



## **Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting 29 November 2025 at Crystal Palace National Sports Centre and online via Teams.**

<b>Directors Present</b>	<b>Titles</b>
Rowena Hackwood [RHa]	Chair of the Board
Ali Shipway [AS]	Vice Chair, Chair of the meeting
Anton Kornilov [AK]	Elected Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Senior Independent Director
Jess Keen [JK]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP] online	Elected Director
Jill Osleger [JO]	Independent Director
Philip French [PF] online	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH] online	Elected Director
<b>Staff Present</b>	
Charlie Ford [CF]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive
Agata Sromecka [ASr]	Secretariate

### **EB/25-26/20 Apologies**

- AS welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Apologies had been received from Jake Sheaf and Tracy Newton.

### **20.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures**

There were no declarations that had been submitted.

### **20.2 Approval of agenda**

Agenda was approved by all.

### **20.3 Previous meetings**

#### **Minutes of 25 October 2025 Board meeting.**

- Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- RHa asked AS to chair this meeting to enable RHa to observe the dynamics of the Board. In an update to the minutes of the previous meeting, RHa will formally chair her first meeting in February 2026.

### **20.4 Matters Arising/Actions List**

- GB updated the final wording for the Concussion policy discussed at the October Board meeting was still awaited from Prof Dane and the policy was still to be released. The policy would be shared with the Board for approval as previously agreed.

- CF confirmed that sitting volleyball would be a standing Board agenda item from the February 2026 Board onwards.
- GB asked for anyone who had not received the link to the safeguarding training to contact her and she would resend.

## **20.5 Board Member Check In and 20.6 Meet Rowena**

RHa introduced herself to the meeting and thanked AS for chairing this meeting to enable her to observe. RHa has scheduled time to catch up with staff and Board over the coming weeks and expressed her excitement over her appointment as Chair of VE Board.

Board shared updates on their wellbeing.

## **EB/25-26/21 Exec Report**

The report was taken as read.

AS and CF highlighted the following:

- Board agreed that AS would represent VE on the BVF Board moving forward and to attend upcoming meetings.
- Updates would be shared on the CV Solidarity Fund, Congress, BCU and issues relating to membership.

AS and CF reflected on the Congress as follows:

- The event was formal, with slick and well managed logistics.
- The World President's energetic and passionate speech, which focused on volleyball as something that should be fun, was the highlight of the day. He used the example of China, where the sport was seen more in a simple, playful way rather than only as a highly technical discipline.
- While England appeared 'small' in global volleyball terms as nation, the passion and interest within Volleyball England had come through strongly. AS stressed it was important to keep this authentic passion and avoid becoming overly corporate.
- There was an emphasis on commerciality throughout the Congress, with a new commercial department in Luxembourg, with a new head of commercial, and that team size and salaries were substantial compared to VE. Other federations, such as Sweden, had also introduced new commercial strategies and heads of commercial. CF suggested a future board discussion on what "commercial" should mean for VE and for the next strategy cycle.
- There is strong alignment between Congress priorities of commercial and digital aligned closely and areas VE wanted to prioritise from 2026 onwards.
- The Congress and social events provided valuable opportunities to build relationships with European colleagues.

AS and CF reflected on the NEVZA (Zonal Association) Meeting as follows:

- Countries such as Finland had commented that NEVZA was not their main competitive focus, as they sought higher-level competition elsewhere. The group agreed NEVZA needed review, including zoning lines, competition levels and formats. AS noted that the Faroe Islands and Iceland had been voted into NEVZA. AS reported that future leadership of NEVZA would move away from being driven solely by a president and general secretary and instead be delivered through country-based working groups.
- The board discussed whether, in future, England might be better placed in a different zonal association to access higher-level competition.

- Some countries might lobby for a full redrawing of zonal lines over the next 12 months, and that VE would need to 'watch this space'.
- VE had approval to run NEVZA beach events for the next three years, including junior and senior events and an additional beach Pro Tour Futures event.
- There was openness at European level to expand indoor senior women's competitions, building on the existing Nordic men's club competition, and noted VE's interest in hosting such events to secure more competition for senior teams.

CF and AS reflected on the opportunity presented by the Solidarity Fund:

- A new solidarity fund will launch at the end of November 2025, with an overall pot of €400,000. Exact funding levels per project were not yet clear but FIVB/CEV were encouraging federations to apply.
- Potential project ideas included facility development (e.g. linked to the Birmingham build) and initiatives connected to player and community feedback. CF suggested a possible investment in beach officiating.
- AS recommended establishing a Board working group to develop a solidarity fund application.
- AH agreed to chair the working group, with other interested members asked to contact the CF directly.
- It was noted that the application deadline for the fund was likely to be at the end of January.

CF updated the Board on BCU:

- The project was confirmed as officially paused, but further planning work was required.
- Movement toward a revised facility design was noted, shifting to a partially covered model. A site reassessment in Birmingham was scheduled. Planning amendments and a reconvening of partners in the New Year were anticipated.
- However, timelines for facility readiness were now uncertain.
- AS and RHa had offered their support for related meetings.
- Possible additional place-based sport funding was anticipated.

### **21.1 Anti - doping update**

The paper presented to the Board aimed to meet the UKAD Assurance Framework requirement 3, that required the Board to have 'a report to the Board or for discussion at a Board meeting'. The Board is required to evidence Compliance with requirements about due steps and due processes.

GB updated the Board that:

- No UKAD tests had been reported for volleyball and no adverse findings had occurred.
- International testing was not included in this report.
- VE is also required to track senior athletes and this was proving a challenge. A request for reporting detail around this from the international federation was identified as a potential solution.

Board discussed:

- RH: communication regarding individual responsibility for substance use should be made clearer within policies. Also, not all athletes attend national training camps or receive competition briefings which include anti-doping. Broader communication to all registered players was recommended so they understood their responsibility.
- AK: embedding information within player registration processes. GB reported that player selection took into consideration players being up to date with their training.

- RH: players rely more on social media than websites, suggesting a need to diversify communication methods. CF also mentioned using ambassadors.
- GB: senior international athletes demonstrated strong understanding and accountability in completing required training.
- Lower levels of the pathway were identified as needing further support and education.
- The need for coaches and parents to have better awareness was discussed.
- The need for consistent support structures around young players and families was emphasised.

## **EB/25-26/22 Volleyball England Policy Updates**

GB updated:

- Majority of documents were reviewed on three-year cycle and some annually.
- RHa had already fed back and her feedback noted for incorporation. Policies would be proofread ahead of publishing on the website.
- Substantive updates to policies such as EDI, anti-bullying, and cyber security were summarised.
- A review of SEM policies and procedures was pending due to capacity limitations within the Talent Team.
- Board members were asked to share their feedback with GB.
- Upon adoption of the feedback, policies would be amended and published.

Board discussed:

- The need for policy consistency, policy structure, and alignment across documents (RH)
- That adult safeguarding documents were more detailed than youth safeguarding documents due to differences in how guidance was published and when policies were added.
- Rationalisation and consistency across safeguarding materials (AS)
- The need to improve policy organisation and visibility on the website, particularly for good practice guidance containing multiple sub-documents (AS)
- The relationship between on banter and bullying, with reference to trends in education where banter is increasingly perceived as harmful (RHa).

## **22.1 Publishing Disciplinary Outcomes**

RHa asked for the narrative to be made clearer (i.e. “Sanction” to be used rather than “Fine” in Outcome) Subject to this, Board has approved publishing a summary of disciplinary outcomes for all national competitions.

## **EB/25-26/23 Game Plan Review & Progress**

AS suggested that a thorough review of Game Plan strategic plan progress would be reviewed during a virtual meeting scheduled at another time convenient to Board members. CF and GB to schedule.

CF summarised the approach he had taken to date on reviewing the progress of the 2024-28 implementation plan using a strategic progress barometer. This approach showed the organisation is 63% along the journey, with an average score of 2.8 out of 5.

The discussion amongst the Board highlighted the need for a deeper dive into the success statements and their prioritisation for the Board, cross-referencing with club surveys and risk register.

## **EB/25-26/24 SEM 2024/25 Priority Review & Planning**

CF updated that SEM priorities revolved around physical robustness and readiness. The 2026/27 budget would be looked into to facilitate progress in this area. Next steps would focus on S&C for the next 18 to 24 months. Board discussed inviting Prof Dane to discuss this at a Board meeting.

## **EB/25-26/25 Meeting review**

### **25.1 Review of Actions**

Actions were noted.

### **25.2 AOB**

Board discussed:

- International beach events and how we could bring new players that would match the skill of Bello brothers (AH)
- Inviting UKBT to attend the February Board meeting to present on the current position of the domestic leagues and development plans moving forward (CF)
- The need for a dedicated discussion about performance and talent (RH)

### **25.3 Meeting Close**

CF expressed his gratitude to the Board meeting and hub team for their support in time of challenge.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.45pm.

### **Actions**

EB/25-26/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wording in the concussion policy still outstanding and would be shared as soon as ready.</li> </ul>	GB
EB/25-26/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitting volleyball update would be added to the exec/subgroup reporting from February 2026.</li> </ul>	CF
20.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GB to resend the link to safeguarding training to those that notify her.</li> <li>• Action and Decision Making log to be included in the Board pack moving forward.</li> </ul>	GB CF
EB/25-26/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members to submit policy feedback to GB Policies to be amended and published after feedback</li> </ul>	Board
22.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative for disciplinary outcome publishing to be clarified; summary to be issued</li> </ul>	GB
EB/25-26/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Game Plan progress review meeting to be scheduled</li> </ul>	CF GB
EB/25-25/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof Dane Vishnubala to be invited for Board discussion in</li> </ul>	CF

	February.	
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