

THE ROYAL SCOTTISH PIPE BAND ASSOCIATION
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
Via HQ & Video Conference Saturday 10th January 2026

Present Via Video Conference: J Gibb (JG) and R Niven (Chairman)

Present at HQ: J Allan (JA), M Brown-Scott (MBS), A Duthie (AD), J Gibb (JG), R Hall (RH), G Hamilton (GH), D Hunter (DH), M Kerr (MK), A McCleery (AM), M McCrindle (MM), R Niven (Chairman), S Orr (Vice), L Parsons (LP), S Smith (SS), P Starr (PS), D Todd (DT)

In Attendance: R Gillespie (RG), C Mulhern (CEO)

The meeting started just after 9:30am

The Chairman brought the meeting to order.

Item	Discussion/Information	Action	Action by Whom
Correspondence	The board discussed a potential sale of their headquarters building as a party was interested in purchasing HQ.		
Directors Meeting Minutes	Meeting minutes from 6 th December were proposed and 2 nd . HQ requested feedback on director's meeting minutes, emphasising the importance of accuracy.		
AGM	HQ is preparing the AGM Order Paper.		
Music Board	The Music Board have not had a meeting this year, the convenor spoke about a letter the Music Board had received regarding to capping playing numbers in bands. The Format Group have responded to the letter. Concerns were raised about the workload of the music board convener, with suggestions for reorganising responsibilities. The group also discussed the proposal regarding capping player numbers in bands. The RSPBA discussed a proposal from a Pipe Major for a transfer window system for Pipe Majors and Leading Drummers, aimed at preventing band members from leaving within the season. The proposal would allow transfers between bands only during specified windows, with potential dispensations in exceptional circumstances. The proposal would be sent to all directors and music board for review. The board discussed the Grade 2 competition format, clarifying that bands will either play a qualifying round on Friday or proceed directly to the MSR on Saturday, depending on whether the trigger number of 24 bands is reached.		

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Pipe Band College Review Group	The meeting focused on reviewing the Pipe Band College's structure and operations. The Review Group, Alastair Aitken OBE, John MacInnes MBE and Robert Wallace attended HQ to present their findings and conveyed their disappointment that the review was cancelled. Alastair Aitken OBE presented findings from a review group, highlighting issues such as delays in training, underutilisation of approved assessors, and a lack of clear vision for the college. The group recommended separating policy and delivery roles, reducing the number of instructors and assessors, and improving accountability through an operational plan reviewed annually at the AGM. They emphasised the need for a broader educational focus beyond qualifications and suggested more proactive fundraising efforts. Some of the Directors who have experience with the college, supported these recommendations, noting the importance of education in maintaining the RSPBA's relevance and competitiveness.		
Pipe Band College	The meeting discussed financial and operational challenges related to assessments and training. It was highlighted the need for cost reduction and efficient use of resources, emphasising the importance of assessing assessors and streamlining processes. They reviewed the status of the Pipe Band College and addressed concerns about the Lead Principal's acting as convener, which conflicts with the constitution. Following discussions, the Board of Directors took a vote, and the outcome was that the CEO will undertake the role as Interim Education Officer, which encompasses serving as Convenor of the Pipe Band College. The meeting focused on the evolution and future direction of the RSPBA's educational initiatives, with discussions centred on developing a strategic plan and enhancing the visibility of the Pipe Band College. Participants emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach to education, including both examinations and broader musical training, while acknowledging the challenges of limited resources and expertise, particularly in Northern Ireland.		

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Pipe Band College (cont'd)	The conversation highlighted the importance of creating online resources and potentially collaborating with other organisations to strengthen the association's educational offerings. There was also discussion about the potential impact of changes to the Qualifications Scotland structure on qualifications and partnerships.		
Standing Orders and Steering Committee	Discussions around dual instrument and the rewording of the easement took place. The wording that identifies if a new or a change to an OR/SR is ratified was discussed and clarification is required on the 2/3 or 75% threshold.		
APMB	It was highlighted that Northern Ireland Adjudicators expressed concern that the APMB were favouring Adjudicators in close proximity to the event. It was noted that all Adjudicators should have the opportunity to experience all grades during the competition season and rotation and fair representation is applied. The aim is to increase Adjudicator retention. The group reiterated the importance of non-collaboration between Adjudicators until the end of the allocated grade performances.		
Marketing and Media	The meeting focused on reviewing a new website for the RSPBA. The website features include a job board for tutors, entry systems for competitions, and a calendar for events. DH presented the new website and the new features. There were discussions about the visual design, with suggestions to make the RSPBA logo more prominent and adjust the layout. The group also reviewed the functionality of the site, including the ability to upload and publish results. They discussed the need for training on using the new system and the importance of having accurate competition information. The plan is to launch the new site soon, with the current site being taken down for a week during the transition. Bespoke whisky labels. The Group agreed to create our own design, edged with RSPBA tartan.		

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Marketing and Media (cont'd)	Issues with selling ourselves: licence, training, age verification, plus storage and postage. Conclusion: It's better to have reduced profit and let a distillery do the work.		
Finance Insurance and Maintenance	The meeting focused on several key topics, including the review and adjustment of fees for various roles such as adjudicators, stewards, and compilers, with a decision to maintain current rates for 2026 but review them in 2027. There was discussion about the need for a level playing field in terms of remuneration across different roles. The group also addressed the issue of overseas competitions and the need for clear guidelines on expenses for judges traveling internationally. Additionally, they discussed the importance of proper documentation and receipts for expenses. The group discussed capping expenses at a maximum of £750.00 per Championship. It was agreed that this be effective immediately. It was agreed that any overseas activity was solely between the Adjudicator and the Promoter. The RSPBA is obliged to sanction the activity under its rules, however, it cannot be involved due to no benefit to the Association. 2026 will see the withdrawal of the Pipe Band College budget and will move to a case-by-case model. Funds remain for the important activity, however, as with all other areas, cost reduction is essential moving forward. David Todd, to examine membership options over a 2-3 year period. The meeting to discuss this will take place after the Board Meeting.		

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AOCB	Directors job descriptions for committee activities; still have a few outstanding. The Branch Chair of L&B asked permission to use RSPBA Adjudicators for SSPDT competition in March 2026. This was granted. Best Bass/Mid-Section prize was discussed; this needs further discussion as it may result in the need for 45 new trophies over 5 Championships. Safeguarding and PVG is being passed to the CEO from the current Officer. A letter will be sent from HQ to all Honorary Members to invite them to the Majors.		