



British Aikido Association
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The decision to leave the British Aikido Board – an open letter to all members

For a number of years the British Aikido Association has been dissatisfied with the BAB, its organization, structure and speed and direction of development. The number of associations has risen to nearly forty whilst practising Aikidoka has actually reduced. For successive years BAA Chairmen have considered the idea of leaving but had not taken the step, however the BAA Executive has recently and unanimously voted to leave the BAB and become "The lead body for Sports Aikido in the UK". The decision to leave was taken after serious consideration and was done for the best interest of the membership as a whole. For a number of years now the BAA has been working towards independence ensuring that all policies and guidelines were in place and the internal structure of the association was strong and fit for purpose. In 2012 the BAA became a Company Limited by Guarantee to ensure accountability and security. A three-year plan was developed and the action now being taken by EC members enables the BAA to work effectively, efficiently and independently.

The timing of the exit was left to the Chairman's discretion but was influenced by four factors: -

- 1.The resignation in January of the Joint Aikido Council (JAC) from the BAB, removing between 2,000 and 3,000 members. The JAC, a consortium of Aikikai associations, now an independent group, has terminated their membership as from the end of February 2014.
- 2.The readiness of the BAA application to Sport England for National Governing Body status. The application is now with Sport England and although it may take some time the BAA will continue to negotiate for NGB recognition in its own right.
- 3.The renewal and negotiation for insurance with the current provider Endsleigh, which is complete and fully functioning. As the current provision lapses at the end of February it would seem pragmatic to ensure a seamless transition.
- 4.The BAB fees for the following year become payable on the 1 March 2014 and now stands at approximately £5 per person including disability insurance of £1.10. This including PI payments would have meant 30% of all BAA income passing to the BAB.

Following this assessment, a letter was sent on the 23rd January outlining the reasons for the BAA's resignation, which will be effective as of the 1 March 2014.

Following the BAA's resignation, a letter was been circulated to BAA clubs, by the acting chair of the BAB making some detailed but fundamentally flawed statements. The following is the Executive Committee's response to the BAB's letter and its contents.

It is now true, that there are more associations with fewer members with a majority of Aikido practitioners outside the BAB than within. The two largest groups having left the BAB, a number of smaller associations are in negotiation to leave also.

Whilst it is true that publicity via the BAB website will cease, it is clear that the majority of "traffic" comes through the BAA site. Recent work to upgrade the BAA site is ongoing. This will provide greater range and access to information. The "Shizentai" Magazine provides an excellent vehicle for a range of articles and news items. Work is ongoing to directly e-mail all members with the magazine and BAA events flyers. Any member who is not receiving the magazine can sign up through the website or contact Phil Eyers the BAA Communication Officer.



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On the subject of grant aid, the BAA has never received financial support through the BAB or Sport England. We must also remember that Karate has never had an NGB and have little difficulty securing premises. Many sporting groups do not have NGB status, whilst some sports have several, representing different aspects of their sport e.g. Basketball and Wheelchair Basketball, Bowls England, British Crown Green Bowls Association, English Indoor Bowls Association English Women's Indoor Bowls Association, English Short Mat Bowls Association and of course Rugby Union and Rugby league. The BAA NGB application is already being considered by Sport England and although it may take some time before a conclusion, the BAA is committed to this course of action. Other organizations of our size including the British Kendo Association already have NGB status.

Other groups are approaching the BAA requesting direct or associate membership. The BAB therefore remains a body supporting many smaller, the majority below 200 members, organizations. It is no longer a true or representative NGB.

Regarding the BAB Coaching qualifications, which were developed, as an interim measure some fifteen years ago. At the time, the appetite for formal qualifications within the BAB was low. Therefore a series of L1, L2 and L3 internal BAB awards were devised. They have no value outside that organization; they are not accredited within the national framework of qualifications and hold no legal status. They are however required by the insurance company to at least demonstrate a degree of competence. The BAA has maintained the link between the Coach Awards and the Insurance Company. Coach level 1 will still be mandatory for all potential coaches. All existing BAB awards will automatically transfer to BAA recognized awards for insurance purposes.

It is true that a recent insurance claim was settled for £11,000 involving an instructor that had not undertaken the coach award certification but even in this case Endsleigh honoured the payment. It is expected to continue with the same Coach Award system with delivery by existing BAA recognized tutors until an external accreditation body can ratify the Coach Awards making them nationally and externally recognised. All existing BAA tutors have externally validated teaching qualifications. As far as Coach awards are concerned, it is business as usual. Revised certification has already been designed and awarding body negotiation is ongoing. Mark Jenner (Qualifications and Grading Standards Officer) is now responsible for all qualifications within the BAA and is currently in negotiation with external awarding bodies.

Over the last few years the BAA has not enforced CRB renewal awaiting to the governments transfer to the DBS system. DBS, (Vetting and Baring Service) which is a nationally transferable system, will now become available to all coaches. Francis Burgess will be circulating details to all coaches during March 2014 about the new online system. The BAA's new Child Welfare Board has been strengthened with the inclusion of Mark Aldridge a qualified solicitor.

With reference to policies and guidance, all policy documentation has been developed or re-written specifically for the BAA and is available on the association's website. This process has taken almost two years and has been undertaken with the NGB application in mind.

Although "Clubmark" is no longer a national government priority, within the BAA Brent Moran is a registered national assessor and holds the national portfolio for this area of work. He is willing and available to provide advice and support to all registered clubs who still wish to pursue "Clubmark" accreditation.



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Regarding insurance and other costs. Until the BAA negotiated a reduction in insurance costs the BAB were seemingly paying £80,000 p.a. for their cover. The BAA through negotiations with Endsleigh reduced this cost by 50%. Further insurance reductions and elimination of the BAB membership fee will see a considerable reduction in BAA outgoings. In anticipation of this, new clubs no longer pay a club fee or PI insurance for the first two years of membership. Indeed the BAA has been subsidizing PI insurance cover for the past four years; coaches only pay 26% of the actual cost.

The BAB has huge financial reserves, pays considerable honorariums to executive members and announced membership fee increases for the following year even though insurance premiums reduced two years ago. Their voting system favours smaller organizations that by and large are not democratic and the coaching system has not moved toward official recognition. The main growth within the BAB has come through increased fractionalisation of existing member groups with no real attempts to nationally market Aikido to potential new members.

We believe the BAA has a strong national and international presence with the capability and expertise to provide enhanced support to the membership and grow as the "Lead body for Sports Aikido in the UK". The Executive believes that this is a pragmatic, planned and practical development for the long-term future of the BAA.

The Executive Committee will be discussing further cost reductions to the membership, NGB progress, World Sports Aikido Federation (WSAF) progress and next steps at its meeting on Sunday 2nd March 2014. Any comments and/or views are welcomed.

Bob Jones
On Behalf of the BAA Executive Committee