



BOARD MEETING
Tuesday 13th December
Tollymore National Outdoor Centre (TNOC) at 9.30am

BOARD MINUTE

Present

George Lucas
 Jay Colville
 Kieran Harding
 Kyle Ferguson
 Wendy Elliott
 Alison Nicholl (via remote access)

In Attendance

Antoinette McKeown, Chief Executive
 Rebecca Morgan, Chief Operating Officer
 Richard Archibald, Director of Sport
 John Hart, Head of Policy and Innovation
 Orlagh Watters, Head of Sports Systems
 Laura Carland, Board Secretariat

	ITEM	Status
1	Apologies Apologies were received from Gavin Boyd, Denise Burns and Richard Bullick	
2	Declaration of Conflicts of Interest There were no declarations of conflicts of interest to make.	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the previous meeting (16 th November 2022) were accepted Approval: The minutes of the 16 th November Board Meeting were accepted.	Approval: The minutes of the 16 th November Board Meeting were accepted.
4	Actions from the previous meeting Members noted that the actions and decisions log was uploaded with the papers on DecisionTime for Members' information.	
5	Matters Arising None	
6	Chair's Briefing The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended thanks to the staff and team at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre (TNOC) for hosting the Board and ELT. The Chair remarked that this was a perfect opportunity to engage with staff. Members noted that the Board Meeting will serve as an update meeting and an opportunity for the ELT to raise any items by exception for Board information or approval. In addition, the Chair noted that as the end of another busy year approaches, the Board recognised the significant work undertaken by staff and the positive approach to change and challenge as the Board, ELT and staff look forward to another productive year in 2023. WE joined the meeting.	
7	CEO Update The CEO Update paper, and associated appendices, were tabled as read.	Action: Sport NI website to be updated with

The CEO advised Members that following a recent meeting with the Permanent Secretary, DfC and other ALB CEOs, discussions were held in respect of the Cost of Living Crisis and the resulting impact on budgets. Members noted that three key areas - namely public interest, governance and budget - were highlighted for focus and the CEO advised therefore that budget pressures will impact the organisation moving forward.

Members queried the Staff Engagement work to date and the Board responsibilities resulting from the Staff Engagement Survey. Members queried the Board actions required which may not have been actioned to date. The CEO and COO advised that the previous position of the Staff Engagement WG reported to Board that Board engagement was not deemed a priority relevant to other issues remained in place. The CEO advised that staff had been advised that the board was monitoring progress with staff engagement as a priority. The CEO advised that allowing the Staff Working Group to lead on the priorities identified demonstrates that the ELT are listening to staff and respecting their pressing concerns.

The COO referenced the meeting in TNOC today as an example of Board engagement with staff, including an opportunity to join staff at lunchtime from across Sport NI. Members noted that Board profiles are currently being uploaded to the Sport NI website to aid an increase in visibility. Members discussed how they were concerned that the Board engagement with staff had not occurred. The CEO advised that the engagement plan was staff led however if the Board wished to prioritise a meeting with staff, this could be easily arranged.

A Board Member raised concern that the Board Minutes page on the Sport NI website is outdated and that Board profiles should be uploaded to the website as soon as possible. The CEO advised that once all Board members profiles are received, they would be uploaded to website; also, that Board minutes would be updated asap.

Action: Sport NI website to be updated with Board Member profiles and Board Meeting minutes.

Members were advised that the follow up staff engagement questionnaire - , at the request of the Staff Working Group – would be undertaken in June 2023 and that this change would be reflected in the draft Business Plan 2023/24

Members queried the status of the Health and Safety review of HOS, SNISI and TNOC. Members were advised that work is ongoing with TNOC and SNISI centre managers and, in the case of SNISI, the premises officer at UUJ also, during the review process. Members noted that management will be engaged during this process and that to date, it is believed that the review has been detailed and thorough.

Members were advised that staff continue to undertake online Health and Safety module training, and additional workplace specific training modules; with HR issuing reminders to staff and statistics of completed courses being recorded and monitored.

In addition, Members were advised to use their Sport NI email addresses for Board related correspondence, and the DecisionTime platform, to help adhere to GDPR and Data Protection policies and guidance.

The COO informed the Board that the IT Manager recruitment process closes on Friday 16th December and advised that as this recruitment process is being undertaken via the interchange platform, the organisation does not have direct control over the application process.

Draft Business Plan 2023-24 and Q2 Business Plan Review

Members were referred to the Draft Business Plan 2023-24 and Q2 Business Plan Review, which were tabled as read.

The CEO spoke to the draft plan which has been developed to reflect forthcoming budgetary pressures and the ambitious strategic objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan and DfC Ten Year Strategy. Members were advised the organisation is required to submit the draft Business Plan with high level actions by 31st December. The CEO introduced the draft Plan as one that reflected organisational consolidation after

significant change and a focus on data capture to enable a better evidence base for reporting against impact measures, milestones and outcomes

Members discussed the draft Business Plan and the need to include metrics to support the information provided and to agree a baseline from which to measure realistic objectives and progress, to better demonstrate what has been achieved to date.

The CEO advised that the Q2 Business Plan review is a mid-term overview and that the report will be available for February 2023 meeting and the Q4 review in May 2023, with an annual overview, to be included in the Annual Report for 2022-23. As such the Q2 report only covers until end October 2022.

Members queried the information included within the draft Business Plan. Members discussed governing bodies and their current ability to take forward the objectives of the Business Plan. Members were provided with a brief verbal overview of the accountability measures and governance procedures in place with governing bodies and were advised that the scope and variety of governing bodies in both size, available resources and skills would vary and therefore impact on the consistency of information provided. Members were advised that as part of ongoing engagement with the sporting sector, the organisation is collating the challenges of individual sports and ascertaining what is occurring at 'ground level' and that this information and engagement will help shape the direction of the business plan objectives moving forward.

During discussion on baseline data and impact/outcome measures, ELT members highlighted the recognition that data is a key priority in the next draft Business Plan hence the action relating to this. The discussion noted that some impact measures could be set now for some actions but not for others as work to determine the performance measures has not yet completed.

The CEO asked a Board member for a further discussion offline as a conducive means of gaining more understanding. The Chair asked that Members review these points and submit any additional comments for inclusion or consideration in advance of the February Board Meeting.

AN left the meeting

The ELT advised that due to the nature of performance and the timelines determined by competitions, the impact of delivering more medals has complex and nuanced implications in terms of the potential negative impact on culture within sports and upon athletes. Members noted that the organisation is on the path to determining what 'success' looks like beyond podiums, for example, in respect of addressing inequality in sport.

Members referred to the Q2 Review. There was a brief discussion regarding the grading of individual items and members were advised that we cannot change actions mid-year but we can report against progress and provide rationale where progress is delayed.

Outstanding Lottery Accounts Update from Vice Chair

The Vice Chair referred Members to the Outstanding Lottery Accounts and the work undertaken to certify this information.

Members were advised that the outstanding Lottery Accounts were robustly discussed during the ARAC Meeting on 17th October. Members noted that KMcC, Finance Manager, spoke to the backlog and provided ARAC with historical background and context. Members noted that KMcC's update gave ARAC Members the confidence that the audit process was progressing, and that the organisation had provided the relevant information for NIAO to proceed.

Members were reminded that during the full Board Meeting on 19th October, the Vice Chair provided a verbal update. Members were reminded that the conclusion of the Board was that the organisation should seek to engage NIAO to review their proposed 2026 conclusion timeline, that the COO negotiated in August 2022, and bring the audit dates significantly forward.

	<p>Members were advised that following Board request, a joint letter from the Vice Chair and CEO would be sent to NIAO to seek a review and acceleration of the audit programme. Members were advised that NIAO responded and made the following statement, quote '<i>Since the certification of the 2014-25 financial statements in 2021, we have been unable to progress any of the other audits because for almost 12 months we have been awaiting key information from yourselves, together with revised accounts for each of the years since 2014-15. This information was finally received on 30th October, four days before your letter</i>'</p> <p>The Vice Chair stated that receipt of this letter gave cause for concern and therefore the Vice Chair wrote to the CEO requesting further clarification. Members were advised that a meeting with the Chair, CEO, COO and Vice Chair was held on 08/12/22 and the Vice Chair requested to see the NIAO requests for audit information and confirm when they were received. Members noted that the CEO provided a spreadsheet with multiple tasks listed and an email dated 30/10/22 from KMcC to CO'H, NIAO. The Vice Chair stated that the emailed demonstrated that KMcC and Sport NI had explained the material requested and earmarked staff to deal with any further enquiries. In addition, the Vice Chair stated that the COO showed the considerable email traffic to the Finance Manager throughout the year and the apparent 'random' nature of audit requests. The Vice Chair stated that he took confidence from the discussion and the evidence provided. Members noted that it was agreed that the COO and CMcG, Audit Manager, NIAO, would meet on a monthly basis to update on audit progress, provide timely responses when required and report to the CEO, who would then update the Board accordingly. The Vice Chair stated that he would continue to monitor progress and include this information in the quarterly ARAC Meetings moving forward.</p>	
8	ELT Issues By Exception	
	Sport NI Travel Policy	
	<p>Members were referred to the Sport NI Travel Policy, which was subject to review and updating, in advance of Board discussion and approval.</p> <p>The COO spoke to the draft Travel Policy and provided an overview of the paper. The Board sought assurance on potential tax implications of the new policy in relation to HMRC. In addition, Members were advised that staff operate with a contracted 'normal place of work', which is integrated into the travel policies and procedures.</p> <p>After a brief discussion, Members were content to approve the Sport NI Travel Policy Approval: Members approved the Sport NI Travel Policy</p>	Approval: Members approved the Sport NI Travel Policy
	Multi Facility Fund – Ballyclare Rugby Football Club	
	<p>The Multi-Facility Fund – Ballyclare Rugby Football Club paper was tabled as read. The Director of Sport spoke to the paper; providing an overview for the information of Members. Members and the ELT discussed the paper. Members queried the context of the project, the use of regional mapping, the hours of activity and geographical comparisons with other similar projects. The Director of Sport discussed the ongoing infrastructure review being undertaken by staff and provided additional context to the long term project detailed within the paper. Members noted that time lags of infrastructure projects, significant resources required and a lack of consistency across infrastructure projects impact on the comparable data and statistical formation available to the organisation. There were no issues or concerns raised by the Board.</p> <p>Members were content to approve the Multi-Facility Fund – Ballyclare Rugby Football Club paper Approval: Members approved the Multi-Facility Fund – Ballyclare Rugby Football Club paper</p>	Approval: Members approved the Multi-Facility Fund – Ballyclare Rugby Football Club paper
	Sports System Investment Paper	
	<p>Members were referred to the Sports System Investment paper for consideration and approval. OW, Interim Head of Sports Systems, spoke to the paper, which follows significant engagement with the sporting sector conducted across the latter half of the year. OW spoke to the paper and provided an overview of the proposals for the approval by the Board; noting that the paper has been developed by reviewing best practice measures and close work with sports councils including Sport Ireland and UKS. The</p>	

	<p>Board acknowledged the positive engagement with Sports Governing Bodies across UK and Ireland in developing this programme, the most extensive held by Sport NI to date. .</p> <p>Members commented positively on the paper and discussed the current levels of engagement with the sector, the impact on resourcing and governance and the risks identified and managed appropriately.</p> <p>Members were advised of three proposed approaches to investment, namely sports invested within the current year, sports in receipt of smaller investment within the past two years and sports which have received no investment to date. Members noted that caps in funding have been integrated into the investment programme. Members noted that this funding would be mined from Lottery Funding.</p> <p>After extensive discussion and questions, Members were content to approve the Sports System Investment Paper, including the recommended approach to investment into Governing Bodies and the indicative baseline planning figures.</p> <p>Approval: Members approved the Sports System Investment Paper including the recommended approach to investment into Governing Bodies and the indicative baseline planning figures.</p>	
9	<p>Board Schedule for 2023</p> <p>Members were referred to the draft Board Schedule for 2023. Members were content to approve the 2023 Board Schedule</p> <p>Approval: Members approved the 2023 Board Schedule.</p>	Approval: Members approved the 2023 Board Schedule.
10	<p>Additional Information for Board</p> <p>COVID-19 Enquiry Response to DfC</p> <p>Members were advised of an ongoing enquiry into the nationwide response to COVID-19. After discussion with ELT Members, it was proposed that DfC colleagues would manage the information provided for this enquiry moving forward, however, it was noted that Sport NI would provide full cooperation and support to DfC colleagues when and where needed.</p> <p>Letter from Permanent Secretary Re: Raising Concerns / Whistleblowing</p> <p>Members were referred to a recently submitted letter from the Permanent Secretary, Colum Boyle, in relation to the ability of staff to raise concerns and the existing Whistleblowing Policy and procedures within the organisation. Members noted that staff are aware of the current Whistleblowing policy and procedures and that a response to the Permanent Secretary is currently being drafted. In addition, Members and the ELT discussed the benefit of considering external communications and external good practice models to integrate into future policies moving forward.</p>	
11	<p>AOB</p> <p>Members were advised of further correspondence received from the Permanent Secretary, Colum Boyle, on the management of operations in the absence of a functioning NI Executive. Members were also reminded of the presentation to be provided now from TNOC Centre Manager, a proposed tour of the facility and lunch which would provide the Board with an opportunity to meet staff.</p>	
12	<p>Date of the next meeting(s)</p> <p>The ELT were advised that, as per the new 2023 Board Schedule, the next ARAC Meeting is scheduled to take place on 30th January 2023 and the next quarterly Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on 15th February 2023.</p> <p>Members were advised that the SportMaker Awards are scheduled to take place on 6th March 2023 and were encouraged to attend as an opportunity to showcase programmes with the organisation.</p> <p>The Chair asked if Members and ELT felt this was a positive meeting and reminded those in attendance that if they have any ideas for improving Board proceedings, to liaise with the Chair.</p>	

The Chair thanked the Board, ELT and staff for the hard work conducted throughout 2022 and wished everyone a peaceful, safe and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Signed by Sport NI Chair: *George Lucas.*

Date: 15th February 2023