

Chief Executive Officer - Colin Mulhern, Chairman – Robert Niven, Vice Chairman Stewart Orr
Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association
45 Washington Street
Glasgow
G3 8AZ

We, the representatives of bands from Novice Juvenile and Juvenile Grades request consideration by the RSPBA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chairman and Board of Directors of the following proposal.

On Saturday 17th August 2024, a critical mistake occurred during the Novice Juvenile B Final, caused by human error and a failure to comply with procedures in the verification of sensitive results-based data and the rules of the competition. These errors have had a profound impact on young competitors globally, leading to emotional trauma, a loss of confidence, and a loss of trust between the piping community and the RSPBA. The reputational damage to the RSPBA has played out globally on social and national media in the subsequent days.

A letter of invitation was issued from the RSPBA 20th August 2024 to Secretaries and Pipe Majors of bands affected by this compiling error to join a meeting to discuss the issue held 22nd August 2024. The RSPBA were represented by Mr Robert Niven Chairman, Mr Colin Mulhern CEO, various Board Members, and Mr George Woods (Paid employee compiler). In the invitation letter and during the 22nd August meeting the RSPBA specifically requested “...feedback and insights that you may be in a position to offer so that we arrive at a just and fair resolution to all affected bands and competitors.”

A large number of wider concerns were raised in the 22nd August 2024 meeting on the competitive environment for our young pipers and drummers and it was acknowledged that it is the responsibility of the RSPBA Board of Directors, and ultimately, the Chief Executive Officer to address these issues. At the time of writing this letter no minute of the meeting has been circulated, despite request.

Following the 22nd August meeting, Pipe Majors and Tutors of affected bands held informal discussions and established an Independent Working Group on Youth Piping and Drumming to consider recommendations as requested by the RSPBA. The membership of this Working Group now extends to all Juvenile grades and is international in scope. It is the conclusion of this Working Group that clear systematic institutional change is necessary to improve the competitive environment for youth piping and drumming and to rebuild trust between youth-focussed organisations and the RSPBA.

The Working Group concludes that the actions proposed by the RSPBA in their email of 22nd August 2024 are insufficient. We recognise and welcome that steps are being taken to improve operational capacity and competency in compiling volunteers. We highly value the dedication of the volunteer officers and judging communities who work tirelessly in support of our young pipers and drummers and their tutors. However, it is noted that a significant concern was raised during the meeting 22nd August 2024 by a senior teaching professional on the competency of the RSPBA to oversee the welfare of young people in its organisation.

We propose the following priority actions be undertaken:

1. That the RSPBA commissions, urgently, an independent review of its current position and policies pertaining to the competitive environment in its care for youth piping and drumming. We request that this review is conducted by a professional independent body (i.e. not by the RSPBA itself) and that transparency and inclusivity is at its heart. We propose

that the review is forward looking and includes consultation with RSPBA office bearers, the band membership including teaching professionals, and youth pipers and drummers to inform the development of a long-term vision on youth piping and drumming. This is essential to demonstrate the RSPBA is a competent body in this context and to re-build trust with professional teaching establishments. The results of this independent review, its recommendations and the resulting RSPBA action plan should be made public.

2. That the RSPBA and its members conduct a review and publish recommendations for continual improvement of the competitive environment for youth piping and drumming at the close of each competitive season. The Working Group offers its services in producing an independent report to the incumbent RSPBA CEO on closure of each competitive season.
3. That the RSPBA considers an alternative formatting of the World Pipe Band Championships to enhance the experience of youth pipers and drummers and to avoid the likelihood of a repeat of the 2024 World's issues. The Working Group proposes the establishment of 'Junior World Championships' in 2025 and presents the case for this proposal in Annex 1.

We request, here, recognition in writing from the RSPBA CEO and Chairman on the need to implement such actions and agreement to issue a public statement of the RSPBA's commitment to make this a priority area for development.

We, the Working Group, stand ready to help the RSPBA provide leadership towards the improvement of the competitive environment for youth piping and drumming across the world.

Sincerely,

The Independent Working Group on Youth Piping and Drumming

David Ross (West Lothian Schools Pipe Band / St Columba's School Pipe Band)

Ben Duncan (George Watson's College NJA)

Thomas Barnes (Isle of Arran Music School Pipe Band)

William Paul (Tynecastle Youth Community Pipe Band)

Dan Nevans (Hutchesons' Grammar School)

Conner Pratt (Tynecastle Youth Community Pipe Band)

Alastair Hutcheon (Peoples Ford Boghall & Bathgate Caledonia Pipe Band)

Gordon Bruce (St Columba's School NJA & NJB)

Chloe Taylor (Stirling Schools Pipe Band)

Cameron Lawson (Renfrewshire Schools Pipe Band)

Callum Beaumont (Dollar Academy NJA)

Simon Grant (Preston Lodge High School Pipe Band NJB and JUV)

Darren Sommerville (North Lanarkshire Schools NJB)

Ross Cowan (North Lanarkshire Schools NJA)

Paul Brown (Lochgelly High School)

Craig Hooper (Burntisland & District Pipe Band NovB)

Keith Dawes (Balerno and District Schools Pipe Band)

Euan Cowan (Lewis and Harris Youth Pipe Band)

Bryan Spears (Burntisland & District Pipe Band)

Lee Moore (Preston Lodge High School)

Mick O'Neill (George Watson's College Juvenile and Novice Juvenile B)

Grant Cassidy (Oban High School)

Greig Canning (Lochgelly High School and Lochgelly High School Junior Pipe Bands)

Euan McNab (Falkirk Schools Pipe Band)

Andrew Wallace (Stirling and District Schools Pipe Band NJB)

Steven McWhirter (Edinburgh Academy)

Alastair Tripney (Edinburgh Academy)

Scott Figgins (Isle of Arran Music School Pipe Band)

Peter Macgregor (Erskine Stewart's Melville School NJA)

Steven Bell (Erskine Stewart's Melville School NJB)

Graham Brown (St Thomas Episcopal)

Steven Nelson (North Lanarkshire Schools)

Stevie Stanley (Brisbane Boys' College)

David Henderson (The Glasgow Academy)

Chris Gibb (Stirling and District Schools)

Maureen Connor (Capital District Youth Pipe Band)

Graham Drummond (West Lothian Schools NJA + NJB)

Steven Graham (High School of Dundee Pipe Band)

Steven Shedden (Scotch College Pipes & Drums, Melbourne)

David Richardson (Strathallan School)

Struan Thorpe (Scotch College Pipes & Drums, Melbourne)

Jamie Hawke (Brisbane Boys College)

Arthur Cook (George Watson's College, Novice Juvenile A)

Eilidh Young (Lewis and Harris Youth Pipe Band NJB)

Ashley MacDonald (Lewis & Harris Youth Pipe Band NJB)

Connor Sinclair (Dollar Academy NJB)

Jono Quay (PLC Melbourne)

Matt Wilson (Dollar Academy juvenile)

David Wilton (High School of Dundee NJA)

Darren Brown (Falkirk Schools Pipe Band)
Chris Johnston (Scot's college, Sydney NJA NJB)

William Sincok (Knox Grammar School, Sydney)

Johnathan Simpson (Edinburgh Academy)

Laura Johnston (The Scots College, Sydney)

Jim Semple (High School of Dundee Pipe Band)

Paul Hughes (The Scots College, Sydney)

Lincoln Hilton (Haileybury Pipes & Drums - Australia)

Mark Saul Scotch College (Melbourne)

Hamish Wallace (Scotch College, Melbourne)

Keith Bowes (Renfrewshire Schools' Pipe Band)

Amber Ives (Ballarat Grammar, Australia)

Andrew Elliott (St. Thomas' Episcopal School)

Lyric Todkill (St. Thomas' Episcopal School)

Josh Fraser (Strathallan School)

Niall Stewart (Lochalsh)

Andrew Gray (Turriff & District NJB)

Jake Joergensen (George Heriot's School)

Alisdair McLaren (PLC Perth)

Ben Jones (Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne)

Caitlin Macdonald (Renfrewshire Schools' Pipe Band)

Edward Roxburgh (Ballarat Grammar, Australia)

Kyle Warren (Merchiston)

Lee Innes (Dollar Academy Juvenile, Dollar Academy Novice Juvenile B, Burntisland and district Novice Juvenile B)

Angus J MacColl (Oban high school)

Gordon Lee (Burntisland & District)

Andrew Lawson (Dollar Academy Nov A)

Bobbie Davie (Dunoon grammar school)

Richard Hawke (St Andrew's College, NZ)

Scott Birrell (St Andrew's College, NZ)

Jamie McEwan (St Andrew's College, NZ)

Donald Ban MacDonald (Sgoil Lionacleit Pipe Band)

Hugh MacCallum (Lochalsh Junior Pipe Band and Skye Youth Pipe Band)