MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
22nd May 2026

Board of Directors attending

- Yvonne Emery **(YE)** – Chair
- Alastair Greener **(AG)** – President
- Denise Fay **(DF)** – Marketing Director / Vice President
- Phil Ingle **(PI)** – Finance Director
- Patrick Mercie **(PM)** – Commercial Director
- Olga Geidane **(OG)** – Director of Regions
- Leon Bamforth **(LB)** – Membership Director (joined during item 4)

Apologies

- Michelle Mills-Porter **(MMP)** – Immediate Past President

Also present

- Sue Evans, Performance Unlocked **–** facilitating the strategy session at item 4

The meeting opened at 9.30am.

Notes
1. Welcome (YE) [Agenda item 1] The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Board, confirming a hard stop at 1.00pm. Sue Evans was welcomed as the facilitator for the strategy session on identity. **YE** advised that the Board would need to schedule two further strategy sessions of approximately an hour to an hour and a half, and that directors' charters had been circulated for completion ahead of the following month. **Minutes for the March Board Meeting** to be approved separately Proposer **AG;** Seconded - **OG**
2. Apologies for Absence (YE) [Agenda item 2] Apologies were received from **MMP**. **LB** was expected to join shortly after the start.
3. Potential Conflicts of Interest (YE) [Agenda item 3] **AG** declared that he knows one of the parties submitting bids for the audio visual contract for SBS26. He confirmed he has no financial interest in the bidder but works with them regularly, and declared the matter so that any perception of preferential treatment could be seen and managed.

YE declared that she works with Simon Zutshi, and registered this as a potential conflict of interest should he assist with sponsorship for SBS26.

4. Strategy Session: What is our Identity? (Sue Evans) [Agenda item 4]

Prioritisation and charters

Sue Evans opened by addressing how the clusters of ideas generated at the strategy day should be converted into a prioritised plan. She demonstrated an effort and benefit matrix, in which each idea is plotted against the benefit it delivers and the hands-on time required to implement it, producing four quadrants that indicate what to do first, what to schedule, what to treat as a quick win and what to set aside.

She advised that each cluster group should agree an overall success measure for its area before plotting anything, and that a measure should be identified even where no data currently exists, on the basis that an educated estimate is preferable to no measure at all. She cautioned that without a way of measuring progress the Board would be working on assumption, and that a group of volunteers already stretched thinly risked exhausting itself by proceeding without prioritisation.

On charters, Sue Evans confirmed that at this stage a charter defines what a group will do and why, not how. She offered to join calls with individual cluster groups to help shape them.

Defining who we are

The Board worked through who the association is for and what activity qualifies a person for membership, covering the relationship between keynote speaking, training, workshop delivery, coaching and online delivery, and the extent to which the membership has broadened since the association was founded.

PM reported research on the size of the paid speaking market across the UK and Ireland, estimating approximately:

- 200,000 digital creators and influencers
- 100,000 corporate trainers and workshop facilitators
- 50,000 conference speakers
- 15,000 radio and television presenters
- 10,000 podcasters
- 10,000 keynote speakers
- 10,000 delivering webinars

The Board noted that the market is crowded and that the figures are estimates.

PI cautioned against treating these occupations as discrete, observing that most members occupy a Venn diagram of activities rather than a single category, and that the speaking market differs substantially from the market of twenty five years ago. He proposed that the element which does not change is that the PSA enables its members to speak more and speak better.

The Board also considered whether the existing professional membership criteria, including the current audience size threshold and the treatment of a speaker delivering content written by someone else, remain fit for purpose. This was flagged as requiring further work, and the membership criteria may need updating to match whatever is agreed.

The working definitions arrived at are recorded in the confidential minutes, as the identity document is an internal working document and the wording is not final.

Professionalism and standards

The Board held a substantial discussion on professionalism and standards. It recognised that the association's reputation has moved towards being a welcoming community for those starting out, and away from being an association that attracts and retains established professionals, and that the standard visible at the association's events determines who it attracts.

The Board recognised a gap between the standard of professionalism the association claims and the standard it currently delivers, and agreed that the identity work must carry commitment to excellence, standards and audience impact, and language oriented towards growth.

OG raised an important counter-consideration. She reminded the Board that the association has recently emerged from a period of significant financial loss during which retaining members was the priority, and cautioned that narrowing the identity carries a real risk of members not identifying with it and leaving, with the associated loss of income. She distinguished between the potential to attract new members and the reality of losing existing ones. **DF** responded that the association is currently losing members at a similar rate to which it gains them, and that a clearer definition would attract the right people.

Sue Evans observed that nobody had proposed replacing the identity, and that the Board was describing incremental shifts, restorations and enhancements of what already exists.

PI tabled the CIPD profession map as an illustration of how an established professional body defines professionalism, built around a central purpose supported by core knowledge, core behaviours and specialist knowledge. He argued that if the association has the word professional above the door it must be able to tell members what being professional actually means, and that the Board's task is to define the purpose and values at the centre of such a model, from which behaviours can then be derived.

YE noted that the association is evolving because speaking itself is evolving, citing online delivery, podcasting and the emerging use of AI. She also identified the annual turnover of Regional Presidents as a structural obstacle to consistency, since each intake requires induction before it can book speakers with any judgement of quality or value, and observed that the current route into associate membership is easy enough that members see little benefit in upgrading.

LB questioned whether speaking is in fact evolving, arguing that the craft of speaking to a live audience has not changed while the vehicles and the business of speaking have. **AG** reconciled the positions, accepting that the methodology changes while the level of attainment expected should not.

YE raised a caution drawn from her time coordinating Speaker Factor, that the criteria weighted bookability heavily and that the most bookable topic consistently outperformed the strongest speaker, and asked the Board to hold that in mind when equating professionalism with earnings.

Individual contributions to this discussion are not attributed here. The full discussion is recorded in the confidential minutes.

Training and learning

PM asked whether the association exists only for those who already earn from speaking, or whether it also trains people to do so. **YE** described her own position on learning and development, that the association should not become a speaking school, but that the demand is for help running a speaking business rather than help speaking, which is what her courses address through a business wheel worked through over six months. **AG** noted that CAPS, one of the strongest associations within the GSF, treats skills development as central to its offer. **PM** stated that a learning and development function is an essential part of any professional association. No conclusion was reached and the question was carried forward.

Regional delivery and external perception

AG argued that identity is formed at regional level, since that is where most people encounter the association, and that while the Board controls the standard of its national events it has no equivalent control over the regions. **LB** framed the issue as the difference between who the association says it is, who it actually is, and who others say it is.

The Board observed that regions with active fellows present are consistently the stronger regions, and that fellows currently have little incentive to attend and pay for regional events from which they derive no personal value. Examples relating to specific regions and individuals are recorded in the confidential minutes.

Decisions

- **Agreed.** The Board recognised a gap between the standard of professionalism the association claims and the standard it currently delivers, particularly at regional level. No change to the published identity was agreed at this meeting.
- **Agreed.** The identity document is an internal working document to guide the charters. It is not an external announcement.
- **Agreed.** The Board reached working conclusions on the definition of the qualifying activity for membership. These are recorded in the confidential minutes and remain subject to further work.
- **Agreed.** The next strategy session, covering customer needs, will be held on Thursday 11 June 2026 from 9.00am to 10.00am, facilitated by Sue Evans.

Actions

- **Sue Evans** to send the identity document to the Board following the meeting.
- **YE** to upload the identity document to Google Drive.
- **All directors** to add their input to the identity document using the agreed colour coding.
- **LB** to use the Fathom recording of the session to capture points not recorded live in the document.
- **Each cluster group** to identify a success measure for its area before drafting its charter, taking up Sue Evans' offer of a supporting call where useful.
- **YE** to issue a calendar invitation for the strategy session on Thursday 11 June 2026, 9.00am to 10.00am.

- **All directors** to post their holiday dates for the coming months in the board chat.

5. **SBS26 Update and Actions (AG) [Agenda item 5]**

AG reported that ticket numbers stand at 103 if the speakers and those who have paid a deposit are included, and at 89 on a firm paid basis. The break-even point for the event is 120 paid tickets. He expressed confidence that momentum would build but confirmed the event is not yet at break-even.

AG identified a member from the North West region who wishes to pay a deposit but has not been contacted and does not appear on the deposit list. He undertook to identify the individual and arrange payment.

The ticket price is due to increase on 1 June and **AG** asked that the position be confirmed so that the pricing trajectory is clear. He also reported that there is currently no mechanism to sell a non-member ticket, as no non-member price has been set, and that a request for one has already been received. **LB** was asked to provide a Stripe link once a price is agreed.

On audio visual, **AG** confirmed the intention to contract a basic package and add optional elements only if ticket numbers support them. He confirmed a site visit to the venue that afternoon with Sara Beth, following which he would report back, and described the venue positively, noting that all rooms including the breakout space are located together and that the breakout area is well suited to sponsor stands.

YE advised that, given **PI**'s limited availability, she and Sara Beth would prepare the AV and budget material for **PI** to review rather than asking him to build it.

PI raised the hotel room contract. Delegates booking bedrooms are paying the hotel directly, which represents a significant saving to the association, but the association retains a contractual commitment for a block of rooms across three nights, part of which can be released ahead of the event. **AG** undertook to raise the room block with the venue that afternoon and to seek a reduction, noting that alternative bookings made by members frequently require advance payment and exclude breakfast, so the saving is smaller than it appears. The contracted figures and the negotiating position are recorded in the confidential minutes.

AG proposed forming a small advisory group to support his decision making on speakers and running order. Programme decisions currently sit with **AG**, **YE** and Sara Beth, and he judged that none of them has the capacity to work through the volume of material required. The group would advise and flag concerns rather than decide. **YE** noted that the timescale is short and that the composition needs to be settled quickly.

AG confirmed the Professionals' Day and the Fellows' Day are both half days, and asked the Board to promote the event wherever possible.

Decisions

- **Agreed.** Non-member tickets will be made available for SBS26 once a price has been set.

Actions

- **AG** to identify the North West member awaiting a deposit request and arrange payment.

- **AG** to confirm the position on the ticket price increase due on 1 June.
- **AG** to confirm a non-member ticket price and request a Stripe link from **LB**.
- **YE** and **Sara Beth** to prepare the SBS26 AV and budget plan for **PI** to review.
- **AG** to negotiate a reduction in the contracted room block with the venue.
- **AG** to report back to the Board following the venue site visit with Sara Beth.
- **AG** to record promotional video content at the venue and use it to increase promotion of SBS26.
- **AG** to confirm the composition and remit of the proposed SBS26 advisory group at short notice.
- **All directors** to promote SBS26 through their own channels.

6. Regional Speaker Quality and Showcase Feedback (AG) [Not on the agenda, taken during item 5]

This section is held in the confidential minutes.

7. Finance Update (PI) [Agenda item 6]

Impact! 26

PI presented the figures for the Impact! 26 event, with figures exclusive of VAT taken from Xero:

- Income: £13,200
- Venue costs, including all audio visual, as the AV supplier invoiced the venue directly: £9,600
- Sara Beth and team: £1,900
- Brightworks: just under £900
- Surplus, after a small number of other items: £731

PI noted this is higher than the figure given in his report at the end of the previous month, because of income received from late bookings, and that the figures exclude income from the fellows' and professionals' meetings. **AG** advised that approximately £100 of expense from the additional afterglow is still to be claimed. **PI** confirmed he would report any further material adjustment once bookkeeping checks are complete.

Event profitability

LB challenged the model. He argued that the association is repeatedly running events on a basis that only just returns a surplus, that this will eventually produce a significant loss when something goes wrong, and that he would not accept the risk in his own business. He referred to the additional audio visual cost of approximately £2,500 incurred late in the planning of Impact.

AG responded that the association is in the events business but not in the business of making substantial money from events, and that the current objective is to deliver value to members while returning a small surplus. He confirmed that the AV decision was taken in the knowledge that elements could be removed if ticket sales did not support them, that the overriding requirement was not to make a loss, and that reducing scope would have produced a weaker event. He added that Impact functions as a showcase for SBS and that a poorer event would have affected the association's ability to sell SBS tickets.

PI framed the underlying question as a strategic one about where financial return sits alongside serving members and delivering value for money, and observed that it connects directly to the identity discussion held earlier in the meeting. **YE** accepted the point that the association must be sustainable and that current margins are too close to the bone, while noting that reducing cost would have meant fewer members attending.

No decision was taken. The Board agreed the question of whether events are run for member value or financial return requires a strategic decision.

Cash position and cashflow forecast

PI reported just under £3,900 in the current account and £88,000 in the savings account, giving approximately £90,000 in total, with the month not yet closed. He tabled the cashflow forecast circulated the previous day and noted that the forecast position at the end of May matches the actual savings balance.

Looking forward, **PI** advised that the total cash position including savings is likely to fall to approximately £20,000 following SBS26, which is normally the largest single expense of the year, once all associated bills are paid. He noted the forecast depends on how SBS27 tickets are priced and sold, and what proportion of SBS27 income arrives before the end of 2026, which is a decision still to be taken.

PI's overall assessment was that the association is doing enough to sustain current activity but is not generating a significant surplus, and is not forecast to reach the figure set out in its reserves policy in 2026. He advised that if the current pattern continues into 2027 the reserves target would not be met in that year either. He confirmed the association is solvent, but not comfortably so.

Key performance indicators

PI introduced three indicators added to the forecast.

- **Overheads to membership fees.** This should be below 1.00, so that membership income more than covers overheads each month. Actual overheads have been running above that level, with some seasonal variation, including one off legal fees in April.
- **Members required to cover overheads.** Calculated using a weighted average membership fee of £233. On the April actuals the figure was 687 members, which is above current membership. Across the months modelled the requirement ranges from a low of 564 to over 700.
- **Regional event income to regional event cost.** This stood at 1.8, 1.6 and 1.5 across recent months and was slightly below 1.00 in January.

YE observed that the association therefore appears to be roughly 200 members short of the level needed to cover overheads from membership income, and that the options are to reduce overheads further or to allocate income differently. **PI** confirmed the calculation is a first attempt requiring refinement, and noted that not all overheads fall in every month, which distorts month by month comparison.

On the regional ratio, **PI** cautioned against reading any single month, since invoice timing from venues distorts individual figures, but confirmed the pattern for 2026 to date is that regional events are more than covering their costs, by a margin measured in a few thousand pounds rather than tens of thousands. **PI** confirmed in response to a question from **AG** that the Eventbrite fees currently absorbed by the association are not fully reflected in these figures, so the true ratio is somewhat lower while remaining above 1.00.

Cost variances, bookkeeping and data access

PI identified variances against budget:

- Exiting the previous membership system, Sheep, cost just under £2,000 (£500 per month), which had not been budgeted.
- Stripe fees processed through Sport80 have run above budget. Moving events back to Eventbrite will change both that cost line and the way the forecast is constructed.
- The volume of work Sara Beth and team are carrying out for the foundation is being monitored.

Book-keeping costs are running above forecast. **PI** explained that the original estimate of the time required predated the move to Sport80, and that Sport80 settlements arrive as single bundled payments with no visible breakdown, so income has to be reconciled manually and grossed up for Stripe fees before it can be allocated across membership grades and event types. He gave the example of a single Sport80 receipt of £749 covering multiple membership levels and an Eventbrite receipt of £328 covering several regions.

LB identified the root cause as loss of data autonomy, noting that the association previously had visibility of membership numbers and event attendance through its own dashboards and has lost it. **PI** confirmed he has not identified a tool that will reconcile the bundled settlements automatically, and **LB** advised against attempting to automate around a broken process rather than fixing the underlying system. **DF** noted that itemised reconciliation into Xero requires the payment platform to be connected natively or through a third party application, which is not possible while the Stripe account belongs to Sport80 rather than the association.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Companies House director identity verification

YE reminded the Board that all directors are required to complete identity verification with Companies House. The deadline is understood to be November. She confirmed she had circulated an email containing the process and the link, and undertook to resend it.

It was noted that the process is open to directors resident outside the UK, although the identity documentation required may differ, and that a single verification covers all companies of which an individual is a director.

……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

June board meeting

PI advised that Mike Ogilvie will attend the June board meeting, and that as the financial year will have closed by then an indicative year end position will be available.

Decisions

- **Agreed.** The Board noted the Impact contribution of £731, subject to final bookkeeping adjustment and approximately £100 of expense still to be claimed.

- **Agreed.** The Board noted the cash position of approximately £90,000, the forecast reduction to approximately £20,000 following SBS26, and that the reserves policy target is not forecast to be met in 2026.

Actions

- **PI** to confirm the final Impact outturn once bookkeeping checks are complete and report any material adjustment.
- **PI** to refine the members required to cover overheads indicator and make it easier to interpret.
- **PI** to reflect the return to Eventbrite in future cashflow forecasting.
- **YE** to resend the Companies House identity verification guidance and link to all directors.
- **All directors** to complete Companies House identity verification before the November deadline.

8. Sport80 and Eventbrite (LB) [Agenda item 7]

Platform performance

LB updated the Board on the Sport80 platform. Following his report the previous month on the events module, the supplier redesigned the events flow, reducing it from eleven pages to four. **LB** has not yet tested the revised flow and confirmed that events will not return to the platform until, at minimum, attendees can book on the day.

LB set out the principal user problems:

- A member cannot change a payment card without first cancelling automatic payment and re-entering their details.
- Upgrading membership carries unnecessary friction.
- Purchasing an event carries unnecessary friction.

Sport80 has indicated that APIs will be available in the third quarter. **YE** and **LB** agreed that the association must document its specific business requirements before that work is scoped, so that the resulting development meets the association's actual needs, particularly around reconciliation and access to its own data.

The Board's fuller assessment of the platform and its position with the supplier is recorded in the confidential minutes.

Eventbrite for regional events

The current arrangement, under which the association absorbs the Eventbrite fees for regional events, runs to the end of June. **LB** and **AG** both advised that there is no realistic prospect of moving regional events off Eventbrite by that date.

YE proposed extending the arrangement, on the basis that SBS26 will occupy the Board's attention through the intervening period, and pushing the decision point out to November so that no platform decision is required until the association has clarity on its wider direction.

Alternative platform options

This part of the discussion is held in the confidential minutes.

Decisions

- **Agreed.** Regional events will remain on Eventbrite, with the association continuing to absorb the fees. The decision point on the future events platform is pushed out to November 2026.
- **Agreed.** The Board will document its business requirements and the operational impact of the current platform, and will discuss these with the supplier.

Actions

- **LB** to test the revised Sport80 events flow.
- **LB** and **YE** to document the association's requirements and the operational impact of the current platform, including the reconciliation and bookkeeping effect.
- **LB** to specify the association's business requirements for the Sport80 API ahead of the third quarter development.
- **YE** to extend the Eventbrite arrangement for regional events to November 2026.

9. Recruitment Update (YE) [Agenda item 8]

YE reported three applications received, each for a different role. Phase 2 is due to launch at the end of the following week. She has released the titles of the remaining roles and has had one encouraging conversation with a potential applicant for a board role who cannot yet apply because Phase 2 is not open.

YE proposed extending the application deadline by one week to encourage further applications. She asked directors to approach individuals directly and to make clear that the non-board roles carry a modest time commitment.

The Board discussed the low level of interest. **PI** suggested that members who value the association but do not see themselves as board members assume the commitment mirrors that of the executive roles, and that this perception needs to change. **LB** observed that people respond to being asked directly, and gave an example of a member who took on a small visible role and subsequently progressed to a Regional President position, on the basis that being asked gave her an identity within the association she would not otherwise have claimed.

YE confirmed the extension would apply to all roles, and that she would post about Phase 2 on Podium on the Monday following the Friday launch.

Decisions

- **Agreed.** The application deadline is extended by one week to Friday 29 May 2026, applying to all roles.
- **Agreed.** Phase 2 will launch on Friday 29 May 2026, with the Podium post following on the Monday.

Actions

- **YE** to announce the deadline extension to members.
- **YE** to prepare the Podium post on Phase 2 and schedule it for the Monday following launch.
- **All directors** to approach suitable individuals directly and encourage applications.

10. GSF Representative (YE) [Agenda item 8]

This section is held in the confidential minutes.

The meeting closed at 1.00pm.

Date of next meeting: Friday 26 June 2026. Time to be confirmed.