

**SCOTTISH FENCING LTD**

Meeting of the BOARD of DIRECTORS of SCOTTISH FENCING LIMITED  
 18 April 2018 at CALEDONIA HOUSE, EDINBURGH

Present	George Liston	President and Chair (GDL)
	David Carson	Finance Director (DC)
	Sheila Anderson	Director HR/Equality (SA)
	Ross Morrison	Director, Safeguarding/Development (RM)
	Gail Prince	Independent Director, Communication and Events (GP)
	William Steele	Director, Selection Manager (WS)
Apologies	Martyn Foley	Director
	Hugh Kernohan	Director
	Jennifer Griffin	<b>sportscotland</b> Partnership Manager (JG)
In Attendance	Pam Scott	Consultant (PS)
	Vincent Bryson	Chief Operating Officer (VB)
	Jacqui Dunlop	Minute Taker

	Item	Action
1	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>1. <u>Welcome, apologies for absence</u></p> <p>Apologies were intimated on behalf of Martyn Foley, Hugh Kernohan and Jennifer Griffin.</p> <p>2. <u>Declaration of conflicts of interest</u></p> <p>There were no new conflicts of interested declared. GDL noted that his wife was no longer President of England Fencing.</p>	
2	<p><b>Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>2.1 <u>Review of Minutes of 15 March 2018</u></p> <p>Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>2.2 <u>Matters arising:</u></p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 15 March 2018.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Chair's Report</b></p> <p>a) <u>Budget</u> – GDL reported that work was being carried out on the budget for in-year activity, particularly that which was not funded by sportscotland. It was hoped to have a first draft ready for circulation to the Board for feedback in the next two weeks for ratification at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>b) <u>Commonwealth Cadet and Junior Championships</u> – A Board-level action plan was being prepared and it was agreed that VB would circulate this to the Board for comments and feedback.</p>	<b>VB</b>

	<p>c) <u>Selection Issue</u> – it was agreed that this would be discussed by GDL, WS and VB. There would be a discussion on how to improve the process for this cycle and a report to support this would be prepared for the next Board meeting.</p>	<b>GDL</b>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Pam Scott – Report Findings and Q&amp;A</b></p> <p>PS’s Final Report had been circulated in advance. PS started by noting that it had been a privilege to carry out the report and that everyone who took part in the consultation had been very open and appreciative that they had been invited to be part of the process. She reported that when she had presented in February it had been about Talent Development, however the brief was much wider than that, covering four main areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Membership Growth</li> <li>- SwordMark</li> <li>- Club Development</li> <li>- Talent Development</li> </ul> <p>She noted that her report was comprehensive, with recommendations, but that her presentation to the Board would focus on the high-level aspects.</p> <p>There were three key messages which came out of the consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purposeful and Strategic Approach</li> <li>- Modernisation</li> <li>- Leadership</li> </ul> <p><b>Purposeful and Strategic Approach</b></p> <p>She noted that she had included “purposeful” as there had been feedback which suggested that people did not know the purpose of activities which Scottish Fencing were providing such as competitions and summer camps. She felt it was important to make sure that “Purpose” was part of the Strategy and noted that it was good that this was being developed in parallel with the report.</p> <p>Communication was also vital and this was important when building the new Strategy. The feedback received noted that the Board had not communicated as well as it could have to members and clubs.</p> <p>The Calendar influenced many elements of the brief, and she was shocked that it didn’t seem to be in in a sensible order. Feedback noted that it was too busy, not focused and Scottish Fencing was not in control; there were a number of recreational events but no easy route through the calendar for Talent ID and selection.</p> <p>It was felt that the format of competitions was not designed with athletes in mind and Scottish Fencing needed to take control of the calendar.</p> <p>Scottish Fencing did a lot of good work, but its activities were not developmental; there was no joining up of the dots, or a thread which joins activities together.</p> <p>SwordMark was good and doing a good job. However, clubs which were achieving Superclub status were good clubs anyway and consideration should be given to supporting clubs which were struggling. If the role of SwordMark was developmental then the scheme needed to be tweaked.</p>	

There were a lot of independent activities, such as plastic fencing which was so far removed from the metal fencing that something was needed to bridge the gap. If there was no Club in the areas where the plastic fencing was taking place as an Active Schools activity, then there was no point in them running.

The organisation needed more and skilled volunteers. Clubs were mainly run by coaches; however, clubs needed a wider range of volunteers with skills such as fundraising, development.

An increase in the numbers and variety of people within the organisation is needed, and these roles should be clearly defined and time-banded. There are a lot of parents whose children are involved in the sport who have the skills, but it was not known if they were asked to volunteer or if the deference to coaches is a barrier to volunteering.

### **Modernisation**

The culture within the sport is old fashioned. Athletes seem to be skeptical about nutrition, strength and condition, psychology etc. The culture within fencing seems to be that to improve athletes must spend more and more time fencing without looking at the bigger picture. Younger fencers, who are exposed to athletes from other sports, see some benefit in areas such as strength and condition, so it is starting to creep into the sport. However, this need addressed in a sustainable way.

When nutrition, strength and condition etc is introduced, there is no follow-up and no support from the governing body, with athletes needing to find out their providers. PS's report suggested that Scottish Fencing partners with other organisations such as smaller governing bodies or pay for coaches to develop their skills in these areas.

The sport was a very coach centred and it must transfer to be athlete centred.

Feedback had suggested that there was a lack of facilities, however it was also noted that people leave early, don't turn up on time so consideration needs to be given to using what facilities it does have effectively.

There is a lack of long term planning for athletes with no measurement of targets. For example, if athletes are doing strength and conditioning, there is no measurement of their progress.

There needs to be a clarity of roles for new volunteers. The new Club Development Manager appointment may be the catalyst for this. There needs to be role descriptions for volunteers so that all have the same vision.

### **Leadership**

There needs to be effective leadership in the organisation. In Clubs there is a lot of expertise within the parent body which is not being utilized. At a governing body level, the Board need to separate out themselves and the other people running the sport. Consideration needs to be given on how to encourage people to come onto the Board and Club Committees. Ideas suggested include buddying/apprenticeships.

Opportunities for strategic partnership should be looked at with education authorities and other sports governing bodies. Previously sportscotland used to introduce smaller governing bodies in order to facilitate closer working.

Communication is crucial. There is a lack of confidence in the Board. When the new strategy is being consulted on with the clubs, it was important that drafts of the documents were taken. VB noted that it was important that the Board was out and visible and he will be attending the veterans event next week and RM had attended the Glasgow Open. He suggested that now that there was something to talk to the membership about, the report and the new strategic process, then Directors should look at attending an event each.

During the consultation process PS felt that she needed to apologise for the Board. It is critical that the Board communicate what it is doing to the members, examples of this would be in GDPR. There is a lot of hearsay and gossip within the membership, so it is better that Communication is received from the Board which will help to reduce negativity.

PS finished by saying that some of the recommendations can be taken up straight away and inputted into the strategic planning process which is ongoing, but some were longer term. GP noted that some work has been done on strategy, but the report will inform the strategic process. PS felt that as communication was such an important part of recommendations that a Communication strategy is also produced in parallel with the Strategic Plan.

She hoped that her report was thought-provoking.

PS was thanked for her informative presentation and report and the undernoted questions arose:

VB asked if she could articulate the feedback from the High Performance sportscotland partnership manager's comments. PS reported that he was scathing about the adherence to the programme by the athletes and that this may have contributed to the lack of performance funding for Scottish Fencing. If the athletes could not fully embrace the programme due to other commitments such as exams, then this should have been communicated, but it was not. There was a 28% adherence to the programme, with a negative 12% improvement in strength and conditioning.

There is now a new performance manager in place, but sportscotland/institute of sport will require a lot of convincing that talent/performance has stepped up within Scottish Fencing. It was noted that Scottish Fencing will not get access to nutrition, strength and condition, psychology etc and they need to find a way for their coaches to access this. GP thought it was important that Scottish Fencing showed evidence in getting coaches trained up. Jane Scott suggested that a debate is started with the Institute of Sport on how Scottish Fencing should start this process.

There was a discussion on whether the Report should be shared with the membership and it was agreed that it should be, and that Scottish Fencing needs to take ownership of the report. It was agreed that the report should be circulated in full, although PS noted that she had assured the contributors of confidentiality, so their names should be removed. It was agreed that when the report was circulated that background reports on sportscotland funding, what modernization looks like and the top-level strategy should also be explained to the membership.

VB agreed to circulate the report to the contributors and to thank them for their part in the process.

GDL noted that it was important when the Report was published that it was made clear that the Board would not be able to do all the recommendations immediately but that they would be done over time. Performance recommendation may need to be left until there was a stronger base and the numbers in the sport were growing and the governing body was self-sustaining.

SA noted that there would be concerns about telling competition organisers that they could not run their events as some were income generators for clubs. PS suggested that discussions need to be had with clubs.

GDL noted that for SwordMark that this target had been set by the Board with sportscotland and it may not have been targets which the current Board would have set.

There was agreement with the volunteer recommendations and Jane Scott noted that some of the feedback had indicated that in some cases volunteers had been treated badly. GDL noted that the Board will be looking to a build a volunteer strategy this year.

The Board agreed that they recognised a lot of the issues identified in the Report. It was agreed that there are innovators within the sport and there are pockets of good practice in all areas.

5. **Priority Areas – Strategy Sub-group Report and Discussion**

VB reported that the Strategy Sub-group had met three times and that the terms of reference and the end-point had been discussed and agreed at the previous Board meeting. The operating model had not been formalised however this would come out of the strategic process.

Funding of the COO Post and of development staff would be considered for the next Investment Request, but Performance was currently out of scope.

VB noted that the sub-group members (GP, RM, VB) had listed that which was important and the key themes which had emerged were: performance, workforce, pathways, communication, clubs, governance, perception, visibility, geography, fencer/athlete, environment, culture.

It was suggested that “participation” should also be added.

The Vision had been discussed and “Scottish Fencing – Forging the Future” had been suggested.

The Mission suggested by the Sub-group was:

To create World-class pathways empowering the fencing community to master their chosen environment.

A diagram of pathways which were relevant to wherever athletes and volunteers found themselves within Scottish Fencing was also drawn up.

SA noted that the in the Mission the term “World-class” may put off grass -roots fencers and new entrants into the sport. VB explained that that buzz words had been used, but a lot of support material would go out with any communication of the strategy, vision and mission.

GP noted that Scottish Fencing couldn’t do everything that was in the strategy but that it could influence the coaches and clubs. Support which could be offered would be through competitions, safeguarding, clubs, education. This was “Scottish Fencing’s DNA” and where the effort would be focused. SA noted that she wasn’t sure about the DNA and felt that it should also include Communication. GP noted that Communication would be included under Infrastructure which would also include Governance and ensuring that the new strategy was compliant with the Articles of Association.

VB noted that if Scottish Fencing got the Pathways right then modernisation would happen.

The Board agreed the Vision and the Mission although there were still concern about the word “World-class” and it was agreed that this would be considered further.

There was also a section on “First Contact” and this needed further work. This captured new entrants to the sport and how marketing and communication were done.

It was agreed that a third line of “Staff” would also be added to the pathway. GP noted that this was the first step and that there would be more depth added; this may include a diagram specifically for Volunteers.

	<p>SA also noted that “Measurement” was missing and it was agreed that this would be added under Infrastructure.</p> <p>GDL thanked the Strategy Sub-group for their work on the Strategy and noted that other Board members should feel free to contribute ideas.</p> <p>VB reported that it was now time to Pause and to get the Board’s view on what work had been done to date. VB agreed to pull together a coherent summary of all the work and circulate around the Board for feedback.</p> <p>GDL suggested that sportscotland’s views were also sought before there was wider consultation with the membership and it was agreed that JG would be included in the Board circulation for her views.</p> <p>GP suggested that there could be a North and South Consultation with members which the new Club Development Officer could assist with, and there could also be targeted invitations to sections of the membership.</p> <p>Dunblane was cited being a good Club example and it was agreed that work would be done to see how their best practice could be promoted.</p> <p>It was noted that there will be a new staff member and with an independent director and COO who have experience with different sports, different ideas may help with the strategic process as previously Scottish Fencing had been too insular.</p> <p>The next steps were agreed as:</p> <p>19 April - VB to issue a coherent summary of the Strategy as developed by the Sub-Group for the Board to respond to by Monday, 23 April.</p> <p>19 April – VB to collate all the recommendations from PS’s report into an excel spreadsheet for the Board to priorities. It was agreed that the Board members would list their top three priorities in each area. The Strategy Sub-Group would then use this to inform the Strategic Plan.</p> <p>An article would go on the website immediately saying “Consultation on Strategy - Coming Soon”</p> <p>Week-Ending 4 May - PS’s report would be circulated to membership, noting that an expert had been commission to produce the report and that the report would inform the new Strategic Plan. The presentation slides would also be issued.</p> <p>Week-Ending 18 May – Consultation on Strategic Plan would be started.</p>	<p><b>VB</b></p> <p><b>VB/Board</b></p> <p><b>VB/Board</b></p> <p><b>VB</b></p>
6.	<p><b><u>AOCB</u></b></p> <p>a) <u>Board Dates</u> – LA had noted difficulty in confirming a suitable date for the June and July Board meetings and it was agreed that dates would be re-circulated and Board members asked to respond.</p> <p>b) <u>Club Development Manager</u> – VB reported that Blair Cremin would start on 23 April with his first date in the office being 30 April.</p>	<p><b>LA</b></p>

7.	<b><u>Date of Next Meeting</u> – Thursday, 24 May 2018</b>	
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