DRAFT Minutes of Volleyball England Annual General Meeting

Date: Saturday 20 June 2026,
Venue: SportPark, Loughborough University
Time: 11:30am

Category	Name	Role / Organisation
Volleyball England Board	Rowena Hackwood (RHa)	Chair
	Andres Hernandez	Senior Independent Director
	Anton Kornilov	Elected Director
	Jess Keen (JK)	Elected Director
	Jess Plumridge	Elected Director
	Richard Harrison	Elected Director
	Tracy Newton (TN)	Elected Director
Volleyball England Staff	Charlie Ford (CF)	CEO
	Guin Batten (GB)	Deputy CEO
	Kevin Fletcher (KF)	Finance Manager
	Matt Halfpenny	Volleyball England
Members	Bryan Youlden	Northern Manchester Bees VC
	Genoveva Castro Valente de Brito Lopes (Veva)	London Blockbusters & Player Community
	James Murphy (JM)	Maidenhead
	Klaudia French (KFr)	Tendring Volleyball Club
	Richard Burbedge	Southampton Volleyball Club
	Rocio Trujillo	Onyx Volleyball
	Sarah Hanrahan	Cheshire West and Chester Volleyball Club & LYNX Volleyball Club
In Attendance	Agata Sromecka	Secretariat

1. Welcome and introductions

Rha opened the meeting, noting that this was her first AGM as Chair, having joined the Volleyball England Board approximately nine months previously. Rha welcomed members and acknowledged the passion and commitment she had encountered across the volleyball community from players, volunteers, coaches, officials, staff and wider stakeholders.

Rha outlined the agenda, advising that the meeting would run for approximately one hour covering formal business, voting and a question-and-answers session. She confirmed a hard

stop of 1pm, acknowledging that a number of attendees would be travelling directly to the Beach Pro Tour Futures event afterwards.

Rha noted the following procedural matters:

- Questions from members would be limited to five per person initially, with additional opportunities if time permitted.
- Written responses would be provided where questions could not be answered on the day.

Rha confirmed that the AGM would be followed by an informal lunch at which Board members would remain available to speak with until 1:30 pm.

Rha then paid tribute to three retiring directors: Richard Harrison, Brendan Fogarty and Jake Sheaf who were all unable to attend, as well as to Nick Heckford and Nick Schaffrey, who had come to the end of their volunteer terms.

Rha expressed sincere thanks for their service and hoped that they would remain engaged with the sport.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from Ali Shipway (Vice Chair), Jill Osleger, Jake Sheaf, Phil French, Nick Shaffray, Richard Callicott, and Lenny Barry (email received on the morning of the meeting).

3. **Minutes of AGM 2025** were approved and taken as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. Annual report

CF thanked Rha for her leadership since joining and echoed Rha's thanks to the retiring directors and volunteer leads. CF then went to highlight the following:

- CF noted that 2025–26 had included a number of activities to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the sport, culminating in a special event at Club Finals. He acknowledged the contribution of GB in presenting a historical tour through the decades at that event.
- CF indicated that rather than reviewing 2025–26 in isolation, he wished to reflect on the Game Plan strategy as a whole, noting that the 2rganization was in a position to sunset the strategy early given the strength of the foundations built. Key highlights across the strategy period included:
    - Significant growth in Super League attendance, online activity and visibility.
    - Growth of the Learning Management System (LMS), now serving as the hub for learning across the volleyball community, including an online safeguarding course completed by over 500 individuals.
    - Relocation of the National Volleyball Centre from Kettering to Loughborough University after 16 years, providing new opportunities for facility development (indoor and beach) and 2rganizatio operations.
    - Introduction of the Queen/King of the Court indoor event at Crystal Palace described as a 'monumental undertaking' involving 320 tons of sand.
    - The Bellos breaking into the world top ten and recently winning silver at a Challenger event in Turkey on their return from injury ahead of the 2026 beach

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season.
    - Delivery of 11 international events strengthening England's reputation and standing with NEVZA, CEV & FIVB.
    - Appointment of the first female Chair of Volleyball England.
    - Launch of the Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund, providing grants to young players to cover the costs of attending England camps, supported by commercial partnerships.

- CF advised that the sport now faced a challenge of infrastructure rather than simply participation including facilities access, coaching and officiating capacity, and the changing nature of the volunteer journey were cited as key issues to address in the next strategy.
- CF outlined a number of priorities for the forthcoming year while noting that the Game Plan delivery would continue at pace through its final year. Key items included:
    - Regional planning and reporting: building on work done at opening weekend with the regions to better understand each region's specific needs and support requirements.
    - IT infrastructure support: working with the London Volleyball Association and other regions to 3rganizat working practices.
    - Talent Zones: workforce now recruited; Zones to become fully operational in 2026–27, bridging clubs and national teams and providing development environments for talented players, coaches and officials.
    - VolleyStore growth: new commercial partnerships to be announced; proceeds reinvested into the sport.
- CF confirmed that following the AGM, Volleyball England would communicate quickly with members about opportunities to engage with the forthcoming strategy reset. He 3rganizati that the new strategy must be co-created with the entire volleyball community rather than driven top-down.

5. Financial Report

KF presented financial results for the year ended 31 March 2026:

- Total revenue for the year was £1.9 million (against a target of £2 million). The shortfall was attributed primarily to staff turnover within the talent team, which resulted in less camps being delivered than budgeted for.
- The 3rganization had budgeted to make a small planned loss but positively a small surplus was achieved. KV confirmed that this surplus would be reinvested into the sport.
- Key variances to budget were noted as follows:
    - Talent was slightly below budget due to the reduction in futures events, with corresponding cost savings partially offsetting the revenue shortfall.
    - Coaching and officiating was above budget, driven primarily by coaching courses exceeding expectations in volume and margin.
    - Membership / HEVO conference: membership income was slightly above budget; conference costs came below budget.
    - Commercial deals were approximately 30% up on the prior year but below budget, due to an anticipated new commercial deal not materialising.
    - NVL membership was above budget.
    - Finance, governance and compliance was slightly below budget.
    - Overall, VE achieved £31,000 better than budgeted.
- KV highlighted that Sport England grant funding, which represented approximately 70%

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of revenue at the outset of his tenure seven years ago, now accounted for less than 25% of total revenue. All other income streams have grown significantly year on year.
- Closing bank balance at year-end was approximately £300,000 (before receipt of the next tranche of Sport England funding). Closing reserves were approximately £200,000, confirming the 4rganization as a viable going concern.
- The budget for 2026–27 targeted revenue in excess of £2 million which presented a 20% growth increase. The budget included
    - Investment in under-22 programmes for men and women.
    - A £40,000 project fund across workforce and other strategic workstreams, approved by the senior leadership team.
    - A broadly break-even position for the year.
- 40% increase had been awarded for beach volleyball talent development.
- £20,000 earmarked for BCU had been returned as the project did not proceed; funds would be available to deploy in 2026–27.
- Additional funds from Sport England awarded to sports who were not included in the scaled back Glasgow Commonwealth Games would be used to support the Beach Pro Tour event. CF expressed thanks to Sport England and Commonwealth Games England for this grant.

6. Board appointments

GB confirmed the following board appointments for ratification:

- Rowena Hackwood was appointed Volleyball England Chair in October 2025.

7. Resolutions

GB as an AGM voting convenor, confirmed the following voting arrangements:

- 42 proxies/voting forms had been received and validated by the 5 pm closing deadline of 18 June 2026.
- 39 votes were present in the room.
- 8 votes had been submitted by clubs to appointed representatives (Option A).
- 7 votes had been submitted by clubs to nominated others (Option C).
- 24 proxy votes had been given to the Chair (Option B): 21 with specific voting instructions; 3 at the Chair's discretion.
- Sussex Dolphins did not exercise their right to vote on four resolutions, reducing the count to 38 for those items.
- A practice vote was conducted. Two tellers were appointed from the floor.

7.1 Ordinary Resolutions (majority required)

- The following ordinary resolutions were put to the meeting:
    - Reappointment of Duncan Topliss as auditors, to hold office until the conclusion of the next meeting at which management accounts are laid, with authority for directors to fix their remuneration. PASSED
    - Election of Katarina Cepinova as elected director in accordance with the Articles of Association. PASSED
    - Election of Julie Kouamo as elected director in accordance with the Articles of Association. PASSED
    - Election of Sophie Szysko as elected director in accordance with the Articles of Association. PASSED
    - Election of Richard Burbege as Officials Delivery Lead in accordance with the

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company's framework documents. PASSED
    - Election of Jane Ashbrook as Children and Young People Delivery Lead in accordance with the company's framework documents.PASSED
    - Election of Richard Harrison as Coaching Delivery Lead in accordance with the company's framework documents. PASSED

7.2 Special Resolution (75% majority required)

- Amendment to Articles of Association: that the Articles of Association be amended to permit the company to hold virtual and/or hybrid general meetings, including AGMs, to allow for greater member engagement. PASSED unanimously
- RHa welcomed the unanimous result, describing it as a positive signal of collaborative governance between the board and the membership. RHA confirmed that attendance at future in-person AGMs would remain welcome even where a hybrid option is available.

8. Questions and Discussion

- KFr as a parent whose nine-year-old daughter was beginning her volleyball journey, asked what the structured development pathway looked like for a talented young player in England, contrasting this with the embedded school and academy system she had experienced in Eastern Europe, where volleyball was integrated into the school curriculum from primary level with professional coaches and sponsored academies.
- JK suggested consulting the club finder on the Volleyball England website. KFr acknowledged that the daughter was already club-involved but sought a clearer structural answer about long-term development.
- CF acknowledged the difference in sporting infrastructure between the UK and Eastern European countries. He noted that the organisation was not in a position to replicate that system in the short term, but highlighted an emerging approach focused on schools engagement via clubs rather than the reverse helping clubs to become community-centric organisations that operate within schools. RHa drew on her experience running a multi-academy trust of 27 schools, describing a 'Complete, Compete, Elite' model connecting in-school participation to club structures. She noted that while the primary national curriculum does include a volleyball module, many primary school teachers lacked confidence in delivering it, and that bridging this gap was a personal priority for him.
- CF suggested that the coaching income generated through education courses could be replicated in schools, with benefits both for income generation and for growing the coaching and participation base.
- A member proposed targeting university students training to become teachers as a route to establishing school clubs.
- JM expressed concern about the effectiveness of the current linkage between the national hub and clubs, describing a 'disjoint' that had grown since regional support structures were reduced. He called for proper, substantive engagement rather than infrequent calls.
- RHa acknowledged the point, noting that rebuilding club-region-hub connectivity was a primary commitment for the new strategy. She expressed a desire to balance national consistency with regional autonomy.
- TN noted that a productive two-hour conversation on junior development had taken place at inter-regionals, led by Richard Williams and Gillian Harrison, generating ideas about 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 formats as entry points.
- A member emphasised the importance of keeping volleyball on secondary school PE

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rotations (particularly for the 12–14 age group) given the significant influence of PE teacher preference on which sports young people experience.

- A member then raised a concern that the cost of the new volleyball-specific safeguarding course was creating a barrier to DBS checks, particularly for club committee members and volunteer coaches working with juniors.
- TN advised that DBS check numbers had increased significantly year on year, partly driven by the new requirement for every club (not just junior clubs) to have a welfare officer. She confirmed that once the volleyball-specific safeguarding training was completed, DBS checks could be obtained through Volleyball England at no charge. She noted that the volleyball safeguarding course was cheaper than the UK Coaching equivalent.
- JM framed the discussion as requiring deeper, substantive conversation rather than a search for quick solutions. He observed a gap between the official process and actual on-the-ground experience and called for an honest examination of whether current systems were producing the intended safety outcomes.
- RHa acknowledged the complexity including the specific scenarios that arise in a coaching context (physical proximity, one-to-one settings) that differ from a classroom environment and affirmed the organisation's responsibility as an NGB to create a safe framework for clubs.
- JM put a series of questions to the Board. First was what are the board's three highest priorities for the next 12 months were , and what specific outcomes would members be able to use to judge success? RHa outlined three areas: (i) improving connectivity and representation between the board and the membership; (ii) launching and delivering the strategy reset in a way that was genuinely bottom-up and inclusive; and (iii) cementing stakeholder relationships at governance level to support elite programme ambitions.
- JM challenged the board to express these as measurable outcomes rather than activities to enable accountability. RHa acknowledged the point and agreed to give further thought to how success would be defined and communicated.
- The second question from JM was where the strategy had not delivered, and what the board had changed in response? JM noted that in the NVL, 95% of matches had a Grade 4 official, but asked about the proportion appointed by Volleyball England versus self-sourced by clubs, and whether fewer than 50% of those were Grade 3N or above (the minimum national standard). He also requested an update on the eight outstanding recommendations from the 2022 officiating review, following a 2024 update that addressed only two of the ten.
- CF confirmed he had not had time to retrieve the specific data (questions had been received the previous day) and undertook to provide a written response. He noted that the officiating working group's reconstitution had absorbed many of the 2022 review's actions.
- JM also raised whether the board had considered changing the mileage rate for officials in line with the Government's increase to 55 pence per mile.
- RHa and CF noted this would need to be considered in the context of Sport England grant uplifts and national alignment and agreed to follow up.
- JM then asked how the board would measure impact (rather than activity) across major workstreams, including the People Plan and the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.
- RHa acknowledged this as a longstanding challenge for an NGB trying to be broad, and noted that metrics such as club, player and staff satisfaction surveys were in use and trending positively. GB confirmed that diversity metrics were embedded in survey data and would be reviewed at season end.

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- JM clarified he was looking for statistically significant changes attributable to specific interventions, not random variation. CF cited the Ann Jarvis Hardship Fund as an example of qualitative and quantitative impact that should be communicated more clearly: the fund had been established in response to a gap, has supported a defined number of players, and has recorded impact through conversations with recipients. He agreed this was the model for impact reporting.
- GB confirmed that impact data existed and that the challenge is one of communication rather than collection.
- What trade-offs is the board making with limited resources, and how transparent will the board be about those choices? Specifically: are the Super League, opening weekend and inter-regionals subsidised by membership fees, and what is the target date for self-sufficiency?
- CF questioned whether self-sufficiency was the right goal for all activities, noting that investment in, for example, the Super League generated intangible benefits (inspiration, participation) that offset direct costs. He described these as investments rather than losses.
- JM agreed with the principle but challenged the board to make these intangible benefits tangible and measurable, for example, tracking the number of young people inspired by the Super League to join a club so that the rationale for subsidy could be demonstrated to members clearly. He called for transparency about which programmes are cross-subsidised and what the membership is, in effect, funding.
- CF agreed to consider how to communicate this narrative more effectively. RHA summarised that the challenge of connecting activity to impact and articulating resource trade-offs was a clear area for development.

9. Close

RHa thanked all those who had attended, acknowledged the effort made to travel to the meeting, and expressed appreciation for the quality and depth of questions raised. She reiterated his commitment to meaningful engagement and to hearing the voices of clubs, counties and regions in the strategy reset.

The formal meeting was closed at 1.05pm. Board members remained available for informal discussion over lunch until 1:30 pm.

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