



NPUA Executive Committee Meeting

Date: Sunday 26th October 2014
 Venue: The Barns Hotel, Cannock

Apologies: Mike Davidson, Frances Block
 Attendance: Martin Twist (MT), Richard Kirk (RK), Sean Edwards (SE), David Ellcock (DE), Mark Everard (ME), Darryl Hoffman (DH), Clare White (CW), Mark Williams (MW)
 Ex-officio: Paul Box-Grainger (PBG), Richard Glynne-Jones (RGJ – for part of meeting)

1. Minutes from the previous meeting

These were accepted as a true and accurate record.

2. Intro to 2014/15 Executive Committee

MT opened the meeting by welcoming ME and CW to the Executive Committee and thanking everyone for volunteering their time for the upcoming season. MT introduced the ways of working, and encouraged all members of the Executive Committee to continue providing honest opinions on all issues, represent the views of the membership and respect confidentiality where appropriate.

3. Finance and budget update

RK provided a summary of finances so far this season, including monies owed from elsewhere. There are some payments outstanding from the sponsors.

[Post meeting note: the Steelcase Contract runs until the end of the 2015/16 season.]

RK to chase outstanding payments.

RGJ has requested some evidence of NPUA performance against agreed deliverables, to support future budget submissions. The NPUA Strategic Plan being developed for the end of the 2014/15 season would help with feedback to EH. PBG asked RGJ whether he would be willing to review the terminology around some of the funding in the budget from EH, to more accurately reflect the split of funding. RGJ confirmed he was happy for this to take place.

MT and RK to review budget allocation and terminology used.

MT to agree mechanism for feedback to EH with RGJ.

MT to coordinate production of the NPUA Strategic Plan.

RGJ has requested access to club feedback scores, and permission to speak to some NPUA members regarding the new coaching strategy to support budget justifications within EH. The Exec confirmed that they are happy for this information to be provided.

SE to provide RGJ with access to the Selector Summary page on the administration area of the website.

MT to discuss methods for capturing feedback on coaching with the CWG, including use of the new coaching feedback form.

MT raised concerns with RGJ regarding the performance budget being consistently overspent in recent years – this is due to the number of appointment requests made by EH, with NPUA having no control over cost. PBG and MT asked that the deficit for 2013/14 be covered by EH and that the 2014/15 costs be fully underwritten by EH, with any deficit paid back to NPUA.

MT and RGJ to formally review performance budget twice per season.

RK to provide spend for the season to date.

4. NPUA Conference review

A discussion was held regarding informal feedback from members, which has been very positive. The high quality of external speakers was a particular highlight, as was the quality of video footage used and the ability for delegates to use voting pads. Unfortunately the website feedback system has not yet been activated although members of the Exec continue to chase.

MT to chase Tex Solutions.

The Conference was overspent on budget by approximately £1,600 – this was expected and the Exec feel that this is a good use of members' development funds given the high quality of the event.



There has also been very positive feedback regarding the new venue, particularly around the quality of food and accommodation, although the layout of the gala dinner venue could be better. The Exec accepted that the 3G surface for the fitness test was an issue and that this will be avoided in the future.

A discussion was held around the feasibility of combining next year's conference with the European Championships at Lee Valley in London. Unfortunately the likely cost of accommodation and conference facilities would make this a real challenge, and the Exec felt that hosting the event on August bank holiday weekend would have too large an effect on numbers. It was agreed that if possible we should return to Warwick Conferences next year, with the date to be confirmed as soon as the EH Central Calendar is available.

MD, CW and SE to form the organising committee for 2015 and look to book venue early.

5. NPUA Shop update

SE provided an update on NPUA shop and the service being received from SilverFX. The quality and variety of products is still good, but there are significant concerns regarding lead times for the delivery of products. There are also issues with communication regarding delivery dates, with SilverFX failing to respond to a number of emails.

SE to arrange a meeting with Matt Harrison and SilverFX to review service levels and confirm that the agreed levels of buffer stock are still in place.

A number of members provided feedback on the headsets provided with the NPUA radio sets. The Exec have since been made aware of a number of alternative options available to members at their own cost.

SE to provide link on website to alternative headsets.

NPDP members that have not already been provided with a radio by their region, will receive a radio from NPUA.

SE to identify which NPDP members require a radio and liaise with DH to arrange distribution.

6. Website review

RK requested that members' bank details are not held on the website or shown in the personal area. They are held securely in the bank payments software by the Treasurer and Expenses Administrator.

MT to pick up with Tex Solutions.

The provision of web services by Tex Solutions was discussed at length and suggestions for improvements were made.

MT to collate current known issues and pick up with Tex Solutions.

Some of the content on the website is outdated, and a complete review and update is required.

SE to allocate pages of the website to Exec members for review and feedback.

With the development of the NPUA Portal, and discussions about recruitment and the web presence of NPUA, the Exec are in favour of reviewing the web strategy and in particular developing a new landing page for the organisation.

DH to review initially alongside portal developments below.

7. Portal review

MT thanked all those that had contributed to getting the NPUA Video Portal live; initial feedback from members has been very positive. PBG provided an update on the clips that have been added so far and initiated a discussion on a roll out plan for future releases. The Exec agreed that the domestic indoor programme should be targeted for filming – across 4 venues over 2 weekends to ensure a representative spread of the levels in the indoor National Programme.

SE and PBG to liaise over suitable venues and events for indoor filming.

SE to co-ordinate content management of the portal, as well as an annual schedule of release dates for footage and updates.



It was agreed that there are significant benefits to sharing portal content with external stakeholders, such as FIH, EHL clubs and regional HUAs. The Exec is keen to ensure that this is achieved, but this needs to be managed carefully to ensure that these stakeholders do not receive contradictory information.

DH to investigate the possibility of having an external facing element of the portal, which does not require a user login and can be accessed by external stakeholders.

Whilst the initial funding has been provided by EH, the Exec intends to fund the ongoing development of portal functionality through NPUA and the generous legacy from Graham Nash. The portal infrastructure and branding will be updated to reflect this, and will be named the 'Graham Nash Umpire Development Portal'.

MT and DH to liaise with EH and ensure the portal becomes NPUA and EH co-branded, with links from an appropriate NPUA landing page.

8. Coaching and selection update

MT provided an update on the significant work being completed by the Coaching Working Group, as well as the process of appointing of coaches and assessors, which has gone well so far this season. 12 people have been targeted for continuity coaching and the initial results appear to have been positive, although there have been some challenges with coach availability. The CWG are meeting in a couple of weeks and will provide minutes from their meeting.

MT and RK confirmed that targets for appointment numbers had been shared with Dawn Bonner, and that RK would update Dawn regularly on spending against the budget.

MT / SE to share CWG minutes with the Exec when available.

The first half of the domestic season has been challenging for EHUSP due to numbers of umpires available and particularly numbers of double header days. Approximately ten fewer umpires are available due to the changes in fitness requirements. The Exec remains confident that changes to fitness requirements are a positive step and will enhance performance.

NPUA continue to liaise with EH over the number of double header days in the Central Calendar, and have provided several suggestions to ease the pressure on appointments. NPUA favour an extension to the season, and the not having all 40 EHL fixtures defaulting to the same day when there are single system events.

MT to continue to liaise with Stephen Barlow (EH) on central calendar. MT will also contact Sue Catton and SE will continue to raise via the EHL Committee.

SE to update analysis of umpire performance on double header/non-double header days and provide to RGJ.

There have been some encouraging international performances so far this season, particularly from Tim Benford at the EHL and Dave Dowdall at the Sultan of Johor tournament.

PBG reported that EHUSP is having significant issues with preparing umpires for international tournaments due to lack of communication from EH regarding planning of future international matches. Greater visibility of, and notice for, training matches and Test series is required if NPUA is going to adequately prepare umpires, and manage appointment costs effectively.

RGJ to discuss with EH Performance Department and feedback to PBG.

NPUA agreed to an FIH request to support a foreign umpire in the build up to the Indoor World Cup by appointing him to our domestic indoor programme. The appointment will be made on top of the regular appointments to the indoor programme.

DE to feedback to EHIUSP.

PBG to feedback to FIH.

PBG has also been approached by another FIH umpire about the possibility of umpiring some outdoor domestic games. It was agreed that we would be willing to appoint and should look at the opportunity to develop an exchange relationship that would benefit our membership.

PBG to liaise with EHUSP.



Following Sarah Bush's retirement from NPUA, an additional selector is required for EHIUSP. The Exec agreed to appoint Ann Hopkins as a member of EHIUSP for the 2014/15 season.

MT to communicate with Ann and EHIUSP.

It was agreed that indoor events provide an excellent opportunity for the development of new and existing coaches and umpire managers, given the large number of matches and different umpires to interact with. The Exec agreed that we should look to support recruitment and development of coaches and future UMs during the indoor season.

ME to draft a news item asking for members that would be interested in becoming coaches or umpire managers to contact EHIUSP and CWG.

Management of the new NPDP process has caused a number of challenges at the start of the season as the collaboration with Regions and EH develops. Whilst the new processes were always going to be challenging, MT acknowledged that the number of issues has been disappointing. There have been extensive discussions between MT, EHUSP, Regions and EH to gather feedback, respond, and where possible improve the process and ensure that NPUA operates within budget.

MT explained the principles in place around readiness of umpires being governed by Regions. It was also noted where umpires were not yet deemed ready for National League appointments by their Region, there had not been any other opportunity for NPUA to appoint to games. The first opportunities would be Futures Cup and the November rounds of the EH Cup.

On the positive side, nominations for NPDP were higher than initially anticipated at 18, three of whom have already progressed to full NPUA membership. Most of the NPDP members attended the NPUA Conference and the peer group developed well over the weekend.

MT has approached Simon Gillett who has agreed to lead the NPDP panel, and co-ordinate liaison with the Regions. Greater clarity on budget support has been obtained from EH.

Two documents have been produced with the aim of clarifying the NPDP process for all parties. These will be distributed to NPDP umpires, regional representatives, EHUSP, EH and NPUA assessors.

SE to liaise with PBG and distribute clarification document.

RGJ asked the Exec to consider the 'traditional' approach of assessing umpires for level 3 performance on a single game, rather than over a period of time. MT suggested that the NPDP approach moves in this direction, but moving to ongoing assessment for NPDP umpires would be challenging with such large numbers. Focusing assessment resource on NPDP would also reduce the ability to assess existing members. However, there may be an opportunity to explore this idea further.

MT confirmed that there would be a full review of the NPDP process at the end of the season.

9. EHL Committee update

SE provided an update on the latest EHL committee meeting. At the meeting SE raised concerns over the number of double headers that are in the 2015/16 provisional calendar and asked EH to reconsider its position on scheduling so many men's fixtures on a Saturday, as well as ending the outdoor season so early.

The EHL Committee has approached NPUA about the opportunity of umpires attending club training sessions to umpire small sided games and share skills to develop both players and umpires. The Exec agreed that this would be an excellent development opportunity for members and could build relationships with clubs. A pilot scheme could target a single week in the second half of the season.

ME to identify a week for the pilot and co-ordinate communication between clubs and umpires. Availability will be added to the NPUA website.

DE passed on feedback regarding the issue of teams taking too long over their half time break and the process that umpires should follow in this situation. A communication will be sent to NPUA members in the next week.

SE to send communication to NPUA members when available.



10. Assessor development

Janie Frampton has approached NPUA about the opportunity of sending two assessors to an Elite Assessor Workshop. As Dawn Bonner and Gary Stent are currently working through the Umpire Manager pathway, they have been extended this invite by NPUA. NPUA will explore opportunities around Assessor development based on feedback from the course.

MT led a discussion on whether the Exec felt a review of assessor performance was required to identify a strategy for assessor development, and to consider how as a performance organisation we can best review and maintain assessor standards.

SE to communicate with assessors and lead a review on behalf of the Exec.

MT raised the idea of having a 'Lead Assessor' to be involved in assessor performance management and development. It is possible that a candidate may become obvious as part of the assessor review.

DE suggested he was surprised that as an assessor he had access to previous umpires' reports. The Exec confirmed that this was contrary to NPUA policy, as assessors should assess the match they watch, regardless of previous performances.

SE to discuss with webmaster and ask for website to be updated.

The Exec confirmed their desire to run an additional assessor and coach convergence day after the Christmas break, perhaps when a national league club has men and women playing on the same day.

MW to identify a suitable date/event for a convergence day and liaise with CWG.

Volunteers to co-ordinate and lead the day would also be sought.

11. Development opportunities

The Exec is keen to exploit the 2015 European Championships in London as a LearningLive event for members. At previous events, ticket prices and access have provided a barrier to a successful event, but RGJ will look into the opportunity of finding ticket offers for sessions.

RGJ to investigate ticketing options.

MW outlined the domestic events available for LearningLive events, with particular emphasis on events that provide more benefit for non-international or premier panel umpires. Key opportunities have been identified as the domestic cup, trophy and plate finals days, as well as the play-off finals.

MW to put together a proposal for 2014/15 domestic and Euro 2015 LearningLive opportunities.

For a number of years, NPUA has sent umpires to the Los Reyes event in Barcelona which has proven to be an excellent development opportunity. The tournament organisers have confirmed that the 2015 event will be a junior tournament only, so NPUA has taken the decision not to appoint members this season.

PBG to thank tournament organisers for their invitation and hospitality in recent years, whilst also 'keeping the door open' for future years.

12. Selection and development strategy

Given the importance of this, discussion was deferred to the next meeting, alongside the wider NPUA strategy review, to allow proposals to be developed and allow time for full consideration.

MT to circulate documents in advance of next meeting for Exec to review.

13. Any other business

DE explained that as an assessor on league fixtures he was required to enter feedback on the match official. He also explained that he was surprised that Indoor Umpire Managers were required to provide feedback on the technical officials at an event.

DE to investigate where the information is collated, what it is used for and present proposals to Exec at the next meeting.

SE discussed options for spending a generous donation from Carol Unwin, which was made to support the development of our "bread and butter" membership.

MW to contact Carol to discuss options for what she would like to see her donation invested in.



MT has been approached by Chris Spice, a PHD student, to look at a project regarding umpire fitness and physical performance, building on a similar review in 2009. MD is in contact with Chris to look at the development of the project and provide NPUA support.

MD to continue liaising with Chris as the lead on fitness.

DE confirmed that from round 3 onwards of the EH cup (all of the rounds that NPUA appoints to), National League rules would be played, with the exception of the technical red card.

SE to post a news item confirming this.

The Exec was disappointed to hear that a number of umpires have made errors with the technical red card and will communicate guidance to members for the third time to remind them that in all cases where a second yellow card is shown, a red card must also be shown and the incident treated as a technical red card.

The **ONLY** exception is where a yellow card is shown to a player in their role as captain. (A straight red card must be shown for violence or serious dissent.)

SE to email members again with guidance on technical red cards.

PBG reported that Margaret Hunnaball has been promoted to FIH Grade 1 Umpire Manager following her performance at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The Exec extends its congratulations to Margaret on achieving this, the second highest rank of international umpire manager.

SE to post news item.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Saturday 21st February 2014 in the Warwick area.

SE to identify and book suitable location

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4pm with thanks to RK for organising the venue and all for their attendance.