

Scottish Handball Association (SHA) - AGM Board Meeting Minutes

Date: 18/09/2024

Time: 1900 to 2030

Location: Virtual Meeting via Teams

1. Welcome and Attendance

- **Chair:** Ross Kirkwood (Interim Chair) supported by Ewan Hunter (CEO SHA)
- **Attendees:** Allan Stokes, Barry Cook, Ben Muir, Brian Bartlett, David C Watt, Eilidh McDonald, Ewan Hunter, James Yule, Jim Rankin, Julie Rackstraw, Kevin Bain, Mads Aune, Maria Diaz, Olivia Carroll, Ricardo Valls, Ross Kirkwood, Ross McGowan, Roz Haughey, Edinburgh University Sports Union Handball, Vicky Cox
- **Apologies:** Alison Braddock, Cameron MacAllister, Fiona Kennedy, Fiona Semple, Kevin Bain (joining later due to travel delays), Newcastle Vikings

Ewan Hunter opened the AGM by welcoming everyone to the meeting and thanked those who attended the recent awards ceremony. Ewan noted that the awards event had been held before the season's start for the first time, and the feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, and encouraged attendees to continue sharing their thoughts via the distributed feedback forms as the event continues to evolve. Ewan acknowledged that the previous year, 2023/24, had been one of both change and progress for SHA, and thanked everyone for their hard work and commitment.

2. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous AGM and board meeting were reviewed. No amendments were requested, and the minutes were unanimously approved by the board.

Proposal and Acceptance:

- Ross Kirkwood noted he couldn't formally propose accepting the minutes, so he asked for someone who had read and agreed to them, along with a seconder.
- Proposed by: Ewan Hunter
- Seconded by: Jim Rankin
- No objections were raised, and the previous minutes were approved.

3. Chair Update & Introduction of New Chair

Ross formally recognised the departure of the former Chair, Beverley Francis, who had stepped down earlier in the year. He thanked her for her leadership and support during her time in the role. Ross has since served as the Interim Chair, with significant help from both the board and the executive team.

After a thorough search and discussions, Ross announced that the final candidate for the position of Chair is Dr. David Watt OBE. Ross provided a brief background on David's extensive experience in governance and sports, including roles with Basketball Scotland, Scottish

Gymnastics, and involvement with Sport Scotland, as well as his personal passion for sports such as rugby and golf.

David Watt then introduced himself, providing further insight into his experience and vision for SHA:

- **David Watt's Address:**

David explained that although he is not an expert in handball, his extensive governance experience across multiple sports positions will allow him to help SHA grow and thrive. He has worked with organisations such as Basketball Scotland and Scottish Gymnastics, and has served on the board of several sports bodies, including the Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland and British Gymnastics. David emphasised his belief in the potential for handball to grow significantly in Scotland, noting that handball is an accessible and engaging sport for participants of all ages. He expressed his eagerness to work with SHA's board and members to enhance governance, increase participation, and develop partnerships with Sport Scotland and other organisations.

- Ahead of the vote, David left the virtual room to await the outcome.

Proposal and Vote:

- Ross formally proposed the appointment of Dr. David Watt as the new Chair of the Scottish Handball Association
- Seconded by: Vicky Cox
- No objections were raised, and the proposal was unanimously approved
- David was invited to rejoin the meeting

Formal Appointment:

Vicky Cox had the honour of officially congratulating Dr. Watt on his appointment and welcomed him to the role of Chair. David thanked everyone for their confidence in him and expressed his excitement to work collaboratively with the board to continue the organisation's success.

4. Appointment of Accountants

Each year, SHA must re-elect our accountants, and SHA accountants from Drummond Laurie have been very helpful in the past. However, their role has evolved, particularly over the last year, as we've been working closely with them to move beyond simple auditing.

Ewan, along with the board, met with Drummond Laurie to discuss how they could become more of a business partner rather than just an auditing firm. This collaboration has been highly successful. They are now not just bookkeepers but are assisting with monitoring and maintaining our finances from both a current and forward-planning perspective. They have helped provide us with tools to ensure a proactive approach to financial management.

Additionally, as SHA will be moving away from using Caledonian House as the main SHA base, Drummond Laurie's office has been proposed and is now set to serve as our registered office moving forward.

With that, Ewan formally proposed the reappointment of Drummond Laurie as our Chartered Accountants and financial advisors going forward.

Proposal and Vote:

- Proposed by: Ross McGowan
- Seconded by: Vicky Cox
- Vote passed

5. SHA Progress Update

Ewan provided an overview of SHA's strategic progress over the past 12 months, with particular focus on the successful implementation of the master plan, developed in collaboration with Sport Scotland and the European Handball Federation (EHF).

Key Highlights:

- **Participation Growth:**
Alan Stokes, the Development Manager, presented detailed statistics on participation growth, highlighting that over 16,500 primary and secondary school pupils had been introduced to handball in the last year. The team delivered over 150 courses, resulting in a total of 60,000 participation sessions. Alan explained that a participation session counts every time a child attends a session, so the same participant attending multiple sessions is counted individually.
- **New Areas of Growth:**
Alan noted that the sport is expanding into new regions, particularly in areas that previously had little or no handball presence. This growth is expected to continue in the coming year, supported by increased interest from schools and other institutions.
- **Focus on Club Development:**
Alan explained that the next phase of SHA's strategy is to convert school participants into club members. This will involve working closely with both existing clubs and newly developed ones to ensure continued growth and sustainability.

Women and Girls' Participation Update (Eilidh)

Eilidh provided a brief but insightful overview of the ongoing work surrounding women and girls' participation in handball over the past year.

- **Media Campaign:**

Eilidh noted that SHA had launched an initial media campaign during Women and Girls in Sport Week, which was well-received and helped raise awareness of the opportunities available for female athletes within handball.
- **S1-S3 School Competitions:**

A major change implemented this year was the decision to split the S1-S3 competitions into two separate events: one for S1 and another for S2 and S3. This adjustment was made following the success of last year's primary competitions, which saw a significant number of girls' teams participating. However, there was concern that, as these players moved into S1, they would be overshadowed by more experienced S2-S3 players, leading to a potential drop in participation. The new structure will help maintain engagement and create a more level playing field, mirroring the pathway already established for boys' competitions, which are divided into S1, S2, and S3-S4 categories. Eilidh expressed optimism that this change would help retain young female athletes in the sport.
- **Introduction of "Come and Try" (Open Play Sessions):**

To further support female participation, SHA will be introducing "Come and Try's" – open play sessions that will be accessible to any girl interested in playing handball, regardless of club affiliation. Eilidh explained that this initiative aims to lower the barrier to entry for those without access to a local club, giving them the chance to play handball in a supportive and open environment. This format is expected to attract more girls to the sport and potentially lead to greater club membership in the long term.
- **Partnership with Scottish Sports Futures (SSF):**

Another positive development was the formation of a new partnership with Scottish Sports Futures (SSF). SSF is an organisation that operates across Edinburgh, Glasgow, and parts of North Ayrshire, focusing on using sport to make a positive impact on young people's lives. SHA and SSF will collaborate on a series of exciting events in the near future, further expanding the reach and visibility of handball to young girls across Scotland.
- **Equalities Working Group Progress:**

The group has undergone a restructuring process, allowing it to become more organised and effective in its mission to promote gender equality in handball. The group has been particularly active in supporting the school competitions, and one of their key projects has been conducting a survey of under-21 players to gather insights on their experiences and identify areas for improvement.

- **Recruitment and Group Structure:**
The Equalities Working Group is currently recruiting new members to bolster its efforts. Eilidh explained the group's long-term plan to establish a two-year cycle for membership, where every two years, three members will step down and three new members will join. This staggered approach is intended to ensure a smooth transition and continuity within the group, preventing the disruption that can occur when the entire group changes all at once.
- **Ross McGowan's Contributions:**
Eilidh expressed her gratitude to Ross McGowan, who has been a key figure in supporting the Equalities Working Group. Ross has been instrumental in attending sessions and contributing valuable insights to the group's initiatives. Eilidh acknowledged his efforts and thanked him on behalf of the group for his continued support.

In closing, Eilidh summarised the progress made over the past year, noting that while there is still much to do, the future looks bright for women and girls in Scottish handball.

6. Strategic Direction Discussion and Q&A

Ewan introduced a strategic discussion regarding the future direction of handball in Scotland, explaining that SHA is in the final year of the 2021-2025 Sport Scotland investment cycle. The association is now focused on developing a broader strategy that will guide handball's growth, not over the next four years, but that as part of a longer-term strategy.

Ewan's Opening Remarks:

- Emphasised the need to move from operational plans towards a broader, long-term strategy.
- Consultations with clubs, stakeholders, and partners have provided valuable feedback and support.
- The focus is on strengthening the grassroots, while recognising the challenges of being a smaller sport in Scotland.
- SHA aims to solidify its base to create future opportunities for national and international competition.

Questions and Answers:

1. **Mads's Question:** *Mads asked about SHA's long-term ambition, questioning whether qualifying for the Olympics was a goal or if the focus was on becoming an established sport like football or netball.*

Euan's Response:

Olympic qualification is not currently part of the strategy, as the focus is on solidifying the grassroots and creating a strong foundation. While Scotland competes through Team GB in international handball, SHA is committed to strengthening the National Academy and exploring

other international opportunities. The goal is to build a strong grassroots foundation that could lead to future opportunities at the national and international levels.

2. **Brian's Question:** *Brian asked how the new strategy aligns with the targets set by SHA's funding partners, particularly Sport Scotland.*

Barry's Response (Sport Scotland Representative):

Barry clarified that, unlike in the past, Sport Scotland is focused on supporting SHA's own vision and goals, rather than imposing outcomes and targets. The next funding cycle will be shaped around what is best for Scottish handball, with Sport Scotland's role being to facilitate and support SHA's strategic objectives.

3. **Benji's Question:** *Benji expressed appreciation for the ongoing consultation with clubs and asked how they could best offer new ideas moving forward, especially on areas like sponsorship and spectatorship.*

Ewan's Response:

Ewan welcomed Benji's feedback and reiterated the importance of ongoing dialogue. SHA is committed to maintaining open communication channels with clubs, and Benji's ideas will be valuable in the upcoming one-to-one discussions. Additionally, SHA plans to reintroduce a newsletter to enhance communication with clubs and stakeholders.

4. **James' Question:** *James asked about promoting handball and attracting sponsors beyond the current circle of friends, family, and small businesses.*

Ewan's Response:

Ewan acknowledged the need for better promotion and sponsorship efforts, noting that SHA has already made strides with recent BBC coverage and NorDan sponsorship. However, there is still room for growth, particularly in building a sustainable, long-term sponsorship structure. The development of clubs and school competitions will help raise the profile of the sport, attracting more sponsors over time. He also mentioned an ongoing project with both England Handball and British Handball and that all three Associations are working on jointly. His hope was that progress would be visible from that work soon.

5. **Ricardo's Comment:** *Ricardo raised the point that more media coverage and public awareness is essential to growing the sport. He also agreed with the strategy of focusing on grassroots development.*

Ewan's Response:

Ewan agreed with Ricardo's points, noting that while grassroots growth is vital, the sport also needs visibility at all levels. The recent BBC Super Cup coverage, which attracted over 23,500 online viewers, is a step in the right direction. Ewan also highlighted the importance of making handball more visible to the general public and said that media growth is a key part of the strategy moving forward.

7. Closing Remarks

Ross & Ewan's Closing Statement: Ross and Ewan thanked all attendees for their participation and contributions throughout the meeting. They reiterated that the feedback from clubs and stakeholders is crucial to shaping the future of handball in Scotland. Ewan encouraged everyone to stay engaged and continue the dialogue with SHA as they develop the new strategic plan.

The AGM concluded with a final invitation for any additional business or comments, and both expressed their gratitude for everyone's continued support and commitment to the growth of handball in Scotland.