

## Karate Unification

A meeting between Karate England and the English Karate Federation (EKF) was hosted by Sport England on 24<sup>th</sup> November at Sport England's Headquarters in London. The meeting was suggested by me following the rejection of applications from Karate England and the EKF for recognition as the National Governing Body (NGB) for Karate in England.

Sport England wish to see Karate united and for Karate to have a Strategic Plan for the next 3-4 years which will set out the future direction for Karate in England. The meeting was attended by myself as Chairman of Karate England, Vice-Chairman Abdu Shafer, Secretary Bob Poynton and Board Members Noel Mantock and Molly Samuel-Leport. The EKF were represented by President Carl Lindley and Mike Dinsdale, representing the World Karate Federation (WKF)

Phil de Glanville of Sport England opened the meeting by welcoming all present and giving an overview of what Sport England is looking for from National Governing Bodies in Sport. The current challenge to NGBs by Sport England is all about delivering on the ground, especially increased participation and competition. Sound financial procedures and good governance are expected. Richard Clarkson of Sport England explained the revised policy for the recognition of National Governing Bodies of sport by Sport England. The recognition process now has two stages: a new pre-application process must be satisfied before a full application can be submitted.

There was a frank discussion on points of agreement and the current issue which divides Karate, WKF Rule 21.9. Both parties agree on the fundamental requirements of a unified Karate Governing Body:

1. That the Executive Board of the NGB for Karate in England be democratically (i.e. based on individual memberships) elected by all those practising Karate in the country.
2. That the NGB should seek the inclusion of all bona fide Groups in England.
3. The NGB would foster and promote grassroots Karate and provide opportunities for competition at all levels.
4. The NGB would set Technical Standards for Associations and clubs and provide a Clubmark equivalent for Karate
5. The NGB would promote child and vulnerable adult protection protocols and ensure Associations sign up to those and demonstrate that they are in use in all clubs.

Karate England argue that Karate is divided because of one issue. Karate at the grassroots enjoys friendly relationships across the styles and Karate Associations. Indeed there are many examples of clubs and associations training together across the divide. For example the EKF National Coach has run courses whose attendees have included Karate England members: we have no problem with this. The only barrier to a fully representative National Governing Body for Karate in England is the current interpretation of the Rule 21.9 imposed by the WKF through the English Karate Federation. This rule forbids 'sportive relations' between WKF members and other groups, and is in our view unfair and incompatible with the Olympic Charter and the European Convention of Human Rights. This rule should not prevent Karate in England uniting and gaining Sport England recognition for its NGB.

Carl Lindley and Mike Dinsdale were of the view that the WKF mandate currently enjoyed by the EKF had been voted for by their membership and must be retained. It was explained that the WKF Rule 21.9 must be firmly applied and that the Rule forbids members of the WKF

recognised body from participating in multi-style competitions organised by bodies deemed to be 'dissident' by the WKF. Karate England colleagues and I argued that this participation was no threat to the WKF and we believed in the freedom of NGB Member Associations to enter long-established single-style and multi-style championships and many countries who are affiliated to the WKF also participate in such championships.

Sport England's Director of Sport, Lisa O'Keefe summed up their view of the meeting saying that there were clear benefits to the sport of Karate in unifying and there is much common ground, but the issue of WKF affiliation was a challenging one for both parties.

It was agreed that there was enough common ground to establish a dialogue, in the first instance between myself and EKF President Carl Lindley, with a joint Working Group being considered later. The timescale for reporting back to Sport England on these talks was early February 2011.

John Bell  
Chairman Karate England

December 2010