**APPG for Boxing: Virtual meeting, September 2020**

Wednesday 30 September 2020

10.30am – 11.30am

Virtual meeting, Zoom

**In attendance:**

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| **Name** | **Organisation** |
| Chris Evans MP | Chair of APPG Boxing |
| Paula Barker MP | Vice Chair of APPG Boxing |
| Lisa Cameron MP | Vice Chair of APPG Boxing |
| Lord Moynihan | Vice Chair of APPG Boxing |
| Imran Hussain MP | Member of APPG Boxing |
| Nigel Huddleston MP | Sports Minister |
| Matt Holt | GB Boxing |
| Rob McCracken | GB Boxing |
| Sam Winter | Secretariat to the APPG Boxing |
| Murray Stewart | Secretariat to the APPG Boxing |
| Robert Smith | British Boxing Board of Control |
| Charlie Giles | British Boxing Board of Control |
| Oner Avara | My Next Match |
| Shelly Carter | Boxing Futures |
| Jamie Parry | Empire Fighting Chance |
| Luke Davies | StubHub |
| Jenny Oklikah | Fight for Peace |
| Ruth Raper | Fight for Peace |
| Ron Tulley | England Boxing |
| Gethin Jenkins | England Boxing |
| Mick Maguire | England Boxing |
| Lee Murgatroyd | English Institute of Sport |
| Lee Marsham | Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games |
| Ryan Pratt | Office of Lord Taylor of Warwick |
| Olia Sardarova | BXR |
| Ben Dobson | Adidas |
| Dan Riley | GVC Group |
| Frank Smith | Matchroom Boxing |
| Adam Morallee | Brandsmiths  |
| Emma Evans | Office of Chris Evans MP |
| Lewis Gell | Individual |

**Minutes**:

1. **Introductions from Chris Evans MP, Chair of the APPG for Boxing**
* Chair of the APPG for Boxing Chris Evans MP (CE) opened the session, before introducing Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage Nigel Huddleston MP (NH).
1. **Remarks from Nigel Huddleston MP, Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage**
* NH introduced himself, before thanking the APPG for Boxing for its hard work. He stated the importance of ensuring that all sports are represented in the House of Commons and acknowledged that his role encompasses both elite and grassroots sport.
* NH thanked the sports sector for its work during the coronavirus pandemic. He noted that elite sport is back up and running at both at a training and competitive level and stated that government is working hard to get all sport restarted in a safe manner, adding that boxing gym facilities are now open without full contact sparring.
* NH noted that plans to reopen sports stadia with crowds have had to be halted following increases in the number of coronavirus cases. He said that he could not provide a timescale for how long the delay would last for but stated that he wanted to ensure that sports that are reliant on ticket and matchday revenues receive financial support from government.
* NH apologised for the brevity of his appearance and promised to attend another APPG for Boxing meeting in the future. He subsequently reiterated his praise for the sports sector, before opening up the floor to questions.
* Gethin Jenkins (GJ) thanked the Minister for his time, before stating that 40% of boxing clubs are in low-income areas but have received limited government support, with restrictions on full contact training still in place. He asked NH what plans were in place to support boxing clubs, and what was being done to tackle unregulated white-collar boxing that has continued during the pandemic.
* NH responded by noting that DCMS is aware of the need to tackle white-collar sport and is considering action. He added that he recognised the importance of the relationship between mental and physical wellbeing and sport, stating that government is working hard with medical experts to get sport resumed in a safe manner. Regarding financial support, NH referenced the routes of support available to boxing clubs, such as funding from Sport England.
* Jamie Parry (JP) stated that sport in schools has been deprioritised during the pandemic, before asking NH what can be done to increase awareness of the positive impacts of sport on mental health. NH responded that the link between sport and mental health is not being neglected, praising the work of Sport England during the pandemic. He added that government had ensured that people could exercise during lockdown, before stating that he is working with Schools Minister Nick Gibb on the issue of sport in schools.
* CE thanked NH for his time.
1. **Update from Robert Smith, General Secretary of the British Boxing Board of Control (BBBoC)**
* Robert Smith (RS) stated that professional boxing had been postponed on 17 March but is now up and running again with medical procedures and testing in place.
* RS noted that boxing has been considered a risk sport by government due to the close contact between participants but said that the Chairman and Board of the BBBoC worked hard to get bouts restarted behind closed doors in July.
* RS stated that the first positive cases of coronavirus were detected in a bubble on 29 September and the affected persons were removed from the camp. Up until that point, over 1,000 tests had been conducted with no positive cases.
* RS said that the BBBoC had planned to resume bouts with crowds in attendance in October, but this has been postponed following updated government guidance. He added that Cardiff is in local lockdown, providing organisational and logistical challenges.
* RS noted that the number of tournaments held this year is significantly down on previous years. 63 tournaments have taken place so far in 2020, compared to 217 at the same point in 2019 (there were 270 tournaments in total in 2019). Whilst TV promoted bouts have recommenced, 95% of boxers and licence holders are not currently competing.
* RS thanked NH and DCMS officials for their assistance in getting boxing bouts up and running and ensuring that overseas boxers and officials could travel to the UK. He subsequently called on DCMS to help get more sports, including boxing, on TV while crowds in stadia are outlawed.
* RS stated that the next step is to get crowds back in stadia, noting that small licence holders cannot afford testing and PPE at this time.
* JP thanked RS and the BBBoC for the work in getting professional boxing restarted, which he heralded as being a success.
1. **Update from Matt Holt, Chief Executive of GB Boxing and Rob McCracken MBE, Performance Director of GB Boxing on preparations for the Tokyo Olympic Games**
* Matt Holt (MH) spoke of the challenges that GB Boxing is facing following lockdown and the disruptions to preparations for the Tokyo Olympic Games. He noted that GB Boxing is aiming to win 3-5 medals at the Games.
* MH noted that the Olympic Qualifiers in London in March were the last sporting event held prior to the onset of lockdown, with events ending prematurely following government advice. At the time of postponement, 2 British boxers had qualified, with another 9 yet to box or qualify.
* MH acknowledged the challenge of managing boxers’ wellbeing, as several members of the team were training specifically for the Games. Normally, a number of boxers leave the programme at the end of the Olympic cycle to enter the professional game, so there is an expectation that training for the Paris 2024 Games will be on a reduced timeline.
* Rob McCracken (RM) stated that the postponement of the Games has presented psychological challenges for the boxers, but the response from the team has been good. He stated that GB Boxing has been able to retain all its Number 1 and Number 2 boxers to date despite the postponement.
* RM noted that preparations have progressed well and there was a successful training camp held in Turkey in June. He thanked the National Lottery for its funding, which has helped to retain and motivative the team, before noting that winning 3-5 medals would be a large milestone.
* Oner Avera (OA) asked if there were any procedures that GB Boxing implemented in training that boxing clubs could replicate. MH said that risk assessments are carried out, while a COVID-19 management group works to create a safe environment for boxers. He added that only a small number of boxers and trainers partook in sparring at the beginning, with this number having built up over time. MH subsequently noted that the team is housed in social bubbles to limit infections; non-contact training is carried out with social distancing implemented; all coaches wear full PPE during pad work; and boxers wear masks during contact training. MH echoed RM’s praise for the National Lottery, noting that funding has helped the team to secure PPE and prepare for the eventuality of a positive case occurring in the camp.
* MH, RS, and GJ committed to sharing COVID protocols with the group. GJ noted that England Boxing follows GB Boxing’s procedures and has requested permission from DCMS to re-begin sparring and is awaiting a response.
1. **A.O.B.**
* Murray Stewart (MS) stated that the latest parliamentary guidance is that APPGs will continue in a virtual format until Q1 2021, with the next meeting to be arranged in due course.
* MS noted that the draft programme of work has been circulated to members and invited attendees to provide feedback.