

**Minutes of Executive Board Meeting at 5.30pm on 3 August 2021
via Teams**

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andreas Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Alistair Marks [AM]	Elected Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Clare Francis [CF]	Senior Independent Director (Vice Chair)
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Phil French [PF]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Ronu Miah [RM]	Independent Director
Simon Griffiths [SG]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Sue Storey [SS]	Chief Executive
Kevin Fletcher [KF]	Financial Consultant
In attendance	
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat

EB/21-22/35 Welcome by Chair

Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

35.1 Apologies

Freda Bussey and Sam Jamieson had submitted apologies prior to the meeting.

35.2 Director Conflict of Interest Disclosures

No conflict of interest had been submitted prior to the meeting.

35.3 Approval of the Agenda

AW confirmed that the meeting was focused on one agenda item.

EB/21-22/36 Board discussion about the submission to Sport England for next 5 years of funding

SS, AM and AW highlighted the following in relation to the Volleyball England submission to Sport England for funding for the next 5 years:

- There were two phases in the Sport England process.

- The first phase was to determine whether Volleyball England (VE) could become a system partner and the submission was part of this process. Also, as part of this process VE had to complete a diagnostic framework, which had been distributed to the Board alongside the Phase 1 roles and finance partner workbook.
- Within the submission, VE needed to demonstrate how it was aligned to the Sport England strategy and in particular how VE was going to tackle inequalities going forward.
- Sport England had stressed that there was no extra funding made available and the submission needed to demonstrate how VE would allocate the funds should we be in receipt of the same level of funding as received in previous years. This was a reassuring piece of news. However, Sport England while stressing the importance of digital transformation, recognised the significant cost of this and therefore informed VE that should VE want to bid for funding to facilitate digital transformation, specific information regarding this should be included in the submission. This was a mixed and confusing message.
- SS proceeded to add that any specific projects or things that VE wanted to spend money on would need including in the submission.
- AM confirmed that he was not clear on the messaging from Sport England around the digital transformation but suggested that thorough scoping should be done before specifying what this might look like for Volleyball England.
- AW added that the general consensus was that system partners would receive more money than before. However, Sport England's focus would still remain on allocating the funding subject to them understanding how the allocation would be spent by the applicant organisations irrespective of their status.
- SS reported that Sport England anticipated 130 system partners with £600m available. These would not only include NGBs, active partnerships and others.
- The current funding allocation process was considerably different in comparison to previous funding cycles and was much more flexible in its approach.
- In terms of next steps, SS and KF would meet with Sport England the following day to confirm the documentation with them, for them to give us feedback. The submission would be considered at Sport England board meeting in September as part of the first round of system partners to be assessed under this new process. Phase 2 was yet to be confirmed by Sport England.

Board discussed the submission:

- PF noted that the submission was a good document that read very well, especially in terms of articulating how much progress Volleyball England had made. **PF would email SS with corrections of a few typos and sentences.** Further, PF asked whether there would be a separate bid for a digital transformation, or whether it was going to be included in the same bid. Also, PF asked how we would ensure that we could articulate the need for digital transformation in a way that would convey urgency of this for Volleyball England. PF asked whether there was a scope for asking Sport England's support and help through their partners to conduct an audit for VE to ensure that our proposition around digital transformation was strong and likely to receive funding. In terms of tackling inequalities and barriers to engagement and participation, PF asked whether it was clear what inequalities were faced by the sport or would this be an output from the insight we were hoping to acquire once a CRM system was up and running. SS agreed it was important to make the point that we were looking for help with the CRM and the website and it should be an area where NGB should be working together. However, Sport England had appointed a digital agency called Seven League to support NGBs through their digital process. They had conducted a

light-touch audit with VE in the past. Seven League were happy to help VE with the business case and the work moving forward. VE also were considering Seven League in terms of conducting a more detailed audit, that would be funded by VE. There was potentially an opportunity to apply for funding to Sport England to assist with this piece of work. In terms of tackling inequalities, SS confirmed that more data was needed to identify where the gaps were.

- RH liked the outline of VE's own strategy and how it linked and referenced the Sport England five big issues. RH asked whether we needed to show more interconnectivity between our activities/programmes. In terms of the digital transformation, RH had been trying to develop training beyond coach training including a training a series of roles within volleyball for life. As part of this, RH asked whether VE needed an e-learning platform that would support the whole organisation, or would we try to create elements of work to support the development of our roles and developing skills within VE for all the roles we were hoping to create. Next, RH questioned the references to volleyball being traditionally a diverse sport. RH believed it was not entirely correct although volleyball attracted players from different countries. This pool of players was unsustainable, and it was important to work with clubs to build the base meaning there were significant interrelationships between areas of interest within the sport rather than treating them as individual pieces of work. This approach could have a significant impact on the Sport England perception of the coherence of activities and programmes within volleyball and their alignment to their strategy. SS answered that volleyball was diverse in terms of gender. AW commented that he thought volleyball was a diverse sport in terms of gender, an ethnic background and disability. CF added that in terms of diversity, volleyball had good gender diversity compared to many other sports, but now was not the time to be complacent and there was much more that could be done to increase diversity within the sport. However, volleyball as sport should be bold and put itself forward to be showcased by Sport England as an organisation able to take diversity to the next level, and even ask for some funding for consultancy to support the organisation to implement in terms of the diversity. RH answered that there was evidence that suggested that volleyball was underrepresented in Black and Asian groups. RH wondered whether more targeted work with communities was needed to build representation in those areas. CF followed up and noted that this type of work could make VE an attractive choice to Sport England.
- AM observed that there was a disparity between the narrative stressing low capability of resource and the positive score for this area in the submission. AM wondered whether the need for resource could be made more urgent in the submission to highlight the fact that in order to deliver all our activities we need to invest in people.
- RM asked whether there was any data to support any assertions we were going to make in terms of how diverse the sport was or was not. Secondly, was it a plan to try and put in a ballpark figure VE would require to deliver its activities and programmes. KF answered that in terms of the figures that had been put in, the only requirement from Sport England was to put the Sport England investment received in the previous year and break that down across the different headings. KF confirmed that we could certainly add some figures into the narrative of the submission. RM agreed that this could be a good approach to enable the conversation to start. AW expressed his concern around committing to running an activity in the future that would then be difficult to operate or maintain. It was important the articulation of figures was considered thoroughly.
- SG noted that some of our shortcomings could be acknowledged more strongly. When building a case presenting reasons for Sport England to allocate funding to VE, we could afford to show vulnerability and articulate better areas where we could improve.

In terms of diversity, we could proceed to acknowledge that there are indicators of representations missing from the sport. In terms of the digital transformation, for SG there was no indication in the submission that this area is of poor performance and yet there was a consensus that the digital transformation was in need of overhaul to be able to help to connect better with customers and understand them better. Finally, SG added that it was important for the CRM to be used for sales and marketing purposes to help grow the sport as opposed to being used as a replacement for VolleyZone to administer our sport in its current form. Finally, SG believed that this would make VE look more progressive in this admission.

- AW noted that it was important for the self-assessment to be self-critical but showing the organisation as forward thinking, progressive, competent and capable as a trusted partner. These two could be seen as conflicting and it could be difficult to achieve balance of the presentation. AM responded that in his view Sport England were encouraging organisations not to try to bid for everything, be more honest in self-reflection and to demonstrate what organisations had achieved and what their next steps would be. Further AM believed that the Sport England were keen to invest in potential.
- SS agreed that that was the sense she had had following conversations with Sport England with organisations to be a tool for Sport England to achieve their outcomes.
- AM highlighted that the equality and diversity element was receiving major focus closely followed, if not superseded, by safeguarding, which is why it was important for partners to demonstrate how they would reach disadvantaged communities or hard to reach individuals.
- RM asked whether Sport England would expect a broader group of people to input into the diagnostic document. SS noted that she would strengthen the mention of stakeholders in the document. BF added that officials should be added to the list of volunteers. RH added that a volunteer strategy might be a useful reference.
- RH referenced the staff resource and whether we would be able to deliver our commitments with the existing capability. AW commented that this could be phrased as not being able to fulfil our full potential rather than not being to deliver our strategy.
- SS asked PF to send her the amendment to the text as discussed earlier in the meeting.
- Board were supportive of the direction of travel. SS would circulate the final submission, taking into consideration points raised during the discussion, to Board after the meeting with Sport England and before sending off for a decision by the Sport England Board. Thursday lunchtime was set as a deadline for Board's additional input.
- AW thanked SS, Sam Jamieson and KF for their work on the submission


EB/21-22/37 AOB

- SG asked about the resolutions regarding the digital transformation. AW responded that he believed VE did not have an in-house technical expertise to be able to scope and write a brief. AW believed that stage 1 involved finding an organisation that could help us scope that brief and to do a market test. This brief would need to be brought to Board. The Board would then be able to make an informed decision. SG asked where we would find this person. AM responded that Seven League could help with this especially that they had already done a partial audit of VE's requirements and gaps in the past.
- AW highlighted that VE had a finite budget to spend on the digital transformation and it was important to understand what the best way would be to spend this money to ensure we would meet the needs of the business. The business case had been presented to Board in terms of the reasons for digital transformation but not on how this would look like. SG agreed and stressed it was critical not to commit to something that would be

below par.

- RM observed that the reasons behind digital transformation should flow from the strategy. The other layer was the feasibility study whereby all the relevant stakeholders are consulted in terms of what CRM should look like and what would be fit for purpose. This would feed into the business case to be put forward to the Board.
- AW noted that SG was chairing the service subgroup to initiate and push this forward. SG would pick the members of the group. CF would recirculate the membership of Board subgroups.
- AM asked about the plan for the working groups. CF responded that the work on this was ongoing.
- SS confirmed that 30 and 31 October were suitable for most Board members for all-day Board sessions.
- AW updated the Board on the relationship with Volleyball England Foundation. AW, SS and AM would be attending the Foundation's Board meeting on Saturday 7 August 2021. The main agenda item was the relationship between Volleyball England and the Volleyball England Foundation. The last board meeting saw the paper advocating the collaborative model. That paper had now changed to be a jointly authored paper between VE and the Volleyball England Foundation. This meant that it was presented jointly and was difficult to turn down. Simone Turner had an input into the paper. AW would be presenting the paper. SS would circulate the paper to the Board.
- There being no other business AW closed the meeting at 6.27pm.

Actions	Who
PF would email SS with corrections of a few typos and sentences.	PF SS
SS would circulate the final submission, taking into consideration points raised during the discussion, to Board after the meeting with Sport England and before sending off for a decision by the Sport England Board.	SS
CF would recirculate the membership of Board subgroups.	CF
SS would circulate the paper on the relationship between VE and the Foundation to the Board.	SS



Adam Walker, Independent Chair