BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of the Board meeting held at Goodenough College, London House, Mecklenburgh Square, London, WC1N 2AB at 14:00 on Wednesday, 28 May 2025.

PRESENT

Board
Joy Carter (Chair) (JC)
Richard Cannock (RC)
Yawar Abbas (AB)
Eamonn O'Rourke (EO)
Mark Jeffreys (MJ)
Heidi Leseur (HL)
Andrew Light (AL)
Nick Murrills (NM)
Mayuri Nigam (MN)
Andrew Steele (AS)
Mark Williams (CEO) (MW)

Also present
Neil Edgar (Finance Director) (NE)
Steve Jones (minutes) (SJ)
Paul Makinen (Head of Digital & Insight) (PM)
Jo Rowbottom (Head of Partnerships & Communities) (JR)

MINUTES REF.	ITEM	**ACTION**
NOTE	The Board meeting was preceded by a session on England Squash strategy, the minutes for which follow as an appendix.	
M01ESB(2502)	**1. Chair's Welcome** JC welcomed all to the meeting.	
M02ESB(2502)	**Apologies for Absence** Apologies were received from Board member Wendy Newlove.	
M03ESB(2502)	**Declarations of Interests** There were no interests declared.	
M04ESB(2502)	**Minutes of the Board Meeting 19/03/25** The minutes were taken as read and were agreed to be a true and correct record.	
M05ESB(2502)	**Matters Arising**	

	M08ESB(2501) – In relation to the National Schools Championships, it was agreed that England Squash would proactively contact schools in the East Midlands and West Midlands regions as they are both currently under-represented in the event.	**MW**
M06ESB(2502)	M09ESB(2501) – RC had produced a poster that promotes use of 'the right ball', and a version shall be added to the website's Club Toolkit for September. Discussions with Dunlop shall continue.	**PM, MW**
M07ESB(2502)	M10ESB(2501) – There was discussion of the terms of reference for the Remuneration Committee and Nominations Committee, and it was agreed that both shall be reviewed and updated ahead of the next meeting.	**MW**
M08ESB(2502)	M11ESB(2501) – NE is to report back once the new finance system for purchase orders has been rolled out to the staff team.	**NE**
M09ESB(2502)	M25ESB(2501) – It was noted that an advisory group for performance had been re-established and that 'the athlete's voice' has been included.	
M10ESB(2502)	M39ESB(2501) – There was discussion of anti-doping, and England Squash will look into whether the frequency of testing has recently been increased.	**MW**
M11ESB(2502)	**CEO Report**	
	Departing Board Members	
	MW began his update by paying tribute to the three non-executive directors present who are reaching the conclusion of their third and final terms as Board members. Chair Joy Carter, Senior Independent Director Eamonn O'Rourke and Director Andrew Light have provided outstanding support and leadership to the organisation. It was agreed that the organisation is now a very different one for the better compared to nine years ago when their first terms began.	
M12ESB(2502)	New Chair Mark Jeffreys expressed his sincere thanks to the departing Board members for their hugely significant contributions.	
M13ESB(2502)	*Staffing*	
	It was reported that David Evans, Partner Engagement Officer, had recently left the company and that Vickie Prow, Competitions Project Lead, would be doing likewise in the summer at the conclusion of her contract. Both David and Vickie had been great assets to England Squash in their time with the company.	
M14ESB(2502)	It was noted that a staff survey had recently gone out and that the recommendations stemming from it would be shared at the next meeting.	**MW**
M15ESB(2502)	*Outdoor squash courts*	

	Outdoor courts recently opened in Birmingham. The state-of-the-art courts facilitate different ways of playing and are a collaboration between England Squash and Play Innovation, thanks to funding from Sport England. It is hoped that more similar types of court can be built in the future.	
M16ESB(2502)	*Performance* There was notable success for England at the European Team Championships in Poland where England won the men's and women's titles. In addition, several players had recently achieved their highest-ever world rankings. There was special tribute paid to Sarah-Jane Perry, who had reached 100 England caps and would be retiring in June after an outstanding career.	
M17ESB(2502)	*Transgender matters* It was noted that the UK Supreme Court had ruled that the legal definition of 'woman' refers to biological sex, which has its implications for sport. Guidance is due to be issued by Sport England. NM volunteered his help and support in relation to policy.	**MW, NM, JR**
M18ESB(2502)	*External Board evaluation* An evaluation will take place in 2025 since one is due in accordance with the Code for Sports Governance.	**MW**
M19ESB(2502)	*Key Performance Indicators* MW showed the most recent KPIs via a slide on the screen. The KPIs are linked to the current strategy and it was agreed that this must continue to be the case with the forthcoming new strategy beyond 2025.	**MW**
M20ESB(2502)	**2. What England Squash Does** There was discussion of the updated version of the document. The following changes were agreed: • Remove the word 'funding' • Move the line 'Provide guidance and resources to clubs, coaches and players' to the bottom of that section • Change the current 'three Cs' to the three Ps of Place, People and Playing • Remove "and well-governed at all levels"	**MW**
M21ESB(2502)	There was also agreement on the following. • Once the document has been updated it can be published because the Board has completed its guidance and recommendations • The document can be shared on an annual basis with the squash community	**MW**
M22ESB(2502)	**3. Finance**	

M23ESB(2502)	NE thanked the Board and staff for their support in finishing the 2025/26 budget.	
M24ESB(2502)	The Audit and Risk Committee has committed to finishing the budgeting earlier on an annual basis.	**NE**
M25ESB(2502)	**4. GB Squash** Ahead of the meeting, a revised GB Squash governing document had been shared. The document will need approval from the Boards of England, Scotland and Wales. Following discussion, it was agreed that the current document is not suitable. There is a need to document the necessary governance in a more simple and concise way. MW and NM are to produce a revised document and circulate it to Scotland and Wales.	**MW, NM**
M26ESB(2502)	**5. Membership & Affiliation** PM had provided an update paper for discussion ahead of the meeting. The scheme launched last year is now approaching its first anniversary. In relation to the Phase 2 marketing plan, it was agreed that LinkedIn would be added to the organic social media section.	**PM**
M27ESB(2502)	There was discussion of the way that the county data is presented, and agreement that numerical order is preferred. Data showing the number of clubs and courts in the counties will also be helpful for context and to show which counties might be the outliers.	**PM**
M28ESB(2502)	For the next meeting, an update will be provided in relation to the comparison of the scheme to that of other sports and the Australia and New Zealand squash National Governing Bodies.	**PM**
M29ESB(2502)	Regarding paid advertising, this should link with the new strategy and take benefit from keyword searches that capture people searching for pickleball and padel.	**PM**
M30ESB(2502)	**6. New NEDs - Nominations Committee Recommendations** After a thorough selection process, the Nominations Committee recommended Mark Jeffreys (MJ) for the position of Chair, pending formal ratification by the full Board. It was noted that five candidates for the Chair role had been interviewed. After a discussion and vote, with MJ temporarily out of the room, the Board was unanimous in its approval of MJ.	
M31ESB(2502)	Following a thorough and extensive recruitment process, the Nominations Committee had also arrived at three candidates that it recommended to the Board for approval. The CV of each candidate had been shared with the Board.	

	Voting took place by show of hands in relation to each candidate: • Jonathan Halliwell • Matt Lyons • Will Chignell All three candidates were appointed unanimously.	
M32ESB(2502)	There was some regret that the diversity of the Board will not be improved by the three new appointments. Efforts had been made to advertise far and wide, utilising for instance the Women on Boards network.	
M33ESB(2502)	Two actions were then agreed: 1. Further reflection on how to ensure future diversity improvements to the Board, including preparing a cohort of prospective candidates well in advance. 2. Identify the future dates for when multiple NEDs will leave the Board in a short timeframe. 3. Consideration to be given to the start dates of the three new board Directors.	**MW**
M34ESB(2502)	**7. Any Other Business** *Venue for next meeting* The venue will be confirmed shortly, provisionally in Manchester.	**MW**
M35ESB(2502)	*Information-only Board Papers* JC gave thanks to the writers of the supplementary Board papers, which included the following and which were presented for information only and not discussed specifically during the meeting. The Board is extremely thankful to the England Squash team for the quality, breadth and depth of the work being done. • Coach Development – there was an agreed action to incorporate some sustainability within the reporting/updates • Commercial Progress and Opportunities • Inclusion and Diversity • Participation • Talent & Performance	**JR**
M36ESB(2502)	*Departing Board Members* Departing Chair JC gave sincere thanks to the two CEOs she had worked with in her nine years of service, namely Keir Worth and MW. She noted that the support during that time from her fellow Non-Executive Directors had been exceptional. She had special word also for the England Squash Council, and she noted her strong feeling that growing and improving the sport is a team effort with the counties a key part. Proud of her achievements as Chair, JC recognises that there is lots more to do. She congratulated MJ on his appointment as her successor.	

M37ESB(2502)	EO and AL were similarly thankful for the close-knit team they had worked with in their nine years of service. It was felt that the three terms had worked well due to a sense of a beginning, a middle and an end. Although there was sadness about them needing to depart, E'OR reflected that Board turnover should be seen as a positive, an opportunity to reset and go again.	

**Signed……...................……................... ** (Chair)

APPENDIX

Minutes of the England Squash Strategy Session held at Goodenough College, London House, Mecklenburgh Square, London, WC1N 2AB at 11:30 on Wednesday, 28 May 2025.

Present

Board
Joy Carter (Chair) (JC)
Richard Cannock (RC)
Yawar Abbas (AB)
Eamonn O'Rourke (EO)
Mark Jeffreys (MJ)
Heidi Leseur (HL)
Andrew Light (AL)
Nick Murrills (NM)
Mayuri Nigam (MN)
Andrew Steele (AS)
Mark Williams (CEO) (MW)

Also present
Neil Edgar (Finance Director) (NE)
Steve Jones (minutes) (SJ)
Paul Makinen (Head of Digital & Insight) (PM)
Jo Rowbottom (Head of Partnerships & Communities) (JR)

Apologies
Wendy Newlove

MINUTES REF.	MINUTES	**ACTION**
S01ESB(2502)	**Strategy Session** MW introduced the session and began with a presentation using slides. It was noted that the Active Lives survey reports a decrease in participation of around 5% per year, which is concerning and sets the scene for the new England Squash Strategy beyond 2025. There has however, been a recent uptick in participation with participation returning to pre-pandemic levels.	
S02ESB(2502)	Other key take-aways from the presentation included: • The scale of England Squash's current impact is not as high as desired. The current audience is a small proportion of the total participation base (i.e. large number of recreation players). • The period covered by the expiring strategy (2021-2025's *Squash in a Changing World*) was a largely successful one for England Squash, but the "radical" improvement in diversity it described has not materialised.	

- A high percentage of squash courts in England are located in local-authority buildings, which are severely under-funded and vulnerable.
- The current Sport England funding agreement for England Squash runs until 2027, and the level of funding post-2027 is not known at present.
- The England Squash staff team concluded in its internal reflections that a bigger impact is desired, doing things differently and more boldly.
- The listening exercise conducted recently by England Squash suggested that squash is low-profile and is considered an “if-you-know-you-know" (IYKYK) sport.
- Key findings from the members’ survey align to other views on how squash needs to change but the respondents to the survey lacked diversity.
- Overall, the insight-led conclusion is that motivation for change is high in the squash community, even across the traditional base.

S03ESB(2502) Discussion followed, and key points included:

- Coaches are under-valued and are not on the collective radar to any significant extent, and yet they are the facilitators of squash activity.
- Broadening the range of people delivering squash is crucial, including targeting multi-sport coaches who can add squash to their ‘quiver’ of activities.
- Exciting things happening globally can inspire: the Olympics Games is one, as are some of the incredible squash venues that are appearing internationally, e.g. in converted warehouses containing vast numbers of squash courts and outdoor courts.
- In terms of language, it was felt that ‘reimagine’ and ‘reposition’ are preferable words to use in a vision (instead of ‘reinvent’), and the word ‘fun’ should no longer be used in that context.
- Women do want competitive squash, but it must be enjoyable.
- The principle of growth of the sport is ‘right’, but it’s not exciting enough as an over-riding theme for the strategy.
- Drawing a direct link to other racket sports can be unhelpful. Although lessons can be learnt from activities that are doing well.
- The strategy should balance ambition with realism.
- Who is the vision for? Who will see it?

S04ESB(2502) *Priorities*

The discussion then moved onto covering what people felt were priorities for the period of the new strategy. All meeting attendees contributed with thoughts as follows. The priorities mentioned by the highest number of attendees appear at the top of the list.

Priority	Number of mentions
Participation / community	10

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<tr><td></td><td><table>
<tr><td>Sustainability</td><td>7</td></tr>
<tr><td>Commercial / generating income</td><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>People</td><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>Inclusiveness</td><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>Places</td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Club engagement</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Accessibility</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Talent and performance</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Education</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stakeholder management</td><td>1</td></tr>
</table></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>S05ESB(2502)</td><td>MW concluded the discussion by highlighting that the executive is taking expressions of interest from Board members who would like to be more involved in the development of the strategy.</td><td>NEDs</td></tr>
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