

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors Held on 23 September 2019 at the Sport Wales National Centre

Present: Steve Perks (Chair), Matt Newman (CEO), Bernie Plain, Nicky Lewis, Ron Odunaiya, Sue Alvey, Nick Hewitt, Adrian Thomas, Charlotte Waite, James Williams (WA), Neil Emberton (Sport Wales) & Alan Currie (minutes).

1. Welcome and Apologies.

There were no apologies. Chair welcomed all members and, in particular, Charlotte Waite to her first meeting as a director. Her area of speciality is Equality and Diversion.

2. Declarations of Interest

It was agreed that any impact of the proposed new competition strategy (see item six) on parents, coaches, officials, etc would not constitute a conflict of interest by Board members who fitted any of those categories.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting (10 June 2019) were read and were accepted as an accurate and true record.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 On behalf of the college at Deeside, consultants are undertaking a review of all of its facilities, including the track, which had failed to pass for certification. As a multi-use centre, the college must maximise return on their use and make a case for each. The Deeside club has made contact with the local council and MP. It was suggested that WA should create a partnership with the college, via the principal. There is a sense that the outcome of the review will be favourable.

4.2 The Board should continue to meet six times per annum, with meetings starting at 11.00 am. An earlier start would create difficulties for those travelling long distances. It was agreed that the period of notice for meetings should be 10 days. The Board's priorities need to be determined.

The Board may consist of a maximum of 12 directors, with a broad skills base. The question was raised on the need for athletes to be represented. It was pointed out that at UKA level, the athletes' voice is via the UKMC, not the Board of Directors. The WA equivalent would be General Council, which is also the forum for regions and clubs.

4.3 New appointments at UKA are Chris Clarke (Chair) and Zara Hyde-Peters (CEO). Chris Clarke the new Chair believed that minor changes need to be undertaken to "Athletics Nation" he was informed that Welsh Athletics' strategy is based on 'Athletic Nation' and any UKA proposals which might affect that situation would need to be carefully considered. It was agreed that both should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board.

4.4 A junior athletes' forum is being established. A shortlist of candidates has been drawn up and will be considered tomorrow (24 September). The WA Clubs' conference will be held on 18 October, at which such matters can be discussed in full.

5. Sport Wales Matters

5.1 Neil Emberton reported that 5 new directors have been appointed at Sport Wales, none with allegiance to any particular sport. A Board diversity event is to be held in July. Related materials are available for governing bodies.

5.2 Four presentations had been made on the SW Resource Strategy. WA had been represented and the presentations had led to a positive feedback. A CEO forum is to be held shortly on future steps in line with resources and investment.

5.3 Uncertainty over 'Brexit' has had an effect on Sport England. It is unclear whether the same will apply to Wales. There will always be speculation until this matter is resolved and there is unlikely to be any firm commitment on funding before then. It was requested that the Board be kept up to date on developments, as they occur.

6 WA Competition Strategy

6.1 In line with Board policy it was agreed that this item would be the main focus of the meeting. There was general agreement on the need to modernise the sport to accommodate modern day attitudes. It was recognised that some of the more radical proposals would be unpopular and meet with resistance from some quarters, but they were felt to be in the best interests of the sport overall.



6.1 The discussion concentrated on track and field competition. Issues included the length of meetings, the demands on officials, perceived over-use of young athletes and the creation of a sustainable competition structure. A long term philosophy is required, aimed at addressing the high drop-out rate of young athletes. An example was given of 97 female athletes of whom 50% had left the sport at Under-15 level and 77% had not continued to senior level. Of those that did continue only 3 had become Welsh internationals and just 2 were GB internationals. The point was made that there are likely to be other factors than the competition structure which contributed to this situation. Further information will be required to look at other possible causes be they social, academic etc. for these drop-out rates.

6.2 Considering different age categories separately, the U13 and U15 groups were discussed first. It was proposed that U13 athletes (and possibly U15 as well) should be encouraged to adopt a multi discipline approach (run, jump, throw) and not specialise too soon, while recognising that some athletes may be physically unsuited to certain disciplines. It was proposed that clubs should withdraw from the YDL and focus on the Welsh Junior League. Participation levels in the YDL are very low and the days tend to be long. The travel time involved amplifies this situation. The WJL meetings need to be shorter (maximum of 5 hours) with a reduced programme of events, but possibly with more meetings per season. Moves should be made to introduce a Welsh Junior League in North Wales. The value of retaining the Welsh Championships for U13 was questioned. Wales is the only country in the UK which holds championships for this age group. Welsh Schools does not.

6.3 For the U17 and U20 age categories it is proposed that clubs should withdraw from YDL competition, for the reasons stated above, and that the Welsh League should be discontinued (which would also affect senior athletes). Discipline specific meetings (jumps, throws, sprints, etc) would be held instead and these have proved very popular. There would need to be sufficient of these meetings and they would need to be held at venues throughout Wales.

To facilitate an inter club element, points could be awarded from the event specific meetings and accumulated over the season, creating a virtual league. The Welsh Championships should be promoted and could also be used to accumulate league points. A grand final could be held in which the top 8 competitors per event would compete, possibly for cash prizes.

6.4 Other points discussed were:

Staging all Welsh Championships (except U13) in one weekend

The WA International match be expanded to include all age groups.

The indoor international should be discontinued.

Wales should apply to host a European Athletics Permit meeting.

Competition providers need to be upskilled.

Investment in infrastructure is required.

All parties (coaches, officials, club officers) need to be fully involved.

6.5 The proposed timescale for changes would be:

2020: Changes to U17/U20/senior age groups, instigate a WJL in North Wales, discontinue the indoor international.

2021: Implement U11/U13/U15 changes, remove Welsh U13 Championships, stage an EAP meeting.

Board members were asked for comments, which were generally positive.

They were asked to forward any comments, suggestions, etc to Steve Perks/James Williams within the next 10 days. Response to their views would be received within one month. Communication could be made via electronic means.

7 WA Athlete Affiliation Proposal

It was proposed that athletes' annual affiliation fees be increased by £1 per year for all age categories. In response to a suggestion that this is a small figure and that a greater increase should be made, it was pointed out that the proposal has to be approved by AGM and any increase at all is likely to meet with resistance.

Club affiliation fees are to increase by £50 per year, in two stages of £25 each. Compared to other areas of the UK, specifically Scotland, the fees were still very low.

THE BOARD AGREED THAT THE PROPOSED INCREASES BE IMPLEMENTED.

8 End of Year Accounts 2018/19

Nick Hewitt reported on financial matters, pointing out that the slide circulated to all Board members included all proposals. The report shows WA as being £3K off budget but this will be addressed by actions currently in progress. The accounts have been audited and are ready for sign off. Income and expenditure figures have been broken down. In terms of risk review, WA was regarded as prudent.

Directors need to be fully aware of financial regulations. Reports need to be more focussed.

THE BOARD ACCEPTED THE END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS.

9. Updates and Reports

All Reports had been circulated in the Agenda package. A few points were raised.

1. Performance and Coaching Group

A recent meeting did not meet the minimum quorum requirement. The group is short of a number of members and some recruitment is needed.

2. Governance Group

A prioritised action plan has been drawn up and circulated. Feedback would be welcome. This group also needs some extra members, and in particular someone with knowledge of legal matters. The corporate risk register needs to be expanded.

3. General Council

Attendance at GC meetings is poor. One region and one committee are not represented. Steve Jones is to submit an update on safeguarding and welfare matters.

4. Run 4 Wales

A closer link between WA and R4W is needed to avoid such things as fixture clashes. Cardiff has been included in the 'SuperHalves' Half Marathon series. The current financial situation looks positive.

5. UK Members' Council

An extra £40K has been allocated to Welsh Athletics. UKA has sustained some financial losses, which may impact on future funding.

6. Welfare and Safeguarding

There was discussion on the possible withdrawal of an award presented to those who incur a long term suspension from the sport.

No immediate action was recommended. It was agreed that before taking any action, changes need to be made to the byelaws, with careful consideration of any legal implications, which would allow for such matters to be dealt with.

The current byelaws are fully compliant with legal requirements.

10 Correspondence

There was none.



11. Any Other Business

There are no issues relating to the possible re-election of the President.
Both B Plain and N Lewis are due for re-election. Both indicated their willingness to continue as directors.

12. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Monday, 25 November at 11.00 in Sport Wales.