



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SPORT NI BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY
17TH DECEMBER 2020 @ 9.00AM (VIA ZOOM MEETING)**

Present: Board members: George Lucas Jay Colville Jackie Bryson Richard Bullick Wilma Erskine Kyle Ferguson Kieran Harding Catherine O'Mullan Darryl Petticrew	In attendance: Sport NI Officials Antoinette McKeown, CEO Adrian Doherty, Director of Finance & Governance Peter McCabe, Interim Director of Performance John News, Interim Director of Participation Ali Campbell, Executive Unit Manager Gillian Gilliland, Board Secretary
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Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
1. Apologies	There were no apologies to note.
2. Register of Member's Declarations of Interest	There were no new declarations of interest to note.
3. Minutes of Previous Meetings	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2020.
4. Chair's Remarks	<p>The Chair presented his remarks as follows:</p> <p>Public consultation on the Draft Corporate plan continues using a variety of engagement methods. DFC's overall strategy was launched last month and progress has been made on the formulation of DFC's Sports Strategy 2020. Sport NI will continue to gain feedback on our draft Corporate plan and ensure alignment with DFC's strategies before completion by the year end.</p> <p>Progress against Business plan objectives and also information in Board papers continue to demonstrate a solid performance by SNI's Executive Team and staff. The Covid 19 coping strategies continue to be implemented in partnership with DFC, governing bodies and other stakeholders and have provided much needed advice, support and extra funding to the sports sector. This partnership working has been acknowledged by the Minister, the Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary and the Board.</p>

	<p>The Chairs' of the Home nations Sports Councils were invited to attend a recent meeting of the UK Sports Cabinet. The Chairs provided an update to Ministers on cooperation and coordination of Sports Councils in seeking to improve the contribution of sport to improve lives and build a healthy and inclusive society.</p> <p>The National Lottery advised sales had recovered from an 18% drop at the start of the pandemic to an overall half year result of 1.7% reduction. This is important to SNI as Lottery funding is a significant contributor to our programmes.</p> <p>Investment in Safety Management at Designated Sports Grounds Business Case for £310,498 capital funding was approved by the Board on 17 November 2020 to enable procurement and a project delivery before 31 March 2021.</p> <p>Everybody Active report circulated on 26 November 2020 highlighted a successful programme for participants, stakeholders and SNI. This has also provided an improved understanding which will inform the implementation of the new corporate plan.</p> <p>There is a need to augment our Board training programme agreed in June as part of the Board Effectiveness Review. We need to plan 3 half day workshops in 2021 focusing on building relationships to underpin culture change and corporate plan aspirations.</p> <p>This is the final Board meeting for Jackie Bryson and Catherine O'Mullan, both are key members of our Board. Jackie has served 4 years and brought an experience in leadership in UK Sports Outdoor centre, and an expertise in Sports development in GB. Jackie is very diligent and committed with strong strategic thinking and analysis skills, which was evident in questions raised in response to papers and constructive challenge in discussions. Jackie also served on the Remuneration committee.</p> <p>Catherine has served 5 years, as interim Vice Chair in 2016, served on ARAC and as Chair of Remuneration Committee. Catherine provided valued support to the Chair and Vice Chair through knowledge transfer, the handover of the Transformation Project combined with ongoing support. Catherine's background in education and experience from serving on other Boards brought strong strategic thinking skills plus an ability to inject ideas or suggest a resolution to difficult problems in discussions which is highly valued.</p> <p>The Chair took the opportunity to acknowledge Jackie's and Catherine's contribution during a period of transformation and development and advised the Board look forward to meeting up when circumstances allow.</p> <p>In line with our commitment to continuous professional development, the Vice-Chair requested circulation of a presentation on the evolution of the role of Non-Executive Director for a brief discussion.</p> <p><i>K Harding joined the meeting at 9.10am.</i></p>
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	<p>The Vice-Chair advised he recently attended an InTouch international conference and advised the Board of the key findings which were presented at the conference. It was agreed the presentation and findings would be shared with the Board and there was a possibility to discuss this further in a workshop.</p> <p>A member highlighted the Charity Governance Code was reissued this week; a lot of this ties in with our cornerstones. It was agreed this would also be shared with the Board.</p>
5. CEO Report SNI 20 63	<p>Members received paper number SNI 20 63 for noting.</p> <p>Members noted the report was a standard operational update of work across the whole organisation and the CEO was happy to take queries.</p> <p>Members noted the Partnership Agreement was not yet complete. DfC have advised that no ALBs have completed their partnership agreements and none within DfC. Members heard the respective principle purpose of DfC and Sport NI was an area which has reached an impasse. DfC had advised there is a grey area in terms of issuing grants and relationships; we need to get mutual agreement on what Sport NI and DfC do in terms of roles and responsibilities. Members heard the timing was unfortunate as this is a business plan target for the end of March. DfC have asked for the Partnership Agreement to be discussed further in 2021, therefore we will likely not meet this target. Members noted Board support was being requested.</p> <p>Members agreed this is vital in terms of moving into a new corporate plan without purpose of how we operate; it was agreed we need to ensure the corporate plan, strategy and the partnership agreement align. This is a priority for us as a Board and we need to get some engagement in January to get this moved forward. Members queried should this be highlighted to Tracy Meharg and it was advised this would be seen as a failure to agree and staff did not want that.</p> <p>A Board member raised a concern that Sport NI has been asked to do something and then is not getting cooperation. This is a not just point of principle in terms of our values and behaviours but also creates significant risk for the organisation. Members also noted the fourth principle is valuing expertise and we have not had collaboration with DfC.</p> <p>It was highlighted to members regarding agreement on roles and responsibilities and issuing grants, Sport NI had set up a Project Board to administer the Sports Sustainability Fund but DfC had also set up an oversight group which ultimately created duplication. This has created governance issues and is a risk for the organisation.</p> <p>Members discussed again the main recommendation within the October 2017 PAR Review was outstanding around distinction of roles. The Chair advised, in discussions with the department in May, he raised the idea of working with John Harkin and it was rejected. The Chair stated as this was a Business Plan target and we need to get this done by the end of March in agreement; we need to have clear proposals to get this complete.</p>

	<p>It was suggested we seek a meeting with the department involving the Chair and another Board member to show the significance of the need to complete this. Members agreed to this and advised the Board are available to support the organisation.</p> <p>Members agreed this as a last resort and fully supported that first the CEO should follow up the Chair's suggestion to seek involvement from John Harkin, the lead reviewer in the original PAR. The Board concluded that it was very frustrating to hear the department are duplicating work, especially on project management of the Sustainability Fund (through DfC Oversight Group and SNI Programme Board) as this creates real risk. Concern was also raised in relation to "grey areas" as this is bad governance.</p> <p>It was agreed that at the next meeting of the Partnership Agreement Group Sport NI would seek input and facilitation from John Harkin to take this forward and try to meet our Business Plan target.</p> <p>Members queried the attendee levels for the Public Consultation. Members were advised the ET have had a good discussion around this; there is a stakeholder engagement plan and the public consultation is just a small part of the groups. Members were advised the DfC taskforce for their strategy were receiving comments similar to those within the codesign for our CP. Although the public consultation attendance is low, due to covid, we have lots of other stakeholder engagement ongoing with GBs, Section 75 groups and other sectors. Members agreed it was good to hear we have a widespread consultation and look forward to receiving the engagement report.</p>
6. Communications 6.1 Covid-19 Communications Plan SNI 20 64 6.2 Media Report SNI 20 65	<p>Members received paper numbers SNI 20 64 and SNI 20 65 for noting.</p> <p>Members noted the highlights from the Communications and Media Plans. The key messages around funding, role of clubs in the community and the value of volunteers were highlighted and it was advised we are getting many good news stories out in the media.</p> <p>A member stated this was a very comprehensive report but queried were there any areas that have not been achieved. Members were advised negative comments were noted in the media report; we would contact a person offline regarding any negative comments to try to resolve this directly. It was confirmed that all campaigns have hit their targets.</p>
7. Equality Scheme SNI 20 66	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 66 for approval; this is Sport NI's updated Equality Scheme aligned to our statutory duties under Section 75 of the NI Act.</p> <p>Members approved the Equality Scheme.</p>
8. Equal Opportunities Policy SNI 20 67	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 67 for approval which sets out the revised Equal Opportunities Policy aligned to the updated Equality Scheme.</p> <p>Members approved the Equal Opportunities policy.</p>

9. Remuneration Committee TOR Update SNI 20 68	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 68 for approval.</p> <p>The Remuneration Committee Chair advised the Remuneration Committee TOR was revised; however there are a number of items that need to be reviewed and this paper has been withdrawn.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Catherine O'Mullan and Jackie Bryson for their contribution to the Remuneration Committee.</p> <p>The Chair proposed to the Board for Wilma Erskine to take on the role of Remuneration Committee Chair, Richard Bullick to remain as Secretary and Jay Colville to become a member with effect from January 2021. The addition of a further member would be discussed in the New Year. Members approved the amended Remuneration Committee membership.</p>
10. Rolling Board Business 2020/21 update SNI 20 69	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 69 for noting which sets out the business for 2021 Board meetings.</p> <p>Members noted the paper.</p>
11. Review of Safeguarding Policy SNI 20 70	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 70 for approval.</p> <p>Members noted the Safeguarding policy review was scheduled for March 2021 but was brought forward at the Board's request to December 2020. The policy has been revised, with the cover paper identifying those revisions made, including that the policy has been split into two separate components to take account of children and vulnerable adults.</p> <p>Members acknowledged the work around these policies and approved the policies.</p>
12. Covid response update SNI 20 71	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 71 for noting.</p> <p>Members noted this is a comprehensive report on how SNI are managing the Covid response and allocation of resources. The Chair thanked the ET for preparing this report and for the agile response to the Covid response.</p> <p>Members heard there were a range of projects happening and while we have £25m for the Sport Sustainability Fund there are smaller projects which involve a lot of time and work and they are HR intensive reflective of our wish to add value. Members noted staff are working quickly and making decisions promptly while taking a robust project management approach to all work; there is a clear resource tool for monitoring across the whole programme.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated staff for all the work involved in this area.</p> <p><i>K Harding left the meeting at 10.03am.</i></p>
13. Recognition update including approval of Golf Ireland	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 72 for approval.</p>

<p>SNI 20 72</p>	<p>Members noted the paper was seeking approval for the recognition of Golf Ireland as an NGB, replacing the previous separate organisations for male and female golf.</p> <p>It also provided an update to the recognition list following a recent review which members were previously briefed on and de-recognised some sports as a result.</p> <p>Members approved the paper.</p>
<p>14. SNI Pure Winner Anti-Doping update SNI 20 73</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 73 for noting.</p> <p>Members heard it was good practice to have an annual update on Anti-Doping and this had been presented to the Board in previous years. The update paper provides an overview of Sport NI's responsibilities in this area and the context in which we operate and work planned for next year.</p> <p>The Chair noted Kieran Harding's contribution to anti-doping work as the Board representative.</p> <p><i>C O'Mullan left the meeting at 10.15am.</i></p>
<p>15. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report – 7 December 2020 meeting</p>	<p>The Vice-Chair presented the 7 December 2020 ARAC minutes which had been circulated to members.</p> <p>Members noted DfC were content with what we are doing in terms of the McBride judgment. Members were advised of a significant development yesterday afternoon; a letter had been received from the department regarding the McBride judgment. The letter advised the NI Executive and Heads of Department have formally approached OLC and have agreed to draft a bill to amend the Charities Act and legal advice regarding acting ultra vires. It also confirmed decisions may be taken by staff if these were then approved by the Board. This reflects the position on how SNI were working prior to McBride. The letter asked if we are content with this and we have confirmed this approach. Members noted this approach is subject to the Minister's approval. The Vice-Chair stated this was good news and we would be able to take McBride off future Board agendas.</p> <p>The Vice Chair confirmed PAC were not taking evidence on the NIAO Sport NI report and therefore would not be required to attend the PAC. Members noted Internal Audit was going well. Members were advised there will be a slight delay on the accounts due to Covid but the current audit was proceeding well.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair confirmed it was a really good meeting and a deep dive was planned for March in terms of capital funding.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair thanked Catherine O'Mullan for her service on the ARAC.</p> <p>The Chair stated he appreciated all the work undertaken at ARAC.</p>
<p>16. Delegated Decisions</p>	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 74 for approval.</p>

SNI 20 74	<p>Members noted the paper addressed the current McBride Judgment context by seeking retrospective approval for decisions taken by the Executive Team since the last Board meeting.</p> <p>Members approved the paper.</p>
17. Finance & Governance SNI 20 75	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 75 for noting.</p> <p>Members noted the report was discussed at length at ARAC and noted its contents.</p> <p><i>C O'Mullan re-joined the meeting at 10.23am.</i></p>
18. HR Policies SNI 20 76	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 76 for approval.</p> <p>Members received the following policies attached to the paper: Disciplinary, Grievance, Uniform Appeals and Whistleblowing. Members noted the policies have been under review for some time and have been out for consultation with the Union. They are currently with the department for their observations; it was proposed the Board approve the policies subject to any comments received from the department.</p> <p>Members queried had there been many changes from the previous policies and it was advised the policies were out of date. Members requested for future policy review if the changes could be highlighted for members' information.</p> <p>Members stated these policies were "quite gloomy" and asked for assurance on work being taken forward on more positive action HR policies, e.g. a reward and recognition policy. Members were advised there is a whole suite of HR policies that we review on a rolling programme; however these policies were being reviewed aligned to recommendations arising from the NIAO report.</p> <p>Members approved the policies.</p>
19. Going Concern SNI 20 77	<p>Members received paper SNI 20 77 for approval.</p> <p>Members heard as NIAO are completing audits on accounts they have requested the Board have a formal discussion on whether Sport NI continues to be a going concern.</p> <p>Members discussed this in terms of the organisation being a recipient of lottery and exchequer funding, with the department continuing to invest in us.</p> <p>Members agreed that within the last year there has been a significant amount of work to provide evidence and assurance to the Board of going concern. There is also work ongoing in terms of our purpose and progress against the Business Plan and responding to Covid which has been acknowledged by the Minister.</p> <p>Members discussed the work undertaken to bring accounts up to date, the fact that the financial statement have been produced and work ongoing on audits. Members also discussed the Corporate Plan which has been approved by the</p>

	<p>Minister in terms of future work. Members agreed the four bullet points within the paper provided evidence of Sport NI as a going concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial statements of Sport NI have always been produced on the 'Going Concern Basis'. The Executive Team is not aware of any reason to adopt a different basis. • Sport NI is an arm's length body of the Department for Communities. The Minister has recently approved Sport NI's draft Corporate Plan 2020-25 for Consultation, thus implying that Sport NI will continue to exist for at least the next five years. • Sport NI is incorporated by legislation. To change the status of Sport NI would require a legislative change. The Executive Team is unaware of any suggestion that such a change is being considered. • DfC has recently published its five year strategy: Building Inclusive Communities. The strategy acknowledges that ALBs perform many vital and significant functions and it is through them that the Department will deliver much of its work. The work carried out by Sport NI is specifically referenced: "Lead in the development of, and access to, sport in Northern Ireland." <p>Members agreed they had scrutinised the paper along with the evidence that Sport NI is a going concern.</p> <p>A member queried point 2 in the paper referring to the 14/15 accounts and stated the present Board inherited these and we are working to rectify these. It was confirm this is a legacy but there has been a great amount of work by Sport NI and the auditors to bring this up to date. It was also noted this is a routine request in terms of when the accounts are being finalised and an audit requirement to ask this question.</p> <p>Members approved Sport NI as a going concern based on their discussions above.</p>
20. AOB	<p>The Chair asked was everyone content this had been a good meeting and members agreed.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone and particularly the Executive Team for the hard work and requested thanks be passed onto staff. The Chair also thanked Board colleagues stating great progress had been made as a team; the Chair stated the papers are testament to progress made and the Board were very mindful of the hard work put in during Covid.</p> <p>The Chair wished everyone a very Happy Christmas, New Year and asked everyone to stay safe.</p>
21. Date of next meeting	<p>Wednesday 10th February @ 9.15-11.30am</p> <p>The meeting ended at 10.39am.</p>

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George Lucas.

Approved by: _____
Sport NI Chair

Date: 10 February 2021