

BOARD SYNOPSIS – July 2025

Meeting	England Hockey Board Meeting				
Venue	Bisham Abbey				
Date	8 th July 2025	Start Time	10:00	End Time	15:00
Lead	Kath Russ, Chair (KR)				
Present:	Jo Coates (JC), Rich Beer (RB), Kuldeep Kaur (KK), Shelagh Everett (SE), Damian Smith (DS), Simon Mantell (SMa), Anne-Marie Garner (AMG) (Online), Claudio Borges (CB), Angela Durnin (AD), Janet Grant (JG)				
Invited in:	Alex Danson-Bennett (ADB), Jacqui Barlow (JB), Bobby Crutchley (BC), Heather Williams (HW), Charlie Wells (CW), Andy Tapley (ADT) (Online)				
Notetaker:	Michele Townsend (MT)				
Apologies	John Harrison, UK Sport Representative (JH)				
<p>Opening Comments from the Chair</p> <p>The Chair congratulated RB on his recent appointment to CEO.</p> <p>KR and ADB highlighted activity undertaken in their capacity as Chair and President respectively. This new section of the meeting had been added following a very useful session which had been held between AMG and KR during which AMG provided feedback to KR on views (collated by AMG from various different people within EH) on how she was performing in her role as Chair. One element of the feedback focused on a desire for the Board members and observers to hear more about what the Chair has been doing outside the Board room. It was felt that a short section in the Board meeting would be helpful to address this feedback and that it made sense for this also to focus on the role of the President.</p> <p>KR – focus has been on organisational health, working on board governance and clear responsibilities of committees. She explained that Isla Strachan (IS) is to be the contact point for Board and Committee meetings.</p> <p>Member of Honour is now back up and running and presentations were conducted by KR and ADB at Pro League. JG and SE are working with IS on the process for Kings honours.</p> <p>Stakeholder relationships with UK Sport are strong, with regular dialogue. JC is to facilitate a meeting with the Interim CEO at Sport England to help build relationships there. Relationships with other NGB Chairs are good. Internationally, KR felt that she could be doing more, although the relationship with the Chair of EuroHockey is good; we have nominated Rachel Walsh as a member of the EuroHockey Executive Board and are assisting her to actively canvass for votes. An International Influencing and Relations plan is being developed.</p> <p>KR has met with clubs where practicable and extended offers to meet with specific clubs if board members would so wish. She highlighted a good relationship with Spencer Links and recent attendance at an Area meeting.</p> <p>KR recently hosted an event with former athlete captains and vice captains with 35 attendees for the purpose of listening to what's important at EH. She added this was received very positively.</p> <p>ADB – focus has been on being present and visible across the membership, including attendance at the England Hockey awards and presenting awards. ADB has attended the majority of Pro League games, engaged with committees, VIPs and hospitality and meeting with players.</p>					

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ADB confirmed that she too attended the former athlete event and strongly advocates for the skillset of former athletes, who are willing to help out where they can; she emphasised the importance of continuing to build on this and host other events where possible.

ABD attended the Nottingham LX Masters and had the honour of presenting the Lifetime Achievement award to Graham Griffiths. RB confirmed that EH had received a very heartfelt message of thanks from his son. In addition, ADB has been supporting the performance advisory group and working closing with performance teams.

KR confirmed the importance of continuing to engage with former athletes and this required more strategic thinking.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

2. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/2025 – FOR INFORMATION

- i. KK presented the year-to-date May figures and highlighted the work that is being done on risks and opportunities.
- ii. KK assured the Board that work is still being done to identify further cost savings. She highlighted the fees associated with broadcast, although mitigated by grant money, sponsorship is behind forecast; the additional restructure costs have been somewhat mitigated by a hold on vacancies, but the increase in NIC also had an impact.
- iii. ADT added that invoicing delays have also affected cashflow but assured the Board that the Finance Committee have interrogated the numbers in great detail before being presented to Audit and Board.
- iv. JC added that some good news is that Pro League could present a small surplus.

2.1 BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/2026 – FOR INFORMATION, APPROVAL AND ACTION

- i. KK presented the budget for the upcoming year for approval by Board.
- ii. Income and expenditure are aligned at £12.5M, and ADT confirmed that once again the numbers have been interrogated. He added that other NGBs are in very similar situations; the difference being that others had significant commercial income, and this is where the focus needs to be in order to grow revenue.
- iii. SE was keen to understand the strategic plan for recovery of reserves. JC confirmed that the plan is to stabilise for 2026 and look at how we can rebuild beyond that.
- iv. JB highlighted the potential challenge from clubs with regard to GMS and the lack of development in this area. She wanted reassurance that there would be some development of GMS in the upcoming year.
- v. Any budget related to pay increases would be considered by the People & Culture Committee, and any such recommendation would include appropriate salary benchmarking data etc.
- vi. Further assumptions on the appropriate amount to be included in the budget for 2026/2027 would also be discussed with People & Culture Committee prior to the commencement of the next financial year and prior to approval of the budget for 2026/2027 in June 2026.
- vii. **The Board approved the budget for 2025/2026.**
- viii. **The Board approved the Auditors' fee, which was inclusive of additional VAT work and work associated with the membership.** KK explained that the decision to tender was postponed given the additional work required this time around.
- ix. JC highlighted the importance of longer-term plans and replenishment of reserves. There was a detailed discussion with regard to key themes in respect of the path to future profitability.

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- x. It was agreed that a review of high-level competition would be beneficial and discussions with broadcasters to determine what is attractive to them. The Board discussed the benefits of a focus.
- xi. **ACTION - It was agreed that a feasibility study in respect of high-level competition be carried out and a proposal to be presented to Board – Exec**

3. RISK REGISTER – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

Papers taken as read with the following comments:

- i. JC explained that the purpose of the paper was to provide Board with a summary the process and current thinking on the Risk Register; approval to be sought at a future meeting.
- ii. JC provided context around the changes made which included feedback from Auditors, Finance & Risk Committee and Insurers. The top 10 risks, linked to strategy are highlighted. ADT added that the Audit & Risk Committee will carry out a more detailed analysis twice a year in addition to the Audit.
- iii. The Board discussed the process and the changes highlighted.
- iv. AMG raised concerns about the priority of financial sustainability, the lack of inclusion of the wider Board in the scoring and the focus on the failure of the strategy as opposed to the organisation as a whole.
- v. KK assured the Board that detailed information was presented to the Committee which was challenged and tested. ADT highlighted the number of audits that are undertaken from external bodies, and that anything flagged there is also considered at risk committee.
- vi. KR summarised the process: Exec will determine the risk and score, with clear mapping of ownership and mitigations. The role of the Board is to track mitigation and challenge appropriately. The role of the Risk Committee is to carry out an internal audit to include deep diving for further assurance and in respect of specific areas if required. The Register will be shared with the Areas.
- vii. The Board discussed the level of risk associated with cyber threat and agreed to circulate the detail for wider considerations by the Board.
- viii. **ACTION - It was agreed to arrange a meeting with Exec for further input from Board members to finalise how the risk register should be presented to Board. Exec**

4. SAFEGUARDING PLAN – FOR INFORMATION

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. JC referred the paper which presented an overview of the current structure and an outline of planned changes which it is hoped will allow for more independence and enhanced skillset around decision-making.
- ii. JC shared some data relating to the number of cases and those that require significant resource, which hinders the team's ability to focus on any proactive education and training. She added that it is not clear how many of our Welfare Officers have had sufficient training. It was agreed that this issue would be considered as a matter of urgency and that the Board would be given updates on progress on this matter as a priority.
- iii. The Board discussed whether this information should be made mandatory in the membership process and were advised that this is being considered as part of the data strategy.
- iv. **It was agreed to discuss the role of the Board safeguarding champion offline.**
- v. KR emphasised the importance of highlighting the risks and ensuring that the right training and checks are in place.

4.1 FACEMASKS – FOR INFORMATION, APPROVAL AND ACTION

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. The Board were asked to consider the recommendation made by the Exec in respect of the changes in FIH policy regarding Facemasks.

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- ii. RB explained that the FIH have delegated decision-making to national associations and put them in a difficult position. He added that further dialogue should be undertaken with FIH to encourage them to be clearer on the messaging around safety.
- iii. The Board were made aware of the lack of British Standards and that an ill-fitting facemask could be more dangerous than not wearing one.
- iv. In determining the position which the EH Board should take on this issue, the Board agreed that the most important issue is the safety of our players and as such EH needed to start by understanding the strength of the research in this area.
- v. The Board considered the research referenced by the FIH and the work that Podium had done on behalf of EH and their view was that the research did not provide compelling evidence and that currently there is not enough data to support mandating.
- vi. **The Board agreed to accept the recommendations of the Exec to: ‘strongly recommend’ the use of facemasks in penalty corner situations at all ages, and that a full communication campaign be implemented.**
- vii. **ACTION - DS offered to discuss the possibility of further research being undertaken by Podium. It was agreed to have a follow up conversation. It was further agreed that any ongoing research would continue to be tracked and EH’s position on mandating would be reconsidered by reference to any such research updates. DS / Exec**

4.2 EUROHOCKEY STAKEHOLDER BOARD CHAIR – FOR APPROVAL

- i. SE provided the Board with an update on the recruitment process.
- ii. Interviews were held with the preferred candidate, the panel consisted of ADT, RB, SE and a representative from UK Sport Major Events team.
- iii. **The Board approved the appointment of Kelly Fairweather and confirmed the fee.**

5. FIH PRO LEAGUE – FOR INFORMATION

- i. BC provided the Board with an update on the recent challenges, particularly with the Women’s group. He emphasised that there had been significant change since the Paris Olympics, and it was important to understand where the group is now. BC and MS are meeting with Psychologist to discuss further. The current squad are young and inexperienced, but now the more experienced players are returning, it feels different.
- ii. Next steps will be the Euros in August, which is a World Cup qualification event – to qualify directly teams must be the next highest ranked after teams that have already qualified. If not, there will be a qualifier to play in March 2026.
- iii. The schedule for next year means that not every nation will host. This will have some benefits from a performance perspective, but there may be additional hosting costs to cover, especially around broadcasting.

5.1 PERFORMANCE STRATEGY – FOR INFORMATION

BC provided the Board with a presentation highlighting the performance strategy with a focus on the upcoming Europeans, FIH Pro League and the LA 2028 Olympics. Slides attached outlining the strategy for:

- Planning and preparing to win in LA 2028
- Performance Club Environment
- A fit for purpose Pathway
- Performance Coaching

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5.2 PERFORMANCE ADVISORY GROUP – **FOR APPROVAL**

BC presented the Board with a paper seeking approval of the terms of reference, the Chair and the initial members of the Group.

- i. **The Board approved the Terms of Reference.**
- ii. **The Board approved Simon Mantell as Chair.**
- iii. **The Board approved the members.**

6. CEO RECRUITMENT

KR extended thanks to everyone involved and confirmed that she has now spoken to all external candidates who were not offered the position.

6.1 OPERATIONAL DASHBOARD – **FOR INFORMATION**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. JC highlighted the strategic objectives and areas where measurable data was available and asked Board to consider what other measures would be helpful. She confirmed that there are plans to develop the dashboard more appropriately.
- ii. The Board discussed adding in Membership satisfaction, EDI baseline and progress, financial targets and club data (AGM participation).
- iii. CB suggested that it would be helpful to have headline measures for the top 6 with further detail behind it. JC agreed that a narrower focus, that is easy to cascade, is important.
- iv. **The Board confirmed they were happy with the direction of travel, and the Exec welcomed any further suggestions.**

6.2 CEO REPORT – **FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. JC highlighted the paragraph relating to GMS consents and explained that in future adult players will appear on team sheets and will need to opt out (U18s will be an opt in). This will improve the experience of the user and allow us to add value for the player, create a leaderboard, improve storytelling, etc. KK also reminded the Board of the importance of ensuring the GDPR analysis is clear.
- ii. **ACTION - It was agreed that communication to alert players to the changes in consent on GMS is imperative. CW**
- iii. JB asked for an update on Umpiring kits. CW confirmed that two orders have been processed and already sold out. A further order has been placed.

7. 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. KR thanked JC on her last Board meeting.

5. AOB

No other business was discussed.

Meeting closed at 15:02