

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



Meeting **BOARD**

Location Online (Google Hangouts)
Date / Time Wednesday 20 January 2021 at 1.15pm

Present: Mark Davies (MD) (Chair)
 Kate O’Sullivan (KOS)
 Liz Behnke (LB)
 John Hinnigan (JH)
 Nick Hubble (NH)
 Martin Claxton (MC)
 Laura Lion (LL)
 Andy Parkinson (AP) (CEO)
 Simon Reeves (SR)
 Jonathan Vickers (JV)
 Karena Vleck (KV)
 Jack Beaumont (JB)

In attendance: Susan Lightman (SL, Head of Legal & Governance), Tatiana Doncaster (TD, Director of Finance), Genevieve Collett, Minute Secretary.

Items 6.0 & 7.0: Kenny Baillie (KB, Director of Partnerships & Communications), Helen Rowbotham (HR, Director of Rowing Community & Strategy), Louise Kingsley (LK, Deputy Director of Performance Pathways & Paralympic Programme), Brendan Purcell (BP, Director of Performance)

	<p>CLUBHUB PRESENTATION</p> <p>Claire Cann (Business Systems Project Manager), Paul Lorenzato (Head of Community Development), Harvey Davies (Head of Technology) and Marieke Bal (Head of Membership) delivered a summary of the benefits of ClubHub to the rowing community and the plans for 2021 to the Board. The Board expressed their thanks for interesting presentation and their interest in being kept up to date with this project. They also encouraged a future focus on marketing including using satisfied clubs to spearhead this.</p>
1	<p>CHAIR’S INTRODUCTION</p> <p>MD welcomed the Board to the meeting. Martin Claxton was introduced as a new Board member and gave a brief precis of his background.</p>
2	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE and quorum</p> <p>The meeting was quorate. No apologies for absence. (JB joined the meeting slightly later due to training commitments).</p>

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



3	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were none.</p>
4	<p>APPROVAL OF MINUTES from the previous Board Meetings on: 25 November 2020, Board</p> <p>The minutes of the above meeting were noted and approved by the Board.</p>
5	<p>MATTERS ARISING (not otherwise covered on the Agenda)</p> <p>The Board had received a letter from Sir Steve Redgrave (SR) at the beginning of January outlining his and the Henley Royal Regatta Charitable Trust's (HRRCT) dissatisfaction with British Rowing. A brief discussion was held about SR's grievances which centred on the HRRCT's investment into British Rowing and a recent advertisement for a staffing vacancy. SR intimated that the money given was not appreciated by British Rowing and that communication from them was unsatisfactory, but stressed that he had had a very successful meeting with LK.</p> <p>It was noted by both MD and AP that there were communication challenges with corresponding with HRRCT and it was agreed that there needed to be a single point of contact going forward. There was also a need to explain to the Trustees that British Rowing's Love Rowing initiative was not in competition with the HRRCT.</p> <p>It was agreed that AP would respond formally to SR's letter and that his response would be circulated to the Board. AP</p> <p>There had also been a letter from Andy Triggs-Hodge which had expressed various concerns about British Rowing. It was agreed that AP's formal response to this letter would be circulated to the Board. AP</p> <p>All other matters on the action tracker had been completed or were on-going. KV commented that the action tracker needs to be updated so that out of date actions were taken off. AP confirmed that this was the intention after this meeting so that all 2020 actions could be formally completed. AP</p>
6	<p>CEO UPDATE</p>
6.1.1	<p>CEO & DIRECTORS' TEAM UPDATE</p> <p>AP thanked the Board for allowing the Directors' Team to attend this part of the meeting. He noted that allowing them to provide their own updates brought them closer to the discussions and deliberations of the Board.</p>

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



<p>AP pointed out that two further sets of COVID-19 guidance had been published since the last meeting and that these had been well received. As part of the ongoing support to the Clubs the British Rowing Emergency Fund had been extended until the end of March and Clubs could apply until the end of April.</p> <p>AP advised that a group had been tasked with working on post-lockdown scenario planning so that we are able to support Clubs to the best of our ability once the lockdown is eased.</p> <p>Financially, the accounts were showing a net deficit of £67k and a budgeted deficit of £28k, with a £39k negative variance. AP and Directors' Team remained focused on achieving a budget as close to breakeven as possible.</p> <p>AP informed the Board that late December 2020 UK Sport had confirmed an investment of £22,212,008 meaning that British Rowing was 2nd in the list of funded sports. In line with other similarly sized sports this investment represented a reduction in funding of approximately 15%. The final UK Sport contract had yet to be provided, but one condition that will be included is the need for the successful completion of the recommendations of the BDO Audit and addressing British Rowing's well documented governance issues.</p> <p>External Selectors had been interviewed and roles offered to seven individuals. AP will advise the Board of the successful appointments outside of the meeting.</p> <p>Intelligence received indicated that the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo would go ahead in 2021, although many believe that overseas spectators will be seriously limited/absent. AP noted that Japanese public opinion was not hugely supportive of the Games going ahead. The IOC is likely to be taking the next major decisions in March, but it remained inconceivable for sport if they did not go ahead.</p> <p>BP reported to the Board that the British Olympic Association (BOA) had run a session with the Elite men's squad yesterday so that Performance were well prepared to deliver an Olympic Games team. A similar session was planned for the women's squad next week.</p> <p>KOS asked BP how the new Performance structure was working out and he confirmed it was working well and the logistics and programming were being monitored continually by regular meetings.</p> <p>Partnerships continued to progress well with a recent meeting with SAS to start the possible renew process. Discussions continued with a preferred Sportswear partner and the asensei partnership is progressing well.</p> <p>AP acknowledged that British Rowing remained comms-led with 90% activity around this and only 10% activity on marketing. He noted there was a need to build capacity and expertise in this area as the organisation was not naturally geared to selling itself.</p>	AP
---	----

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



	<p>The rowing community at large remained unified and efforts were focused on creating communities of practice within the Pathway, for example the webinar series. The Indoor Rowing team continued to deliver products for a number of audiences, with the January focus being on ROW31.</p> <p>AP reported that the Diversity work was progressing well, and sustainability equally was vital to connect with the next generation.</p> <p>AP noted that the impact of closed schools was being felt by employees. The future working culture was being worked on by a small staff group with the likelihood of many staff seeking to work remotely post-COVID, with discussions taking place on how best to utilise the available space at Hammersmith.</p> <p>AP acknowledged that the organisation needed to be more agile to deal with the 41% reduction from its highest membership figure which was this time last year, which he would cover off under item 6.1.3.</p>	
6.1.2	<p>FINANCIAL COMMENTARY</p> <p>TD gave a financial commentary to the Board commenting that the accounts presented were only a snapshot in time and ultimately the finance function was sustainable and holding up well. Whilst the reduced membership figures could cause problems over the next three months, she reminded the Board that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) the organisation owned its own property and so had no rent to pay.b) Public investment continued albeit at a slightly lower rate than previously.c) The focus on lowering overheads and utilities had brought savings.d) The finance team was planning to continue to collaborate with other teams and to reduce overheads further. <p>KOS asked HR if her team had enough resource and asked whether, in the light of the resource available to them, they were overstretched in what they could deliver. HR noted that her team's key projects needed to go ahead if they were to get the funding in the next cycle.</p> <p>KOS asked AP if it was possible to move people around different functions to utilise their skillsets. AP explained that this was happening but that there was a recruitment freeze in place for anything that was not funded by one of the partner organisations. This freeze had affected Kenny Baillie's team the most. KOS flagged up the expertise to be found in university leavers and retired members. AP agreed that there was a real opportunity there but that it was a challenge to do this whilst a physical place to house these people remained out of reach due to restrictions.</p>	

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



SR raised the issue of what the multi-channel campaign to raise funds was doing. KB noted that it was a campaign to promote friends of British Rowing who had lapsed membership or were not returning as members. There was an opportunity to fund emergency club funding through this and to cover British Rowing's expenses. The split of this money was yet to be determined. There was also the opportunity to raise funds beyond coronavirus. KB was asked by SR what financial target had been set for this campaign. He replied that no figure had been set.

MC commented that COVID-19 had made a major impact on how people lived their lives. He noted that it could be a golden opportunity to do things differently and that further gains could be achieved by doing things smarter and better. He cited the example that office supplies costs had gone down but IT costs had not gone up even though there was far greater IT activity with everyone working from home. He asked whether there were further benefits to be found from the new ways of working.

KB presented the Adventure Series, sharing there were 11 challenges due to launch with 700 new email addresses to add to the database. He also noted that ROW31 had not cost the organization anything and engagement was good with incentives being given to subscribe. He felt these organic sales were encouraging and that it was the only stream which was growing membership. This was being led by the junior members of staff.

MD challenged KB's assessment and stated that, in his view, the figures could not be looked at as positive. His view was that it is not a product that the members will get excited by and therefore, even with British Rowing pushing it, it is unlikely to be successful. Engagement was not increasing as hoped but was at best stagnant and indeed had fallen 50% in the 7 days from 5 to 12 January, with 1-minute views falling from 962 to 492, and 3-second views (themselves both strange metrics to judge engagement in a workout) from 8.7K to 4K which in his view was not encouraging.

HR commented that it was a respectable start due to the low investment put in. HR reminded the Board that the focus needed to be put on the commercial partnerships which were providing the financial investment. ROW31 was a January initiative and it was the first time the organisation had created a Facebook group on the back of a campaign. The organisation was very much finding its feet in this world. £650 was the figure spent on the initiative which was very low compared to other competitors in this field.

MD disagreed strongly with the Directors' Team's assessment. He argued that the Adventure Series was a product that needed to be pushed ever harder, whereas what we should be looking to launch was a product that would grow virally by members recommending it to each other.

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



	<p>He challenged the relevance of the idea that we are not good at marketing, by saying it shouldn't be our job to market something, and if the product was the right product, our members would market it for us. Momentum should be generated by the members themselves and that as this is not the case with the AS, he did not think it would play any successful role going forward as an acquisition tool. MD remained unconvinced that the current figures displayed or would ever display the growth needed to impact positively on our membership numbers.</p> <p>JH commented that the organisation needed to keep experimenting and if things did not reach traction to try new things.</p>	
6.1.3	<p>MEMBERSHIP UPDATE</p> <p>AP introduced the item providing some background to the membership strategy, based on the fact that a number of Board members had joined since critical discussions had taken place.</p> <p>In May 2019, membership growth was discussed at the Board with the ambition of tripling our membership in three years put forward. In July 2019, an assessment was provided to the Board on the resources required and the framework by which we would seek to achieve the 100,000 target. This paper was not discussed, because the Board was not quorate by the time that it came up for discussion.</p> <p>Through July and September 2019, it was agreed to conduct a market segmentation exercise to assess how to achieve the 100,000 target, the conclusion of this work being presented to the Board in November 2019, and the proposed framework agreed. In February 2020 we had 33,144 members the highest membership figure in our history, and as the Board is very aware COVID-19 started to impact on the business in March 2020.</p> <p>KV commented that the aims of the Membership Update paper seemed passive. She reiterated that the action tracker was not an easy document to read and that there were not enough specific actions. KV felt that since the last meeting there had not been the promised improvement. AP acknowledged her concerns and took them on board saying that the tracker brought to the next Board meeting would reflect her comments.</p> <p>SR shared KV's concerns, noting that there was no real action in his view in getting membership figures up. If there was no rowing activity until June it would be a serious situation for the membership figures and British Rowing.</p> <p>KB noted that it was decided last Spring by the Directors' Team and the Board not to discount or give membership for free. It was decided at that point to give members extra content and not financial incentives to renew. Private matches and affiliated competitions were planned after the last lockdown but could not go ahead which affected numbers.</p>	

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



SR asked how British Rowing compared to other sports. AP replied that British Rowing were in the 'middle of the pack' in terms of other NGBs. Most NGBs had seen a similar decrease in membership activity. In all age groups throughout the nation there was a decrease in physical activity due to lockdown. In March 2020 British Rowing enjoyed the highest ever membership. Most of its members joined for competitive racing and the team did not lack creativity or ambition, but the circumstances prevented a lack of real racing on the water. Virtual rowing was not the same proposition to members. Nevertheless, the membership programme was showing green shoots but AP accepted it was not quick enough. LB referenced the success of the "return to" programme in netball and queried whether this could be replicated in rowing.

KV agreed that the conditions presented by COVID-19 were challenging but put it to AP that there were missed opportunities and a lack of ideas since things were unlikely to go completely back to normal. AP noted that lack of ideas was not the problem, but execution was. The organisation was learning to adapt quickly and to execute their ideas well and effectively.

LL commented that there was a real drop in the women's membership figures especially in the 35-55 age group because of the pandemic. She felt that there was a missed opportunity in promoting the profile of their female leads which would promote a return to membership for this sector. Re-engaging with this age group now was relevant to ensure their membership returned when water activity restarted.

LB raised the success of the "return to" programme in netball and asked whether this could be replicated in rowing.

KB commented that a working group had been set up at the end of last year to combat this issue and that he would reiterate LL's comments to them. He reminded the Board that members of the women's squad like Becky Coleman were regularly featured in live streaming. Potentially there was room for female squad appearances to do live streaming to junior clubs and this was something that Comms were looking at. KOS identified that there might be a need to encourage single sculling in women who may find the heavy lifting of the scull an issue on their own.

MD was frustrated by the current strategy and felt that British Rowing needed to offer a more unique proposition. He noted that AP and MD had different views of the situation.

TD made the point that the organisation was a NGB and not a commercial business. The way the organisation operated was bound by its governance and funding. It simply could not react the way a commercial business would in the same circumstances.

MD did not accept that analysis. He said that if the organisation's aspiration was simply to govern then it could do so with a much lower

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



	<p>cost case. But the organisation could break the mould and become more commercial, in order to be able to deliver on what he believed was everyone's aspiration despite the reduction in other forms of funding.</p>	
6.2	<p>REVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION</p> <p>The discussion at item 6.1 encompassed a review of the current situation and no further discussion was deemed necessary.</p>	
7	<p>DECISION ITEMS</p>	
7.1	<p>2021 TARGETS</p> <p>AP introduced the paper to the Board which was a version 2 of the one presented at September's Board meeting. AP noted that a lot of work had gone into making the targets ambitious as possible whilst recognising the limitations of what could be achieved. HR pointed out the amendments made which were based on comments received from the Board. "Agile" had been added into the culture section. Under the goal of strong clubs, university support and coastal clubs supports had been added. Under Performance, people development had been added in. Most of the changes needed to be monitorable.</p> <p>LB commented that her comment on including younger volunteers had not been included. HR said that this was picked up in the volunteer community section.</p> <p>JV commented that he liked the document and the strategy within. He felt that there were too many 'Xs' and not enough actual numbers. JV stated that the growth in membership numbers was not ambitious enough.</p> <p>AP noted that there was a need to prioritise the work for this calendar year and to achieve the pre-COVID membership figure. That figure would be ambitious enough given the circumstances. He reiterated that the Targets relate to the financial year 2021/22 and that further work needed to be done once we come out of COVID to agree more long term targets.</p> <p>JV made the general point that the figure was a long way below the figure that was agreed to last year.</p> <p>KV reiterated JV's doubts about the membership figures not being ambitious enough. She commented that the KPIs needed to be more specific and smarter. HR acknowledged that there were some gaps but that some surveys were going out which in turn would give the target numbers. AP pointed out the clubs were very fragile with the lack of income and as such the figure was the right one. SR said he would take his challenges offline to AP. SR felt strongly that the KPIs were not a</p>	

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



	<p>good indication of where the organisation was going. As they stood, they were not going to take the organisation to a better place.</p> <p>It was agreed that the paper would be updated by HR with the targets amended and the gaps filled in and then circulated to the Board for approval before the next Board meeting.</p> <p>LB challenged that not enough was being done on the Indoor Rowing market. HR asked the Board to recognise that the gym-going home market was a lot bigger than the indoor rowing home market. MC asked that the paper needed to be prioritising in its nature. HR agreed but said it was written as a 4-year strategy, but as the overall framework is essentially agreed, it was too ambitious for 1 year. The plan was written as a 4-year plan as this was the length necessary to agree British Rowing's Sport England funding.</p> <p>MD pointed out that it was 170,000 owners of Concept 2 machines alone - nearly ten times our current membership.</p> <p>LL commented that the water market was being missed.</p> <p>MD stated that we should have one single KPI on the non-performance side of the sport, particularly given the level of uncertainty which is troubling people and that this should just be the membership number.</p> <p>KV asked for the paper to be updated and circulated before the next Board meeting. The Board was not happy to sign off the numbers and requested a more complete, updated document to be circulated before the next Board meeting for approval. This was agreed by AP and he confirmed that it would be circulated for sign off in advance of the next Board meeting.</p>	AP
7.2	<p>GOVERNANCE REVIEW</p> <p>AP introduced the paper that reflected the outcomes of the Governance Review meeting held in January. LB commented that it was a productive meeting that moved matters forward despite there being some areas of expected disagreement. NH felt that the discussions were excellent, and the group came out of it in a stronger position. KOS agreed and felt it was a worthwhile conversation bringing accountability and confidence.</p> <p>The paper was accepted and approved by the Board.</p> <p>AP agreed to progress work on developing the proposed changes to relevant organisational documents for consideration and approval by the Board.</p>	AP
7.3	<p>APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS</p> <p>The update was noted.</p>	

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



7.4	<p>COMPANY POLICIES</p> <p>The papers were accepted and approved by the Board. SL confirmed that a timeline for policies to be reviewed and prepared would be brought to the Board once completed.</p>	SL
7.5	<p>SPORT COMMITTEE</p> <p>7.5.1 Rules of Racing 2021-22</p> <p>7.5.2 Competition Calendar 2021-22</p> <p>Both papers were accepted and approved by the Board. However, regarding the Rules of Racing MC and NH planned to speak directly after the meeting to affect small changes recommended by MC.</p> <p>Once any necessary changes were agreed and the rules updated SL would share the revised rules with the Board so that they could see the changes made.</p>	NH/MC SL
8	DISCUSSION ITEMS	
8.1	<p>GOVERNANCE AUDIT ACTION PLAN</p> <p>KOS observed that there seemed to be a lot of expectation on the Board's half day meeting. SL recognised this and noted it but felt that it was important that the expectations were listed and that the goals could be fluid. KV commented that a lot of things had been moved to the March Board meeting and requested that as much as possible should be finalised at this meeting.</p> <p>A discussion was held on recruitment of the Independent Directors who would be chair the Finance and the Audit and Risk Committees. It was reiterated by JH that it was agreed not to merge the committees but if the right person was available to chair both this would be revisited.</p> <p>On a more general point JV was keen that the January targets were met. He felt that they were losing some traction in not meeting the targets. AP agreed with this verdict and cited the significant amount of unexpected governance work required in the latter part of 2020 which had impacted on delivery of this work, but that SL and he were back on track on delivering the work plan.</p>	AP/SL
8.2	<p>BOARD WEBINAR MEETING ON 28 JANUARY</p> <p>SL gave a verbal update on this. A half hour briefing was being organised before the meeting hosted by Rich Stock. KB would act as moderator at the Board Webinar itself. JH stated that the Board should prepare for likely questions as well as answers to the questions received in</p>	

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



	<p>advance. It was agreed by all that received questions would be allocated to the most relevant person to answer them pre the meeting itself. KOS suggested putting an infographic slide up showing where British Rowing's membership money was spent.</p> <p>It was agreed that the whole Board would be in attendance where possible at the webinar. It was agreed that there should be a smaller number of main speakers: AP, JH, KOS, NH, JB and MD to avoid too many speaking at once and overwhelm.</p> <p>It was agreed that likely and received questions should be left on the Google drive and a date should be set to review these pre the webinar itself.</p>	<p>Board</p> <p>AP</p>
9	REPORTS & INFORMATION	
9.1	<p>WORLD ROWING COASTAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND BEACH SPRINT FINALS</p> <p>9.1.1 Board Report</p> <p>9.1.2 Budget Summary</p> <p>The above papers were both approved by the Board.</p>	
10	CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS	
10.1	<p>DISCUSSION REGARDING DIRECTOR AVAILABILITY</p> <p>Not discussed as no longer relevant.</p>	
10.2	<p>REPORT ON CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE CHAIR AND THE CEO</p> <p>The Board noted that Peter Melrose would produce a report the following Monday and that SL would share this with the Board.</p>	SL
11	MATTERS TO BE DEALT WITH OUTSIDE MEETING	
11.1	<p>The Board noted the four items to be deal with outside of the Board meeting.</p>	
12	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	<p>The meeting ended at 4pm. It was agreed that draft minutes would be circulated before the next meeting.</p>	AP

MINUTES

Minutes approved at 24 March 2021 Board Meeting



	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
--	-----------------------------

	The next meeting would take place on 24 March 2021, 2020 at 12:15pm for a 1pm start.
--	--