BOARD SYNOPSIS – July 2026

Meeting	England Hockey Board Meeting Synopsis				
Venue	Elizabethan Room, Bisham Abbey				
Date	12th July 2026	**Start Time**	12:00	**End Time**	17:30
Lead	Kath Russ, Chair (KR)				
Present:	Rich Beer (RB), Kuldeep Kaur (KK), Shelagh Everett (SE), Damian Smith (DS), Claudio Borges (CB), Janet Grant (JG), Alexa Murray (AM) Online - Anne-Marie Garner (AMG), Simon Mantell (SM), Nicky Ponsford (NP)				
Invited in:	Bobby Crutchley (BC), Heather Williams (HW), Charlie Wells (CW), Stuart Guise (SG), Don Williams, GB President (DW), Andy Tapley (ADT) (Online for Item 3), Jason Wiltshere, Head of Legal & Governance for Item 4.				
Notetaker:	Michele Townsend (MT)				
Apologies	Alex Danson-Bennett (ADB), Jacqui Barlow (JB), Charlie Wells (CW), John Harrison, UK Sport Representative (JH),				

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Other than the standing declaration from JG in respect of performance discussions, DS declared an interest in the paper on injury reporting as some of this was provided by Podium.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING, MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS – FOR APPROVAL, INFORMATION AND ACTION

2.1 Approval of minutes and update on matters arising and actions

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate recording.

2.1.2 Matters arising (see action points tracker)

RB led the Board through the action points tracker from the February 2026 meeting, working through it by reference number for speed, highlighting actions completed and those on the meeting Agenda. The tracker was updated accordingly.

2.2 Chair Governance Update (verbal)

i. KR thanked Board members who had taken part in one-to-one conversations on how the Board operates. She has drafted a note on potential changes, which she is discussing with RB and the wider team, and will bring back to the Board once fully reflected upon.

ii. **ACTION – Bring proposals on Board operating changes back to the September Board – KR**

iii. KR updated the Board on recruitment for a new independent Non-Executive Director with a finance specialism, following the departure of the previous finance NED. ADT is stepping down as Chair of Finance Committee and Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) at the next AGM after a long tenure; JG and SE have kindly agreed to be chairs-elect of Finance Committee and ARC respectively, with an appropriate handover from ADT.

iv. Second-stage interviews for the new finance NED have been completed; KR confirmed a recommendation will be brought back to the Board.

v. **ACTION – Bring a recommendation on the new finance Non-Executive Director appointment to the Board – KR**

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3. STRATEGY & 2026-27 OPERATION PLAN & BUDGET – FOR INFORMATION, APPROVAL AND ACTION

3.1 Strategy Feedback and Update

RB presented a paper summarising and closing the loop on feedback from the Board's strategy session at the last meeting, setting out the themes the Exec had drawn together for the next iteration of the strategy.

i. The Board fed back that the paper should not miss the opportunity to build on existing strengths, not just address gaps, and that the role of content in building emotional connection with audiences could be more prominent.

ii. The Board discussed the risk of "strategic sprawl" and acknowledged that while a National Governing Body cannot simply stop delivering core functions, the level of effort and investment applied to each area is a genuine choice.

iii. KR asked the Exec to reflect on whether a sharper, more prioritised version of the plan – clearer about what will not be done, as well as what will – should be brought back once the Board had worked through the individual items.

iv. KR raised a specific request for a paper to a future Board on the strategy, resourcing and long-term ambition for Hockey ID.

v. **ACTION – Bring a paper to the Board on the strategy, resourcing and long-term ambition for Hockey ID – RB**

vi. The Board discussed how brand and communications, which cut across multiple work areas (including Euro Hockey and the Premier Division/domestic game), could be presented more coherently within the plan, and agreed this would be considered as the plan structure evolves.

vii. **ACTION – Reflect Board feedback in the next iteration of the strategy and Operational Plan structure – RB/HW**

3.2 Operational Plan 2026-27

HW presented the Operational Plan 2026-27, thanking colleagues for the work involved. The plan is structured around the existing "deliver / improve / grow" business-plan framework, which is being adapted for the current transitional year ahead of the Euro Hockey Championships, with quarterly RAG-rated reporting used internally at Exec/SMT level.

i. The Board discussed, at a high level, whether the plan tries to do too much within the year. And asked the Exec to be clearer about what is genuinely essential this year versus what could be deferred, and to be prepared to say what will not be done as well as what will.

ii. **ACTION – Bring a more sharply prioritised version of the Operational Plan back to the Board, with clear ownership and links to KPIs and resource – RB/HW**

iii. On the Euro Hockey section, the Board asked for the plan to better articulate the "biggest, boldest" ambition (e.g. through headline KPIs covering event delivery, marketing/commercial and the England team) rather than reading as a list of operational tasks.

iv. On club support (Governance, junior hockey provision and facilities), the Board welcomed the clarity of the three focus areas but asked that measures reflect a two-way relationship with clubs (e.g. response times, listening, satisfaction), not solely what England Hockey delivers to clubs. HW confirmed this links to the wider membership priority on listening and satisfaction.

v. The Board discussed the plan to develop England Hockey's approach for 12–16-year-olds, an age group AMG noted as critical to retention as young people begin making their own choices about sport. SG confirmed this year is focused on understanding the current picture (coaching, current offer, player voice through focus groups) ahead of defining a future approach; AMG offered to attend player focus groups.

vi. **ACTION – Bring proposals to the Board on the future approach for 12–16-year-olds, following the current listening/insight phase – SG**

vii. On Talent Academies (TAs), NP and JG challenged the Exec to be clearer on how success is measured – specifically the quality of players produced, not simply progression rates through the pathway.

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viii. **ACTION – Bring a clear framework for measuring the success of Talent Academies, and options for strengthening England Hockey's influence over quality, to a future Board meeting – RB/BC**

ix. On performance, the Board heard that a UK Sport-led review of the top end of the talent pathway (EDP and age-group), is under way; initial recommendations will be worked up with Exec and taken to the Board as part of the Brisbane cycle submission. JG asked that the review draw on feedback from players who have come through the pathway, not solely UK Sport's external view.

x. DW updated the Board on early feedback on the GB athlete/performance conversation with the GB Board.

xi. KR raised that the Board still lacks a clear strategy for how England Hockey manages the loss of players to US university scholarships and asked for this to be addressed as part of the wider performance strategy.

xii. **ACTION – Address the US university scholarship pathway as part of the wider performance strategy work – RB/BC**

xiii. The Board discussed "Maximise the impact of data and tech" and ADT confirmed Audit & Risk Committee is tracking delivery of an AI usage policy for staff, which is in final draft.

xiv. **ACTION – Finalise and issue the staff AI usage policy – HW**

xv. On income growth, the Board discussed the ambition to develop a more entrepreneurial, revenue-generating culture across the organisation (beyond the core commercial team), including better negotiated rates with key venue suppliers (e.g. Bisham Abbey, Lilleshall, Nottingham) and clearer income-related KPIs for individual teams. The Board asked for this to be more clearly articulated with specific initiatives in the next iteration of the plan.

xvi. On people and culture, MT and the Board agreed the plan should reflect both maintaining and further enhancing the positive staff culture built over recent years, referencing findings from the staff survey.

xvii. The Board noted the remaining sections of the plan (safeguarding, discipline, officiating and coaching) without further substantive comment, other than reiterating the general challenge on prioritisation and achievability raised earlier in the discussion.

xviii. **ACTION – Report back to the Board on how the Operational Plan has been prioritised/adapted and on progress against it, at least a couple of times a year – RB/HW**

3.3 Budget 2026-27 and Long-Term Projection

KK presented the year-to-date (May) management accounts for information, noting a small deficit against budget currently being managed through offsetting risks and opportunities, with the year still projected to land on budget.

i. ADT, on behalf of Finance Committee, recommended closer examination and greater Board visibility of the World Class Programme budget going forward, noting that there are absolutely no concerns regarding the management of the budget. He stated that this should be led by the Finance Director and Exec team rather than Finance Committee. DW welcomed the suggestion which would provide more clarity for GB Board too.

ii. **ACTION – Bring forward proposals for greater Board visibility of the World Class Programme plan and budget – KK/RB**

iii. The England Hockey Budget was presented for approval.

iv. **DECISION - The Board approved the Budget 2026-27, on the basis that any minor refinements arising as year-end planning is finalised over the summer will be scrutinised by Finance Committee and will not materially change the bottom line.**

v. **ACTION – Scrutinise any minor budget refinements before the budget is confirmed in the finance system and report the confirmed position to the September Board – Finance Committee/KK**

vi. The Board reviewed long-term financial projections for information (not for approval). The projections highlighted a gap in future years without further income growth or operational efficiencies; the Board noted this will need continued attention as the events and sponsorship income model develops.

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4. RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

4.1 End of Season Stats: Injury Reporting

KK introduced the item, with JW (Head of Legal and Governance) presenting the end-of-season injury reporting paper, which combined England Hockey's own reporting data, insurance data (via Marsh) and Podium analytics, brought together at the end of the season when the most complete data is available.

i. The Board welcomed the improved quality of data but noted the dataset remains small; however, it was noted that the data has already added value in discussions with the insurance provider and has begun to challenge some commonly held assumptions about where injuries occur.

ii. The Board discussed the data related to penalty corner injuries and the current position against mandatory face masks. Following discussion, it was agreed that the data is not yet sufficient to draw firm conclusions on relative risk.

iii. It was suggested that future data collection ask whether protective equipment (e.g. mouthguards, face masks) was being worn at the time of injury, particularly for dental injuries, to help build the evidence base on protective equipment.

iv. KR summarised the Board's wider challenge: to be clearer about why data is being collected, what decisions (e.g. rule changes, format changes for juniors, protective equipment) it is intended to inform, and how this will be communicated to clubs and members to encourage better reporting and engagement.

v. **ACTION – Refine the purpose, scope and communication of injury data collection, and reflect this – including what has been decided as a result of the data collected – in the next iteration of the report – KK/JW**

4.2 End of Season Stats: Safeguarding and Discipline

JW updated the Board on discipline.

i. The new disciplinary regulations, rolled out this year, are working well and are under a light-touch summer review. The Board noted that the volume and complexity of cases has increased.

ii. The Bord discussed whether an explicit behaviour/respect campaign (similar to those run by football or rugby) is needed, and what the trigger point for one would be. The Exec would welcome capacity to deliver such messaging. It was suggested that some of the rise in reported cases reflects positive cultural change – improved umpire confidence and willingness to call things out – rather than a genuine deterioration in behaviour, drawing a parallel with the initial spike typically seen after compliance/reporting programmes are introduced in other sectors.

iii. The Board asked the Exec to consider the pros and cons of publishing more information on decisions and reasoning (as some other sports do), balanced against the risk of disproportionate impact on individuals if minor cases are made public. Consideration was given to a compressed, FA-style annual "state of the game" discipline report which could provide useful thought-leadership and reassurance without publishing individual case detail.

iv. **ACTION – Consider options for a proactive behaviour/respect campaign and a more transparent annual discipline summary report – JW/RB**

v. KR raised continuing concern at the pace of increase in trained welfare officers across clubs. SG confirmed welfare officer training volumes have increased substantially (from c.130 to over 300 this year), and that the membership renewal process will verify named welfare officers and contact details; future compliance requirements are also under consideration.

vi. KR reiterated this remains a Board priority and asked that progress continue to be tracked and reported.

vii. **ACTION – Continue to track and report progress on trained welfare officer coverage across clubs – SG**

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viii. The Board were made aware that a refined (not a full rewrite) Safeguarding Regulations update has been prepared, is with Exec for review, and a draft is already with the CPSU, with feedback expected the following week. The Board agreed the update would be circulated over the summer for electronic sign-off, given the limited scope of change.

ix. **ACTION – Circulate the updated Safeguarding Regulations to the Board over the summer for electronic sign-off – KK**

5. CEO & EXEC REPORT – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

5.1 CEO Report

Paper taken as read, with the following items highlighted:

i. The England Hockey Awards evening was well received by members; the Board noted the Lifetime Achievement Award winner.

ii. On sponsorship, a deal has been secured for the Euro Championships and a shirt sponsor has been confirmed for the World Cup; no headline sponsor has yet been secured for the Mongoose opportunity despite being taken to market, and the Exec intends to also pursue smaller-value sponsorship opportunities alongside the search for a headline partner.

iii. The Board discussed the Sporting Assets facilities fund; a first annual review is expected at the end of the first funding cycle in September, and the Exec intends to build a bank of club case studies to help inspire further applications.

iv. **ACTION – Bring a first annual review of the Sporting Assets facilities fund, including club case studies, to the Board – RB**

v. The Board noted a new hockey-compatible multi-purpose sports surface is being trialled at Leicester Hockey Club.

vi. CB agreed to speak to CW about potential in-kind or partnership opportunities with a vehicle supplier, following a query regarding the vehicle tender process.

vii. **ACTION – Explore in-kind/partnership vehicle supplier opportunities – CB/CW**

viii. SE asked that Board members be given sight of the proposed improvements to the Talent Academies once the current review cycle concludes.

ix. **ACTION – Circulate details of Talent Academy changes to all Board members once the next review cycle is complete – HW**

x. KR thanked the Exec team for their work over the Pro League weekends and the Awards evening and highlighted an example of a staff member going well beyond their role.

5.2 Safeguarding Update

This item was taken together with the safeguarding discussion under item 4.2 above; see the actions recorded there regarding welfare officer coverage and the Safeguarding Regulations update.

5.3 Top Domestic Competitions Update (Super 6's & Premier Division Operating Standards)

The Board were made aware of ongoing consultations with Premier Division clubs.

i. It was noted that two-thirds of Premier Division clubs have responded to the consultation to date, with further responses being sought.

ii. No final decisions have been made. A further stage of review, consultation and discussion is planned before implementation (proposed from the 2027-28 season), with this item returning to the Board in September or later depending on the pace of rollout.

iii. **ACTION – Bring the next iteration of the Premier Division operating standards, informed by further consultation, back to the Board – RB/HW – September Board or later**

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6.	**AOB**
i.	No other business was discussed
ii.	The meeting closed at 17.35