



## Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at SportPark, Loughborough and via Teams.

Directors Present	Titles
Ali Shipway [AS]	Interim Chair
Anton Kornilov [AK]	Elected Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Jake Sheaf [JS]	Elected Director
Jess Keen [JK]	Elected Director
Jill Osleger [JO]	Independent Director
Philip French [PF]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Tracey Newton [TN]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CF]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive
John Worrall [JW]	Project Lead Sitting Volleyball
Agata Sromecka [ASr]	Secretariate

AS welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### EB/25-26/14 Apologies

- Andres Hernandez and Jess Plumridge had sent their apologies.
- Board offered congratulations to Jess on the birth of her baby son, Angus.
- AS welcomed all and thanked participants for making the trip.

### 14 1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

There were no declarations that had been submitted.

### 14.2 Approval of agenda

Agenda was approved by all.

### 14.3 Previous meetings

#### Minutes of 18 July 2025 Board meeting and AGM 2025.

- RH raised an issue re minutes of the last Board meeting:
  - This should state that this was defined for mixed competitions.  
*A balanced team line-up had been defined (e.g., three male and three female players, or two male and four female players), allowing regional flexibility in application.*

- RH queried the Board's understanding of this bullet point.  
*The revised policy wording was agreed to be more precise, with regional bodies granted discretion on interpretation and implementation.*
- CF confirmed that regional discretion was granted on interpretation and implementation of the policy in the case of inclusion of transgender women in women's competition. RH suggested monitoring implications of this. AS queried whether there was national guidance on this. CF reported that wider work with regions would facilitate conversations with regions about this as well.
- NVL women's competitions remained women-only spaces.
- There was no change to the policy.
- Board discussed "Whistleblower" terminology and a distinction between raising a concern and whistleblowing.
- JO asked whether issues around the discussion related to the kit had been resolved. AS spoke of role of VE in making a clear distinction between communication, engaging and consulting with the membership and the circumstances where these would apply. CF reported that updated consultation page now clarified those processes, and this had been communicated. It was important to relay the message that VE would take decisions that would benefit the sport, which did not equal majority vote from the membership for a specific issue.
- TN asked about "You Said We Did" initiative and how VE fed back about organisational progress. CF updated that CF and GB would reframe strategic quarterly updates and use the 12 success statements with a story against each.
- AS pointed out that the Elected members could strengthen two-way links to membership in terms of this communication. This could be further explored.
- JO noted that this could also be based on FAQs with updates on the same questions every time to ensure consistency.
- AS noted, that the survey could be a tool to strengthen messaging.
- JK questioned whether there was a mobile-friendly way to achieve this in bitesize chunks.
- Mindful use of pronouns (you/we/us) in relation to comms launched about the sport and how the language could be interpreted by the membership was also considered.
- Both sets of minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to transgender policy clarification.

#### **14.4 Matters Arising/Actions List**

There were no matters arising.

#### **14.5 Board Member Check In**

Board shared updates on their wellbeing.

#### **EB/25-26/15 Exec Report**

The report was taken as read.

AS and CF highlighted the following:

- Next Board meeting would take place alongside the Queen & King of the Court event at Crystal Palace on 28/29<sup>th</sup> November (hybrid attendance would be available).
- On the Chair appointment, Rowena Hackwood had accepted appointment as Chair of VE following the recruitment process led by Nominations Committee. Board recorded thanks to AS for the interim support since Adam Walker left. CF confirmed that the Nominations Committee followed due process as per the Articles. Rowena's induction was underway. First meeting to be chaired by Rowena would be in November.

### **15.1 VE x VEF Ways of Working**

- A refreshed 'Ways of Working' document had arisen off the back of the conversations between CF, JO, and Greg Brown/Janet Inman from the VE Foundation. Roles and responsibilities as well as shared principles had been agreed and those would be included in the Foundation's five-year Strategy. Board were pleased with this development and reaching agreement on alignment of priorities between VE and the Foundation. Board approved the document.

### **EB/25-26/16 Subgroup reports**

#### **Volleyball for life**

- RH confirmed the group's work alignment with strategic plan.
- AK had joined the VfL Sub Group.

#### **Get Keep Grow**

- Laura Allcoat was back in post.
- The group was progressing well.

#### **An Ace service**

- The group had had a reset following Simon Griffith's departure.
- The consultation had been launched into junior competition structures.
- Discussions around enhanced standards through the NVL were ongoing.
- The NVC opening weekend was reported to have been a success.
- BF raised concern regarding finishing times as this posed health and safety risks for those travelling long distances back home. CF updated that scheduling was being looked at.
- AS commented that Board should be reflecting post-event linking to the Strategy and considering various perspectives. JK expressed her support for this idea and offered to explore how this could be facilitated. RH commented that working groups could help with evaluations on the day.
- BF raised the issue of the numbers of English players in the top league. CF referenced that there is work ongoing to develop standards. JK participated in this. RH stressed the importance of establishing strategy for junior comps.

### **Finance, Strategy and Risk**

- Q2 and 6-month financial figures had been reviewed and approved by FSR last night (Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October).
- Sport England funding and impact of its organisational change continued to be recorded as the most significant risks to the organisation.
- The group discussed developing the dashboard in terms of recording progress against strategy potentially against the 12 success statements. RH commented that a dashboard presenting progress against pathways would be helpful to understand data better. Post-Covid data stabilising would enable trend analysis. GB added that monitoring data linked to People Plan would also help with trend analysis. JK added that performance of the sport should also be monitored. AS added that Board should be clear about what they wanted to hear about in terms of the progress.

### **EB/25-26/17 Concussion policy**

GB reported the following:

- The guidance was part of Sport & Exercise Medicine (SEM) documentation and had been

written by our Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dane Vishnubala.

- The document needed to be implemented as soon as possible.
- The request was for the Board to approve the policy with the section related to the “during the match” protocol awaiting final approval from the Officials Working Group.
- Concussion training might need to be developed and added to the learner platform.

Board discussed:

- TN questioned the relevance of age for return to play. GB responded that this was to do with development of brain and the time it needed to recover post-concussion.
- TN asked about reporting of incidents. GB answered that it would be reporting during match play. The policy needed to state this. GB to update the policy with this point.
- Board requested to see the missing wording once ready and an out of meeting approval would then be given.
- AK asked how this policy would be communicated. CF responded that an animation was looked at as part of bringing it to life.
- AS asked whether this document was a policy or guidelines. CF responded that this document was guidelines and best practice. AS then asked whether it would be helpful to have infographic accompanying this due to the amount to go through in terms of contents. This would be considered.
- GB would ask for a key to abbreviations/glossary of terms to be added.

### **EB/25-26/18 Sitting volleyball development plans.**

JW joined the meeting. He presented a video created for Disability History Month last November. JW then went to present the following:

- A joint working group (VE, VE Foundation, BVF, community representatives) had been formed in June 2023.
- Achievements of 2024 included: comms and campaign plan for Disability History Month, sitting volleyball had become part of HEVO programme, multiple collaborations with external organisations, partner charities and the foundation, club starter pack had been created.
- In 2025, the group formulated a plan under five developmental headings with each organisation having a distinct role.
- JW presented the number of clubs and members registered to play. The numbers were on the rise from last year.
- University route was recognised to create opportunities to play sitting volleyball. To try to get the sport on the university sport plan, the principle of “three Cs” had been utilised: Coaching (HEVO activators), Clubs (societies/links to community), Competition (developing a model to hold timed-match format). Three repeat uni tournaments planned (two at UEL alongside activations to highlight the sport). Subject to numbers, there is a scope for BUCS to start inclusion of the sport into their official sport programme.
- JW asked the Board what opportunities the Board saw for sport to grow within the current structure at the national level and how it can be accessible and inclusive for all abilities.

Board discussed:

- RH asked about the equipment that clubs could use to play sitting volleyball. JW responded that a lot of clubs use a pop-up tennis or badminton net. There is no need to have specialised equipment although it was available through the VolleyStore.
- JW reported that there was a starter pack that helps to start the game within the club setting.
- A publicity campaign about the sport would run during the Disability History Month.
- RH added that values could be included as part of the five development headings.

PF left the meeting at 12.30pm

- TN added that it was important to target potential non-disabled players but not able to play/enjoy indoor volleyball due to age or injuries.
- The sport could be positioned as both an inclusive format and a sport in its own right.
- RH raised the issue of the lack of venues. BF commented that it might be worth exploring partnerships with paddle/badminton venues.
- AK observed that sitting beach volleyball could be an option to raise interest in the sport.
- Sitting volleyball update would be added to the exec/subgroup reporting.
- Newsletter names were being decided upon.
- Board thanked JW for the update.

BF left at 1.05pm

### **EB/25-26/19 Birmingham Beach Centre – Current Position & Planning**

The paper was taken as read.

Board discussed:

- AK asked whether BCU students would have access to the venue. CF confirmed that this was the case alongside the wider community engagement.

### **EB/25-26/20 Meeting review**

#### **20.1 Review of Actions**

Actions were noted.

#### **20.2 AOB**

- JO asked about the Safeguarding training for the Board. This to be organised before the end of March 2026.
- Safeguarding update would be delivered by TN the following day.
- AS discussed, the visibility of the Board also during the events. To enable this, Board members would be able to claim expenses. GB would circulate instructions on how to claim expenses.

#### **20.3 Meeting Close**

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 1.15pm.

#### **Actions**

EB/25-26/17	Changes and additions to the Concussion Policy to be circulated to the Board for an out of meeting approval.	GB
EB/25-26/18	Sitting volleyball update would be added to the exec/subgroup reporting as a standing item.	CF
20.2	Safeguarding training to be organised for the Board by March 2026.  GB would circulate instructions re claiming expenses.	CF/LA  GB

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## **Board Meeting – Report Summary**

The following paper provides summary information from the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025 board pack which should be read in conjunction with the above-board meeting minutes:

### **EB/25-26/15 – Executive Report**

#### **1. Staff Updates**

Since the last Board meeting, we can report the following staffing updates:

- Jordan Goldsborough started in our Project Lead – Talent position at the end of July. In line with our newly embedded Talent Ways of Working, Jordan has rapidly improved all aspects of communication between athletes, parents, coaches, and support staff.
- All members of our 2025–26 Student Project Officer (SPO) cohort have now been inducted and have hit the ground running across the business. As an additional enhancement for our SPOs and aligned with the principles of our People Plan we have introduced a series of monthly development sessions covering a broad range of NGB-related areas and skills.

Over the past 18 months, we have seen a staff attrition rate of just 9%, compared to 24% in the previous period. Coupled with our employee satisfaction score of 32 on the enPS scale, these are positive indicators of the culture and environment we have built.

#### **2. Social Media Comment Moderation Plan**

Following the Super League Final Four in 2024, there was a noticeable increase in negative and, at times, inappropriate comments directed towards players, officials and event staff across our social media channels. While the majority of our community continues to engage positively and respectfully, a small number of comments and behaviours raised concerns around respect, safeguarding and the wellbeing of those representing the sport.

In light of these issues, we have reviewed our internal approach to how online comments are managed and have developed a new *Social Media Comment Handling Guide* to provide staff and volunteers with a clear and consistent framework for moderation. The aim is to ensure that our response to online behaviour reflects the organisation's values of respect, inclusivity and belonging, while protecting both individuals and the reputation of the sport.

The new approach introduces a sliding scale of response which categorises comments according to their severity and sets out proportionate actions for each level. At the lowest level, minor negativity or unhelpful remarks may simply be monitored or ignored. Comments that adopt a rude or disrespectful tone can be hidden or addressed with a polite warning if appropriate. Posts containing inappropriate or offensive language will be deleted and repeat offenders may be blocked. More serious cases involving personal abuse or harassment will result in immediate blocking, reporting to the platform and internal documentation. Any comment that contains threatening language or hate speech will be treated as a safeguarding or

legal matter, with escalation to the relevant authorities if necessary.

To ensure consistency in the application of this approach, the guide will be shared internally with all staff and volunteers who manage official social media accounts. A short online briefing session will accompany its rollout to provide clarity on how and when to act, as well as how to record incidents appropriately. Where comments are linked to registered members, cases will be referred to the disciplinary or safeguarding team for further consideration.

The introduction of this structured approach is expected to strengthen our ability to manage online interactions effectively, reduce reputational and wellbeing risks, and reinforce our commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment across all platforms. The guide will be implemented in November 2025, with its effectiveness reviewed after three months. A summary of findings and recommendations will be brought back to the Board at the April Board meeting.

### **3. Queen & King of the Court – London 2025**

We have now officially announced the Crown Series: Queen & King of the Court event, which will take place on 28–29 November at the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre.

As a reminder, this will be the world's first indoor Queen & King of the Court event, positioned just after the World Championships meaning it is expected to attract many of the world's top players. As hosts, we will receive guaranteed spots per gender, with an additional spot per gender available to the winners of a qualification round on Friday, 28 November, featuring five teams.

A significant part of the event, during downtime outside of competition will be dedicated to community activation. We are working closely with the London Volleyball Association (LVA) to provide opportunities for young people across London to learn new skills and take part in a Junior Queen & King of the Court event.

Given that our next Volleyball England Board meeting is scheduled for Saturday, 29 November, we propose moving this to an in-person meeting at Crystal Palace.