



Active Partnerships National Board meeting

Thursday 18th July (in person)

Present:

Trustees:

Chair: Dave Capper (DC), Jack Shakespeare (Senior Independent Director) (JS), Rob Purdie (RP), Julie Amies (JA), Neil Fletcher (NF), Born Barikor (BB), Vicky Joel (VJ), Jeanelle de Gruchy (JdG), Neil Fletcher (NL) (left at 11:30)

AP National Team:

Andy Taylor (AT): CEO, Graeme Sinnott (GS): Director of Relationships, Helen Pring (HP): Director of Relationships, Sarah Dickson (SD): Director of Communications

Guests:

Adam Rigarlsford (AR): Director – Place Relationships, Sport England, Ben Jessup (BJ): Head of Public Affairs, Sport England, Mark Ormerod (MO): Leap - Active Partnership in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

Secretariat:

Deborah Thorpe (DT)

Proposals accepted:

Agenda item 4:

- Board welfare champion (BB) would meet with Sport Welfare Officer project leads and network Safeguarding Lead (Steve Boocock) bi-annually.
- Board would receive an annual report on the progress of the Sport Welfare Officer project, Safeguarding policy and practice of Active Partnerships.
- Board members were invited to join staff attending Safeguarding Adults training and an audit of existing training to be carried out initially.
- Members of the Executive join Sport England's Uniting the Movement Big Issue and Place connectivity working group to support stronger alignment and communication with the network.
- Members of the Executive work in collaboration with Sport England Place colleagues to develop a plan and proposal to create a network people plan.
- Members of the Executive work with Sport England Place Colleagues to explore a framework of suppliers and commissioning concept that would provide an agile model for ensuring the right support reaches where it most needed across the network in a timely and efficient manner.
- Related Board members VJ and JA, and members of the Executive AT and GS, form a working group alongside Sport England colleagues to review and strengthen the existing behaviours and culture framework for working in partnership in delivering Uniting the Movement.

Agenda item 5:

- Approval of board and subcommittee structure.
- Approval of Nominations Committee Terms of Reference.

Agenda item 8:

- Delegated authority to finance and risk subcommittee below £30K, with board paper/case for limited number of cases.

Action Points:

Agenda Item	Date	Actions	By
9	18.07.24	Meeting dates for the board and subcommittees to be shared once completed.	DT
9	18.07.24	Annual General Meeting (AGM) registration link and calendar invite to be sent out. All board members have the option to join online for the AGM or attend the event for network Chairs and CEOs for the full day	DT

1. Welcome, introduction and apologies

Apologies: Hanya Pielichaty (HP), Clare Morley (CL), Andy Daly-Smith (ADS), Nerys Lovell (NL).

Welcome to new board members: Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy and Vicky Joel.

Welcome to Adam Rigarlsford, Director of Place Relationships at Sport England; Ben Jessup, Head of Public Affairs at Sport England, and Mark Ormerod, CEO Leap Active Partnership in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and chair of the network policy working group, who was attending as an observer.

2. Conflicts of Interest

Julie Amies, Energise Me, Place Expansion.

3. Minutes and actions from 2nd May 2024

Minutes accepted without amendment. Actions accepted without amendment.

4. Strategy & Strategic Projects

The conversation emphasised the need for the Active Partnerships National Organisation (APNO) to address growing expectations and demands, while ensuring its internal capacity and capabilities were adequate. Since its establishment in 2011, APNO had seen a significant increase in its profile and scale, which had not been matched by a proportional growth in support and resources. Key areas of focus included expanding work through significant investments, such as Sport England's £250 million for place partnerships, and addressing safeguarding and welfare through recruitment of new staff. The urgency now lay in strengthening the foundations across Active Partnerships, specifically leadership, governance, and financial health so that the network could effectively embrace and deliver its expanded role and responsibilities. With increasing expectations, particularly around local and national commitments, APNO must act decisively to support its members and mitigate any potential reputational damage by evolving and maturing the support provided. The meeting aimed to highlight these issues and focus on strategic discussions about advocacy, policy and effective political engagement.

The discussion primarily focused on the health of Active Partnerships in terms of finance, governance, and leadership, and the opportunities and challenges faced in these areas. It was acknowledged that while the network had moved from strict performance management to a culture of improvement, there was no comprehensive performance dashboard or robust metrics to evaluate financial stability



and governance uniformly across all Active Partnerships. Recent efforts included annual financial reviews and compliance checks, but gaps in performance measurement and efficiency in handling compliance issues persisted. Active partnerships often faced difficulties due to varying local contexts which impacted their financial and operational stability.

The conversation also highlighted the importance of relationships and trust within the network, noting that strong connections helped identify and address issues before they escalated. It was suggested that the network needed better mechanisms for identifying and acting on potential issues. Leadership and the need for ongoing support and development were emphasised as critical areas. The lack of a network-wide people plan was identified as a significant gap, suggesting that having a more structured approach to leadership and staff development could improve overall performance and resilience. The goal moving forward was to strengthen the network's infrastructure and relationships while remaining responsive to emerging challenges.

The need for a more coherent approach to integrating physical activity within health and care systems was highlighted. Key issues included enhancing data and insight collection to improve relationships with partners and address gaps in coordination, particularly in relation to health and place-based work. There was an emphasis on resource allocation, both financial and skill-based, to better support health initiatives and address inactivity and inequality. The conversation also underscored the importance of clear objectives and accountability in achieving growth and improvement, suggesting that detailed planning and investment in leadership were crucial. Additionally, the need for strategic alignment between funding requests and systemic change goals was emphasised, alongside considerations for developing and retaining talent and adapting to new political and funding landscapes.

Welfare

The discussion focused on implementing recommendations from a response to the White Review on safeguarding in sports. The primary task had been to establish a national network of sport welfare officers, with sixty-three officers currently recruited.

There were three recommendations for board consideration:

Proposal:

Board welfare champion would meet with sport welfare officer project leads and network Safeguarding Lead (Steve Boocock) bi-annually.

Recommended

The Board would make decisions based on good understanding of the needs of APNO and the network in relation to safeguarding and welfare.

Proposal:

Board received an annual report on the progress of the Sport Welfare Officer project, and Safeguarding policy and practice of Active Partnerships.

Recommended

Proposal:

Board members were invited to join staff attending Safeguarding Adults training. Agreed to gain existing qualifications from all board members to understand current picture and gaps.

Recommended



Sport England expansion of place partnerships presentation and discussion

Adam Rigarlsford (AR) provided an update on the £250m investment into place expansion within Uniting the Movement, emphasising the progress and challenges in this initiative. AR highlighted the importance of the Active Partnership network in achieving the project's ambitious goals. The focus was on building on the progress to date, addressing inefficiencies and expanding the delivery network to tackle inactivity and inequality. With a new government in place, there were opportunities to align this work with emerging policy agendas. The strategy included investing in high-need areas and expanding partnerships, with a commitment of £250 million over five years to increase participation and develop partnerships in 80-100 new places. The approach involved applying resources proportionately based on need and learning from previous pilot areas to scale successful strategies. The effort also involved updating the implementation plan and engaging in comprehensive testing and design to refine a universal offer. Challenges included balancing expansion with maintaining strong, long-term relationships and managing stakeholder expectations. The initiative aimed to foster collaboration and improve place-based systemic practices to drive meaningful and sustainable change in community activity levels.

The importance of trust and clear communication in relationships between national and local partners was emphasised, highlighting the need for ongoing dialogue and transparency. Particularly regarding the application of the principle of proportionate universalism through this work. The funded system partner Active Partnership role was complex, requiring a balance between providing support and managing existing resources effectively. Evaluation frameworks were being used to assess and adapt the approach, focusing on learning and iterative improvement. There was a recognition of the need to integrate various policy areas, such as health and education, into a cohesive system to ensure effective place-based working. Overall, the goal was to enhance collaborative efforts and ensure that investments were made in a way that maximised impact across all regions.

The scope and scale of the areas being analysed involved a diverse range of locations, from areas with small populations to larger districts and boroughs. The initial focus was on identifying places in need, based on physical activity data for adults and children, alongside health inequality and social index data. The approach involved a combination of data analysis and partnership discussions to prioritise areas with the greatest need.

The challenge lay in balancing the geographical spread and needs of these places, from rural and coastal to urban areas. The plan included working closely with local partnerships to integrate and coordinate efforts, ensuring that resources were used effectively and that communication was clear. The goal was to build capacity and capability within the Active Partnerships rather than outsourcing work, with a focus on long-term sustainability and addressing local needs comprehensively.

The process also involved updating and refining data sets to provide an accurate picture of current needs and engaging in a development period to build relationships and insights at the local level. The aim was to ensure that the selected areas were prepared and equipped to work effectively within this framework.

A key risk was the lack of absolute causality, as evaluations may show correlation but not definitive cause-and-effect. The discussion highlighted the need for robust intelligence gathering and effective communication of the initiative's value beyond physical activity, such as impacts on crime reduction and educational attainment. Ensuring effective leadership and relationship building within the



network was also crucial, with a focus on retention and strategic planning. Moving forward, there was a call to develop a comprehensive people plan and secure board endorsement for necessary resources and support to enhance the initiative's success. Additionally, a requirement to identify Sport England's expectation of APNO in this work and to further develop a plan moving forward.

Proposal:

Members of the Executive join Sport England's Uniting the Movement Big Issue and Place connectivity working group to support stronger alignment and communication with the network.

Recommended.

Proposal:

Members of the Executive work in collaboration with Sport England Place colleagues to develop a plan and proposal to create a network people plan.

Recommended.

Proposal:

Members of the Executive work with Sport England Place Colleagues to explore a framework of suppliers and commissioning concept that would provide an agile model for ensuring the right support reaches where it most needed across the network in a timely and efficient manner.

Recommended.

Proposal:

Related Board members including VJ and JA and Members of the Executive including AT and GS form a working group alongside Sport England colleagues to review and strengthen the existing behaviours and culture framework for working in partnership in delivering Uniting the Movement.

Recommended.

5. Governance

The focus was on the governance and subcommittee structure of APNO. The proposed structure included two main subcommittees—Finance & Risk and People—that would meet quarterly to handle detailed business and provide assurance for the board.

Additional committees, such as the nominations and remuneration committees, would convene as needed. The board was asked to approve this structure and ensure it aligned with the broader governance framework. There was also a discussion about board recruitment and the need to balance continuity with fresh perspectives. At present there was one gap, but this would be recruited for in the next financial year. New board members would be ratified at the AGM. Suggestions were made for a board level Sport England representative.

The terms of reference for the nominations committee were shared and feedback was sought from the board.

The APNO tier 3 governance code plan had been signed off by Sport England. The meeting touched on the importance of maintaining good governance practices, utilising the board champions and exploring opportunities for environmental sustainability.

Proposal:

Approval of board and subcommittee structure.

Recommended

Proposal:

Approval of Nominations Committee Terms of Reference.

Recommended

6. Political Engagement

Ben Jessup (BJ) from Sport England discussed their approach to political engagement, emphasising a relationship-based strategy rather than direct lobbying. It was noted that despite political changes and challenges, the focus had been on collaboration with the National Sector Partners Group (NSPG), which included several organisations working together to engage with government bodies like Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Department for Education (DfE). This collective effort aimed to support government initiatives related to physical activity and health. BJ highlighted the importance of consistent communication and unified messaging to effectively convey APNOs objectives. The NSPG had been instrumental in pre- and post-election activities, advocating for the UK to be the most active nation. BJ also stressed the value of local partnerships and the need for a coordinated, rather than reactive, plan in their political engagement efforts.

The suggestion was to build partnerships to influence policy, especially in three principal areas: promoting positive early physical activity experiences for children, creating active environments, and emphasising the health benefits of physical activity. Sport England also focused on recovery and sustainability post-COVID-19, aiming for diverse representation and meaningful inclusion. BJ highlighted opportunities in devolution and local engagement, emphasising the need for clear, simple messaging to align with government priorities on health and economic growth. BJ stressed the importance of coordinated advocacy within the sector, especially with many new MPs who might support their cause. APNO aimed to be strategic and focused, ensuring their initiatives aligned with broader government agendas, such as urban planning and community health.

The overall strategy emphasised a collaborative, relationship-based approach to political engagement, aiming to align efforts across various levels and organisations to promote physical activity and support government missions.

Mark Ormerod (MO) from Leap Active Partnership who chairs the policy group for the network discussed the establishment and activities of the policy group, set up in 2022 to provide a sounding board. The group, composed of various trustees and experts familiar with government operations, focused on fostering relationships with politicians and civil servants, particularly within the DCMS. The policy group's efforts included writing sections of manifestos, contributing to sections where Active Partnerships were cited in government strategies, and engaging in roundtable meetings.

MO highlighted the evolving trust and cooperation between sporting organisations and politicians, noting the importance of aligning language and strategies with government priorities. MO emphasised the need to offer support to the government's objectives rather than making demands and queried the ideal methodology for achieving the network's goals.

Whilst it was noted influencing others to effect change in health and activity policies was challenging, having clear ambitions and requests for policymakers was needed.



The policy group had also set up a sub-group with representatives from various regions to focus on public affairs, aligning their efforts with Sport England's priorities, such as integrating physical activity into health care, promoting community sports, and sustainable development. They aimed to support the government's first 100 days with quick wins while maintaining long-term sustainability goals.

The sub-group was creating a toolkit to help Active Partnerships communicate effectively as part of a national network and align their messages with government and Sport England language. This effort included Friday Focus Groups, mapping key relationships and preparing consistent messaging for local and national engagements. This aligned with the refresh of APNOs brand and new website. A network wide policy event planned for 24 September has been postponed to allow time to consider the purpose and content given the recent political changes and a planned NSPG event on 3 September.

Finally, it was stressed the importance of understanding the political landscape, including MPs' current priorities and the constraints of the legislative timetable, to optimize engagement efforts and maximize impact.

7. People development

The Strong People group had reported on monthly community practice sessions and progress on the People survey, which would be conducted again in November. The survey aimed to inform planning for the next financial year, with improved transparency on the results expected. The update also highlighted the need to close the loop on the previous survey and integrate feedback more effectively.

There was an update on the progress of the EDI focus. There was a plan to align the network people plan with the DIA (Diversity, Inclusion, and Access) efforts to create a cohesive approach. Also, an update on the development of the staff handbook, ensuring alignment with organisational culture and policies.

8. Finance & Risk

A new finance officer had been recruited and finance was doing well with no issues.

A discussion emerged about the need for agility in seizing new opportunities, suggesting that the Finance and Risk Committee (F&R) be given delegated authority to approve expenditures up to £30,000 without board approval. This flexibility would help respond quickly to opportunities such as organising regional events or enhancing messaging efforts. Anything above this threshold would still require board approval. A case would be presented to the F&R Committee for each situation. The proposal aimed to streamline decision-making while maintaining transparency and control, with a focus on ensuring that such expenditures were justified and in line with the organisation's financial policies. The need for a well-defined process and clear thresholds was emphasised to avoid bureaucratic delays and ensure efficient use of resources.

Proposal:

Delegated authority to F&R subcommittee below £30K with board paper/case for limited number of cases.

Recommended

9. A.O.B.

It was noted that the integrated physical activity and health prevention event on 26 September 26 in Manchester involved multiple partners, presenting an opportunity for further engagement.

Action:

Meeting dates for the board and subcommittees to be shared once completed.

Reminder that the AGM was December 5th in Birmingham with key figures Chris Boardman and Sport England's Executive and this would include Active Partnership Chairs and CEOs. A working group would be formed to coordinate this event.

Board members could attend the AGM online from 3pm – 3.30pm.

Action:

AGM registration link to be sent out.

10. Date of Next Meeting

17th October 2024 in person (NCVO London) Time: 10:30 – 3.30pm





Options for attendees to meet the evening before.

5th Dec AGM Birmingham 11:00-15:00 Chairs and CEOs; 15:00-15:30 AGM.

All welcome to join for all or part of the day. An online option will be provided for the AGM.

Appendix 1

Information supplied before meeting

Board pack item	File for review ahead of the call please	Link
0 Agenda:	00 Agenda, 18.07.24	 00 Agenda, 18.07.24.pdf
3 Minutes and actions update:	03 APNO Board Meeting Action Log 03 APNO Board Meeting Minutes 02-05-24	 03 APNO Board Meeting Action Log.pdf  03 APNO Board Meeting Minutes 02-05-24.pdf
4 Strategy & Strategic Projects:	4.1 For information (pre-meeting reading/watching): Video Link: 04 Board video recording 04 Board strategy video slides - July 2024	 04 Board video recording.mp4

	<p>Strategy Progress Update: 04 Strategy update report 04 SWO Board report</p> <p>4.2 For discussion</p> <p>Place Based Working and Expansion Paper: 04 Place Partnerships Narrative</p> <p>Presentation by Adam Rigarsford followed by discussion, reference strategic question 1 and 2 in Strategy video.</p>	<p> 04 Board strategy video slides - July 2024.pdf</p> <p> 04 Strategy update report.pdf</p> <p> 04 SWO Board report.pdf</p> <p> 04 Place Partnerships Narrative.pdf</p>
<p>5 Governance</p>	<p>5.2 For decision</p> <p>AP Nominations Committee ToR Jun 24</p>	<p> 05 AP Nominations Committee ToR Jun 24.pdf</p>