

BOARD SYNOPSIS – April 2025

Meeting	England Hockey Board Meeting				
Venue	Bisham Abbey				
Date	28 th April 2025	Start Time	10:00	End Time	17:00
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), Claudio Borges (CB), Angela Durnin (AD), ,				
Invited in:	Alex Danson-Bennett (ADB), Jacqui Barlow(JB), Bobby Crutchley (BC), Heather Williams (HW), Charlie Wells (CW), John Harrison, UK Sport Representative (JH)				
Notetaker:	Michele Townsend (MT)				
Apologies	Janet Grant (JG), Andy Tapley (ADT)				

Opening Comments from the Chair

The Chair welcomed Interim CEO, Jo Coates, Performance Director, Bobby Crutchley and new Independent Non-Executive Director, Claudio Borges to their first Board meeting and introductions were made. A welcome was also extended to John Harrison from UK Sport.

Apologies were recorded and noted that no member of the GB Board was in attendance.

The Chair extended thanks to MT and IS for all the preparation for the meeting and for co-ordinating JCs induction.

The Chair highlighted that she would like to raise some governance issues under AOB, that were not included in the Board Pack.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

KR – Item 3 – Chair of BUCS

KR – Item 7 – Facilities Loan Scheme – appointment of law firm

2. 2023/24 CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - **FOR INFORMATION, APPROVAL AND ACTION**

2.1 Budget 2025-26 and medium-term financial considerations

- i. JC explained that the Exec is working on finalising the 3yr forecast, and that driving growth and income is a priority.
- ii. The year-to-date February, net position shows an overall £80.5k year to date deficit to the original budget reported. Whilst some of this is due to timing other factors such as restructuring and delays in exiting people, in addition to unsecured 200k of partnership income also impacted the numbers.
- iii. KK reminded the Board of the target to reach a 150k deficit and budget holders are reviewing and focusing on costs rather than income generation.
- iv. JC confirmed that it is unlikely that any commercial income will come to fruition and the focus is on savings and phasing of activity, assuring the Board that planned activity is still on track.
- v. The Board were asked to approve the 3% pay award that had been budgeted for. The Board discussed the importance of this given that this is the third time an award has not been made. AMG highlighted that this would normally be reviewed and approved by the People Committee and the Board discussed the need to carry out more detailed benchmarking and for the process to be correct going forward.

BOARD SYNOPSIS – April 2025

- vi. **APPROVED - The Board approved the 3% pay award effective 1st May 2025 and agreed to review again in the Autumn.**
- vii. **ACTION - It was agreed to discuss pay awards further at the People Committee. AMG**

2.2 Budget 2025-26 and medium-term financial considerations – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

Paper taken as read with the following comments.

- i. JC highlighted the work that Exec have been doing to improve the financial stability of the organisation, focusing on income generation for the longer-term rather than reducing the size of the organisation, which is already lean. It was agreed that more emphasis be placed on how the organisation prioritises the use of unrestricted grant money, understanding fluctuations in risks and opportunities and providing clear reporting to Board.
- ii. She added that there is still work to be done to drill down into the numbers as indicated in the paper; the impact of the changes to coaching under the new membership proposal, not hosting Pro League, etc.
- iii. The Board discussed the reserves policy and recovery plan, the need for more visibility of potential income and the challenge of needing to invest in technology in order to grow.
- iv. JC emphasised the importance of understanding and mitigating risks in all areas, including partnership commitment, Euros 2027 target of 175k, membership savings related to school sports offer, ProLeague tickets, secondary selling, price increases (recognising it may impact inclusivity). She added that work is being done to produce a dashboard of targets to bring back to board for monitoring closely.
- v. RB explained that the Euros will provide money to the organisation for a time, but it is not sustainable and further assessment of the benefits of the Euros should be considered along with future bids. He agreed to provide more analysis in terms of our event strategy.
- vi. **The Board confirmed its support for increasing income; albeit with a need to be clear on where spend is focused.**
- vii. KR sought clarity that any potential savings identified in membership area is not impacting the benefits promised to the members. RB confirmed that it would not.

2.3 Risk

- i. JC confirmed that Exec are reviewing the Risk Register against strategic themes to identify interdependencies. Work is being done to identify risk owners along with the responsible Exec member.
- ii. SE emphasised that the plan is for the new structure to be embedded in the organisation as a tool to provide more engagement through the staff team, and to bring the top 10 risks to Board regularly.
- iii. KR recorded thanks to ADT as Chair of the Audit Committee and confirmed his agreement for the Committee to also manage non-commercial risk.
- iv. **ACTION – Bring newly formatted Risk Register back to July Board. JC**

3. COMMERCIAL STRATEGY – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

CW provided the Board with a paper and presented a slide deck.

- i. The purpose of the session was to remind the Board of the Commercial Strategy, and the Five Pillars included therein and to seek input from the Board to assist with diversifying income streams.
- ii. The Board discussed each of the areas and provided feedback.
- iii. CB commented that whilst there is a good framework in place; he was keen to see where the priorities lay and what the key drivers were.
- iv. The Board discussed the retail proposition and the return on investment. The partnership with the Hockey Centre delivers modest returns (£50k/season) with low effort, but broader retail sales are event-dependent and unlikely to significantly grow without investment in marketing.

BOARD SYNOPSIS – April 2025

- v. The Board discussed the importance of deeper connection with the membership now that the new scheme has been approved and how we engage better with our members. CW assured the Board that plans are in place.
- vi. There was a recognition of the importance of data, through GMS, and a need for clarity on the digital transformation strategy. JC confirmed that this is now an additional strand to the Commercial Strategy.
- vii. **ACTION - DS, CB, JC and Tom Allen to meet on a regular basis to develop the Digital Transformation Strategy. JC**
- viii. The Board acknowledged the step-change in ticketing for events, particularly Pro League. CW highlighted the challenges with the set-up costs at Lee Valley, in addition to the demands of the Pro League schedule. Consideration was given to the future of the hockey stadium, hospitality, Big Stadium Hockey and how VIP and 'free' tickets are managed. Big Stadium Hockey and Euro27 present some growth opportunities, and the team are currently working with Two Circles on pricing and marketing, with a focus on creating improved experiences.
- ix. KR summarised the importance of looking at ways to build events in the future to ensure they are more financially successful and drive commercial opportunities from hospitality and partnerships.
- x. There was a discussion around the importance of elevating the domestic game; the value of our international players and how we better engage with premier league clubs to tell stories; recognising that players are a key factor in amplifying the hockey product. To be discussed again at a future meeting.
- xi. **ACTION – Exec to present back at a future Board meeting all commercial priorities once feedback from the day has been collated. JC**

4. MEMBERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

It was agreed to include an update for the July Board.

5. PERFORMANCE CULTURE REVIEW – **FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION**

- i. BC provided the Board with an update on his recent review. He emphasised that there had been a lot of 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.
- ii. He acknowledged that everyone was nervous about results, and he stated that there is some good talent in the group but emphasised the need for patience. He highlighted the challenges around integrating players who have been abroad, and the disruption of the breaks taken. Both Head Coaches are working on creating a distinction between GB and England.
- iii. He assured the Board that moving forward he plans to implement more regular pulse surveys and not rely wholly on the end of cycle reviews, which is generally determined by whether or not results have been positive. He highlighted the need for more consistency while athletes are in the programme and confirmed that the team are working with the Psychologist to create opportunities for regular two-way feedback.
- iv. ADB concurred and added that this will help with rotation and recognition of other high-level competitions.
- v. KR asked about the escalation process depending on the severity of any outcomes. BC assured the Board that there is a clear process for escalation of considerable issues, but the pulse surveys would focus on creating a positive day-to-day environment and addressing issues before they became considerable.
- vi. **ACTION A Performance Strategy will be delivered to Board in July. BC**

6. TRANS NAMING – **FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION**

HW presented a slide deck which included the results of the recent survey.

- i. HW reminded the Board of the process undertaken in the development and launch of the policy, which was done primarily with fairness in mind.

BOARD SYNOPSIS – April 2025

- ii. Within the new policy, the suggested names were Female and Open; representing a significant change to the current policy which allowed for self-identification.
- iii. HW referred to the recent Supreme Court ruling determining that the definitions of “woman”, “man” and “sex” refer to biological sex, and as our policy is based on fairness, nothing changes in terms of the policy.
- iv. To maintain fairness and a welcoming culture it was agreed that the naming must be aligned to eligibility criteria; notwithstanding that any club or organisation can still call their teams what they wish to.
- v. The survey was sent to a sample of 8000 players (across age, country and gender) club chairs and welfare officers, ASC and Adult leagues, EDI Advisory Group members, and all those involved in the initial consultation. 731 responses were received (9%), which statistically is a sound sample.
- vi. The Board discussed the Female Category and agreed that the name should continue to be called Women (or girls for under-18) which aligns with the Supreme Court definition of women.
- vii. With regard to the Open category, there was a mixed view around the table and some concerns raised around the impact of the change, IT considerations, how junior competitions would be managed, that the name is too long and would ultimately be abbreviated to Men, and how this would be implemented.
- viii. However, following robust discussion (and an informal vote which resulted in a decent majority towards Open) the Board approved the direction of travel towards Open/Men or Men/Open and agreed to support the Exec, subject to clarification for the naming of junior competitions in line with the senior competitions and in response to the survey.
- ix. **ACTION - It was agreed that Exec discuss further and make a recommendation to Board. JC**

7. FACILITIES LOAN SCHEME – **FOR INFORMATION**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. RB emphasised the importance of developing a process for selecting the Stakeholder Board. A Meeting is scheduled for tomorrow to discuss further.

8. CEO / EXEC REPORT – **FOR INFORMATION**

Paper taken as read with the following comments:

- i. JC explained that she has worked with the Exec to cut the report down, bring more comparisons and more visual information for ease of understanding and assurance to the Board.
- ii. She highlighted that anti-doping education process is in place in the lead up to Pro League.
- iii. For clarity, it was confirmed that Havant is a Talent Academy.
- iv. SE raised concern around the FIH policy regarding Facemasks. JC assured the Board that the topic is on the Agenda for an internal meeting.
- v. KR requested the topic be placed on a risk register by the Exec and considered by the Risk Committee before coming back to board.
- vi. BC confirmed that the results from the junior programme are not unusual given where we currently are with our age groups. He explained that there is a large squad through the season, but more focused contact time from now.

9. EDI AUDIT UPDATE – **FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION**

AD provided the Board with an update.

- i. AD explained that 3.5 years ago EH launched an EDI Action Plan which is referred to as a Framework. A first EH EDI conference was held and there was good engagement. An external Advisory Group of passionate experts were recruited and helped to pull together the framework.
- ii. The first-year report saw some good work and some clear achievements; this fell away in second half of second year. The focus then changed to the Trans policy.

BOARD SYNOPSIS – April 2025

- iii. An Internal Working Group was established, and a robust review process was undertaken. The Advisory Group were given updates each quarter, as opposed to asking for guidance and advice; as a result engagement levels dropped.
- iv. UK Sport and Sport England mandated the creation of a Diversity Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) which sat aside from our Framework and included a number of pillars already included in our Framework.
- v. There is a recognition of the need to focus EDI and agree what we're going after, aligned to our strategy.
- vi. There is a lot of good work going on and we need to celebrate successes better.
- vii. Of concern is the lack of baseline data and the ability to measure our performance against it. This is a priority.
- viii. ACTION - Next step is for the Exec to determine next EDI Action Plan (in line with the DIAP), with advice and guidance from the Advisory Group and bring back to Board with plan. EXEC / MT**
- ix. KR added that it is important to try to diversify our sport; the criticism of white representation is very strong.

10. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & AOB

- i. **Accuracy**
The minutes were approved as a true and accurate recording with this amendment.
- ii. **Matters arising (see action points tracker)**
Updates and comments have been added against the actions in the tracker.

11. AOB – FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION

11.1 Governance Matters

- i. JC explained that the process to recruit a GB President was ongoing and agreed to keep the Board updated on progress
- ii. EH Board offered support to the process if required.

11.2 Committees

- i. KR confirmed that a number of Committees are now established, and discussions are still ongoing regarding the Commercial and Performance Committees.
- ii. **ACTION – KR to circulate list of Committees. KR**
- iii. JC suggested that the Performance Committee be an Advisory Group.
- iv. The People Committee Terms of Reference were provided and the Board discussed roles and responsibilities, how detailed they needed to be and the spirit that is intended. It was agreed to proceed with the provisional terms as provided and review as necessary.
- v. KR highlighted that the Appointments Committee was responsible for Members of Honour and explained that there had been no award since 2021. The current recommendation is to reinvigorate the process and appoint 1 member per year. She added that this year is exceptional because of the time lapsed.
- vi. The Committee recommended Mike Stoddard and Gordon Nurse. **The Board approved the recommendation.**
- vii. KR explained that there is also some thinking around using our Patron more effectively and nominations for Kings Honours.

11.3 CEO Process

KR confirmed that the process for recruiting the new CEO was underway with a closing date of 12th May. Two panels have been selected including representation from UK Sport and an independent from outside hockey.

BOARD SYNOPSIS – April 2025

11.4 Hockey Events

- i. It was agreed to host an Athlete event during Pro League week and to invite 50 former athletes to reengage as ambassadors for the sport. Support is being provided by CW, BC, ADB and SMa. A follow up meeting will be arranged to confirm outcomes and details.
- ii. KR confirmed that it is important to understand which Board members are attending EH events. **ACTION – JC to follow up. JC**
- iii. RB advised the Board that they may receive invites to Prem Finals and Awards Dinner and to please respond promptly so that numbers can be confirmed.

Meeting closed at 17:38