

**THE BRITISH JUDO ASSOCIATION ('BJA') ('ASSOCIATION')**  
**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING**  
**HELD ON SATURDAY 18 MAY 2024**  
**GEORGE KERR SUITE, WALSALL CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON**  
**GORWAY ROAD, WALSALL, WS1 3BD**

**Present:**

**Council Members:**

Rowena Birch	President	RBi
Brian Davies	Vice President	BD
Robin Newett	Northern Ireland Judo Federation	RN
Rick Kenney	Judo Scotland	RK
Matthew Clempner	North West Area	MC
Dave Allen	Western Area	DA
John Gibson	Northern Area	JG
Andy Moss	Police UK	AM
Darren Dean	Welsh Judo Association	DD
David Rance	Northern Home Counties	DR

**British Judo Association:**

Neil Fletcher	Vice Chair	NF
Karen Roberts	Development Director	KR

**Apologies:**

Dr Colin Draycott	Senior Vice President	
Mick Leigh	Vice President	
Tony Sweeney	Vice President	
Richard Barraclough	Vice President	
Colin McIver	Vice President	
Jim MacKenzie	Army Judo	-
Nadia Minardi	London Area	
Sarah Newbury	Midland Area	
Seth Birch	Yorkshire & Humberside Area	
John Malkinson	Southern Area	
Raymond Taylor	Eastern Area	
Stephen Watson	Royal Navy	
Gerry Gualtieri	British Judo Chair	
Andrew Scoular	British Judo Chief Executive	

**1 Welcome**

RBi welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for taking the time to travel in person.

Apologies noted as detailed above. RBi added that with both AS and GG being in Abu Dhabi for the World Championships consideration had been given to moving the date, however RBi felt this provided a good opportunity to have KR and NF attend the Council Meeting.

Also, RBi advised that she has been receiving multiple requests for the meetings to be hybrid for various reasons including having young families, travel costs and sustainability. RBi added that she was still not keen on having a hybrid meeting

however, welcomed attendee views on holding two meetings face to face and two virtually. There was then a discussion with general agreement to this proposal as well as other options to consider: reducing the number of meetings to three per year; and holding them around pre-scheduled events.

**Action: RBi to look into the various options and revert to Council members with suggestions/meeting schedule going forward**

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

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with one small initials amendment to be made from RS to GG.

**Proposer: MC**  
**Secunder: BD**

## **3 President's Remarks**

RBi updated that she has been more involved with judo this year including having attended the Female Fighters Festival which has grown significantly with over 100 attendees from all age groups and abilities. The day was hugely enjoyable and included a masterclass from Gemma Howell, no gi and kata sessions showcasing judo and it was also hugely valuable in giving a different view of judo to the clubs. RBi had also attended the Masters national training session which had gone really well.

Finally, RBi advised that she had been honoured to be taken in to the new Manchester University Hall of Fame and was extremely pleased to be representing judo as one of the first to be inducted into this programme. Council members passed on their congratulations.

RBi then requested the Council members, NF and KR provide a brief introduction to themselves with this being the first meeting that NF and KR had attended.

## **4 End of Year 2023/24 Business Plan**

The updated business plan was circulated prior to the meeting and this item was taken as read.

## **5 Chair and Chief Executive Update**

In the absence of GG and AS, NF and KR would provide more information on the pre-submitted presentation which was also shared at the meeting:

- GG is looking to attend more Home Nation meetings as well as visiting more clubs. GG has already visited several clubs in the Southern Area;
- An England Areas review has commenced being led by Garth Illingworth, England Area Chair
- GG, AS and KR met with the French Judo Federation in London and various areas were discussed including how they run their pathway and grassroots judo. There were some areas such as safeguarding, governance and direct contact with membership where the French Judo Federation felt they could learn from British Judo;
- UK Sport (UKS) System Master Planning is being driven by UKS having a £60m shortfall up to the Los Angeles Games. UKS are also going through a restructure which will result in a 25% staff reduction/£25m saving; The System Master Planning work is looking at how NGBs could work together across core areas, eg Safeguarding, Human Resources. We are looking to be proactive and already working with Wrestling, Taekwondo, Fencing and Boxing to a smaller extent;
- The System Master Planning work also links into the Combat Centre which is gaining more momentum. There are three venues being considered and

with the buy in from other sports it is now looking a lot more possible. One backstep is that following the recent elections, Walsall has a new Mayor so there could be some lobbying required to bring him onboard.

- There have now been 9 Finding your Feet courses run with 100 coaches participating. The initiative is now gaining momentum and is possibly going to be featured on the BBC One Show with a story linked to Westerleigh Judo Club;
- Guidance has been published in relation to the Club Accelerator Days which focuses on the sustainability of judo and what we have learnt from Covid is that we lost a lot of our spaces to do judo being the last sport to return to normal activity. The guidance is based on various models and has been produced by a consultant who previously led Sport England's (SE) facilities.
- The All Judo Standards work commenced last February, starting with an open and honest conversation with affiliates and clubs. The focus is on protecting the integrity of judo. Anything negative that happens in judo will impact on the reputation of British Judo. It covers putting standards around quality of coaching, club environment, risk, curriculum etc. This is part of a 3 step campaign with the information being issued to Youth Sport Trust who have direct links to schools; local authorities; UKS, SE and BUCS; In response to AM's query on inclusion, KR confirmed this is considered when British Judo approve any club or coach;
- Revealing The Secrets of Judo is about reaching out to an audience out with the judo community and highlighting the many other benefits judo can bring and how these can be applied in other environments. KR shared a video of the day which would be forwarded post the meeting along with some others (all about one minute long) which everyone should feel free to share;
- Looking to do research and get data to prove what we already know about the benefits of judo, hoping to have this by the end of 2024. DR commented that parents are always amazed at the control and learnings and seeing their children work closely with other children in a safe environment that is evident in judo sessions. Also, need to consider the moral code that is undersold by coaches and could be used as a sales resource.

In response to RBI's query whether there had been any push back from elderly judoka in regard to falling more, KR responded that this is about accepting that you are going to fall but that you now have a toolkit to help when you do as well as being a reminder to think about balance, using micro progressions to build confidence and getting people active.

MC commented that breakfalls were not learnt properly when competing. KR agreed adding that she had learnt them properly for the IJF Coaching Course. KR added it is now about looking at judo from two angles – the competitive side and the general movement side and just getting more people doing judo. Also, time to look at where our marketing is focused and move away from just targeting the younger generation.

DD raised an initiative that had been run in schools in Wales which was an 8 week programme that included parents. It was suitable for all ages, sizes and children's stage of development with a presentation at the end of the 8 weeks. KR noted to look into this initiative.

- KR confirmed the timescale on the Technical & Education slide in relation to how many courses had been run and that it covered the year;

RN enquired if KR had any suggestions for retention of children moving from school judo to club judo. KR advised that year 6 is the critical year for intervention, the one before children move up to secondary school and need to engage them before this big life change and get them used to a club environment. Other suggestions are to run gradings just before children break up for holidays, organise other activities in the judo club venue and looking at the relationship between the child and the coach or other judo people;

- Club Accelerator Days which are for everything off the mat and how to keep your club sustainable and/or grow if that is what is wanted. They are gaining momentum and starting to run virtual sessions too;

A point not on the slides, is that SE have released a new fund 'Movement Fund'. Clubs have to go direct to SE to apply but British Judo will be an investment partner so will check a club's governance as well as if the project is appropriate. The fund can be used for anything, SE's focus is on increasing activity under their 'Uniting the Movement' slogan. Good opportunity to be innovative and think creatively.

AM raised the mental health benefits of activity too, however this is difficult to measure. KR responded that there is research into this and we are trying to get the data. There is also the loneliness crisis and that is about ideas on how to bring people together in a community with a sense of belonging and connecting with other people.

- New Head of Inclusion, Safeguarding & Wellbeing, Andrew Bowly (AB), joined last August with a background in safeguarding and 30 years experience working at Barnardo's. First time British Judo has had a safeguarding specialist in this role. AB has been reviewing our policies and identify any gaps. Also, pushed forward on the recruitment of Club Welfare Officers (CWO) for every club that has u18 year old members. All clubs without a CWO now have until June to get an action plan in place to appoint one and if not done, their club will be removed from Club Finder;
- Really positive that VI and Adaptive Judo will again be included in the British Championships;
- Looking at if it will be possible to accommodate more people at the next Female Fighters Festival;
- Combining the EJU and BJA Adaptive competition;
- National Teams will be hosted by the Midland Area and held at the National Training Centre;
- EJU and IJF have now established 'Masters' not 'Veterans' as the terminology they will be using which we will also do as of 2025;
- British Veterans Open still running and will consider an EJU event in 2025;
- On Performance, Lucy Renshall and Chelsie Giles are injured at the moment but the focus is on getting them both ready for the Olympics. Chris Skelley has had an horrendous time recently having not passed classification twice this year. He has now successfully passed this week in Georgia so he is back competing and hoping to qualify for the Paralympics;  
**Action: JL to request ND uses full names of the athletes on his presentation**
- There has been an increase in UKS funding but still not as high as other cycles. However noted that UKS are considering that it not just about medals but about how things happen as well;
- SE is still to confirm the investment amount for Talent;

- NF ran through the bullet points from the finance section of the presentation; KR confirmed that the amount in the Events section was total expenditure not loss.

DR commented in regard to sponsorship that it's about how we market events and make them flagship ones. KR noted to pick up on this and to potentially look at using the British Judo Trust for getting funding for events.

RBi added that it is perhaps about looking for companies that connect/link into the types of initiatives, eg: insurance companies, large organisations that have good staff welfare benefits.

**Action: To be escalated to Board as to whether members have any potential contacts**

RK raised dan grading costs being a barrier once paid £12 to British Judo administration and balancing costs after hiring a venue, first aid, catering etc. KR responded that this is something that has effects country wide and would be reviewed.

- KR highlighted that the additional £3k HR spend in Qtr 4 was part of a review of the Marketing & Communications Department which has been short staffed, hence the light content in the presentation.

RBi thanked KR and NF, confirming there were no further questions.

## 6. Any Other Business

BD raised the British Judo Trust providing an overview of how and why the Trust was formed and the athletes it has assisted, adding that the contribution from of £1 per membership had not increased since the Trust began. KR commented that there may be ways of raising more funds for the Trust via grants for specific areas/projects, eg: VI judo. JL advised that following BD's attendance at the February Board Meeting, she would be arranging a meeting with BD, GG, AS and Alex Slade, Board member. KR added to bear in mind that the England Areas review may have an impact on the timescale for discussions around the Trust.

With their being no further items for AOB, RBi thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the discussions.

12:35 meeting closed.