

## FINAL

# THE BRITISH JUDO ASSOCIATION ('BJA') ('ASSOCIATION') MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2025 VIA ZOOM

### Present:

#### Council Members:

Rowena Birch	President	RBi
Colin McIver	Vice President	CMcI
Brian Davies	Vice President	BD
Tony Sweeney	Vice President	TS
Richard Barraclough	Vice President	RB
Rick Kenney	JudoScotland	RK
Robin Newett	Northern Ireland Judo Federation	RN
Nadia Minardi	London Area	NM
John Gibson	Northern Area	JG
Fiona Chan	Southern Area	FC
Juliette Langstone	Midland Area	JL
David Rance	Northern Home Counties Area	DR
Matthew Clempner	North West Area	MC
Seth Birch	Yorkshire & Humberside Area	SB
Andy Moss	Police UK	AM
Jim MacKenzie	Army Judo	JM
Stephen Watson	Royal Navy	SW

#### British Judo Association:

Andrew Scoular	Chief Executive	AS
Gerry Gualtieri	Chairman	GG
Justine Lynch	Executive Officer (Minutes)	JL

#### Apologies:

Dr Colin Draycott	Senior Vice President
Mick Leigh	Vice President
Ray Taylor	Eastern Area
Dave Allen	Western Area
Stephen Milne	Armed Forces
Matthew Barclay	Royal Air Force

### 1 Welcome & Apologies

RBi welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for taking time out of their Saturday to attend

Apologies noted as detailed above.

RBi then advised of new members to the Council:

- Midlands Area Representative – Juliet Langstone
- Stephen Milne – Armed Forces
- Matthew Barclay – Royal Air Force

JL was present at the meeting and advised that the previous representative, Sarah Newbury, had thought she would be a good fit as she works in governance. JL continued that she believed the role of the Council was to provide a view on

grassroots judo and also feedback and support the Board in order to keep them in touch with grassroots. Also, that she was aware it was non-decision making body.

RBi suggested proper introductions were done at the next meeting that was face to face.

## **2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting on Saturday 17 August 2024**

RK advised of one amendment with David Rance being noted twice in the attendee list.

With this amendment accepted, the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting on Saturday 2 November 2024.

**Proposer: BD**

**Secunder: SW**

## **3 President's Remarks**

RBi updated since the last meeting there had been the Awards Dinner that was a celebration of competitive judo but also the wonderful judo community. RBi added that it had been a good initiative to have a Judo Day that included a masterclass with Neil Adams as well as a Club Accelerator Day. Concluding that the day had been very well attended and enjoyable.

RBi then raised the British Championships from December 2024 that had taken place over two weekends. Whilst the Championships has been very enjoyable, RBi had been disappointed that there was not a Final Block on the first weekend which she felt took away from the full experience and end of day celebration. However, this was rectified for the second weekend. RBi also remarked on Kim Hicks doing an outstanding job as always as well as the new venue working well.

RBi concluded by raising the content in the Qtr 3 Business Plan and that recognition needs to be given to how much work is going on at British Judo, including pushing forward with new initiatives, and noted the massive effort that is being made by both staff and volunteers.

## **4 Chair's Update**

GG added that we had also had the in person AGM since the last meeting which was well attended.

GG then also raised the British Championships where there had been a good entry level along with a good standard of judo. GG continued that as part of the ongoing strategy meetings and reviews, which had included feedback from coaches that we need to find a way of recognising the importance of the Championships and getting a real feeling of prestige around them.

In regard to the new strategy, GG advised that there had been a lot of time spent over the past few months on this including strategy away day for the Board and Home Countries as well as sessions with the Performance Team, UK Sport, Sport England and coaches. One of the key elements to come out is around a culture of engagement from British Judo to the membership and vice versa. Also, that the focus should be on development as well as Performance, as if we don't get this element right, it won't work and we are at a key point in time where this needs to change. GG then reflected on the Judo Day and that Neil Adams' session had been a great success, adding technical development has also come out as key area that we need to focus on in the new strategy.

GG concluded that he had now been in post just over a year where the focus had been on getting up to speed. His focus this year would be on the domestic side and working with Andrew on a new strategy and the transition phase as this is implemented but would pick up on reengaging with the international world at some point later in the year.

## 5 Chief Executive's Update

AS shared his presentation and provided more detail around the key points:

- **Restructure:** AS advised that this is to be treated as confidential. We are currently in a phase of consultation with the affected staff, who have had an opportunity to feedback on the proposed structure and job descriptions. Consultation phase ends on Tuesday 18 February. There have been consultation meetings with most of the staff affected as well as written feedback. This feedback will go to Board on Tuesday 18 February to finalise the structure and job descriptions. Following that there will be a matching process via a scoring system to identify any affected staff that could be suitable for the new roles. Any staff not matched into a role will then be able to apply for any new role. For any roles not filled, we will go out to advert.

AS added that the main reason for the proposed new structure has been around a central pillar that came out of all the strategy sessions, in regard to requiring more engagement and collaboration with the Home Nations. This was also key to the UKS System Master Planning programme.

- **External Relations:** This links into the strategy and is important for us to take forward the relationships with our key stakeholders who provide 63% of our funding. UKS are working through a System Master Planning programme which includes working with Home Nations as well as collaboratively with other sports. AS added that he was meeting with UKS the following week to discuss being part of a UKS pilot on the Master Planning as we are already currently looking at this.

Other points on this are that the SE Chief Executive is standing down and Dame Katherine Grainger has finished her term as UKS Chair and is now Chair of the British Olympic Association. AS added that it will be interesting to see the change in SE direction away from social networks to more sport and the new UKS Chair will have a significant impact.

- **Strategic Plan:** This has been a collaborative process, starting with an all day planning session in November 2024, where the two main areas of focus came out as collaboration and commercial.

We have already formed a Collaboration Working Group with representatives from the Home Countries, myself and Karen Roberts. One meeting has taken place so far with the next one planned for Tuesday 18 March. In between times, work is ongoing and looking at simple things such as having four different CRM systems which is also being discussed at a Home Nations CEO Meeting on Wednesday 26 February. We are already working together on Safeguarding.

On the commercial side, we are looking at launching a Patrons Club, which we are keen to utilise the British Judo Trust for. Just a concept idea at the moment but will be looking to meet with BD to discuss.

- **Byelaws & Commissions:** These have now been updated and going to the Board on Tuesday 18 February for sign off. Mainly been a tidying up exercise but does include an agreed increase in membership fees. This is the first time we have increased fees since 2019 and is still below the rate of inflation over that time. Also, now simplified to just two types of membership. Release on membership increases scheduled for Monday 17 February.
- **Awards Dinner, AGM & Judo Day:** As RBi mentioned, the Awards Dinner was enjoyable with 200 attendees, however we subsidise this event quite heavily, circa £15k. We are therefore looking at doing things slightly differently with a more local impact from this year. The concept is that we would take awards to the individual at their club and make a celebration of it there which could provide wider engagement. JudoScotland have done this and it has been received very positively. Any feedback on this concept would be appreciated.

We are planning to hold the AGM in person on Saturday 1 November in conjunction with a Technical Seminar and we will know in April if we have a high profile guest attending. The Council Meeting would also be on this day face to face.

- **UKS/SE:** We have had a slight increase in funding from SE which comes in two parts: 5 year contract for grassroots; and 4 year contract for Talent which is on the same cycle as UKS funding. We also got an increase in the number of Athlete Performance Awards which does not come out of our funding. However, the increase in UKS funding does just about cover the additional National Insurance costs.
- **Events:** We will be hosting the European Junior Cup in July and going out to advertise that shortly. We also have the English Open and British Schools coming up. The English Open is already at capacity with 800+ entries.

On the British Championships, we are looking at how to bolster that and make more of a celebration which includes looking for a larger venue and combining the two weekends into one which will also alleviate pressure on staff and volunteer time. We would also look at arranging an event on the Saturday evening, just a little less formal than the Awards Dinner.

RBi then opened the meeting up for any questions so far.

SW: Council members have not seen anything yet on the strategy and it would be good to see that so that we can feedback.

AS: Once we have produced the initial framework in a format that can be shared this will be sent to Council members.

SW: What is your view of what a patron would look like/what they would do so that we can start thinking about if we know anyone suitable?

AS: Currently working on a paper on this but it would be someone who can make a contribution to British Judo via the Trust so that we could claim Gift Aid. We would then look at providing them access to things like the Paris Grand Slam, Olympic/Paralympic tickets, names on the wall in the Dojo and recognised on our website. Will probably be different levels, ie: Gold, Silver, Bronze and looking for people with a passion for judo. Once the paper is pieced together we will circulate around the Council.

JL: Do we have the footage from the JudoScotland awards?

AS: Have spoken to Judith McCleary, Chief Executive Judo Scotland, and there was some really positive PR came out of the initiative. It also links into the strategy of collaboration and engagement, with us going to them.

JL: Think it is a good idea as people in the Area don't always know who has won awards. Also, the Area had Laurence Kenyon visit in person and talk through the different initiatives and it had been much better than receiving information via email.

AS: You will see that we also run the Club Accelerator Days that are being well received, however we have only got 3 people doing this so limited resource to get out to the clubs.

NM: In regard to the England Areas Review conducted recently, received an email from Garth Illingworth (GI) requesting payment and just looking for clarification on what contribution British Judo is making towards this as they commissioned it?

AS: British Judo facilitated it but came from the Areas. GI is working with Sajid Hussain (SH) on this and what the split should be across the Areas.

- Development: Few areas to highlight:
  - 3 Step Safe: This is about quality assurance and all the Home Nations are engaged and an opportunity to pick up on our values. There was a meeting the previous day to look at how we communicate this and more lobbying to ensure that parents and other coaches in schools and local authorities what they should be looking for, important to have an enjoyable and safe sport;
  - Coaching Register: This ties back to 3 Step Safe and one of only a few NGBs that has a public register and revalidation process. Qudos to be given to the Coaching Team and to the coaches for engaging. JL: This has been a wealth of information and has enabled me to get ahead of club validation, think it's great.
  - Adaptive Judo: Kerry Tansey (KT) has been leading on this with an exceptional course last weekend. KT is also part of a European group and we are well ahead in Europe.
  - Judo Activators: This is being headed up by Joyce Heron, who has done some great work, and is about running a course to primary school teachers with the aim of getting judo into schools.
  - Kata: Been an increase in the interest in Kata. It is the basis of the IJF Academy training which has helped grow the interest.
  - Referees & Officials: We have targets with UKS in regard to our international relations, to get more international referees. We now have Lisa Rivers at international events regularly and a total of 6 on the international circuit. Also, we have people chasing us to get on to Competition Controller courses with the Technical and Education team working hard to deliver courses.
  - Club Accelerator Days: Getting out to the clubs to deliver these and there has been a very positive uptake. We are now running courses separated out into community clubs and private providers as they have different objectives, but learnings to be made each way.
  - Safeguarding: We now also have a Young Leaders Group which has been a very positive initiative. They attend the Board twice a year and provide a different lens on what's happening.
  - MyVoice & MyConcern: New system and great way of recording issues as well as providing a track record and audit trail. The Board get a summary of active cases and Russell Brown is the Board Safeguarding Lead.
  - British Championships: Received good feedback but agree hiccups on the first weekend that were rectified.

- Female Fighters Festival: This is coming up in March and participation has increased year on year.
- International Relations: Important to note Loretta Cusack-Doyle being awarded her 9<sup>th</sup> Dan at the Paris Grand Slam. This is a fantastic achievement and one of only a few 9<sup>th</sup> Dans in the world and the UK's only one. We will be trying to arrange a celebration but aware that JudoScotland are arranging one.  
RBI: It is an incredible achievement and when you look at what she has done for the sport over her career, it is well deserved recognition.

11:00 to 11:05 Break

- **Finance:** Few points to highlight:
  - Membership income at end of December down by £12k but does get offset, however will mean less money going to the Areas and the Trust. Although, it is up year on year but not growing as quickly as we budgeted for  
BD: Do you think this is because of not having any men qualify for the Olympics?  
AS: It is tracking in line with previous years and don't think that had much impact as recruitment is generally under 12s.
  - Gradings and education income also down but there was a lot come in late December that would not have been processed until January
  - SE income is steady
  - Had additional spend on bonus payments for the two VI medallists, approved by Board
  - Board training and strategy session costs should be offset by a grant from UKS that we have applied for
  - There is an adverse variance of approx. £8k but there will probably be some costs from the restructure for which we will need to use our reserves
  - Deferred membership is where we take some of the membership income over the 12 months, then draw down on that the following year. Currently sitting at £320k which is about average and at pre-Covid levels
  - Reserves are at £0.5m and we have invested this into an interest account that generates around £18k per year
  - Cash at bank is £1.1m which includes deferred income and some pre-paid funding
  - Next year will be challenging and been working with SH on the budget which will go to Board in April for finalisation. However, there will be ongoing reviews and adjustments made where needed. There won't be any staff cost of living pay increases this year as the money put aside for that has been taken up by the National Insurance increases
  - Funding from UKS and SE in the last cycles has been flat due to inflation and equates to a 30% decrease since 2012. This is another reason for increasing membership fees and we will be looking to do this annually going forward.
- **Performance:** There have been questions around why we have not sent any fighters to events such as the Paris Grand Slam. As part of a 4 year plan/cycle, a block has been built in at the beginning to focus on preparation and getting them ready to compete. To this end the men have been in Georgia and the women have been in Japan for training blocks. We have also sent the youngsters to Belgium, Holland and Paris.



Los Angeles qualification starts in May 2026 so not far away. We are looking to get the fighters in the WR Top 36 by then and if they are, they are able to enter World Masters, which give high qualification points. There are a series of strategies around making that happen and also part of the restructure to get the correct people in Performance to drive that forward.

- **Operations:** We used to lease a van but has now become very expensive so we have now purchased one for the World Class Performance Programme, recharged and phased over 4 years.

The University are working on a master plan that includes selling off their Telford Camps and an additional 2k students at the Walsall Campus. Therefore, there will be extensive building on the Walsall Campus and we are engaged with them as well as Walsall Council to employ a Project Manager (paid for by University and Council) to look at the sport element on the Campus including a Combat Centre. We currently have 14 rooms on Campus but looking to get more. We are also working with the University on helping them attain Elite Training Centre status and they are looking at getting Boccia on site. The University have made a commitment to us that we will not have to move and can keep the Dojo and offices, also that they would not do any major works from 18 months out from the Olympics.

There has been a lot of work done on merchandising and we now have two ranges. There is Adidas kit that can be purchased and then our own branded kit that was on sale at the British Championships. This kit can also be personalised clubs etc and looking to push this more which will also create consistency across the organisation. There will be a World Class Programme line added soon. This is fulfilled by an external provider so no draw on our resources.

There are two elements to anti-doping, education and development within the community at grassroots to make sure we are a clean sport.

On HR, we are working with our HR Consultant on the restructure and this should be completed by the end of February/March with everything in place by 1<sup>st</sup> April. We have also created an action plan off the back of the last staff survey with the next survey being issued after the restructure. We have also carried out some revisions to our TOIL policy as it needs to be flexible to accommodate different departments.

We have a commitment to UKS and SE to look at our impact on the environment. The largest impact comes from Performance travel, where we can't change much. However, we are looking at where we can have an impact and we will be sharing resources to clubs with guidance on where they can have an impact.

A Member Zone is being created for the website which will include technical information and videos. We are trying to make it more select and a benefit to having membership, not give away all the information for free. The Comms Team are also now running a 6 month planning document to help get the balance right between Performance, technical, wellbeing, grassroots etc. They are also going to be building a campaign around the Humble Warriors. There are potential opportunities for us to work with

Keen for feedback from Council members on the evolving website as we are keen that this constantly improved.

Manchester City FC and Arsenal FC who have expressed an interest in using judo in their training as a foundation sport that everyone should do.

SB: In regard to the restructure, what is the main focus?

AS: It's around engagement and the disconnect between the World Class Programme and grassroots so trying to invest more in the Pathway. Also, looking to get out to clubs and be more visual. Then looking at having the WCP focussed on Los Angeles and qualifying men, women and a team, and also the next cycle for Brisbane and beyond to 2036.

SW: In regard to the Olympics review, is that still ongoing and what have been the initial findings from that where you might be able to implement changes to impact on LA, the quick wins?

AS: Lack of technical expertise on the athletes coming through so looking to get to these individuals earlier before they go to the National Training Centre and ensuring they are mentally, physical and technically ready. Also, looking at what is best for each individual. For example, Chelsie Giles is currently in Japan for 6 months on her own and we are looking at sending the heavyweights to Finland or Romania. There is also the issue that about 20% of athletes are injured at any one time, so the new structure frees up the physio and medical teams to get them back on the mat quicker.

SW: How does that 20% fit with other sports, eg rugby?

AS: Think it's not dissimilar but new structure will hopefully improve this and also hoping to get referrals and scans done quicker but this is challenging. We also rely on volunteers, such as Jo Banks.

We have got additional funds for coaching so there will be an additional coach in the WCP as well as a technical coach in the Pathway. Getting new people in will also add a fresh dynamic. We are also now in a position where we are more confident to bring foreign coaches into the system.

SW: Positive that you have identified improvements that can be implemented quickly. Need to be conscious of having longer term but good to have the quick wins to start working on.

GC: There are a lot of quick wins but realistically this is about an 8 year strategy. The challenge is having players moving from championship level to professional and finding the physical side challenging. The technical piece is to work with athletes, coaches as well as strength and conditioning being very important "pre-hab" and trying to do training that prevents injury. The programme and structure has been in place a while but the world has changed so need to look externally also when doing the new strategy.

AS: Going to reword from World Class Performance Centre to Programme as not all the fighters are based at the Centre and more around what and where is best for the fighter.

RBi clarified that the areas where Council were requested to feedback are on the strategy and website improvements.

**Action: Feedback on the website to be sent to Ben Pollard, Head of Communications**



SW: There was a proposal raised at the last meeting to consider the merits of a non EJU British Open and just wondered if there was an update on that?

AS: It has been raised at Board, however at the moment it is too expensive but we will continue to review this. The cost implication would be around £35/£40k but it might become possible if some of the commercial initiatives materialise and we might be able to build in some rights values.

## 8. Any Other Business

RBI advised that AM had submitted an item for AOB.

AM advised that he was fairly new to the Council and just wanted to give a quick update on what Police Judo do and where they are trying to get to.

Currently there are 500 active members and run championships every year that moves around the country as well as a 4 yr cycle, European (USPE) championships where the quality of judo is very high and we have had two Gold medallists. Olympic and World medallists regularly compete. PSUK have had two Gold medallists, Gary Cole 2015 Germany and Rachel Wilding 2007 Russia. Also run technical weekends annually which were originally just for police but now has wider engagement and runs at the Welsh Institute of Sport in Cardiff, working in conjunction with Welsh Judo and the military. There have been many high level contributors to these technical weekends, list is below (grades not necessarily up to date). We also have Gemma Howell attending this year to deliver a masterclass that has 130 signed up. It also acts as a coaching revalidation event as well as dan grading up to 5<sup>th</sup> Dan. There are also team matches against Wales or the combined services. It also attracts overseas participation from country's National Police Teams such as Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Holland with team matches also held when foreign teams attend. PSUK also visit these countries and compete in reciprocal team matches.

- Tony Sweeney, 9<sup>th</sup> Dan, Olympian;
- Richard Barraclough, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan, Olympian;
- Seth Birch, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan;
- Steve Pullen, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan
- Neil Adams, 9<sup>th</sup> Dan Olympian/ World/European Champion;
- Alan Petherbridge, Olympian /European Champion;
- Andrew Moshonov, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan;
- Hidetoshi Nakanishi, Olympian/World Champion;
- Katsuhiko Kashiwazaki, World Champion;
- Hirotaka Okada, World and Olympic Champion;
- Ray Stevens 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, Olympian;
- Nigel Donahue, Olympian and BJA Director of performance;
- Norito Katabuchi, Visiting International Coach;
- Loretta Cussack-Doyle World Champion 8<sup>th</sup> Dan;
- Juergen Klinger, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, German National Coach;
- Densign White, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, World Silver medallist;
- George Bountakis, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan, National Coach to Iceland and Wales;
- Yuko Fujii, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan, National Coach to Brazil;
- Noa Fukumoto. Visiting Japanese Coach;
- Yoko Tanabe, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan multiple World and Olympic medallist;
- Luke Preston, 6<sup>th</sup> Dan, Multiple European and International medallist.
- Gemma Howell, European Champion.

We are also looking to host an event in the Midlands Area for better access with potentially more British Judo input. AM is also in communication with Colin McIver and Joyce Heron on how the events can be expanded. AM happy to provide more information, please contact directly. GG offered future assistance to AM and added he had attended PSUK events previously in Cardiff and confirmed their high quality. I will also be talking to SW about Police and Military events.

BD advised that there had recently been a substantial donation of £12k to the Trust to assist with the VI programme, which has also been able to benefit from Gift Aid of £2.5k. BD added that the Trust is currently mainly funding people to go to camps abroad.

GG: We will be meeting with BD in regard to the Trust and how we can publicise it more.

RBi thanked everyone for their time and contribution and meeting ended at 11.55am.