



Minutes of Volleyball England Board Meeting 20th April 2025 at National Volleyball Centre, Kettering and via Teams.

Directors Present	Titles
Adam Walker [AW]	Independent Chair
Alison Shipway [AS]	Elected Director & Vice Chair
Andres Hernandez [AH]	Senior Independent Director
Brendan Fogarty [BF]	Elected Director
Jess Keen [JK]	Elected Director
Jess Plumridge [JP]	Elected Director
Jill Osleger [JO] online	Independent Director
Richard Harrison [RH]	Elected Director
Simon Griffiths [SG]	Elected Director
Tracy Newton [TN]	Elected Director
Staff Present	
Charlie Ford [CF]	Chief Executive Officer
Guin Batten [GB]	Deputy Chief Executive
Oliver Hudson [OH]	Project Lead - Research and Insight
In attendance	
Mark Kontopoulos [MK]	BVF Chair

EB/25-26/1 Apologies

AW welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Jake Sheaf, Phil French, Greg Brown and Agata Sromecka.

1.1 Directors Conflict of Interest & Disclosures

There were no new declarations in addition to the ones that had been already submitted.

1.2 Approval of agenda

CF informed the Board that 2.1 (2025/26 NVL Rules & Regulations) was being worked on. This would be finished later that afternoon and would be submitted for Board's approval following this. This would therefore be removed from the agenda of the meeting.

The rest of the agenda was approved by all present.

1.3 Previous meetings

The minutes of the 8 February 2025 Board meeting were taken as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

AW thanked AS for chairing the meeting in his absence.

There were some typos of the initials in the minutes and this would be amended prior to publishing.

In terms of actions, the Environmental sustainability plan was to be included in the meeting as an agenda item but was not present. This to be discussed/actioned before the July Board meeting.

1.4 Matters Arising/Actions List

MK reported about having been approached around alleged NVL rule infringements. CF reported that to date there have been no complaints on the subject. MK asked to be appraised of any complaints should they be raised.

1.5 Board Member Check In

Attendees took turns to reflect.

AW thanked the team for their work.

EB/25-26/2 Exec Report

This was taken as read.

Board discussed:

- AW commented that fortnightly updates from CF were helpful and so was the Board summary.
- JK asked whether spot checking of venues was performed throughout the year from a health & safety perspective. CF confirmed that those were not in place. Normally, issues were dealt with when reported. Incident reporting could be expanded and enhanced. There were some proposed changes in the NVL rules that would support this. GB reported that the last community of practice meeting saw a discussion on this. Potentially, regions could help with the venue checks and reporting. Board discussed the importance of the data on the injuries. RH added that it might be helpful to educate coaches to then educate players how to play safely and protect themselves from injuries. AW reinforced that it was important to continue to collect data to aid understanding about injuries and enhancing safety of the sport. CF reported on the alignment of the VE report with the injury prevalence study that had been conducted and with data from other international sources. This data was used to educate the community also on reporting incidents. MK added that there were game incidents and those related to unsafe equipment. MK then asked whether there were standards shared with venues on the safety of equipment to also educate the venues. CF and GB confirmed that the guidance and risk assessments existed and were shared with the venues. GB added that the guidance on the new build design would be sent out to venues also. However, centralised information on this would be helpful for the local planning agencies to access it. AS then added that Board should be kept appraised about what had been reported and this linked to risk appetite. JK asked whether a question around safety of playing at a venue could be added to a post-event survey. Data from coaches could be added to this. This would aid in

proactivity in this area.

- Board discussed the name of the new Beach Centre in Birmingham. CF reported that the decision did not need to be made until the July Board meeting. Consultation with West Midlands would be undertaken as part of this.
- CF informed that the team were working on a comms piece with the university re the beach centre and this would come out shortly.
- CF provided an update on the Chair recruitment process.
- CF noted and acknowledged JS's contribution as he would be stepping down from his consultancy role.

2.2. Annual Governance Statement

Board discussed:

- JK commented on the links on page 9. To be corrected.
- Also, there was an error in composition of the Board section (towards the end). To be corrected.
- Board approved the statement subject to amendments.

EB/25-26/3 Sub group reports

Volleyball for life

- RH provided an overview of the work of his Sub group.

Get Keep Grow

- SG asked about regional support services. JP responded that this had been discussed at the most recent meeting of the sub-group and would be further considered at the June meeting.
- JP updated that the volunteer and regional adult categories would incur a £5 charge for next season.

An Ace Service

- SG reported that a meeting had taken place the previous week after a quiet period for the group.
- CF acknowledged that better scheduling and oversight of the work of this group was in order and CF would ensure that this would be actioned going forward. CF expressed his regret that more could have been done to aid the functioning of this group.
- AW confirmed that the balance between working groups and sub-groups continued to remain a challenge and needed to be looked at to find improvements.
- CF reported that a session was planned with the Strategic Managers including a section on governance structures and how to get the best out of the subgroups, and the working groups.

Finance Strategy & Risk

Kev Fletcher's video was shared as part of the update:

- This was an update on the organisations Q4 and year-end financial position.
- Revenue generated was higher than budgeted in Q4.
- Cash position was strong and close to the position last year.

- The year ended at £1.8m revenue ahead of budget and £192k up on last year.
- Overall, we made a £24k loss against a budgeted £34k loss.
- VAT return had been carried out and audited by Duncan and Toplis.
- KF asked the Board to send him questions if there were any.

Board discussed:

- AH reflected that this was a strong end of the year with areas of improvement identified.
- CF commented on the performance of VolleyStore and the elements that were out of VE's control which affected the figures. A review of VolleyStore would be performed. Kukri deal would boost the commercial performance.
- CF spoke of recommendations discussed at FSR which include staying with the existing IT services provider and moving our event operations from Kettering to Loughborough. The current contract would cease at the end of August.
- AW thanked the group for their work.
- The Board approved the Q4 and year end management accounts.

3.1 Volleyball England Foundation

JO reported:

- There was a scope to improve the relationship with the Foundation especially about recognition of their work and considering their support with the beach volleyball centre.

Board discussed:

- AS agreed, the ways of working with the foundations and clarity around the governance needed looking at.
- RH felt that the diverging perceptions of roles and responsibilities could be the root of the challenges experienced between the organisations.
- JO shared her observations of discussions with the Foundation.
- AW reflected on the importance of the plan for collaboration for both organisations (Volleyball England & Volleyball England Foundation).

EB/25-26/4 Safeguarding Development Plan

TN reported:

- TN thanked CF for his work on this.
- The plan was aligned to the Strategy.
- The vision of having the golden thread of safeguarding through our governing body is that it aligns to six principles of safeguarding, which are empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability. The mission is that participating in volleyball should be safe and enjoyable for all.

- The guiding principles included robust governance, using finance direction for the volleyball community, being timely, decisive and transparent when VE as a governing body, manage risk, that community will have appropriate knowledge and tools to prevent harm and maintain safety and develop positive safeguarding culture.
- In terms of the strategic commitments, the training played major role, and greater embedding of the safeguarding principles across the whole of sport's structures: clubs, counties, regions and Board.
- Within Ace service, it was about using tools to make safeguarding easier with the right people with the right skills in the right place to deal with events and incidents.
- In terms of policies and procedures, reviews would be regular.
- This was planned to be rolled in the next 3-5 years.
- The safeguarding technical advisor group had three main objectives: training, case management and discord channel.
- Safeguarding training had already been rolled out within the coach module. There was also a plan for a tiered training.
- In terms of case management and transparency of publishing outcomes of disciplinarys, the standards were available on the website.
- Club cascade was the next piece of work. The portal would aid reporting of incidents.

Board discussed:

- Board commended TN on the framework, its robustness, and alignment with the Strategy.

EB/25-26/5 Club Survey – Key Findings

Oliver Hudson (OH) joined the meeting to brief the Board on the findings:

- The survey had been open from the end of December until the end of January.
- There had been 243 respondents – the highest response ever received with fifty-six more clubs than last year. 233 affiliated clubs had responded which constituted 61% of the total affiliated clubs. Thirty percent to 40% of the affiliate clubs had responded the year prior.
- Respondents included club chairs, club secretaries and other club committee members.
- In terms of club purpose, 42% of clubs had indicated having adult purpose, 8% junior purpose and further 40% selecting both the junior and adult. In terms of disciplines offered by clubs, 95% clubs offered indoor volleyball, 24% beach and 4% sitting.

- In terms of interest, a question around if the clubs were interested in playing sitting volleyball and if they were interested in starting to play beach volleyball as well, fifty-seven clubs indicated interest in starting to play sitting volleyball with twenty-nine requiring further information on how to start. Sixty-eight clubs indicated interest in starting to play beach volleyball with forty-four requiring further information on how to start.
- In terms of mindset, clubs had been split into four sections: surviving clubs – clubs to survive past or continue in the next six months; maintaining clubs, in the stable position and retaining their current position; thriving clubs, growing and providing more opportunities and bursting clubs, which were clubs unable to meet their growing demand. In comparison to last year, there had been significant increase the number of maintaining clubs, the drop off in the number of surviving clubs, another drop in the number of bursting clubs.
- Club's views had also been investigated with top three issues asked to be identified. For surviving clubs, cost of venues, cost to play volleyball and XXX issues (could not hear). For bursting clubs, those were lack of coaches, court time for players and cost of venues.
- Key issues by area included lack of volunteers, specifically coaches, cost of venues, limited court time for players and funding issues.
- Key issues by mindset were cost of venues, lack of coaches and court time for players.
- AW asked whether the venue costs had gone up and whether membership fees had also gone up to balance it out. AW also commented that it might be helpful to benchmark volleyball against other sports in terms of costs. Board discussed cost of playing sport and how it could influence participation.
- In terms of club affiliation benefits, more respondents were aware of benefits than not.
- In terms of the satisfaction scores, those were mixed ranging from low to high. The low satisfaction themes related to lack of support and engagement, poor value for money, high costs, and issues with systems and processes. In terms of neutral themes, were support and engagement, system and processes, and costs and value for money. High satisfaction was noted in relation to support and resources.
- Use of the club services and the VE services was also presented. This data was also available according to the area.
- Lastly, clubs were asked about the main priority of VE for 2025 with the top answer being the same as last year.
- Conclusions were then presented and included: significant increase in maintaining clubs, club satisfaction had risen to return to play COVID satisfaction levels. The three key issues raised by the clubs were the cost of venues, cost to play volleyball and then funding issues.

Board discussed:

- JK asked what the next steps would be. OH responded that a thank you message had been

sent out. VE were talking with the surviving clubs. A webpage with more information would be created. There were no other next steps planned so far.

- Board discussed the overall purpose of the survey and its role in driving the growth of the sport.
- RH reinforced that it was important to focus on feasible solutions. AS added that engagement and dialogue were also important.
- Board discussed presenting the results of the survey at the AGM.
- Board thanked OH for presenting the survey results.

OH left the meeting.

EB/25-26/6 Meeting finalisation

6.1 Review of Actions

Actions have been noted.

6.2 AOB

RH had attended a Hub Team meeting and found it useful and enjoyable to see how they worked together. CF reinforced that Board members were welcome.

6.3 Meeting Close

Actions

EB/24-25/45	Environmental sustainability plan to be discussed at April Board – <i>This to be discussed/actioned before the July Board Meeting</i>	CF
EB/25-26/1.2	2025/26 NVL Rules & Regulations to be circulated to Board Members for approval prior to publication.	CF & GB
EB/25-26/2	Naming of the Indoor Beach Centre to be discussed with the West Midlands Region for feedback ahead of the July Board meeting	CF
EB/25-26/2.2	To be corrected: links on page 9 of the Annual General Statement. an error in composition of the Board section (towards the end).	CF

Null.

Board Meeting –Report Summary

The following paper provides summary information from the 20th April 2024 board pack which should be read in conjunction with the above-board meeting minutes:

EB/25-26/2 – EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. Staff Updates

As discussed during our last Board meeting, the 2025/26 budget includes adjustments to several staff roles to reflect the evolution of our operations and strengthen the services and support we provide.

Summary of Role Adjustments:

- John Forman will transition to focus solely on Indoor Performance Director duties.
- Gillian Harrison will take on full Strategic Manager oversight for Workforce & Talent.
- Anna Knibbs Project Lead role extended for her Workforce role, assuming responsibilities previously held by Gillian.
- Hema Choudhary Project Lead role extended to include leading our Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan.
- Jon Cornish Project Lead role augmented, dedicating more of his time to the continued professionalisation of the Super League and broadcasting.

All of the above changes have now taken place and in addition, we have also reduced our consultancy contracts.

Please note that Jake Sheaf has decided not to extend his consultancy contract with us. This decision is due to the continued growth of Deep Dish and his need to restore balance with other commitments.

A transition period will follow, during which some of the work Jake was covering will be migrated to the Talent team and the soon-to-be-recruited Head Coach/Programme Lead role based at Birmingham City University.

2. 2024/25 Incident Reporting

Twelve months ago, we implemented a formal Incident Reporting Process to better understand the safety landscape within our volleyball activities. Since its launch, we've actively promoted this system and encouraged both members and Volleyball staff to report all incidents big or small. This has led to improved visibility of potential risks and a growing culture of safety awareness across the organisation.

A summary of the data collected is below:

Incident Overview

- Total Incidents Reported: 28

- Most Common Environment: Indoor (79%)
- Primary Activity Context: Training (54%)
- Top Incident Type: Lower limb (82%)

Medical Response Breakdown

- No medical treatment needed: 3%
- Treated onsite by first aider/paramedic: 27%
- Attended A&E (not admitted): 47%
- Hospital stay <24 hrs: 10%
- Hospital stay >24 hrs: 13%

Learnings & Insights

1. Indoor Activity Risk
 - The vast majority (79%) of incidents occurred indoors, highlighting this as the most high-risk setting. This may warrant reviewing indoor setup, equipment placement, and spacing during sessions.
2. Training Sessions Are a Hotspot
 - Over half (54%) of incidents happened during training, suggesting these environments often less formal than matches may need additional supervision, structure, or modified warm-up routines.
3. Injury Prevention Focus
 - Lower limb injuries made up a significant 82% of all reported incidents. Common causes should be analysed (e.g., slips, collisions, overuse), and prevention strategies like injury-prevention exercises or equipment reviews should be considered.
4. Medical Attention Needed in Majority of Cases
 - With 70% requiring offsite medical care, it's clear that many incidents are serious enough to need follow-up. Ensuring trained first aiders and equipment present is essential.
5. Positive Engagement with Reporting
 - The fact that 28 incidents were recorded reflects a strong start with the new process and shows a growing culture of accountability and safety awareness among both members and staff.