastructure and explore efficiencies. In addition, work is being done on developing the Strategy KPI dashboard, and much focus has been on the membership proposal.
- ii. A focused objective for the immediate future is the replacement of the Club Portal, and the recommendation is to use a trusted technology partner from a reputable organisation. A Tender document is being prepared.
- iii. The Board discussed what they considered to be an ambitious timeline, the potential disruption for clubs, the need for good clean data and the importance of systems that talk to each other.
- iv. SG commented that this had been combined with a review of whole membership process and is key to us having something that is better for the membership, fit for purpose and aligns better with our affiliation process.
- v. DS confirmed his confidence that the necessary work had been done in the background, however, if the deadline is not met, there may be a requirement to run parallel systems to mitigate the risk.
- vi. KR asked how important the short-term goal v long-term plan is. DS explained that this is the long-term solution; not relying on a large bespoke system and identifying the functions and commodity items that serve our purpose - managing clubs, good data, good user experience. The risk is the impact to those who administer the club.
- vii. KR acknowledged that this is an Exec decision but highlighted the nervousness around the Board regarding the timeline.
- viii. **ACTION - It was agreed that this be given more consideration before advising the Board of the decision - HW/RB**

## 3 DRIVE VISIBLE IMPACT – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

### 3.1 Commercial Strategy progress

- i. CW presented an overview of the project undertaken with Mongoose, the Agency selected to support the commercial strategy. Sharing the slide-deck recently received, CW confirmed that the Exec are still digesting the content.
- ii. Mongoose have offered a 3yr proposition and developed a rights valuation and partnership model, which is aligned with our strategy and includes a breakdown of 'go to market' opportunities,
- iii. One of the key areas highlighted is data and the value to partners of rich quality data.
- iv. CW explained that the same process is being undertaken for the Euros, with a focus on naming rights.
- v. What happens with Channel 4 will have an impact, but Mongoose are confident there is a saleable proposition albeit recognising that it is a tough space.
- vi. CW highlighted the sales process and explained that there is still work to be done to create packages and price points. The Mongoose model is one month of prospecting and then a follow through with strong leads; consideration has been given to a longer lead time, however, the need to have a partner in place with a year to go to the Euros means we need to get started as quickly as possible.

## BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2026

- vii. Next steps are to review detail and highlight any gaps, assess the marketplace and finalise the packages, then produce slide decks to go to market in February.
- viii. The Board acknowledged that things are in a better place than 9 months ago. CB reminded the Board that sponsorship is a numbers game and highlighted the importance of keeping the agency on their toes. Understanding why brands are saying 'no' to us is key. He added that while the Euros is a good hook, it is important to continue to build the IP for the long term.
- ix. CW referred to the System Master Planning work with UK Sport and other NGBs to establish a data warehouse and a single participant view. She explained that as part of the pilot, along with Deloitte and 4Global, we are in a good position.
- x. The Board discussed the broadcast rights and Channel 4 deal and CW explained that a meeting has been arranged with Channel 4 to discuss Euros coverage. The BBC have expressed an interest in putting it on the 'red button'. However, there are ongoing conversations with the FIH with regard to the rights.
- xi. CW confirmed that there is of course consideration for how the GB element fits into any advertising and package building.
- xii. **ACTION – It was agreed that CW and RB feedback to Board members, in early March, as to how best they should feed in contacts that Mongoose should consider approaching – CW/RB**
- xiii. The Board acknowledged the work that has been invested in this area and expressed confidence in the progress to date.

### 3.2 EuroHockey27 Update

- i. CW provided the Board with an update on the launch day, the website and the coverage and engagement on social channels.
  - ii. The emphasis now is getting as many people as possible to register interest, the target is 10k and good progress has been made so far.
  - iii. CW shared the timeline with the priority window between April and May and the general sale window commencing in August.
  - iv. KC joined to share the VMost for Euros.
  - v. CB suggested that more connection to grassroots should be evident and the Board discussed the 'Mission' and in particular the real meaning of the word 'bold', with a view that it should continue to be represented at each phase.
  - vi. KC explained that the plan is to be approved by EuroHockey Stakeholder Board and will bring back to Board at a later date.
  - vii. The Board acknowledged the need for increased numbers of Hockey Makers and KR offered to connect with local universities who encourage volunteer work. There was also a request from the Board to involve a wider launch around Hockey ID, in line with Sport England initiatives.
- KC left the meeting.

## 4 MEANINGFUL GROWTH – FOR INFORMATION, APPROVAL AND ACTION

### 4.1 Structure Fit for the Future Review

#### Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. KC highlighted some of the key points from the paper and clarified that the team were looking for approval from the Board to develop an action plan following the recommendations identified in the review.
- ii. Overall, 78% people surveyed partially or strongly agree the structure is effective. Views about the effectiveness of the County/Sub-Area were mixed, although there was a recognition that improvements have been made since 2019.
- iii. There were broadly positive views on Discipline, Masters and Adult hockey, and mixed views around officiating, although work is already underway to make improvements in this area.
- iv. Junior hockey is more challenging, and this is a focus area.
- v. Although not part of the review there were comments about the ongoing challenges of GMS.

## BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2026

- vi. The recommendations following the review included better defining the role of the County/Sub-Area and whether any changes are needed to the structure; supporting recruitment of volunteers, finding consistency in the way regulations are interpreted and improving communications.
- vii. Next steps are to develop a communications plan to disseminate at Areas and County meetings etc. to share the result, to consider any AGM comms and to develop an Action Plan to make improvements.
- viii. The Board discussed the recommendations and the question of paid v non-paid volunteers and whether there could be a hybrid model developed for adopting for some key roles.
- ix. There was also a recognition of the issues arising where Counties overlap with the talent pathway, the risk to the sport of a lack of umpires and the inconsistencies and clashes in delivering junior hockey.
- x. **The Board concurred with the recommendations presented in the paper and approved the development of the Communications Plan and the Action Plan.**
- xi. **ACTION - It was agreed to bring back the plan, including how Areas and Counties are working to deliver on behalf of EH from both a delivery and financial perspective to the June Board – KC/RB**

### 4.2 Participation Data

#### Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. SG explained that the data provided is captured predominantly through GMS and the Club Portal.
- ii. The current data suggests that there are four key areas that will help us drive greater participation: youth, facilities, trends and how much unsanctioned activity is taking place.
- iii. The Board discussed the data; the benefits of understanding the makeup of smaller clubs geographically, the impact of other team sports, the success of Hockey Heroes in supporting the youth growth and whether state school data is tracked effectively.
- iv. SG explained that there is still some work to be done, however, there was awareness that girls are dropping out of football and the data around state schools is linked to the messaging planned for the AGM to show what's happening across the sport, outside of the SGO work.
- v. CB commented that in Rugby youth participation is higher than adult, but hockey is the other way round. RB explained that this has always been the case for hockey and business models should focus on juniors and encourage different playing methods, linked to facilities etc.
- vi. KR asked if there is a better way to track participation in asset-owned clubs given that two-thirds of players play for them.
- vii. KR asked the Exec to consider what would success look like in a few years. Now that we have a good baseline, it would help drive initiatives to ensure that level of success.
- viii. **ACTION - It was agreed to bring back a more detailed plan in terms of what the data is telling us at a later date – SG**

### 5 CEO & EXEC REPORT – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

#### Paper taken as read, with the following items highlighted:

- i. Junior World Cup – the men's final results are not reflective of their potential or performance. The competition structure was tough with goal difference in different groups playing a part. The men won 5/6 matches, only losing to NED in a tight match. The women suffered from their ability to perform under pressure.
- ii. SMa advised the Board that the Performance Advisory Group met again last week and conversation are underway regarding the development of a long term (10yr) plan is being discussed.
- iii. HW advised that the Diversity Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) is being reviewed by the internal group for discussion with Sport England.
- iv. **ACTION – DIAP to be brought to April Board for approval - HW**
- v. CW highlighted the ambitious Pro League target, but January sales were good. However, of note is the fact that lower category tickets are selling first which means although ticket numbers are tracking well, income is lower than anticipated. This will be a consideration for when Euros tickets go on sale.

## BOARD SYNOPSIS – February 2026

vi. KR commented that she would like to see more detail in the discipline report related to trends, and evidence that unconscious bias does not play a part in decisions. In addition, she requested that the same approach in terms of trends be applied to the injury report and whether any progress can be made with Podium research.

vii. **ACTION – It was agreed to update the reports to reflect trends, evidence of decision-making and Podium research where applicable - KK**

### 5.1 International Sportsperson Visa - KC re-joined the meeting.

The Board were made aware of changes in the Home Office requirements related to ‘professional sportsperson’ visas.

- i. KC confirmed that several Premier Division clubs are bringing players in from overseas and the changes will impact their ability to do so legally.
- ii. EH is currently seeking advice from other NGBs and the Home Office.
- iii. There are specific requirements relating to minimum salary, the ability to demonstrate these roles could not be filled from home-grown talent and the definition of a ‘professional player’ is ambiguous.
- iv. An FAQ is being developed to support Clubs and Universities through this complex issue, but at what level we determine a player to be professional will be key. It could potentially have a knock-on effect on the University hockey playing community as they may not be able to play on the back of a student visa.
- v. **ACTION - It was agreed that once the FAQ is drafted, the matter will be brought back to the Board - KC**

### 5.2 AGM Update

- i. To date, no applications for MENED have been received. The Board are encouraged to approach candidates.

### 5.3 Committee summaries and dates

- i. AMG reminded the Board that the People & @Culture Committee will be meeting next week to review the recommendation for the distribution of the 3% pay award pot. Board approval will be sought via email.
- ii. MT advised that the Board Evaluation, which should be carried out every 4 years, has been postponed to the Autumn with permission from UK Sport. Planning is in progress to undertake this.
- iii. There is also a requirement for the Chair to undertake 121 effectiveness reviews with NEDs, and this will be facilitated over the next couple of months.
- iv. With regard to Committees, there is a requirement to undertake a self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the Committee, and a process will be developed with support from MT to facilitate this.
- v. **ACTION – It was agreed to provide Committee Chairs with a series of questions to help facilitate the effectiveness review – MT**
- vi. **ACTION – It was agreed to set up 121s for NEDs and to provide review questions – MT**
- vii. **ACTION - It was agreed to add the table of Committee dates to the Summary sheet – MT**

## 6 AOB

### 6.1 Minutes of previous meeting, matters arising and actions

- i. **Accuracy**  
The minutes were approved as a true and accurate recording.
- ii. **Matters arising (see action points tracker)**  
Updates and comments have been added against the actions in the tracker. RB will circulate following the meeting.
- iii. **No other business was discussed**
- iv. **The meeting closed at 17:10**