

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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BRITISH JUDO ASSOCIATION (BJA)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

HELD ON TUESDAY 28TH APRIL 2026 – BJA, WALSALL

PRESENT:

Gerry Gualtieri, Chair	(GG)
Neil Fletcher	(NF)
Garth Illingworth	(GI)
Russell Brown	(RB)
Ben Quilter	(BQ)
Alex Slade	(ASL)
Marc Preston	(MP)

APOLOGIES:

Nicki Tang
Wai Cheung
Delia Wright
Shaun Davies

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andrew Scoular	(AS)
Lucy Cleary, Executive Officer	(LC)
Rowena Birch	(Rbi)

No	ITEM	ACTION
78.50	WELCOME & APOLOGIES	
	GG welcomed all attendees to the meeting and thanked them for their flexibility in accommodating the change of date. Apologies were received from Wai Cheung, Nicki Tang, and Delia Wright. GG also noted apologies from Shaun Davies and advised that SD has now resigned from his position within Welsh Judo. Action: AS to discuss with Ben Jeffreys to obtain further clarification regarding SD's position.	AS
78.51	DECLARATION OF ANY INTERESTS/CONFLICTS	
	No matters raised	

78.52	ANY MATTERS FOR ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	AS reported that the final NED 2 candidate interviews had now taken place and were considered very positive. The process, from a historically elected role to an appointed position, has resulted in a strong field of high-quality candidates. The candidate shortlist concluded with: • Chris Donovan – Eastern area representative with a finance background and CEO-level experience • Llyr Jones – Extensive involvement in judo and experience operating at a high level within the sport The recruitment panel had agreed that both candidates will be progressed for appointment Chris Donovan will be appointed immediately to fill the current vacancy previously held by Paul Ajala. Llyr Jones will be appointed in August to support a planned transition from Neil Fletcher. A discussion took place regarding the future approach to Board appointments, specifically whether positions should continue to be elected appointments from England representatives or independently recruited and appointed roles. There was agreement on the importance of advertising the roles properly, outlining the required credentials clearly and marketing the opportunities effectively. It was noted that candidates should have a strong judo background A key point raised throughout the discussion was ensuring the roles are well advertised Rowena highlighted the importance of ensuring the Board has the right skills balance overall. She noted that elected individuals often become more visible generally, but that it is equally important for Board members to attend events and become more accessible to the members. Rbi also noted that if this route is taken, other things would also need to change, particularly around visibility and engagement. Gerry suggested that new NEDs should attend events and potentially Council meetings in order to become more visible within the membership. He also suggested communicating clearly why individuals are on the Board and what they bring to the role.	
78.53	MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON TUESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2026	
	The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10th February 2026 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting with no changes to be made. Proposer: GI	

	Second: ASI	
78.54	ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS (NOT INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA)	
	AS reviewed the Board Actions and Decisions, with the following key highlights noted: • AS and NT have now discussed the cyber security with Alan James from IT – this action is now complete • We are in discussions with Onus on commercial, they are on 2 months' notice – and would also like to bring Delia in for discussions • MP met with BJC, this action is now complete • Timelines and papers on the England review have been completed • Work has increased with Matt Keefe, Data Protection Officer. He will now manage redactions for SAR requests, there are approx. 8 per year, improving security. • Joyce has spoken with the YAPs, this will continue as planned, this action is now complete • Trust matters are ongoing. AS to speak with Brian whilst in the meantime Saj is working on the different trust options. Two grant applications have been submitted on behalf of the trust, with outcomes expected within the next month • AS to arrange a meeting with BJC and AJA following Karen's departure, with GG and AS coordinating a meeting with Bernard Richmond BJC. ACTION AS to coordinate a meeting with GG, Bernard and AJA	AS
78.55	RISK REGISTER	
	AS noted, that all updates within the report are highlighted in red to reflect the current position. AS explained in more detail highlighting the following: The biggest risk is the loss of Karen. It was acknowledged KRs departure will have a significant impact. An interim plan is being looked at around development, with the team currently waiting on Sport England guidance for the next 5-year funding submission. The expectation is that SE will give clarity on the process, with key decisions likely around September/October. There are some concerns around timing. If everything stays on track, interim arrangements can be put in place until funding is confirmed. If it	

	slips, then there is a risk of being in an 18-month interim period, which would be too long to manage without something more stable. Succession planning was discussed; • Joyce Heron would lead on technical and officials • Nick Shepherd would take on development • Jenny Close would pick up more from Tim so he can focus on operational work. It was also suggested bringing in a temporary person to cover admin support. Exit interviews were also discussed. AS will carry out the exit interview with KR, and it was suggested that a Board member could also be involved to get wider insight for future planning. GG and BQ are happy to attend. GG suggested keeping this more informal rather than a structured interview and encouraged Board members to have a separate conversation with Karen if they want broader information Decision • All board agreed for AS to start the interim process replacing KR. Action • GG to arrange a broader discussion with KR • AS to discuss funding outcome with Sport England	GG AS
78.56	Safeguarding	
	Action • AS to liaise with SPB regarding updates required to the Safe landings policy booklet • AS to lead the revalidation	
78.57	Development Deep Dive – Karen Roberts	
	KR presented a presentation and noted that from the strategy, it can be seen how the deeper dive has gone into development over the last 18 months. The team initially looked at the role of an NGB, rather than specifically a judo NGB.	

	Three key areas were identified: the sport carries on in this country without NGBs, so it is about adding value around governance, promoting the sport, and selecting international teams. The governance piece was identified as a critical area where value can be added. It was noted that this is where the “3 Step Safe” framework comes in, forming the core focus around coaching, technical education, club support, curriculum, and gradings, with “Three Step Safe” acting as the governance pillar. A strong focus has been placed on ensuring environments are safe through the use of Club Welfare Officers, with licensing now leading the way. Work is also currently underway to explore ways events can be delivered differently. A number of pilot initiatives undertaken over the last few months were highlighted. It was noted that the organisation is completely dependent on the volunteer network and is continuing to work with the next generation of volunteers coming through. Currently working closely with HNs to support the development of the sport and identify any potential blind spots. An issue was identified through the club affiliation process involving members not being registered with the association. A further concern arose when members later applied for a BJA membership and attempted to transfer coaching qualifications. This situation was a valuable learning opportunity, and new processes have now been introduced to share membership lists and identify issues earlier. Another part of the strategy came from the “Reveal the Secrets” work, looking at everything judo can offer to communities. This sits under the “Humble Warrior” pillar of the strategy. There’s been work on developing the coaching programme, so coaches are better supported to deliver, along with networking with the NHS and other local partners for interventions. There’s also clear demand coming in from organisations wanting to work with BJA, but delivery is limited by the number of available coaches. To help with this, a trial has started involving non-judo health professionals to help deliver judo-based content that can be built into their work. This forms part of the Olympic workforce development and is now a key piece of work A key case study highlighted was Harlow Judo Club, which ran a “Finding Your Feet” programme. After 12 months, a group of older adults who never saw themselves on an Olympic or Paralympic pathway have become full judo members and are now working through the grading system. The “Humble Warrior” pillar is therefore about recognising that membership doesn’t have to be driven by a Olympic pathway but can instead focus on helping people fall in love with judo and grow overall memberships.	
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	KR noted there were two further key areas Adoptive Judo. This area has seen significant growth across both performance and grassroots levels in Britain. The association has joined forces with UK Deaf Sport through “Project 29”, with the aim of achieving the first judo representation at the Deaf Olympics in Tokyo in 2029. While judo is already part of the Deaf Olympics, it has not previously had formal representation. Jack Hodgson is the ambassador for this work and is also involved as a coach. The final area is the work around women and girls. The Women’s Festival has been growing year on year, but it’s still a standalone event, so there’s now work being done to see how it can go further. The idea is to link up the work happening across HNs into one group, with quarterly meetings in place to make sure everyone is supporting each other, sharing ideas, and keeping the momentum going There’s also ongoing work behind the scenes around membership, including the move towards a more digital footprint, with membership cards on the way. Inclusion and wellbeing remain a strong focus across the association, with standard training continuing to be rolled out across the NGB so that everyone takes responsibility for looking after each other. The next piece of development for the performance team is “Hero” training, which is about people standing up, being accountable, supporting others when needed, and challenging poor behaviour when it is seen. GG shared his congratulations to KR and suggested arranging a catch-up for a debrief to discuss what would be needed to keep the momentum going following KR’s departure. MP congratulated KR and noted that Judo Scotland also passed on their congratulations and stated that KR will be missed. It was highlighted that KR had played an essential role in supporting the relationship, particularly through the development and delivery of “three Step Safe,” RBI thanked KR for everything she has done with the BJA, including her work within the performance and England programme, as well as her contribution as a competitor. It was described as absolutely brilliant. RB expressed appreciation for KR’s contribution and thanked her for her work. Decision	
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	• Board members agreed that the Board meeting on the 9th June is to now take place in London, with a leaving meal to be arranged for KR on the 8th June Actions • GG – to arrange a catch up meeting with KR • LC to upload KRs presentation on Admin Control	GG LC
78.58	Strategy 2026 – 32 update	
	AS noted that the strategy is nearing completion, with a few remaining elements awaited from NIJ and JS. Once finalised, the strategy will be published on the website. AS will also arrange individual meetings with all HNs. The strategy will be presented at the AGM in November and at the next Council meeting on 23rd May. Ben Pollard has drafted a document outlining the values and judo journey, the next step will be to translate this into a photographic version.	
78.59	BUDGET / AUDIT & RISK MEETING	
	AS discussed, the outline budget and highlighted the main areas within the draft budget. • Fixed income continues through UKS and Sport England funding, whilst the variable income comes through memberships. • Each department prepared its own budget, discussed with AS and then reviewed through the Audit and Risk Committee process, which has resulted in the Budget. • Overall income is expected to be slightly lower due to the decision not to host European Junior Cups and therefore losing the ticket income. • Grant income remains stable, with increased UKS funding confirmed and Sport England funding secured until next year. • Membership income has been forecast conservatively, with around 6% growth expected. • A 3% increase in staff salaries has been included within the budget assumptions.	

	• The budget is currently forecasting a small surplus of just under £10k, compared to last year's deficit position. • Additional investment has been set aside for marketing and commercial activity, with discussions ongoing around whether this support should come through a dedicated individual or an external agency. • Around 37% of income is currently self-generated or grant related, with ambitions to continue increasing this figure. • Sport England funding currently makes up around 22% of income, which compares positively against other NGBs. • Increased expenditure mainly relates to staffing costs and additional IT investment, including cyber security. • Savings have been made through staffing i.e. Saj reducing his hours to 2.5 days per week. • Membership have increased to around 770 on a conservative basis. • Although February membership income was slightly behind target, it was noted that the organisation remains on track to meet overall targets, representing an anticipated increase of around £20k • NF queried the position regarding Under 8s licences, noting that he believed these are now free whereas there had previously been a charge. Action • AS to clarify the membership charge for under 8s and refer back to NF with confirmation. • Financial opportunities and risks were discussed, including the £40k marketing investment. It was noted that the risk would be if the investment does not generate additional income; however, this would not significantly affect the overall figures. • A larger risk discussed with UKS relates to increased travel costs. • It was noted that John is currently managing this through early booking arrangements where possible. • It was further noted that, in a worst-case scenario, the impact may result in members being unable to attend certain events. Audit and Risk AS advised the safeguarding and disciplinary cases and the need to make sure there is appropriate contingency within the budget for these areas. • Additional opportunities were highlighted through the Patrons Club and ongoing fundraising activity, with two bids currently submitted to trusts. • Interest in bank was also noted, with approximately £15–20k to remain for reserves Decision • All board signed off the budget	AS
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	Asi added that everything is running in line with expectations, with small surpluses and deficits across different areas, and an overall aim of achieving a small surplus by year end. - Income is generally positive, with no significant changes outside of the usual funding cycle, which remains on plan. - It was noted that safeguarding and disciplinary expenditure issues have arisen but can be absorbed within the current financial position. - March income exceeded expectations, reaching over £80k, representing the strongest performance to date. - Deferred income for the start of next year is projected to be just under £400k. AS noted, that it is Richard Barraclough's funeral service and LC will organise flowers to be delivered. Action LC to organise flowers for Richard Barraclough's funeral. Break: 11:45am Meeting recommenced: 11:55am	LC
78.60	CHAIRS REPORT	
	Report was taken as read, with the following highlights noted: The Paris Grand Slam was great not only for performance but for the positive feedback received from President Toth and the French Federation. Overall, the team's performance continues to make good progress. Home Nations Updates – all reports taken as read with the key highlights below Welsh Judo Association: Report taken as read as SD was not in attendance to give verbal update. JudoScotland: Membership has fallen to below 9,000.	

	- Staffing issues were noted, with two members of staff currently missing, creating challenges and a significant HR workload. It is hoped this situation will soon be resolved. - The high-performance programme is currently understaffed; however, funding has now been secured for an additional full-time coach on a 12-month contract. - It was noted that 15 judokas have met nomination standards for the Commonwealth Games. - Marc's term as Chair ends on 1st November. It was noted this will be the last popularly elected Chair, as governance terms have changed to four-year terms. - The Vice Chair has stepped away for personal reasons. A discussion is needed regarding future structure, including whether roles should include a mix of judo and non-judo expertise. - GG is happy to discuss further, noting experience of valuing a CEO with strong business skills alongside a Chair with judo expertise. "Three Step Safe" was discussed, including a club highlighted through an evidence-based decision-making process. - Marc attended a meeting with BJA alongside Bernard Richmond BJC to explore ways of working more closely together. An agreement covering HNs, BJA, and BJC is in progress and requires completion and sign off. - It was noted that the Judo Scotland gathering clashes with the British Veterans event (31st Oct–1st Nov), and opportunities are being explored for this to come together. Actions: AS to review the agreement between HNs, BJA, and BJC. AS and GG to arrange a catch-up with MP regarding recruitment. MP to keep the Board updated on "Three Step Safe" on a case-by-case basis. Judo England: - GI highlighted that the Steering Group would decide who writes the initial section. - Feedback from events such as the English Open was noted, including some complaints around timing and event presentation (e.g. backdrops). - A key focus moving forward is to further digitise competitions, building on the use of Judo Manager. - Catering arrangements will be reviewed. - Operational processes require further tidying up. - Main events will continue to be run separately. Northern Ireland Judo Federation Update: - RB advised they have gone through the inspection and reflection work, including Squire Batton for the audit alongside SNI, with recommendations now being taken on board.	AS AS MP
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	• A full remap of all policies have been completed. • SNI are happy with progress, and the funding has now come through for 2026/27, putting things in a strong position. • The change in strategy has been successful and is working well. • Rachel Hocks was noted, along with Khan Armstrong being selected onto the GB Junior Squad, with athletes achieving record points in their first year. • AS advised a training session on NEST can be arranged with Sarah Walker. Action: • LC to link Sarah Walker with Russell to arrange a training session with NEST	LC
78.61	INTERNATIONAL REPORTS	
	As advised that the EJU have got the contract for Uniformed Services event, Dr Toth our European President Working with UKS on the European Congress to piece it together for 2027 Keen to support Lisa Allan's re-election with plans to do this with holding the Congress and during the Commonwealth Games.	
78.62	CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE	
	Report taken as read with the key highlights: • The AGM date was discussed and proposed for 28th November, which sits within the Members and Arts schedule and allows space between events. • Members and Arts (M&A) updates were discussed, including presidential and vice-presidential matters. AS will report back with the recommendations regarding potential changes to the vice-president and elected director structure, including transitional arrangements. • Rowena raised discussions to the current M&A approach and concerns about how potential changes to vice-president arrangements would be managed. AS advised it will be about discussing the terms for vice-presidents and reviewing the overall system and structure	

	GG and Rowena will discuss the matter further separately. - LA ticket submissions will be made next week. - The European Games in Istanbul 2027 were discussed, with judo to feature as a team event only. BOA may offer support, though this is not confirmed. AS suggested that participation should be considered for both sporting and political reasons, would need to budget £6k for coach and Team Leader Decision: The Board agreed the AGM will take place on 28th November The Board agreed to action the England plan. Coaching report was approved All Board members ratified the Lifetime Memberships of Neil Fletcher and Peter Kelly Agreed to enter BJA into the European Games 2027 Action: GG to arrange a catch-up with Rowena to discuss the Vice-President structure.	GG
78.63	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	There was no other business. GG closed the meeting by thanking attendees. The meeting closed at 13:40	