

## FINAL

# THE BRITISH JUDO ASSOCIATION ('BJA') ('ASSOCIATION') MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 10 MAY 2025 GEORGE KERR SUITE, UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON, GORWAY ROAD, WALSALL, WS1 3BD

### Present:

#### Council Members:

Rowena Birch	President	RBi
Brian Davies	Vice President	BD
Richard Barraclough	Vice President	RB
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
Dave Allen	Western Area	DA
Matthew Clempner	North West Area	MC
Ray Taylor	Eastern Area	RT
Jim MacKenzie	Army Judo	JM

#### British Judo Association:

Andrew Scoular	Chief Executive	AS
Justine Lynch	Executive Officer (Minutes)	JLy

#### Apologies:

Dr Colin Draycott	Senior Vice President
Mick Leigh	Vice President
Colin McIver	Vice President
Tony Sweeney	Vice President
Rick Kenney	JudoScotland
Robin Newett	Northern Ireland Judo Federation
Darren Dean	Welsh Judo Association
Seth Birch	Yorkshire & Humberside Area
Andy Moss	Police UK
Stephen Watson	Royal Navy
Stephen Milne	Armed Forces
Matthew Barclay	Royal Air Force
Gerry Gualtieri	British Judo Chair

### 1 Welcome & Apologies

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

Apologies noted as detailed above.

RBi then requested, with it being JL's first meeting in person, that there were round the room introductions and people's motivation for being a member of the Council.

**JL:** Chair Worcester Judo Club. Here to see what she can do to support British Judo and what ideas she can take away to support her club. Previously on the Midlands Area Council. Her job is financial and has helped clubs with securing real

estate finance for new premises.

**DR:** Pinewood Judo Club. Very passionate about judo which has helped him and keen to help British Judo.

**DA:** President of the Western Area. Thinks the Council is important as it keeps the link with the Areas. Good general forum and prevents Western Area feeling like it's out on a limb.

**BD:** Vice President and member for 62 years. Chair of the Budokwai and previously been on the Board.

**NM:** Budokwai Judo Club, London. Worked in education for 15 years and previous elite judoka.

**JM:** 60 years in Army Judo. Here to learn and meet people to share judo with which is a passion.

**MC:** Northwest Area and should support judo in any way we can. This is a link between British Judo and the Area and important that it keeps going.

**RB:** Vice President and President of the Northwest Area. Had keen interest in Judo all my life and see the Council as important.

**RT:** Eastern Area. Done judo for 38 years and important to give something back to the sport and to the Areas that can sometimes feel separated.

**JG:** Judo for 50 years. Happy to give up my Saturdays. Nice to know what other Areas are doing and picking people's brains.

**FC:** Southern Area Secretary. Good to attend face to face meetings and try to rotate the responsibility to attend around the Committee members.

**JLy:** With British Judo for 6 years and support the Chief Executive, Chair and Board as well as managing business operations and governance.

**AS:** Chief Executive for 14 years. Agree the Council is an important connection and good to get feedback from the members. Should be more connectivity work and this will be a focus in the new strategy going forward. Pleased to see you all here.

**RBi:** President and passionate about judo. Very much want to help to make sure voices are heard and all working together, as well as getting the next generation to enjoy the sport that we have all got so much out of and I like being in the company of the judo community.

## 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting on Saturday 15 February 2025

RBi advised of two small amendments.

With these amendments accepted, the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting on Saturday 15 February 2025..

**Proposer: JM**

**Secunder: DA**

## 3 President's Remarks

RBi opened by reinforcing how important it is for these meetings to go ahead to support both the Board and the staff with the decisions they are making by providing feedback and questions that may highlight a blind spot. Also, it's useful for us to get a bigger picture of the activities of the organisation and context. It is our responsibly to take the information back to the members, clubs and communities to help them understand and celebrate the many things we are doing in British Judo. RBi continued that she is conscious it is easy to sit and judge but often there are assumptions that things haven't been thought through which is easy to do without the full information.

JL queried how other members disseminate the information to members and clubs. MC responded that the majority of the information is on the British Judo website, however clubs have not always picked it up. FC commented that the Southern Area have general apathy in regard to attending the AGM, aside from the key community members and odd interested clubs. Also with judo being an all

year round sport, it can easily fill up diaries. The situation is not ideal but the people that need to know information, generally tend to find out.

## 5 Chief Executive's Update

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

- There are 3 basic sources of income – UK Sport (UKS), Sport England (SE) and from membership. 41% of total funding is ringfenced by UKS, 22% by SE and the remaining 37% is from membership. One ambition is to become more self sufficient and generate more income;
- RBi attended the last Board Meeting in London along with representatives from UKS and the Young Leaders Group;  
**Action: AS/JL request the Young Leaders attend a future Council Meeting**
- **Performance Department Restructure:**
  - Commenced with a review of the Performance Department following the Paris Games and ahead of a new funding cycle that started on 1 April 2025.
  - **Performance Director:** Hardest change to make as Nigel Donohue has done an excellent job. Job advert currently out, closing on Monday 12 May. Shortlisted candidate interviews will take place early June, with an assessment day for final candidates on 24 June, with an expectation to appoint after that. Kate Howey is currently Interim Performance Director.  
The main rationale for the change was to create a role with a clearer connection between the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP)/National Training Centre and the Pathway/community and club environment. Also considered the key elements to focus on which are to reach our targets for the Los Angeles Olympics and Paralympics, so needed laser focus on that and also to make that connection and drive technical standards to get athletes from grassroots ready to join the WCPP.
  - **Performance Pathway & Operations Director:** New role which Tim Ellis has been matched in to as he has experience in both these areas.
  - **Performance Manager:** New role and have appointed Jenny Close, starting on 2 June.
  - **GB Home Nations Coach:** New role demonstrating our commitment to investing in the Pathway, with the remit of driving the connection to the clubs and getting more time on task with athlete to enhance their technical skills. Also to drive collaboration with the Home Nations and their coaching resource. Chloe Cowen will be moving in to this role as of 2 June. This leaves an England Coach role vacant which we will advertise shortly.
  - **Olympic Programme Coaches:** Three members of staff have been appointed to these roles – Jamie Johnson, Colin Oates and Simon Moss. One vacancy that has gone out to advert, however the level of applications did not meet the requirements so will be going out to advert again once the Performance Director is appointed.
  - **Head Paralympics Coach:** Ian Johns has been matched in to this role.
  - **Physio:** Jacob Eyres has been headhunted by British Gymnastics and will move on in June. We have appointed a full time and part time physios who will start in June/July.
  - **UKSI Lifestyle Manager:** Moving to England Hockey in mid-June. This role will be vacant for a short period until a replacement is identified.

- **Sport Psychologist:** The current contract had run out and the new costs were much higher for the next cycle and therefore we have changed the Sport Psych practitioners

DR commented that he understood the need for greater connection with the clubs and queried how the Areas would be more involved? AS responded that the Areas will have squads and we will be able to send technical coaches to squad training which can involve other clubs. Also there has been a review of the England Areas which includes a proposal on how the Areas and British Judo can work together.

JL raised the issue of clubs needing more day to day support and that in areas that are being developed, clubs are losing their dojos and there is a general reduction in the number of small affordable buildings. AS advised that this is covered in our Club Accelerator Days that are run by Nick Shepherd, Head of Club Support.

- **Strategic Plan:** Getting in to the final stages of producing the next Strategic Plan which will go out for consultation once it has been pulled together and then to Board for final sign off.
- **Awards Dinner:** There won't be an Awards Dinner this year. There will still be awards but they will be distributed at clubs which will give the clubs more profile in their local areas. Again, part of the collaboration work and getting out into the community. Also, there is a significant cost saving of £12-£15k.
- **UKS Funding:** Received our final confirmation of funding award for the next 4 years. We have managed to secure additional funding for the strategy work and will be putting in a submission for funding for our international relations work.
- **SE Funding:** Positively we have received additional funding from the England Commonwealth Games programme for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, however anyone on a UKS Athlete Performance Award cannot benefit from this. There is another window in October to submit an application for additional funds. The SE funding cycle does not run on the same timelines as UKS and we will start our application for the new cycle in October. One challenge is that SE have drifted away from focusing on sport and more on social impact. However there has been a change in Chief Executive recently, so that may change.
- **European Junior Cup:** The outlines have been issued for this and it will take place the last weekend in July. We will also have a large team of Ukrainians and Indians participating. This is now in the summer holiday period and after exams so hoping for a bigger entry.
- **Annual Report:** This will be fully digital this year as part of digitalisation and environmental initiatives. There will just be a few copies printed. Again, this is a significant cost saving.
- **AI:** Creating an AI Working Group as this could have a significant impact on various areas and need to be able to manage this internally and security wise. Also, how we can use AI to the benefit of the Association.
- **Budget 2025/26:** Budget signed off by the Board. It is a deficit budget which is the first time we have had to do that. However, there are some opportunities identified to rectify this. We have already negotiated a £10k reduction in our insurance premium. Funding from UKS and SE has been flat and in real terms, since 2012 lost 37% in funding. We are also looking at more commercial activity as well as working with the Trust to make that more tax efficient.

RBi enquired if the insurance cover has changed. AS advised that it hasn't and that we are also looking at options of allowing medical insurance to be

put on the back of it which would cost individuals approximately £10 per year. Only issue is that if there are a high number of claims that would push the premium up. It does not cover loss of earnings but people can be signposted to assistance.

**Action: AS/JL to request information to be circulated to members and clubs on the insurance cover provided, importance of following our guidelines**

- **3 Step Safe:** Outlines the key responsibilities of the NGB and used to promote our sport across the country, reinforcing that all judo clubs, including affiliated associations, need to operate to these standards.
- **Events:** Out of 30k members, only 5% compete at national events. Need to look at whether we are running the correct events. Then that 5% is what feeds our Olympic programme, so a huge challenge. Further comments on events:
  - MC:** This has not changed much over the years with the number of people doing judo is nowhere near the number competing. Some, only participate for grades.
  - AS:** Need to look at how we make it exciting/festival environment so that more people want to compete and could also help with retention.
  - FC:** Should also look at the length of competitions and how to minimise the time between weigh in and getting on to the mat, as well as making it more relaxed, eg different colour kits, team kits.
  - NM:** Development events in London have had to become more relaxed with a push on enjoyment as well as pushing to the parents.
  - JL:** Look at how we can build a community in the club and invite other clubs in – sleep over, summer club and include fun activities for the children.
  - RBi:** Becomes more of a team for the parents as well and potentially won't mind the length of the events so much
  - AS:** Everyone is welcome to feedback. Not everyone will agree with the wording but engagement is key
  - AS:** On behaviour and conduct at events, the Chair has done a video for sharing prior to events and is going to be doing an updated one in June.
- Action: JL to arrange for RBi to also film a video**
- JL:** Getting difficult to have the right level of volunteers at events, eg: First Aid as this course needs to be attended in person
- MC:** Suggested looking at club membership for people that are nurses, work in emergency services etc.
- JL:** Timing and having the numbers to attend is an issue
- FC:** Could do it as an Area
- AS:** Active Partnerships should have a list of providers and can be done with other sports
- NM:** London Area uses provider that runs his own classes
- **Commissions:** Progressive Events Commission has been renamed National Officials Commission
- **Kanji Awards:** This programme is continuing and is to encourage younger coaches to deliver judo
- **PR:** Worked with Manchester City Football Club as part of the work on how judo can help other sports
- **International Relations:** Collaborated with the French Judo Federation on an event in a French school in London with over 1000 participants. Budokwai coaches helped out and RBi was also in attendance. RBi commented that this was a brilliant opportunity for the children who attended and there was also a presentation in the evening for the parents and focused on the values of judo and also had champions there talking about where the values had touched their lives.

- **Masterclasses:** The Olympians and Paralympians are travelling round delivering masterclasses
- **Safeguarding:** The wearing of prosthetic limbs and stoma bags in competitions has been approved
- **Young Leaders Group:** Very enthusiastic and passionate group who have got a meeting at the House of Commons to promote judo
- **Female Fighters Festival:** Well received. RBI added that this has now expanded to be a 2 day event with a lot of variety and a really nice atmosphere
- **Competitions:** The EJU are requesting that we host a European Open, however costs for this are prohibitive

#### **Performance and Performance Pathway & Operations**

- The ONST sessions have gone back to being 2 days and ties in with the engagement work
- Been some positive results, especially in Bremen which is an extremely high calibre event and we had our best results ever there
- Some good talent coming through from grassroots
- VI team also doing well and medalled at the World Championships
- Currently pushing for applications to the DiSE programme where we have 40 places as well as having the TASS programme. Both are about providing flexibility to study and do judo
- Discussions on a National Combat Centre are ongoing with the University and the Council who are carrying out a viability assessment
- Expanding our merchandise offering with two different brands – Adidas for the premium brand and working with Team Elite on a British Judo range. Looking to get more people out and about in judo branded clothing. Team Elite can brand for coaches and clubs in a colour of choice and fulfilment takes a few days
- On anti-doping, the athletes have to complete a whereabouts form for the next 3 months as testing can take place at any time. Also, working on an education programme on this for England
- Have to complete an emissions report which includes all flights and produce a plan on how we will try to reduce our carbon footprint

#### **Communications**

- We are slowly moving away from printed mail to email and digital comms. The welcome letter has already been changed and better because we can also embed videos etc. However, research has shown that young people rarely get a physical letter so can be exciting to receive one, therefore need to balance this.
- Constantly reviewing the content we put on our social media. All feedback and ideas are welcome. New website homepage now showcases all elements of judo, not just elite level. Member Zone is under development with the intention that this will give more added value to membership NM raised the content that Bobby Rich had produced. AS advised that we are currently in discussions with Bobby on how we can get the best value from this content. Other website feedback:  
MC: Tend to find things by luck  
FC: More streamlined and some information is more accessible  
AS: When the Member Zone is in place we will be able to add more things, eg; gradings videos
- JL: Better but still room for improvement  
**Action: AS/JL Enquire about making Club Finder easier to find on the website**

RBI thanked AS for a thorough update and enquired if there were any items for any other business?

BD raised the British Judo Trust that continues to assist a great number of people, including 20 people to go to Japan in the summer and has granted over £45k in the last two years. Also, recently the Trust has received private donations, which helped the European Veterans and athletes to go to Vegas Masters, and these private donations allow the Trust to claim back 25% in tax.

BD continued that the membership contribution of £1 has remained the same since the Trust started and he would like support in the near future to raise that to £2, however this would probably need to go via the AGM.

With there being no further items raised, RBi thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 12.30pm.