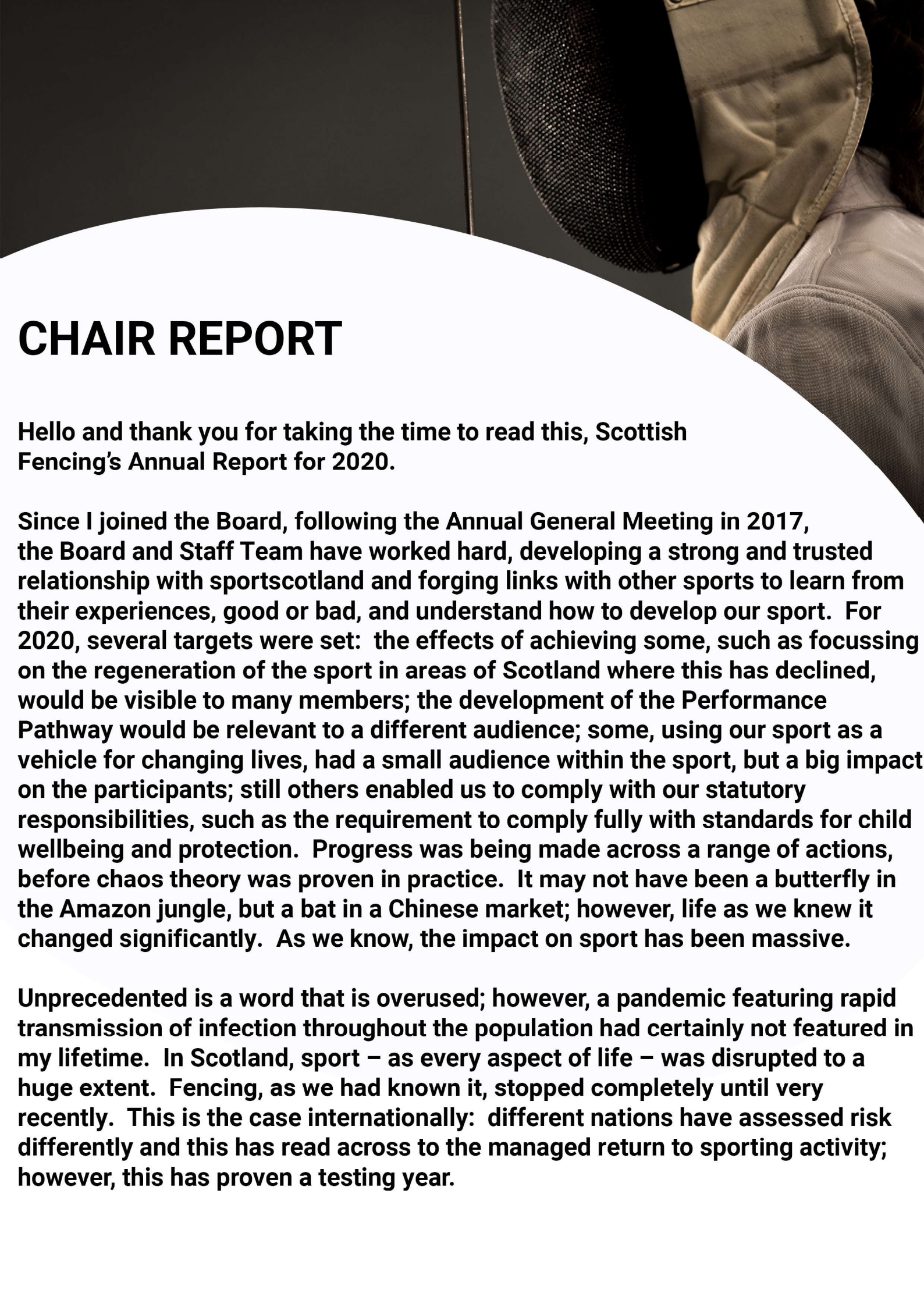




Scottish Fencing Annual Report 2020



CHAIR REPORT

Hello and thank you for taking the time to read this, Scottish Fencing's Annual Report for 2020.

Since I joined the Board, following the Annual General Meeting in 2017, the Board and Staff Team have worked hard, developing a strong and trusted relationship with sportscotland and forging links with other sports to learn from their experiences, good or bad, and understand how to develop our sport. For 2020, several targets were set: the effects of achieving some, such as focussing on the regeneration of the sport in areas of Scotland where this has declined, would be visible to many members; the development of the Performance Pathway would be relevant to a different audience; some, using our sport as a vehicle for changing lives, had a small audience within the sport, but a big impact on the participants; still others enabled us to comply with our statutory responsibilities, such as the requirement to comply fully with standards for child wellbeing and protection. Progress was being made across a range of actions, before chaos theory was proven in practice. It may not have been a butterfly in the Amazon jungle, but a bat in a Chinese market; however, life as we knew it changed significantly. As we know, the impact on sport has been massive.

Unprecedented is a word that is overused; however, a pandemic featuring rapid transmission of infection throughout the population had certainly not featured in my lifetime. In Scotland, sport – as every aspect of life – was disrupted to a huge extent. Fencing, as we had known it, stopped completely until very recently. This is the case internationally: different nations have assessed risk differently and this has read across to the managed return to sporting activity; however, this has proven a testing year.



Thinking positively, our Staff Team has worked very hard, remotely, and strong relationships with both sportscotland and other sports have borne fruit, with effective co-operation meaning that changes in guidance are interpreted, tested, then fencing-specific guidance promulgated across our clubs, ensuring a return to sporting activity that is managed safely, in a co-ordinated manner. A number of training sessions have been developed online and made available to members and a Programme for this year's Pathways Squad has been developed and is proving popular with participants. The Board meets virtually and engagement is frequent and forward-looking, seeking to smooth the path for a broader resumption of indoor sport across Scotland.

The path ahead is complex and largely uncharted. We know that the majority of clubs rely on a range of providers for their venues and we maintain close engagement with sportscotland – and, through that organisation, with the Scottish Government – to lobby with a view to ensuring the best outcome for our members and our clubs. Personally, this is the longest break I have had in active participation since I first fenced, over forty-seven years ago and I share your frustration with the existing constraints on fencing and am keen, as you are, to return to the piste.

I would like to thank you for maintaining your support and engagement throughout this period and I assure you that the Board and Staff Team appreciate these. Please take time to read and understand what has happened during 2020 as we work to position Scottish Fencing for a progressive resumption of fencing across Scotland.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you on or by a piste soon.

George Liston (Chairperson)

A man with short dark hair, wearing a dark blue high-necked jacket with 'Scottish Fencing' and 'CCC' logos, stands in front of a large window with white frames. He is looking slightly to his left with a neutral expression. A large white semi-circular graphic is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing the text of the report.

Development Report

The staff team have done an excellent job with developing our sport over the last 12 months. There is too much to mention to put into this short statement, so please forgive me should I miss anything out. At the same time, the Coronavirus pandemic has naturally stalled areas of work but has also allowed us to pause to reflect and develop core areas of our sport.

With that pause in mind, formal coach education is a live area we are seeking to enhance due to opportunity. Some of you may be aware that the UKCC framework ceased to exist in early 2020. This has brought about a window to explore alternatives to our formal coach education model. It does mean that official coach assessments will be paused for the short-term but we do encourage your club to undertake their own informal coach education and get involved with the range of online coach education opportunities the Scottish Fencing staff team have arranged. The Alister McCaw webinars have great uptake and we would encourage you to engage in our future learning opportunities.

The shaping of our Pathway Squads was something the team took huge pride in last season. The Pathway Squads are there to support the great work of fencing clubs across Scotland by bringing together our most committed young athletes once a month. This year saw a further advanced programme planned. However, again due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have had a couple of setbacks in regards to dates but hopefully we can commence this exciting development in 2021.

My final piece is in regards to the area of refereeing. Certainly during my time at Scottish Fencing I have seen an intentional approach to bring the refereeing community together and bring about better opportunities for referees. In other sports I have been involved with, this can be often a forgotten field but we have brought it to a place where it has equal importance alongside our coaches and athletes. The team have done a great job in ensuring each area of our membership are equally as valued. Adam Szymoszowskyj (Director)



Finance Report

The main income for the year was Sportscotland grant of £97k followed by membership fees of £13k. Competition organisation income reduced significantly from £59k to £5k. Other grant aid was also secured of £7k and other income of £21k was generated.

The result for the year was a deficit of £14k and this was reflected in the reduction in reserves from £34k to £20k. This is the third consecutive year in which a deficit has been recorded. A gross surplus of £6k was achieved, compared to £7k last year, but office and other costs (rent, accountancy, depreciation, telephone, computer, etc.) continue at around £20k per annum leading to the net deficit for the year.

At 31 March 2020 year end, the company had net current assets of £12k (2019: £21k) and cash of £29k (2019: £29k).

2020/21

Funding from Sportscotland continued at £97k and a Covid-19 related grant of £10k was also secured. The cashflow forecast to the fiscal year end estimates that breakeven in cash terms is achievable. Discussions are ongoing with Sportscotland regarding funding for 2021/22.

The directors are very aware of the need to generate additional income and reduce costs, where possible. Actions are being taken to address the situation and maintain reserves at a prudent level.

David Carson (Director)



Operations Report

Communications/ IT

We are delighted to have launched our new website <https://www.scottish-fencing.com> in 2020. It has a modern, fresh appearance, is easy to navigate and easier to maintain. Our CEO led on this work and we are pleased with the outcome.

At the last AGM, there was a lively discussion on the importance/ place of social media. We are pleased analytics show an increasing engagement with our posts, tweets, and pictures. We support club and member social media and would encourage all clubs to use it as part of your attraction and retention approach.

Coronavirus emphasised the importance of sharing information quickly. I would like to thank our staff team for their hard work in turning the information round quickly in easy to read documents. It was good to see our IT capability delivering online sessions on Coronavirus and too so many clubs representatives.

To enable the staff team to work from home we ensured they had the right equipment and workstations are of the H&S standard required.

Actify

Is a Sportscotland initiative to provide GB's with a hub to post training and development material that all clubs and members can access. The Keith Cook sessions commissioned at the start of lockdown are a great primer for this project. We will see it develop as a resource in the next 12 months.



Increasing staff capability and influence

We see a continued emphasis from Scottish Government on the importance of sport to the health of the nation and civic society. Sportscotland's funding is designed to support this, with its vision "An active Scotland where everyone benefits from sport." We need to adapt to attract funding.

Our Pathways Manager is an Ambassador for the Changing Lives programme. Project Forte brought new opportunities and ideas to Scottish Fencing clubs and members. He completed the Changing Lives Champions programme in June 2020 and our Operations Manager has applied and been accepted for the 20/21 programme. Our CEO completed the 5-day Mentoring programme, and our other staff the one-day introduction.

Our CEO is Chair, of the Scottish Governing Bodies CEO Group. An accolade for him personally to be voted into this position. It has kept indoor sport and minority sports at the forefront of the discussion.

Volunteer Development - Referee Advisory Group (RAG)

RAG has worked hard on behalf of the sport for the last couple of years and we see increasing strength and depth in the number and quality of our referees. We funded a very well received development session to recognise their contribution.



Board Development

A planned development day in March, went quickly virtual and gave the Board time to focus on progress against the strategy and an in-depth discussion on key issues. We continue to review Board Portfolios and run small groups on structural topics.

Equality

We are re-accredited at Foundation level of the Equalities Standard for Sport. Coronavirus has delayed the issuing of our new plan, although we continue to develop and focus on Equalities in all our strategies.

Sheila Anderson (Director)



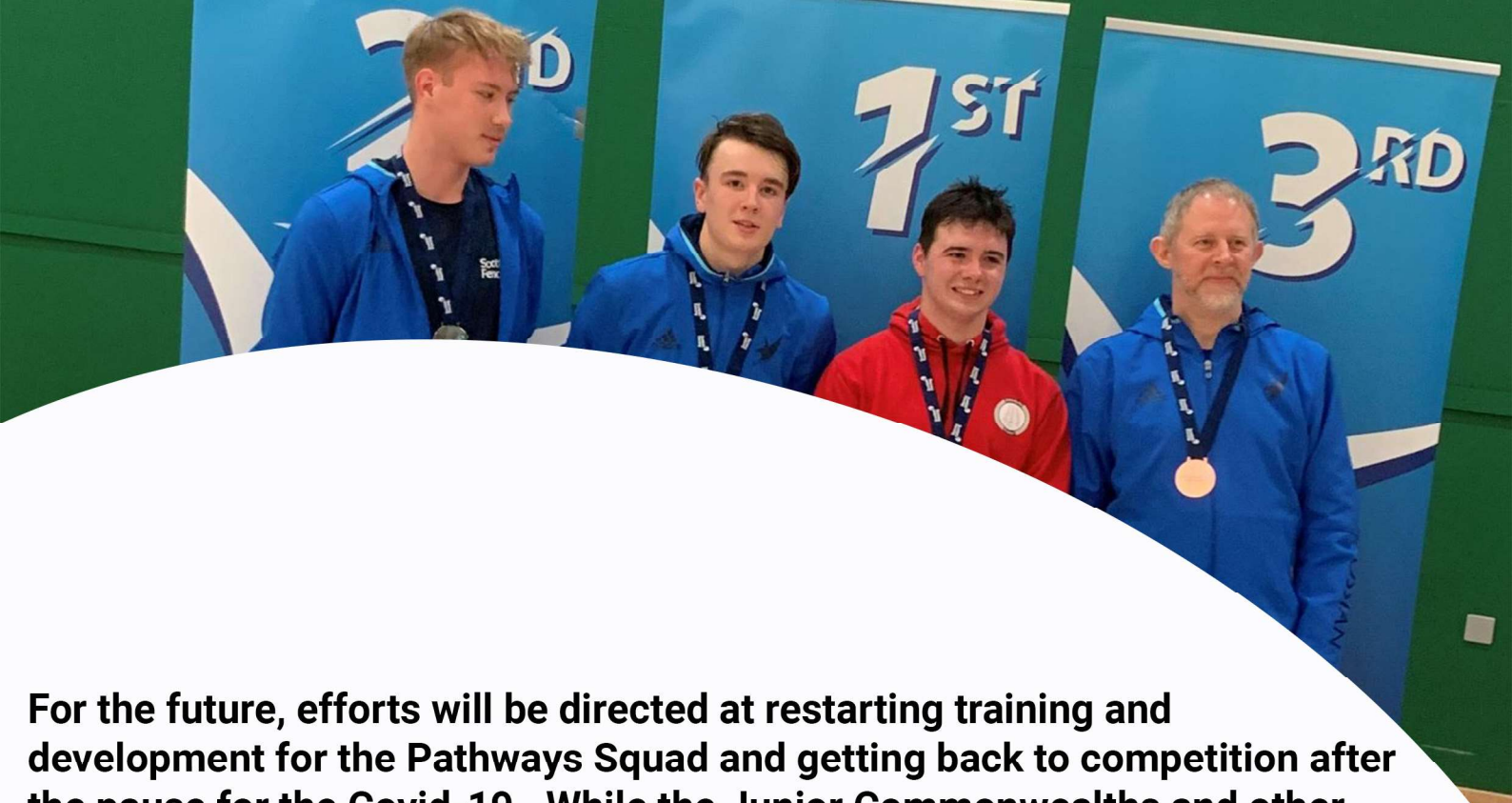
Performance Report

2019 saw the launch of the Pathways Squad for fencers aged under 15. 32 young athletes from across Scotland took part in training and development across six sessions led by our weapon coaches Naomi, Rob and Stan. In addition to the fencing coaching and development, specialist sports psychology sessions were run involving the parents and supporters of the young athletes. The Pathways Squad were to compete at Challenge Wroclaw in Wroclaw but the impact of Covid-19 led to disappointment for the entire squad when the competition was cancelled. A final session saw Allister McCaw presenting an online seminar for athletes, coaches and supporters.

Competitions did go ahead this year and the Senior Home Nations saw a strong performance from the Scotland Team. Special mention has to be made of the Gold medal winning Men's Epee team. This was the first time Scotland had won the Gold in 20 years and with a team that had possibly the largest age range of any recent Scottish team.

At an individual level Scottish Fencers have distinguished themselves across Cadet, Junior, Senior and Veterans Competitions. Even with an interrupted season Scottish Fencers have achieved great individual results finishing in the Top 5 British Fencing ranked fencers in cadet womens epee, foil, junior womens epee, foil, sabre and senior womens epee, foil, sabre and top 5 in cadet mens foil and sabre and men's senior foil. Other weapons categories have seen top 10 and top 20 ranking finishes. The dedication of the athletes, coaches and supporters are to be celebrated in these achievements.

A number of our athletes have been fortunate to have received grant support from SportsAid Scotland and they have asked us to nominate athletes again this year.



For the future, efforts will be directed at restarting training and development for the Pathways Squad and getting back to competition after the pause for the Covid-19. While the Junior Commonwealths and other international competitions are on the horizon we will have to be realistic about these competitions running given the current situation.

Paul Vaugn (Director)



Safeguarding Report

In any other year I'd say this has been a year without significant welfare and safeguarding issues. Clearly in a global pandemic this cannot really be the case. The challenges from a welfare and safeguarding perspective have been very different, with public health at the centre.

The speed at which the staff team, with great support from SportScotland, produced and updated guidance in response to the ever changing public health guidance has been highly commendable. As has their communication with the various stakeholders in the fencing community.

The way in which clubs have adapted their practice and procedures to ensure the safety of their members has been exceptional.

I continue to be impressed with the high level of safeguarding procedures clubs have in place and the support I and the staff team receive from Children 1st when required.

I have been impressed with the way the staff team have looked towards the welfare of our members and clubs over this difficult period.

Throughout lockdown the different ways clubs and the staff team have sought to engage members has been admirable. The variety virtual learning opportunities provided by clubs and Scottish Fencing has been fantastic.

Personally I immensely enjoyed The Big Hit podcast from The Fencing Podcast team telling the stories of Scottish fencers of various ages.

The landscape of our sport is changed but whatever the new normal looks like it is clear the Scottish Fencing staff and clubs will, to quote John Cleese: "Adopt, adapt and Improve.". Ross Morrison (Director)