

**Minutes of the Board Meeting
Monday 18 August 2025
9:15am to 2:40pm
Thistle House
Edinburgh**

Present:

Mr Lindsay Montgomery CBE, Chairing Member
Mr Jonathan Barne, KC
Mrs Liz Burnley, CBE
Mr Paul Cackette, CBE
Mrs Wilma Canning
President May Dunsmuir
Sheriff Jane Farquharson, KC
Mr Paul Gray (by VC)
The Hon. Lady Shona Haldane, KC
Ms Emma Marriott
Dr Fiona McLean
Mr Gareth Morgan, QPM (by VC)

Attendees:

Mrs Laura McGeary, Chief Executive (CE)
Mr Billy Love, Head of Operations (HoO)
Mr Stuart Scott, Digital and Continuous Improvement Manager (DCIM)
Mrs Julie Tarbet, Appointments Manager
Deirdre Fulton, Lay Appointment Advisor (agenda item 7 only)

Apologies:

Sheriff Principal Kate Dowdalls, KC
Mr Peter Murray

1. Welcome and Apologies / Declarations of interest

1.1 The CM welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Laura McGeary, JABS new Chief Executive, to her first Board meeting. He thanked Billy Love, Head of Operations, for his efforts during the period without the CE in post, as well as overseeing the work required to launch JABS new competitions.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest raised by Board members.

2. Business from previous meeting

2.1 Minutes of the 15 June 2025 meeting

2.1.1 The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

2.2 Action Tracker

2.2.1 The HoO updated the Board that good progress had been made on issues that were raised at the June board meeting and the action tracker had been updated accordingly.

The Board was content with the update.

3. Chairing Member Oral Update

3.1 The CM and the CE recently met with the Lord President, the Lord Justice Clerk, and Riley Power, Executive Director of the Judicial Office, about judicial recruitment priorities. A meeting was also held with Scottish Government (SG) regarding the draft framework agreement.

3.2 The CM advised that correspondence had been received from a member of the public who was concerned regarding the conduct of a judicial office holder. Following consideration, it was agreed that this was not a matter for JABS and a response was issued directing the writer to organisations who could assist.

3.3 The CM highlighted the recent decision in R -v- Judicial Appointments Commission in the Court of Appeal of England and Wales.
This was noted by the Board.

Action point 2: CE to share a copy of the judgment with Board members.

3.3 The CM told the Board that recruitment rounds for both the Deputy President and the Scottish Justice for the Supreme Court were completed. The CM has been asked to join the Major Review Advisory and Evidence Group (AEG) meeting held by the Judicial Sub-Committee of the Senior Salary Review Body (SSRB) which is reviewing judicial salaries.

3.4 The CM explained that he and the CE will consider the Business Plan and the priorities for the second half of the year, and this will be discussed at the October meeting at which further stakeholder engagement should be planned.

4. Chief Executive Update

4.1 The CE introduced the paper and explained that her initial focus had been on understanding how JABS operates and meeting colleagues. It had been helpful to sit in on competition planning meetings, hold introductory meetings with all BMU staff and she planned to continue to hold quarterly wellbeing check-ins, which had been positively received in the past. The CE then provided a staffing update and highlighted her immediate priorities.

The Board noted the CE report.

4.2 Assurance of Governance

4.2.1 The CE spoke to the report, setting out that it was the standard quarterly governance paper for Q1 April – June 2025 and that there were no financial issues to report. BMU workload continues to be monitored, and team wellbeing was a priority.

The CE reminded Board members to report any changes to their Register of Interests.

Action point 3: Board members are asked to report any changes to their Register of Interest to the BMU within one month.

4.3 Risk Register

4.3.1 The CE provided a brief update on the Risk Register and explained that the last review took place in April 2025, and a full review is scheduled for the October Board meeting.

The Board noted the report and agreed the recommendations.

5. Records Management Plan Update

5.1 The HoO gave a brief verbal update about the return of Records Management Plan to the Keeper at the National Records of Scotland. This was due to have been resubmitted by 31 July 2025, however due to the current high workload, the HoO had requested an extension to the end August which had been granted.

5.1.1 The CM advised that Huddle was presenting a challenge for a number of Board members in terms of navigation and further support is required.

Action point 4: HoO to arrange further Huddle training for Board members.

5.2 Judicial Attitude Cover Paper and Survey

5.2.1 The CM introduced the paper and survey, and the Board members discussed the key findings which raised a number of interesting points.

The Board noted the findings from the survey.

6. Process and Procedure

6.1 Website update

6.1.1 The DCIM spoke to the paper and explained that work was progressing well on the redesign of website. The Board discussed the proposed Information Architecture and the draft visual design to be implemented and agreed that the new format was much better and clearer but requested a minor change to the loading page to show more tribunal relevant images.

The DCIM advised that the images were placeholders and could be changed as required depending on the main focus of competitions.

The Board were happy to sign off the Information Architecture and visual design for the website.

6.1.2 The CM informed the Board that as the majority of the website content relates to competition information or detail on how the competitions were run, it was the responsibility of the Board to ensure the content proposed was appropriate. He thanked Emma Marriott and Paul Cackette who had volunteered to lead the content development and - given the scale of the content development – sought more Board member volunteers to support this task.

Action point 5: DCIM to ask Board members to volunteer to help to develop relevant content for the redesign of the website.

6.2 Scoring Matrix

6.2.1 The CM introduced to the paper and explained the different scoring matrix options and the research undertaken to develop them. The Board discussed the different scoring matrix options. The CM stressed that this was not a full-scale review and that further work was required to review the scoring matrix for the introduction of the revised Application Tracking System (ATS).

The Board were content to use the current scoring matrix with the revised scoring descriptions in the short-term but noted that more work was needed to enhance the scoring matrix for the introduction of the ATS.

Agenda items 8.1 and 9 were taken at this point in the meeting.

8. Corporate

8.1 Budget Update 2025/6

8.1.1 The HoO introduced the paper and updated the Board on the current JABS budget position. He explained that a review of the finance processes to improve financial monitoring and forecasting for competitions was underway.

The CM updated that the CE is developing a Learning and Development Programme for the Board and further information will be provided at the October meeting.

The Board were content with the revised approach and looked forward to the report at the October meeting.

Action point 6: CE to consider the learning and development requirements of members to develop a Learning and Development Programme for 2025/2026 and provide an update at the next Board meeting.

9. Current and Future Competitions

9.1 Current and Upcoming Rounds

9.1.1 The HoO gave a brief overview of the paper and details on current and potential upcoming rounds. The Board noted the paper.

7. Programme for Change

7.1 Programme for Change Update

7.1.1 PfC Update

7.1.1 Deirdre Fulton (DF) provided a verbal update on the Programme for Change (PfC) workstream explaining that following the June Board meeting, the PfC focus had been on developing JABS approach to consultations, the application pack and the skills and qualities framework.

7.1.2 DF explained that the Board will receive an update paper on qualifying tests at the October Board meeting and a meeting to discuss the tests will be held in the next couple of weeks. She then updated on the progress to develop the application pack, setting out that further collaboration was required with JO to develop the documents and work continues on developing the legal role profiles. This work was helping to develop the skills and qualities framework. DF was looking for volunteers to join the application pack sub-group, and would be in touch with Board members

Action point 7: DF to contact Board members for a volunteer to join the application pack sub-group.

7.1.3 The CM confirmed that the October and December Board meetings would look at the tangible outputs from the PfC and thanked DF and Emma Marriott for their work on this.

7.2.1 Consultation Paper

7.2.1. DF introduced the paper and reminded the Board members of the discussion about the consultation approach at the last Board meeting. DF thanked Wilma Canning for developing the consultation guidance.

7.2.1 The Board discussed the draft guidance, setting out some of the issues which would need to be addressed before introducing the approach as set out in the paper.

Action point 8: PfC to review the consultation guidance following the Board's feedback.

8. Corporate continued

8.2 Annual Report Final Draft

8.2.1 The CM introduced the paper and thanked the Board members who had provided comments. He explained that it was the final draft of the 2024-2025 Annual Report, although formatting and final proof reading were required. He will look to develop the information in the Annual Report relating to JABS achievements in this period. The CM asked Sheriff Farquharson to provide a photo for the report.

The Board were content with the 2024-2025 Annual Report.

Action point 9: Sheriff Farquharson to provide a photograph for the Annual Report.

8.3 Diversity Report Final Draft

8.3.1 The CM spoke to the paper and explained that the core content of the Diversity Report - providing information on the diversity of applicants over the past seven years - was in place subject to final formatting and proof reading.

The Board was content with the report, subject to some minor comments on wording and felt it provided a useful baseline of judicial appointment diversity information, which could be built upon and developed in future years.

Action point 10: CE to update the Diversity Report with the Board members comments.

8.3.2 The CM provided a short update on the work that the Diversity Reference Group will be taking forward. This included plans to hold non-competition specific outreach events to share information on how to apply for judicial posts with a range of organisations and the diversity information.

Action point 11: CE to ascertain best practice for terminology for future use in reporting on diversity.

10. AOCB

10.1 The Sheriff feedback letters were raised, and it was confirmed that the shortlisting feedback letters had been issued, and the interview feedback letters would be issued in early course.

10.2 The CM provided a short update on the formation of the Character and Conduct Committee, advising that arrangements were being made to schedule its first meeting.

10.2 The date of next meeting is 20 October 2025.