

BOARD MINUTES – September 2025

Meeting	England Hockey Board Meeting				
Venue	Bisham Abbey				
Date	23 rd September 2025	Start Time	10:00	End Time	14:00
Lead	Kath Russ, Chair (KR)				
Present:	Rich Beer (RB), Kuldeep Kaur (KK), Shelagh Everett (SE), Damian Smith (DS), Simon Mantell (SMa), Anne-Marie Garner (AMG) (Online), Angela Durnin (AD), Janet Grant (JG)				
Invited in:	Alex Danson-Bennett (ADB), Jacqui Barlow (JB), Bobby Crutchley (BC), Heather Williams (HW), Charlie Wells (CW), Stuart Guise (SG); Andy Tapley (ADT) (Online); Jo Coates (JC); John Harrison, UK Sport Representative (JH); Phil Gallagher, UK Sport Performance Representative (PG) joined for Item 3 - Performance				
Notetaker:	Michele Townsend (MT)				
Apologies	Claudio Borges (CB)				
Opening Comments from the Chair					
The Chair welcomed SG to his first meeting as Interim Development Director.					
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST					
JG declared an interest in the Men's Performance report as her son is an EDP athlete and agreed to leave the discussion at this point.					
2 CEO – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION					
2.1 CEO Report and Priorities					
RB presented a revised report format structured around strategic objectives, with an increased emphasis on forward planning and risk management.					
i. The Board agreed that continued Executive Team participation in meetings is valuable for comprehensive discussion, with confidentiality maintained where necessary.					
i. Youth and Development Strategy – RB reported success with the Masters programme and outlined the forthcoming Junior Hockey Framework for ages 5–11, aimed at improving skill development and retention. The strategy will expand to older age groups in due course.					
ii. ACTION - It was agreed that a dedicated Board session will be arranged to review the overall development strategy, to include performance elements and the Youth Sport Trust (YST) programme.					
iii. Membership and Engagement – Membership initiatives have seen high demand, with free courses fully booked and attendance at 80%. Financial tracking is robust, appeal volumes are low, and payment plan options are being considered.					
iv. Risk and Employee Engagement - the Board welcomed the inclusion of risk reporting within the CEO report, and discussed the Employee Engagement survey results.					
v. ACTION - It was agreed that the Head of People to present back the full report with recommendations to the People & Culture Committee in November. MT					
vi. Concerns were raised regarding the red card appeal process and potential future risks and costs.					
vii. ACTION - It was agreed to seek further disciplinary information and to consider providing formal guidance for Administrators in the sport. KK					

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- viii. Visibility and Media – positive trends were reported in Channel 4 broadcast figures, showing increased engagement from non-hockey audiences and providing a strong base for future visibility and audience growth.

3. PERFORMANCE – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

3.1 Performance and Talent post Euros

- i. BC presented on team performance planning, world-class coaching, player pathways, and club development, referencing the draft VMOST framework.
- ii. Emphasis was placed on balancing short-term results with long-term strategy and addressing fine performance margins from the European Championships.
- iii. The Performance Advisory Group continues to provide valuable insights.

Men's Programme – JG temporarily left the room

- i. BC highlighted the priority focus areas for the Men's team.
- ii. A coach developer has been engaged to support the coaching team, leveraging his experience in rugby and performance management.
- iii. The Recruitment of a specialist coaching pool identified as a key priority amid challenges attracting top talent.
- iv. Managing the calendar, player schedule (from a financial viewpoint) and player welfare, as well as performance peaking at the right times is being reviewed, with upcoming WCQ and domestic double headers highlighted as challenges.
- v. With the appointment of the new Assistant Coach, there is a focus on attacking play.
- vi. Additional coaching support is provided by ex-international players, who bring fresh perspectives.
- vii. The Board expressed support for BC's staffing changes but stressed the need for accountability and measurable progress.

Women's Programme – JG returned to the room

- viii. BC outlined the priority areas for the Women's team.
- ix. Recruitment for an Assistant Coach (female preferred) remains challenging; interim plan includes moving coaches between the teams. Other considerations include a player-to-coach pathway for 'retired' athletes.
- x. The Board discussed the importance of diversifying the coaching talent pool, particularly increasing female coaches, understanding the barriers to women pursuing coaching careers and actively engaging female talent.
- xi. ADB emphasised the importance of clear internal and external communications regarding any changes, expectations and accountability.
- xii. There was a recognition that the UK Sport elite coach programme needs improvement, especially for women; PG to feedback to UK Sport.
- xiii. BC provided the Board with a brief update on the India League and the fact that revisions of the international schedule mean that players can participate, but under strict conditions (no training / injury absences etc). It was agreed that a balance needed to be found between income opportunities and performance priorities.
- xiv. RB highlighted the political sensitivities and the need to manage international calendar relations.
- xv. **ACTION - The Board endorsed BC's plans and requested a further review by end of December. BC**

4. SAFEGUARDING

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

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- i. JC outlined the new in-house case management model, which will enable the current Ethics & Welfare Manager to focus on proactive safeguarding work. Recruitment for Safeguarding Manager and Safeguarding Officer roles is underway.
- ii. Updates to the Case Management Group (CMG) membership are in progress. The link between the CMG and the Board has been strengthened, with the Board Safeguarding Champion to attend CMG meetings. RB reaffirmed his overall safeguarding responsibility.
- iii. **KK will oversee the transition and implementation of the plan, following the timeline set out in the VMOST.**
- iv. An external audit meeting with the CPSU is scheduled for Friday.
- v. SG reported that all clubs are required to have a trained welfare officer. Current data shows gaps in training and data mapping is underway to establish a baseline and ensure compliance. Communications to clubs will continue.
- vi. A draft Adult Safeguarding Policy and plan has been submitted to the Ann Craft Trust for initial assessment. Policies have been created and reviewed. The audit outcome was “conditionally met,” which is satisfactory for the first year.
- vii. The Board was reassured that all necessary actions are being implemented and monitored, with the overarching objective of ensuring a “safe sport” environment.

5. FINANCE – FOR INFORMATION, ACTION AND APPROVAL

5.1 Expected Year End – 2024/25

- i. The year-end position (31 August 2025) has not yet stabilised with more work to be done on stock write-offs and insurance adjustments.
- ii. A Finance and Audit pre-meeting has been held, and no major concerns were raised. External audit plans are in place with Hays McIntyre.
- iii. **ACTION - It was agreed that a communications plan be developed to support clear messaging to members ahead of the AGM. RB/CW**

5.2 Finalised Budget for 2025/26

- i. The 2025–26 budget was presented for approval.
- ii. Breakeven remains the priority for 2025–26. A risks and opportunities schedule is in place, and budgets are now live in the system for budget-holder tracking.
- iii. CW advised the Board that the ambition is to secure a principal partnership and that we are currently in competition with another sport.
- iv. Income growth opportunities will be shared with the Board in the new year. KK and RB reassured the Board that work continues towards achieving a breakeven position.
- v. **The Board approved the budget for 2025/26.**
- vi. **ACTION - RB and the Executive will review and update the Board at the next meeting. RB**

6. PRESIDENT AND CHAIR UPDATE

ACTION - Due to time pressures, it was agreed that this item either be a written note out to Board members and the Executive or covered at the next meeting. KR / ADB

7. DATA & TECHNOLOGY – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

7.1 Digital Strategy

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

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- i. TA presented the VMOST framework and outlined the scale of the transformation project, acknowledging the input from DS and CB. He presented the work that has already been completed and that which still needs to be done and emphasised that transformation takes time.
- ii. TA highlighted the importance of data accessibility and effective use and referenced the UK Sport pilot which is currently underway. The aim being to develop a single customer view across multiple data channels.
- iii. An audit of our current data and systems is being conducted to understand usage and value and metrics and KPIs to demonstrate what is currently available was shared as examples.
- iv. JB highlighted the need to use the data to drive engagement and commented that the current user experience is not yet transformational. She added that clubs are seeking API integration with GMS to reduce the admin burden and retain volunteers.
- v. TA confirmed that the improvements list remains active, and consideration is on a case-by-case basis, depending on costings and if there are short-term fixes that can be done quickly, they will be actioned, but others will take time, and expectations need to be managed.
- vi. **It was agreed to track priorities, focusing on short-term GMS fixes alongside long-term goals and to update Board on progress.**

8. GOVERNANCE – FOR INFORMATION AND APPROVAL

8.1 Board composition and schedule of meetings

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. KR confirmed that the current board numbers are 10 and the Articles state a requirement to be a minimum of 11, max 12.
- ii. The proposal is to immediately recruit an INED with a focus on performance with a view to the successful candidate joining the Performance Advisory Group. She added that it is important to always have equality of INED combined with MENE and Executive and therefore the proposal includes the recruitment of an additional MENE at the 2026 AGM.
- iii. It is hoped that the additional recruitment will better address the representation of the hockey community.
- iv. **The Board approved the recommendation and delegated authority to the NomCo to commence the process.**
- v. KR highlighted the work being done by JG and SE in respect of the process for Royal Honours and also other forms of recognition.
- vi. KR explained that the Appointments Committee along with RB and ADB will make any final decisions.

8.2 GB Framework Update

Paper presented for approval.

- i. RB explained that following a request from Scotland and Wales, the Articles and the Framework were reviewed to bring them up to date and to align them more specifically with the preparation of GB performance plans.
- ii. Scottish Hockey and Hockey Wales have agreed the changes.
- iii. **The Board approved the Articles and the Framework Agreement.**

8.3 Facilities Loan Scheme

- i. Papers were presented outlining the context and importance of the scheme to the sport. RB expressed thanks to AMG, KR, and particularly KK for their legal input.
- ii. The Board was asked to approve the overall scheme and to delegate to RB and KK authority to finalise outstanding legal and contractual matters.

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- iii. The Board discussed the content of the agreement in detail to ensure understanding and comfort with all aspects included therein.
- iv. KK explained that the Auditors are reviewing the documentation, alongside the legal review.
- v. JC will act as interim Chair and KR has agreed to be the nominated EH Director on the Loan Facilities Board (subject to a register of interest and Irish Commission approval) to facilitate signing. Signatories will include the Sporting Assets Director, the EH representative Director, and the interim Chair.
- vi. **The Board approved the scheme in principle and delegated authority to RB and KK to finalise and execute documents once SE assurances and legal reviews are confirmed.**

9.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & AOB

- 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.
- iii. **No other business was discussed**

The meeting closed at 14:10