

## **GB SNOWSPORT LIMITED (the “Company” or “GBS”)**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company held by video conference on 15 March 2021 at 5:00 p.m.**

#### **DIRECTORS PRESENT**

Rory Tapner (RT or Chairman)  
Paula Cardwell (PC)  
Dr. Christian Ewald (CE)  
Vicky Gosling (VG)  
Anna Lees Jones (ALJ)  
Richard Leman (RL)  
Iain Mackay (IM)  
Paul Trayner (PT)  
Trafford Wilson (TW)  
Louise Wright (LW)

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Rachel Frazer (RF)  
James McAllister (JM)  
Pat Sharples (PS)  
John Wade (JW)

#### **APOLOGIES**

Mel Nicci

### **1. OPENING OF MEETING**

It was resolved that RT be appointed chairman of the meeting and it was noted that a quorum was present in accordance with clause 6.9 of the Company’s Articles of Association. As at previous meetings, declarations of interests would be taken as being from those who are employed by GBS and those who are representing particular parts of the GBS operations. If any items are discussed for which a person feels he/she is conflicted, or should declare an interest, then they must specifically do so at that time and not rely just on the introductory statement.

### **2. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

RT said that he had called the meeting to ensure that the Board was fully briefed about recent media issues following the publication of two articles about GBS Alpine in the Daily Mail. The articles contained a number of factual inaccuracies and misleading statements which VG and RF had attempted to correct. A paper had been submitted to the Board providing background and asking the Board to consider guidance and advice to those handling the issue. In addition, a number of directors had received a letter with a series of questions about GBS from an organisation called Ask4Events. This organisation had previously written to GBS questioning why a speed Alpine athlete had not been selected for the 2021 World Championships. The letter, which was unsigned, was referred to in the second article published in the print edition of the Daily Mail which said that the signatories “include Nigel Smith, Chris Blagden and Malcolm Erskine.” He added that VG had also received information from one of the professional advisers to GBS that Mr Erskine was one of the letter writers (and had distributed the letter to some other addressees via whatsapp) and was seeking, with other correspondents, to gain control of the Alpine strategy, secure discipline specific sponsorship and, inter alia, adapt the Selection Policy. RT said that earlier in the afternoon a second letter had been received via one of our professional advisers, containing suggestions for reducing the temperature of debate, and this time naming signatories, and stating that the same signatories were responsible for the previous letter. The Daily Mail articles had caused

significant unrest amongst Alpine athletes, and athletes from other disciplines who were concerned at the potential for disruption to their preparations in the run up to the Olympics.

As the Board was aware, a formal complaint letter has been sent to the Independent Press Standards Organisation, of which the Daily Mail is a part, seeking publication of a retraction of the inaccurate and misleading information published by the Daily Mail. UK Sport (UKS) had also been kept apprised of the position and had indicated its full support to GBS.

RT said that the thrust of the comments in the letters was to challenge the GBS strategy for the Alpine programme, traditionally the most expensive discipline to manage. For GBS, both now and historically, the criteria set by UKS for investment in programmes has not been met (our leading athlete is regarded as Podium potential, not Podium) although UKS do recognise our desire to invest in Alpine and trust us to allocate funding appropriately as long as we do not damage their investment being made elsewhere. Hence a portion of our non-ring-fenced funding has been used to support the Alpine athletes. Immediately after the publication of the Daily Mail articles, in conversations with VG and PT, the Alpine athletes indicated their support of the work being undertaken by GBS, as had the coaches, and there seemed little appetite for any change that might mean that the progress of the last five years might be overturned. The Board has overseen substantial change over the last few years resulting in British Alpine becoming more competitive.

In addition, the unsigned letter had asked a number of relevant questions. RT asked the Board for guidance on how we should respond to the letter, if at all. In the first instance, the Board felt totally comfortable producing answers to all the questions asked. There is nothing to hide, and nothing in the questions which cause embarrassment or difficulty in producing answers. JM had already completed answers to most questions, but to ensure that everything is totally accurate will have finalised answers later that week. After a discussion the Board concluded that the questions are of a nature for which the answers should go to UKS which provides GBS with public funds via the lottery. The Board concluded that full and complete answers would be provided to UKS and circulated to Board members.

PS said that Alpine was a costly sport and many other national federations require Alpine athletes to contribute to the cost of their sport. The athletes appreciated that GBS had sought to reduce the costs of competing. PS had received no negative feedback from athletes and coaches regarding the programme and the level of support provided by GBS. PT added that he had spoken to the coaches and the majority of the Alpine team after publication. All were supportive of the current position and could not envisage how the letter writers might run an elite level programme. VG added that the athletes she had spoken to over the last week all appreciated the work that had been undertaken to produce a team ethos across Alpine and the other disciplines. The work done combining Para with other athletes was also producing significant benefits.

In discussion it was acknowledged by the Board that ultimately there was a need to work towards a position where an Alpine squad could be fully funded without contributions from the athletes.

RT said that Jonathan Coad (JC), a specialist media lawyer advising GBS, has indicated that his recommended course of action would be to send a "cease and desist" letter to Mr Erskine, and a separate letter to Mr Sullivan, who had signed the letter received that afternoon. He advised against engaging with this group until they had assisted us with obtaining a retraction from the Daily Mail. This damaging public debate was started with two inaccurate and misleading articles published in the Daily Mail as a result of the actions of these individuals, and was not preceded – as it should have been – by any constructive discussion with GBS, or the Alpine Committee to resolve the issues raised in the two Daily Mail articles to the limited extent that they are of substance. Indeed there had been no prior contact at all. The tactic was attack first, and then try to engage. However the scale of damage done by the two articles is such that nothing constructive can be achieved until the Daily Mail has retracted their articles – based on our current assessment that is unlikely to be possible until those who were briefing the journalist have assisted in correcting errors and misleading statements. JC had already written to the Daily Mail on behalf of GBS seeking a retraction of the articles and his letter included the following statement authorised by all of our WCP athletes *"Our job as athletes is to deliver high performance in our chosen field of sport. Our Governing Body has dramatically improved everything we do, increased the funding across the board, turned the organisation into a professional and well managed set up and given us what we need. We don't*

*recognise any of the characterisation in the articles and don't support any of the comments and opinions in the article which seem to relate only to athletes from decades ago"*

The Board agreed such letters should be sent by JC and delegated authority to approving the final version of the letters to VG, RT and ALJ.

The Board also expressed its disappointment that the letter writers did not feel able to share any proactive proposals that they might have for the Alpine discipline. If such a high-profile attack was warranted, it might be thought that a series of proposals might be forthcoming. The Board recommended that there should be no discussions with the letter writers until they had assisted, via JC, with obtaining a retraction of the inaccurate and misleading information in the Daily Mail, and until answers to the questions raised in the first letter had been submitted to UKS.

### **3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6:00 p.m.

Rory Tapner

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**Chairman**