



**BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> May in House of Sport at 10am**

**BOARD MINUTE**

**Present**

George Lucas  
 Kyle Ferguson  
 Kieran Harding  
 Gavin Boyd  
 Wendy Elliott  
 Alison Nicholl  
 Richard Bullick  
 Denise Burns

**In Attendance**

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  
 Dame Katherine Grainger, UK Sport Chair

	ITEM	STATUS
1	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies were received from Jay Colville and Antoinette McKeown	
2	<b>Declaration of Conflicts of Interest</b> None	
3	<b>Welcome to Dame Katherine Grainger</b> <p>The Chair welcomed Dame Katherine Grainger to the meeting; thanking the UK Sport Chair for making the trip to Belfast that day.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the Board and ELT dinner held on the evening of 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023, which provided an excellent opportunity to meet with Dame Katherine in advance of the Board meeting.</p> <p>The Chair invited Dame Katherine Grainger to speak to the Board and ELT. Dame Katherine Grainger thanked the Board and ELT for welcoming her to House of Sport; which served as part of annual visits to the four home nations councils in Dame Katherine's capacity as UK Sport Chair.</p> <p>Dame Katherine Grainger spoke to the ongoing challenges experienced by all four home nations in respect of the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis and the economic, social and societal issues affecting all regions. Members noted that a positive focus on sport and forthcoming events, such as the Olympic Games in Paris 2024 allows opportunities to engage with athletes, focus on mental health and wellbeing and to explore great news stories around sport.</p>	
4	<b>Presentation on Women in Sport</b> <p>The Interim Head of Sport Systems presented on the subject of Women in Sport. The IHSS spoke to the challenges faced by women in sport, the unconscious bias demonstrated across the sporting sector, and society as a whole, and also, the challenges regarding data and information bias and knowledge gaps in sport and performance. The IHSS presented on the economic impact of feminism, the effect of universal designs for men on female participation, the lack of sufficient support structures in place and the impact of the absence of women in leadership and coaching roles within sport.</p> <p>Members thanked the IHSS for the presentation and discussion the ongoing challenges faced by Women in Sport.</p> <p>Members discussed the need to address knowledge and data gaps and reassess the</p>	Action: 'Women in Sport' to be added to the Board as a standing item until further notice. ELT to provide brief verbal updates on this issue by exception.

	<p>existing data to determine if it is 'fit for purpose' for women. Members discussed the potential of optimising key figures, including Board Members, to maximise the impact of the work.</p> <p>Members discussed the practical actions which could be taken by the Board to address the issues facing women in sport which affect participation levels and overall well-being. It was noted that significant changes to the experience of women in sport will be slow to take effect but that investment and development within this area at this stage will be demonstrated in the long term. Members discussed the impact of gender specific terminology and language gearing towards male counterparts, the need to inspire change at policy level and through meaningful changes to the physical education curriculum by working with education partners. In addition, Members discussed how best to support those women in sport who may not opt for coaching roles after their athletic career has concluded.</p> <p>Members discussed the work of Governing Bodies to address equality and equity of women in their respective sports. Members discussed utilising Board and Leadership training opportunities for women, the impact of access to appropriate equipment and facilities and the need to engage at political level on this issue.</p> <p>After extensive discussion, it was agreed that 'Women in Sport' would be added to the Board Agenda as a standing item. The ELT will provide brief verbal updates on the topic of women in sport which could include updates on incentives, programmes, stories or scoping plans within the sector, by exception, moving forward.</p> <p>Action: 'Women in Sport' to be added to the Board as a standing item until further notice. ELT to provide brief verbal updates on this issue by exception.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting(s)</b>	
5.1	<p><b>Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 Board Meeting</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 Board Meeting were approved.</p> <p>Approval: Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March Board Meeting were approved</p>	Approval: Minutes of the 8 <sup>th</sup> of March Board Meeting were approved
5.2	<p><b>Minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2023 Exceptional Board Meeting</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2023 Exceptional Board Meeting were approved.</p> <p>Approval: Minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March Board Meeting were approved</p>	Approval: Minutes of the 8 <sup>th</sup> of March Board Meeting were approved
5.3	<p><b>Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 Board Meeting</b></p> <p>Members discussed the minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April Board Meeting.</p> <p>Members requested that Terms of Reference information be uploaded to the DecisionTime platform. In addition, Members received an update on the use of PolyZoom software; noting that the procurement exercise for this equipment is ongoing.</p> <p>The Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 Board Meeting were approved.</p> <p>Approval: Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April Board Meeting were approved.</p> <p>Action: Board Terms of Reference to be uploaded to DecisionTime platform for information</p>	<p>Approval: Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> of April Board Meeting were approved.</p> <p>Action: Board Terms of Reference to be uploaded to DecisionTime platform for information</p>
5.4	<p><b>Action / Decision / Approval   12 Month Rolling Record</b></p> <p>The Action / Decision / Approval record was tabled as read.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	None	
<b>7</b>	<b>Chair's Briefing</b>	
	<p>The Chair stated that the papers for the meeting are comprehensive and took an opportunity to acknowledge the preparation which went into providing the information and the commitment to meet the deadline for Exchequer Accounts.</p> <p>Members noted that the CEO and Chair have a meeting scheduled with the Permanent Secretary on Governance, Financial Management and easement issues. Members noted that these areas will be discussed with the CEO, Chair, COO and Member, Gavin Boyd, in House of Sport on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and will be subsequently followed up during the Exceptional ARAC Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.</p>	

	<p>In addition, the Chair spoke briefly to the impact of budget cuts of approx. 16% combined with inflation issues as an opportunity to leverage good practice. The Chair spoke to membership growth per £1 of investment and costs per £1 of funding distributed; noting that these option could be discussed in Q2.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>CEO Report</b></p> <p>The CEO Report was tabled as read.</p> <p>Members discussed the CEO Report.</p> <p>Members discussed the year end easement figures. The COO provided an overview of the easement declarations and the provisional outturn submitted to DfC post year-end. Members noted that the provisional outturn reflected a lower projected easement than the figure reported at ARAC on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The COO advised members that draft accounts and provisional outturn were submitted to DfC in early May with a caveat against figures for income relating to the Lottery recharge. The COO advised the methodology adopted by Sport NI in calculating the recharge was complex and noted an accurate recharge will take further time to complete. The COO advised the lottery recharge income calculation had been finalised and that it would increase when included in final draft accounts in line with previously reported easement.</p> <p>Members discussed to the forthcoming meeting between the CEO, Chair and Permanent Secretary on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023, which will discuss governance, financial management and the easement issues.</p> <p>The easement figures declared in 2021-22 and 2022-23 were discussed; including existing concerns regarding the reporting function of the CIVICA financial system. Members were advised that DfC colleagues had been offered full transparency and were aware that draft accounts submitted include caveats, including the need for a more intensive Lottery recharge exercise post year-end. It was noted that a response to the Permanent Secretary letter would be discussed during a meeting on 18/05/2023 with the CEO, COO, Member Gavin Boyd and the Chair and that this would be followed up at ARAC.</p> <p>Action: Response to Permanent Secretary to be discussed by Chair, COO, CEO and Member Gavin Boyd on 18/05/2023 and that this would be discussed at ARAC.</p> <p>In addition, Members referred to the Secretariat Statistics table in the CEO Report; requesting that further detail be provided in respect of dates of Board Meetings and the percentage of papers issued on the dates detailed.</p> <p>Action: Secretariat Statistics tabled to be updated with dates of Board Meetings and percentage of papers issued.</p> <p>Members discussed the engagement of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Members noted that this engagement, in partnership with DfC colleagues, brought additional insight to the data that is currently collected for the 'Active Living' and 'Power of Sport' strategies and potential opportunities for revisions to existing data to better support this work.</p>	<p>Action: Secretariat Statistics tabled to be updated with dates of Board Meetings and percentage of papers issued.</p> <p>Action: Response to Permanent Secretary to be discussed by Chair, COO, CEO and Member Gavin Boyd on 18/05/2023 and that this would be discussed at ARAC.</p>
<b>8.1</b>	<p><b>Quarter 4 Business Plan Review</b></p> <p>The Quarter 4 Business Plan was tabled as read. Members discussed the Q4 Business Plan Review.</p> <p>Members discussed the data included within the paper and if this information best demonstrated the progress and successes of the organisation. Members highlighted the disappointing performance of approx. 47% targets not met within the Business Plan 2022/23. Members discussed how this year compares with the years 2020/21 and 2021/22 where approx. 26% of targets not met. A Member highlighted a comment within the paper that the reporting frequency of the Governance Action Plan has been more frequent than reporting on the Quarterly Business Plan reviews; reflecting the priority placed on the Governance Action Plan by the Board. A Member stated that both documents were important.</p> <p>Members discussed the reporting frequency of the Governance Action Plan and the Quarterly Business Plan reviews against the current Business Plan 2022-23. It was noted that both the Governance Action Plan and current Business Plan both have a high level of</p>	<p>Action: ELT to review the 'RAG' rating of Item OLG2</p>

	<p>priority.</p> <p>Members referred to the 'RAG' rating of Item OLG2. There was an extensive discussion regarding the initial goal of the organisation 'creating a robust evidence base from which to share best practice' (OLG2), the status of the work conducted to date and how, through engagement and direction from DfC colleagues, this goal has since been superseded by the collaborative work with DfC; with a view to ensuring the organisation's evidence process aligns fully with the 'Active Living Strategy'. After discussion, it was agreed that the ELT would review the 'RAG' rating of Item OLG2</p> <p>Action: ELT to review the 'RAG' rating of Item OLG2</p>	
8.2	<p><b>Business Plan 2023-24</b></p> <p>The Draft Business Plan 2023-24 was tabled as read.</p> <p>Members discussed the draft Business Plan for 2023-24.</p> <p>Members discussed the budget allocation between the previous years' budget and the current indicative revenue allocation of £7m approx. and how this budget will be managed. Members discussed the importance of bringing forth a budget plan to ensure there are structural arrangements in place to manage any existing budget limitations or, indeed, opportunities that are presented. The COO advised a comprehensive budget exercise had been carried out with managers based on the draft Business Plan presented for approval. The COO advised the budget had been approved by ELT and was with the CEO for approval.</p> <p>Members proposed reviewing the current draft for aesthetic and presentational issues to ensure the document is easy to read and to ensure that there are no remaining gaps in baseline information in respect of key indicators. Members stated that the goals, indicators and performance measures should be aligned with one another where possible to better illustrate how objectives are being met and how Sport NI's contribution to the sports sector can be demonstrated.</p> <p>Members discussed the indicators for measuring staff satisfaction in respect of the Staff Survey exercises; noting that the next Staff Survey will be carried out in June and reported on in September. Members noted that in respect of information gaps relating to the Sport NI website, the organisation does not currently have the capital funding to replace the website at this time, but teams are managing the site through manual workarounds as an interim measure. Members noted that many KPIs detailed within the plan are annual and that it would be helpful for the Board to be updated on progress against these indicators quarterly, by exception.</p> <p>Members were informed that in line with good practice, staff align their individual PDPs against the objectives contained within the Annual Business Plan. Members noted that the strategic approach to the Business Plan which is based on an evaluation of previous iterations of Business Plans against quantitative and qualitative measures. Members discussed the use of performance measures, and it was proposed that a meeting could be held with the Board and ELT at a later stage to delve into greater detail on the measures outlined within the Business Plan.</p> <p>Members noted that this draft of the Business Plan may be impacted by the level of capital funding allocated and the timing said funding is received.</p> <p>Decision: After discussion, it was agreed that the Draft Business Plan for 2023-24 would be approved as an 'Interim' Business Plan, based on the current goals and indicators within the draft. It was agreed that the performance indicators would be subject to further discussion by the Board and ELT.</p> <p>Action: Board and ELT to meet to discuss the Business Plan 2023-24 in more detail in the coming months.</p>	<p>Decision: After discussion, it was agreed that the Draft Business Plan for 2023-24 would be approved as an 'Interim' Business Plan, based on the current goals and indicators within the draft. It was agreed that the performance indicators would be subject to further discussion by the Board and ELT.</p> <p>Action: Board and ELT to meet to discuss the Business Plan 2023-24 in more detail in the coming months.</p>
8.3	<p><b>Communications Report</b></p> <p>Members referred to the Communications Report and discussed the good level of engagement and Social Media activity in progress by the organisation. Members discussed the metrics and statistics of the Sport NI website and advised that the overall digital footprint of the organisation should be fed into the reporting metric of the Communications Team for</p>	



	<p>Board, where possible.</p> <p>Members requested that the Communications Team be advised of the Board's thanks for their ongoing work.</p> <p>KH left the meeting.</p>	
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Operations Report</b></p> <p>The Operations Report was tabled as read. The COO spoke to the Operations Report for the information of Members and those in attendance.</p> <p>The COO advised members that when she was appointed in June 2022, a number of legacy challenges existed in Sport NI regarding governance, financial reporting, resourcing and IT. The COO noted the absence of key staff, including the COO and Finance Manager over the 2021/22 year end reporting period and during implementation of the finance system. The COO provided specific examples of some of these challenges including; a lack of completion of 21/22 internal audit work; a lack of progress on 21/22 year end accounts; backlog of lottery accounts and accuracy of reporting in the context of late easements declared to DfC in 2021/22 and issues with finance system implementation.</p> <p>Members noted that a Governance Action Plan was developed by the COO in response to these challenges. The COO noted evidenced significant improvement and over the last 11 months had been demonstrated in a number of these areas. This included, a 75% increase in 'Satisfactory' audit opinion; a significant reduction in Internal Audit priority recommendations with only 1 high priority Internal Audit recommendation during 22/23; significant improvement in timescales for taking forward completion of annual accounts; compliance with 2022/23 restrictive reporting RoFP timescales to DfC; resolution of a long standing issue of pay; a reduction in staff absence figures; budget profile information being compiled and finalised for CEO approval in May 23 (compared with October 22) and movement on outstanding 2015-16 Lottery Accounts. In addition, Members were informed of the significant work undertaken on Staff Engagement and Health and Safety (through the Mabbett Health and Safety Review). Members noted that the progress against existing challenges via the Governance Action Plan has been shared with DfC and reported on a quarterly basis to Board. The COO advised that whilst significant improvements have been made, it was accepted some legacy issues continue including resourcing and the challenges posed by the implementation and operation of the new financial system; the latter of which was introduced prior to the COO taking up post.</p> <p>Members were advised that the Capital target for 2022/23 was surpassed and the team successfully distributed additional capital funding to sports under the Director of Sports' team. The COO advised processes under CIVICA reporting to facilitate in year spend reporting and monitoring were being reviewed alongside resourcing and capacity of the finance team. The COO advised plans were underway to take forward further improvement.</p> <p>Members noted that a full set of draft accounts will be submitted to ARAC for review on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 and will be aligned to the meeting with the Permanent Secretary on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023. The COO commended the Finance Team on meeting this target despite significant resource challenges.</p> <p>In addition, Members discussed the Lottery Funding programme and the successful use of the Crowdfunding platform in 2022-23. After discussion regarding the scope for the use of Crowdfunding within the next financial year; it was agreed that options for the use of Crowdfunding would be considered for the next financial year.</p> <p>Action: Scope of the use of Crowdfunding to be considered for the next financial year.</p>	<p>Action: Scope of the use of Crowdfunding to be considered for the next financial year.</p>
<b>9.1</b>	<p><b>ARAC Papers and Appendices</b></p> <p>Members discussed the ARAC Papers and Appendices. Members were advised that during the ARAC meeting, it was agreed that the draft Bi-Annual Assurance statement would be subject to further review by the CEO in advance of submission. It was noted that an updated statement would be brought to ARAC with a request for ARAC approval of the draft Exchequer the Annual Accounts. In addition, Members noted that ARAC held an extensive discussion on the challenges presented by the implementation and operation of the CIVICA system.</p>	

9.2	<b>Annual Accounts</b> Members were informed that the Annual Accounts will be discussed in greater detail during the Exceptional ARAC Meeting, scheduled for 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2023.	
9.3	<b>Going Concern Paper</b> The 'Going Concern' paper was tabled as read. Members discussed going concern and did not raise any queries or questions in relation to the paper. Following discussion, Members confirmed a view that Sport NI was a going concern. The 'Going Concern' paper was accepted and noted.	
10	<b>Infrastructure Review Update Paper</b> Members were referred to the Infrastructure Review Update paper. The Director of Sport spoke to the paper.  Members discussed the paper which included a discussion on previous investment programmes, how available resources will be utilised for this work and how data is reviewed and validated.  After discussion, Members were content to approve the Infrastructure Review Update paper. <a href="#">Approval: Members approved the Infrastructure Review Update paper</a>	<a href="#">Approval: Members approved the Infrastructure Review Update paper</a>
11	<b>AOB</b> There were no items by exception to raise.  The Chair asked if those in attendance felt this was a good meeting and those in attendance agreed; recognising progress being made and asking that if Members or ELT had ideas for improvement to contact the Chair directly. The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution.	
12	<b>Date of next meeting</b> The next Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on 14 <sup>th</sup> June at 9.30am in House of Sport  The next ARAC Meeting is scheduled for 23 <sup>rd</sup> May at 5pm in House of Sport, Belfast	

Signed by Sport NI Chair: *George Lucas.*

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023