



## Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting at 11am on 27 January 2024 via Teams.

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Independent Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Clare Francis [CF]	Senior Independent Director
Freda Bussey [FB]	Elected Director
Jake Sheaf [JS]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [DP]	Elected Director
Phil French [PF]	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Simon Griffiths [SG]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CFo]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive
Kev Fletcher [KF]	Finance Manager
Mark Kontopoulos [MK]	BVF Chair (left at 12pm)
Greg Brown [GB]	Interim Volleyball England Foundation Chair
In attendance	
Hema Choudhary [HC]	Community Stakeholder – Project Lead
Laura Allcoat [LA]	Get Keep Grow – Strategic Manager
Agata Sromecka [AS]	Secretariat

### EB/23-24/31 Welcome from the Chair and apologies

Chair welcomed all to the meeting – especially MK who was the newly appointed Chair of BVF.

Brendan Fogarty and Dave Reeve had submitted apologies.

### 31.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

JS declared an ongoing interest as recorded previously.

### 31.2 Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved by all present.

### 31.3 Previous minutes

Minutes of the 9 December 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### 31.4 Matters arising

EB/23-24/28 DV and RH were yet to meet to discuss clinical governance within coach education.

**Actions:**

***EB/23-24/28 DV and RH are yet to meet to discuss clinical governance within coach education.***

**32 EB/23-24/32 Exec Report including CWG Legacy updates**

AW took the Exec report as read.

CFo and GB drew the Board's attention to the following:

- The Board papers now include an updated cover sheet and a table at the end of papers as part of our compliance with the Code for Sports Governance.
- CFo explained that as a result of a review by AW over the Christmas break and member feedback, it had been identified that the board meeting minutes uploaded to the website on many occasions lack the detail that is contained within the board meeting papers. Some members have commented that many positive updates related to sport and the community were not communicated or clarified as part of the minutes. CFO proposed two solutions to the above issue for board discussion and approval:
  - A board paper summary document would be produced, included as an appendix, and referenced within the board meeting minutes.
  - A comms piece would be released after every board meeting to discuss the key points that were discussed, decisions made and refer to any significant milestones that the sport has achieved.

Board discussed:

- SG commented that a brief Board meeting summary could be created alongside the minutes of Board meetings. CF agreed with this point but also suggested that minutes could be more detailed.
  - MK stated that balance was needed between recording contents, capturing nuance and context in a way that is understandable to the members but without making minutes too lengthy.
  - PF added that it was important to articulate progress of the organisation and positive developments in a much more proactive manner. The Exec should be best placed to decide how this could be accomplished. CFo and GB would see what would be best suited and progress this.
- JS commented on the Commonwealth Games Legacy:
    - Raphael Oliverira had been appointed as the new Birmingham Activator.
    - A meeting with the head of estate at BCU to pitch a business case to make BCU the home of performance beach volleyball in England would be held.
    - JS had met with the majority of head coaches which had seemed like a great community.

Board discussed:

- CF endorsed the appointment of Raphael. CF then asked about the funding and how this was being tracked against the original targets. JS said that funding had been shifted slightly but the workforce development was still taking place including beach head coach award in May 16 level 1 and 2 places funded as part of this. In terms of indoor, there was still funding left for a level 1 coaches course in the Birmingham area. JS stressed that it was important that the right people receive this funding to upskill. Also, Janet Inman had been working with Sport Birmingham to upskill community volunteers.
- CF commented that it was important to communicate to the community how the legacy funding was being used and how this would impact the success of the sport in the future. JS agreed and he would pick this up. JS added that one of Raphaels' targets would be to send content to the comms team weekly.

- AW asked how much of a risk the financial situation of the Birmingham City Council presented to VE. JS responded that the biggest risk was them getting rid of the sand. JS was meeting with the Council and Sport England the following Tuesday. JS commented that he was confident that the sand would be safe.

### **32.1 Safeguarding Case Review**

Board commented on the review of the case:

- CF commented that a review was welcome to ensure that safeguards were in place to avoid a similar situation taking place again. CF was curious how and whether monitoring could be implemented going forward.
- AW confirmed that it was important for the sport to learn from this and implement sufficient safeguards to protect players.

CFo commented:

- There were two other individuals being managed on similar grounds and they were currently suspended.
- Conversations with Sport England around securing additional support for a safeguarding lead role were progressing well.

Board commented:

- SG commented on the notion of a position of trust and the fact that a chair of a club, although not listed as a coach or team manager, was also a position of trust. SG added that a comms person should always be in the know around ongoing safeguarding cases so that investigated individuals do not feature in stories. CFo agreed and added that all senior leaders were being kept in the loop about safeguarding matters. Also, VolleyZone and Globocol aided safeguarding by means of accurate record keeping and data tracking.
- RH admitted that suspicions had been raised to him as a Board member. RH was unaware of the case being raised as this had not been discussed at Board meetings. RH expressed his concern that whatever monitoring would be put in place it would not be sufficient due to the pattern of behaviors of people compromising safeguarding of young people.
- AW stressed it was important not to brand individuals guilty until proven as such. Therefore, it was important that communication channels would be internal as long as possible to manage risk and reputations.
- RH asked whether the safeguarding guidance was available to clubs. AW responded that there were many resources available to clubs. CFo added that a new Discord channel had been established for the club welfare officers with new content and education available via the channel. This would help raise awareness from a national perspective.
- CFo agreed that safeguarding allegations had to be kept confidential to avoid prejudice or impacting outcome of investigations taking place.
- MK agreed that making safeguarding resources easily available was important. MK would like to receive more info on the Discord channel. MK asked why the information on the case had not been disclosed to the community now the individual had been found guilty by a court of law. This could be conducive to the community disclosing new/unknown information. CFo added that some NGBs publish this type of info, and some do not. CFo commented that there was no reason this could not be done but this would require further consideration. AW commented that removal from sport could be communicated more widely but not reasons for it. MK agreed that VE had a duty to the community to protect it from individuals harming young people.
- CFo added that CIMSPA was undertaking creation of the national coach register. This would aid inter-sport safeguarding as well.
- CFo and GB were asked to prepare a report presenting the pros and cons of publicizing

information about sentenced offenders from within the volleyball community.

- JP Asked whether a social media profile of sentenced individuals should be looked at with a view to removing any images of children playing volleyball or delinking the profile with any clubs. CFo would discuss this with a LADO.

**Actions:**

***EB/23-24/32 Exec to decide how best to capture the essence of the Board meetings as part of minutes summary to be appended to the minutes.***

***CF commented that it was important to communicate to the community how the legacy funding was being used and how this would impact the success of the sport in the future. JS agreed and he would pick this up.***

***EB/23-24/32.1 CFo and GB would prepare a report presenting the pros and cons of publicizing information about sentenced offenders from within the volleyball community.***

**EB/23-24/33 Sub-Groups & Volleyball England Foundation Updates**

**33.1 VE Foundation**

GB updated the Board on the following in terms of Volleyball England Foundation:

- The trustees had met on 16 January.
- In terms of recruitment, the ad for new trustees was out.

Board discussed:

- CF asked how unrestricted funds would be spent. The VEF Board was looking for opportunities to spend this. CFo added that some proposals would be put forward and a meeting with VEF would be helpful. The projects would need to align to the Strategy.

**33.2 An Ace Service service subgroup**

SG updated the Board:

- Strategic managers should be reporting on the three strategic areas. A lot of topics discussed by the group were operational. However, the current topics also included a rethink of educational pathway for officials and the NVL project.
- The arbitrary reporting schedule was not always in alignment with the meetings of the group.
- AW commented that the chair of the report decides what goes into the report.

AW asked that the reporting from the groups is maximised. The chairs were asked to discuss this in their groups.

**33.3 Volleyball for Life (VfL) subgroup**

RH updated the Board:

- Overall plans for Volleyball for life pathways were being developed.
- Board's decision and input would be required on the learner management system.

**33.4 Get Keep Grow (GKG) subgroup**

JP highlighted:

- Member fees and categories were being looked at by the subgroup. The categories were intended to be more user-friendly and internally friendly.
- CFo would link with JP around what is coming out of the CEO WhatsApp group on the subject of memberships.

### **33.5 FSR**

AH reported:

- FSR were happy with the proposed budget.
- The Strategy progress was on track.
- The Volleyball online shop was included in the risk register.
- FSR terms of reference had been slightly amended in connection with compliance to the Code for sports of governance.

KV updated the Board on the Q3 numbers (October to December):

- An Ace Service within NVL was ahead of the budget
- The Student Cup and U18s also had done very well in the quarter
- One negative offset was course margin which was on the back of the e-learning platform.
- Volleystore was growing, relationships with suppliers needed attention to improve customer experience.
- Within the revenue, 54% was Volleyball England generated, which was larger than ever before.

AW thanked KF for the update.

### **33.5 BVF**

MK was appointed on 7 February 2024. He was in the process of connecting with colleagues across the volleyball community.

#### **Actions:**

***EB/23-24/33.4 C Fo would link with JP around what is coming out of the CEO WhatsApp group on the subject of memberships.***

### **EB/23-24/34 24/25 Operational planning**

#### **34.1 24/25 Budget planning**

KF updated the Board on the budget planning:

- The headcount in the budget remains the same as the 23/24 year.
- Staff pay awards are factored in.
- FIVB's funding for the Beach performance director's annual salary was factored in.
- Additional FIVB funding has been applied for to support our indoor Volleyball plans and knowledge exchange programmes.
- Each department had a development budget that was linked to their respective actions in the Games Plan.
- Within the revenue, 67% was Volleyball England generated, which was larger than ever before.
- Sport England funding made 33% of the total revenue.
- Major events funding had been carried forward and this would net off with the FIVB extra funding.
- Sufficient provisions had been put towards covering irrecoverable VAT.
- The budget was planned to produce a loss of £34.5k but with sufficient reserves protected as part of this. However, despite being a deficit budget, the funds would be used to re-invest into and develop the sport.

AW confirmed that FSR had approved the budget.

Board discussed:

- RH asked whether the subgroups should be involved in what projects had been budgeted for and what the process would look like.
- GB explained that this year CFo and GB had met to discuss how Board subgroups, the strategic managers and their teams would go through cascading opportunity to explore what they would be doing, present their plans and draft budgets to the SLT. Discussions had been expected to have happened prior to the away day and after the away day to ensure that discussions at the away days would have been informed by the subgroups. The outcome of decisions made at the away days would be taken back to subgroups. Over December and January, the work had been happening with the strategic managers and KF to ensure that the budget brought to the Board was sound and robust and informed by the work of subgroups. After the meeting, strategic managers would be expected to finalise the elements of the ops plan and engage again with subgroups in that stage.
- FSR was keen to see the final ops plan once it is finalised.

**Board approved the budget subject to review of the reserves policy wording.**

**Actions:**

***EB/23-24/34.1***

***AW asked GB to ask to subgroups to identify gaps in the process of communication about projects and budgets between them and subgroups.***

AW thanked MK for attending the meeting. MK left the meeting.

**EB/23-24/35 Regions, Counties & Clubs – 2023 review and planning**

Laura Allcoat and Hema Choudhary joined the meeting.

LA reported the following:

- Following the first community of practice that had taken place last January, an online forum called Discord had been launched. This allowed for VE, the regions, and counties to share best practice with one other. This also allowed for reduction in response time and information to be disseminated wider into the volleyball community more easily.
- Based on the first community of practice, a SWOT analysis had been devised, which had helped to run future community of practices. That then enabled creation of a governance health check tool which was also in line with the Code for Sports Governance.
- Following the launch, HC had undertaken one-to-one focus calls with five regions and four counties. This had provided a really great opportunity to dig deeper into their ways of working, what opportunities and challenges they faced as well and how more tailored support could be designed and provided to them.
- Four communities of practice held over the last year focused on reconnecting in the Game Plan and bridging the information gap. A focus on governance over the last few months had helped to make sure that regions and counties started to understand how VE's governance affected their governance and what they should have in place to make their committees and associations sustainable for the future.
- The most recent community of practice around governance saw sharing of the check tool to help identify areas where work or improvements were required.
- There were twenty-three members from seven different regions and eleven counties that had attended the variety of communities of practice, but the aim was to reach a wider audience moving forward.
- In terms of the communities of practice coming up for this year, the sessions would be based on the analysis around volunteers, their development, management, and recruitment, and how to support their succession planning and future sustainability. Sport

England and Buddle colleagues would be coming to deliver this session for us. The April session, based on the SWOT analysis, would be around junior development. The Volleyball For Life subgroup were being consulted around this.

- Future communities of practice session content were still to be determined. They would be based on what comes out of the governance health check potentially around safeguarding.
- The decision had been made to remove the existing regional rep role and responsibilities from Hub Team members with HC being the first point of contact for all. This did not mean that HC would be attending all the regional meetings and AGM. This would be discussed and planned as and when.
- Since HC started in the post, a stakeholder engagement plan focusing on the regions, counties and clubs had been worked on. One of the things identified as part of the work with Buddle was the need to create a regional guidance document to help them to understand the Articles of Association and the Game Plan Strategy. The regions could then formulate sections of their region based on the three strategic areas that could fit into the annual report. Work was being carried out with SportLoMo to integrate the competition's iframe into that as well.

HC reported the following:

- Last year, VE had become one of the hubs to receive support from Buddle formerly known as Club matters as part of their hub partnership. As part of the partnership VE had been allocated 16 days of support for year one and six days of support for year two.
- The first face-to-face three-hour long meeting last October had been held to identify our short-term goals and our long-term goals as well as the need for Governance Health Check Tool in line with requirement of the Code for Sports Governance by Sport England.
- The immediate priority in this partnership was to equip the regions and counties with the right information and knowledge so that they could find themselves in better position to support the clubs in their area when we launched similar tools. At the Club level, a succession planning document had been created and there were many more resources worked on which were still in the pipeline.
- The purpose of these focus calls was twofold. First, there was a desire to create a space for a face-to-face open conversation wherein the regions and counties could share whatever was on their mind volleyball wise and feel heard. And the second purpose was for VE to understand as to how close or far the regions and counties were in the awareness of their objectives as mentioned in the Articles of Association and the framework document, and if they were working to achieve the objectives, what their progress was. The insights from these calls along with a SWOT analysis were feeding into this regional guidance document that was being developed. This document was being created in line with the strategy, and it was displaying how regions and counties objectives were feeding into the Strategy.
- The idea was also to reestablish the fact that we were all working in the same direction with a common purpose.
- Discord was an invite only community-based app and a website which provided quick communication allowing people to chat, share ideas and much more. Currently, four members from three regions and 18 members from 11 counties are using the channel. There were dedicated channels for sharing updates, announcements, funding opportunities, and there were separate channels for regions and counties so that they could share the challenges.
- A lot of work had also gone in at the club level. A more structured approach towards organising the workshop for clubs had been taken to maximise participation. The needs for the workshop were identified by the club survey the previous year and accordingly the workshop calendar from October 2023 onwards had been finalised and published. In the last year a workshop on engaging your community and exploring legal structures had been delivered and this year workshops on funding, volunteer experience, junior development in

engaging community would be organised. The uptake for these was rising.

- Work had been carried out to get the clubs and volunteer success stories out in front of the volleyball community. Thirty clubs who had done some exemplary work in different areas had been contacted. As a result, 10 case studies had been published in the last eight months. Two of them were yet to be posted and work was being carried out on another five. Two case studies on inclusivity had been published and one each on volunteering, club development officials and digital marketing. The case studies were being published on the website first before being shared on social media as well as Discord.
- The club hub had been launched in the previous year. It is a password protected web page for affiliated clubs. It hosted a variety of resources from role descriptions, funding opportunities workshop calendar, to insurance and safeguarding resources with more to come. Vast insight had been collected to understand the length and breadth of the challenges the regions, counties and clubs were facing.

Board discussed:

- AW thanked LA and HC. It was important that this great work is highlighted to the community. PF agreed with AW and congratulated LA and HC for this great work. JS asked about the state of relationship between VE, regions, and counties. LA responded that this was getting stronger with increasing engagement from regions and counties.
- CFo asked about the Peter Wardale memorial award. LA asked whether the Board would like to nominate anyone for the award. CFo explained that the award was the highest accolade for a volunteer with criteria the same as in previous years. CFo reminded that the deadline for nominations was 10th March. Everyone was encouraged to send their nominations to CFo/GB.
- AH asked whether the regions and counties were likely to embrace new technologies such as VolleyZone. LA confirmed that this was taking place, and a focus group would be created to ensure that technology is understood by the regions and counties before being cascaded further.

**Action:**

**EB/23-24/35.1**

**All Board members were asked to send their nominations for the Peter Wardale memorial award to CFo/GB by 10 March.**

**EB/23-24/36 People Plan – First full draft & next steps**

GB reported the following:

- It was important to obtain response to the four questions as per the presentation/paper submitted as part of the Board pack.
- It was also important for the Board to confirm that they were happy to move to the consultation phase of launching the People plan to the community.
- GB thanked all for their help and input into the Plan.
- First question was around the name and whether the Board was happy to use the term “People Plan.”

Board discussed:

- AW commented that People plan was appropriate, but it was indicative of the compliance rather than development.
- JS agreed and suggested that the name could be more aligned to VE.
- CFo suggested People Game Plan.
- SG suggested that a campaign name would be given to the Plan to encourage engagement.
- GB encouraged all to send their ideas.
- Next, GB stated that the plan had been drawn out of the five core guiding principles and



asked the Board whether any of the strategic ambitions did not align. There were no objections to the structure of the plan according to the core guiding principles.

- Thirdly, GB asked whether the ambitions and outcomes were relevant and fit for regions and counties. GB summarised them.

Board discussed:

- On the succession planning, RH observed that the opportunity to transition between roles in the sport was very important. CFo added that it was important to reflect on whether it was more important to keep and protect current workforce or recruit new members.

PF thanked GB for her work, and he would email his comments after the meeting. PF left the meeting.

- RH added that the Plan and actions stemming from it were sitting across the whole of organisation.

Board discussed:

- SG commented that the ambitions could be perceived as potentially stretching. SG asked how challenging the ambitions were going to be to deliver them and whether we were setting ourselves up for failure. GB responded that the plan was to reach those by 2030 but asked whether those should be kept as long-term outcomes or should those be limited. GB added that it was important that the long-term objectives had real clarity to them in order to achieve them.

- AW commented on how great the document was.
- GB encouraged all to feed back. The consultation would start by publishing the plan with a questionnaire linked to it. Once approved by the Board, the questions would be designed to be part of the questionnaire. The Plan and the questionnaire would be up for six weeks. The Volunteer Leadership Group was taking part in discussions shaping the Plan. AW commented that the impact of the work would need to be measured and whether there would be a positive change stemming from the Plan. GB was looking into building a matrix/evaluation and learning framework to measure this. GB was identifying routes into how the insight could be gained to questions under each five segments. Once the questionnaire is finished, it could be shared with the Board.
- Board agreed for the consultation phase to start.

### **EB/23-24/37 Meeting Finalisation**

AW commended the agenda items which were very interesting to hear updates on.

#### **37.1 Review of Actions**

Actions were reviewed and agreed.

#### **37.2 AOB**

CFo confirmed that meeting minutes summary of the December meeting would be drafted as a starting point.

JS asked whether the Saturday Board meetings could start earlier. AW agreed to start meetings at 9am but this would be confirmed.

### 37.3 Meeting close

Meeting closed at 1.15pm.

Actions	Who
<b>EB/23-24/28</b> DV and RH are yet to meet to discuss clinical governance within coach education	DV and RH
<b>EB/23-24/32</b> Exec to decide how best to capture the essence of the Board meetings as part of minutes summary to be appended to the minutes.  CF commented that it was important to communicate to the community how the legacy funding was being used and how this would impact the success of the sport in the future. JS agreed and he would pick this up.  <b>EB/23-24/32.1</b> CFo and GB would prepare a report presenting the pros and cons of publicizing information about sanctioned members from within the volleyball community.	CFO GB  JS  CFO GB
<b>EB/23-24/33.2</b> AW asked that the reporting from the subgroups is maximised. The chairs were asked to discuss this in their groups.  <b>33.4</b> CFo would link with JP around what is coming out of the CEO WhatsApp group on the subject of memberships.	SG, RH, JP, and AH.  CFO JP
<b>EB/23-24/35.1</b> All Board members were asked to send their nominations for the Peter Wardale memorial award to CFo by 10 March.	All
<b>EB/23-24/36.1</b> All Board members were asked to send their ideas for the name of the People plan.	All



## **Board Meeting – 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024 Report Summary**

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The following paper provides summary information from the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024 board pack which should be read in conjunction with the above board meeting minutes:

### **Item EB/23-24/32 – Executive Report**

#### **Volleyball England Staff**

Since the last board meeting, we have seen the below staffing changes:

- Beth Willetts has joined the organisation as our new ‘Project Lead – Competitions’ within the An Ace Service (AAS) department.
- As a result of the above, John Worrall is now transitioning over to his new ‘Project Lead – Sitting Volleyball’ role within the Get Keep Grow (GKG) department.
- Lucy Chalmers has joined our Comms team on a 1-day a week micro-internship from Loughborough University (fully funded by LU).
- Raphael Oliverira has been appointed as the new Birmingham Activator, we are going through the final phases of contracting after which a handover will take place with Mo Kerai and Jake will support his induction into the role.

Conversations are ongoing with Sport England in relation to obtaining the necessary resources to create a full time dedicated ‘People Manager’ role that will amongst other areas, provide us with a full-time dedicated staff member to oversee and lead on all aspects of safeguarding.

#### **Volunteer Leadership Group**

We have introduced a new Volunteer Leadership Group (VLG) that aims to increase collaboration across the organisation and lead to more informed strategic decision making.

It follows recommendations made in an external review of the Board, sub and working groups that took place earlier in the year.

The group will meet twice a year and is made up of the Board, sub-group chairs, the working group delivery leads and a representative of the Volleyball England Foundation who will collectively receive updates, insight and have cross-group discussions on areas of strategic importance.

The next meeting will take place in April with the below identified discussion areas:

- **Higher Education Volleyball Officer (HEVO) programme** – Exploring how we leverage this fantastic programme across every aspect of the sport.
- **National Volleyball Leagues** – As a core product, review and debate the emerging 5-year plan and the potential changes that would need to take place in your respective areas to support or seize an opportunity.

## Players Community.

Grace Lazard and Cameron Carrington (both Super League players from Mally Eagles) have proactively reached out and offered their time to help co-create a new 'Players Community'. The group will be structured and operated as a 'Community of Practice' (piloted last year with Regions/Counties) but will also provide the opportunity for its members to attend where appropriate board, sub or working group meetings to provide the much-needed voice of the player.

As a logical starting point, the initial thinking is to hold a player engagement forum during the Super League Final Four weekend. During the event, we will pose different themes and allow groups of players to express their thoughts and feelings on the current position of the sport and where they want it to go in the future.

This meeting will be open to players across all three disciplines of the sport.

These learnings will then be disseminated into aims (aligned to our Game Plan strategy) that the players community will work on through community of practice meetings and task and finish groups.

## Major Events

Following the session that Jonathan Moore delivered at Octobers board meeting, we have explored the feasibility of running the below international events in 2024:

- The Nations Cup Pre-liminary round (May)
- Queen & King of the Court (September)
- PVE Gold League (June)
- Junior NEVZA Beach Championships (June)
- CEV Cadet Girls European Championship Qualifier (April).

Detailed within our 5-year implementation plan, we have committed to delivering and supporting two international events per year. After rigorous assessment and discussions with partners, we are proposing to focus on the NEVZA & PVE events in 2024.

We are awaiting formal confirmation from NEVZA but have all the plans and arrangements scoped to deliver the event on Bridlington Beach. The PVE event is being discussed with the BVF.

## Talent Plans

Building on the session and feedback from Octobers board meeting, we have now formally communicated our new approach to Talent and conveyed that our long-term objectives will be predicated by laying firm foundations in the following key areas:

- **Coach development** – Coaching is at the core of everything we do, from the earliest ages of youth development up to the Senior National Teams. We will build a comprehensive coach development program that not only teaches the key elements of player and team training and management, but also makes the whole system of coaches in England part of our talent identification process through increased awareness of what it takes to compete at the international level.
- **Athlete support** – A holistic approach to athlete development is critical. We will create an integrated system that brings together broad-based athlete (and parent) education, significantly enhanced Sport & Exercise Management coverage, and increased athlete

communication and engagement. We will also identify opportunities to decrease the financial burden on athletes and families to allow for a more inclusive Pathway.

- **Improved competitive environment** – To reach a high level of competitiveness one must consistently face challenges along the way. We will develop national team training and competition calendars which consistently allow our athletes to be challenged at progressively higher levels, and to evolve our domestic competitions to support the same.

Extensive work has already been undertaken across all of the above areas.

In line with the 2024-25 Operational Plans, we will be introducing our U22 programmes and through harnessing our new centralised DiSE model, we will be delivering enhanced levels of SEM support.

We will shortly be invited to apply for 2025-29 Talent funding from Sport England.

The recent success of our England Senior Men at the Novotel Cup demonstrates clearly that with the right support, we can not only compete with but beat countries ranked significantly higher than us and therefore we can increase our international standing and presence.