

Director for Scotland Report – British Powerlifting AGM 2024

2023 was a strong year for Scottish Powerlifting, with record growth in membership and participation and great success from our athletes at International and National level. This momentum has been carried into the 2024 season, with plenty of progress being made in only a few months on some of our broader goals and already a very busy competition schedule being kicked off in style. It has also been very welcome to be able to collaborate with our fellow Home Nations and with the British Powerlifting Board, all of whom share our passion and commitment to the sport and to our members.

We look forward to hosting the Home Nations Championships in Scotland for the first time since 2018 and anticipate a very strong Scotland team taking to the platform at the 2024 Commonwealth Powerlifting Championships in Sun City. These are significant opportunities for athletes and coaches to gain international and team experience, and of course the only opportunities available to represent Scotland, something that many of our members aspire to.

The ongoing efforts and dedication of the Scottish Powerlifting committee do not go unnoticed, and they continue to work exceptionally hard to create an inclusive, supportive and accessible community for lifters, officials, coaches and volunteers. Ultimately, we are striving as a collective to become formally recognised by sportscotland as the NGB for powerlifting in Scotland, and we continue to work to create the right infrastructure to support this. I'd like to extend my personal thanks to our outgoing 2023 committee members for their brilliant contributions, and to our newly appointed members who have taken on the challenge to be part of future of Scottish Powerlifting.

Many thanks to everyone who has been involved in the success of Scottish Powerlifting this year – your enthusiasm, camaraderie and collective passion for the sport is of course the heart of everything that we do.

Claire Tocher, Chair and Interim Director for Scotland

Membership Update

Membership for the division had surpassed 600 by the end of Q1 2024 keeping us on pace for anticipated 30% growth by the end of the year. Our continued ambition is to achieve 1000 members by 2026 and to cement ourselves as the federation of choice in Scotland.

Competition Update

The 2024 calendar has already commenced, and by the date of the British Powerlifting AGM we will have already hosted 6 competitions, including 2 championships events: Scottish University and College Championships and Scottish Masters Championships. Demand has continued to increase, and several of our open competitions sold out in under 5 minutes, though we also saw that our district competitions in early January and February closed with spaces remaining. This is perhaps a reflection on timing post the Christmas period, and something that we will consider when scheduling for 2025.

We continue to work hard to support lifting opportunities across Scotland, with competitions spread across Inverness, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. Our membership base covers a large geography, and we recognise that travel can be a deterrent to lifters, particularly those who are new to the sport. We continue to work with our club network to find more ways to facilitate local events and give athletes competition experience in their communities.

Athlete Success

We have been thrilled to see the depth and breadth of our athlete talent pool grow on both the national and international platforms. Annie Nelson and Tasmin Campbell continue to set the benchmark in the women's u69kg class, with both athletes taking overall podium positions at the EPF European Open Classic Championships in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

Our Masters athletes continue to blaze a trail internationally, with Scott Simon, Greig Murray and Wendy Macfarlane taking home the title of European Masters Classic Champion in Malaga this February, and a strong Scottish contingent putting up a great showing across the board.

Equipped lifting is also seeing something of a (albeit modest) revival in Scottish Powerlifting, and we had great success at both the British Equipped Championships and at the Arnolds Sport Festival. Special mention goes to Maureen Gordon, who broke the World M3 EQ bench record with an impressive 105kg press in the u69kg class.

Appointment of Head Coach, Team Scotland

Following a selection procedure in January, we were delighted to confirm that William Brown has been appointed as the Head Coach for Team Scotland. This is a five-year appointment, with responsibility for leading our international teams at Commonwealth Championships and Home Nations events, as well as creating development pathways for international coaching.

International Coaching Development Programme

As part of his Head Coach remit, Will has rolled out a pilot international coaching development programme, offering divisional coaches the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills through a blend of online and practical learning sessions and tailored personal development plans.

This programme forms part of our commitment to strengthen not just our athlete talent pool, but also our coaching network, with a view to ensure we have strong succession plans in place. We had anticipated a small uptake in this being a pilot initiative, however we were delighted to receive 20 applications from coaches across the division.

Committee Update

The 2024 Scottish Powerlifting Committee was formalised at the 2023 AGM with the following appointments:

Executive Committee: Claire Tocher (Chair), Mark Fulton (Competition Secretary), Kirsty McCahill (Treasurer), Johanna Platt (General Secretary), Bernie McGurk (Director for Scotland)

Operational Committee: Beth Chinchon (Membership), Alyce Macpherson (Media), Charlotte Murphy (University), Kirsty Gauld (Volunteer), Aimee Jarvie (Sponsorships and Fundraising), Rachel Mawer (Records), Molly Gill (Webmaster) and Jaclyn Smith (Safeguarding).

There has been concerted effort to enhance our communication with the wider membership, driven by a collective commitment to take on board feedback to improve the experience of members. Our social media activity has been revitalised with a more interactive approach on Instagram, as well as more formal social updates using LinkedIn to assist with our corporate sponsorship strategy. There has also been significant work to improve the quality of the information available on the website. We have also invested time in enhancing our approaches to safeguarding and incident response to ensure that our members are clearly able to communicate with us on these important issues.

Competition standards continue to be elevated, with investment in prize money, professionalised live streaming and commentary at all events and technology updates to support a fantastic lifter experience. The regular post event feedback form has been invaluable in identifying those changes that are most impactful, as well as changes we can continue to work towards. Competitions represent the best opportunity for us to showcase our sport, and we will continue to strive for a best-in-class competition experience.

Financial Performance

Our financial position remains robust, and we were able to invest in a full Eleiko platform set, plates and bar for competition use. We have increased our investment in competition enhancements and venues, however we have been able to mitigate the financial impact thanks to the support of competition sponsors. As a non-profit organisation, our aim is to balance our investment back into the sport with the financial capacity to operate, and the appointment of our external accountants has provided us with the structure to be able to do this effectively.