

## **Background and Purpose of the Merger**

### **Q: What is the main reason for proposing a merger between the governing bodies?**

A: Having three governing bodies doing similar work is inefficient for a sport receiving minimal public funding. England and Scotland currently receive no public funding despite being among the biggest sports without such support. The merger would create a more efficient, professional organization that can attract investment and better serve the entire ice hockey community.

### **Q: What has changed to make this merger possible now?**

A: Ice Hockey UK has achieved code compliance from UK Sport, and England Ice Hockey has achieved code compliance with Sport England over the past six months, making the organizations investable. There is also increased collaboration between governing bodies, with shared board members and staff, and alignment on pathways.

## **Benefits and Structure**

### **Q: What are the main benefits of the merger?**

A: The merger will eliminate duplicate systems and processes, provide access to public funding that was previously unavailable, and introduce professional staffing for key roles such as officiating and disciplinary positions. It will unify rules across England and Scotland, offer better support for clubs through foundation funding, improve commercial opportunities through partnerships, enhance the ability to host major international events, and allow more efficient resource allocation.

### **Q: How will the merger affect the junior section specifically?**

A: The junior section will benefit from unified rules across England and Scotland, which will simplify player transfers. There will be increased investment in grassroots development, better coaching resources through foundation funding, improved talent pathways, more ice time opportunities through the development of alternative facilities, and support for clubs in growing membership and improving operations.

## **Funding and Resources**

### **Q: How will the merger be funded and what will it cost?**

A: Funding will come from multiple sources, including public funding that becomes available once the organizations merge, commercial partnerships and sponsorships, and efficiencies gained by eliminating duplicate systems and processes. The foundation has secured nearly £900,000 to £1 million annually for three years from private investors specifically for grassroots hockey, and UK Sport will fund the legal work behind the merger.

### **Q: How will funding trickle down from GB level to clubs?**

A: Investment will flow directly to clubs through free resources such as the NHL Street Programme to drive recruitment, foundation funding for coaches and specialists who work directly with clubs, regional resources to support club development, investment in grassroots facilities and synthetic ice surfaces, and assistance for clubs in securing local funding and improving operations.

### **Q: What specific funding amounts are you targeting and from where?**

A: While there isn't a specific amount targeted, merging would create efficiencies of approximately £250,000 annually. Funding sources include UK Sport, Sport England, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales, Sport Northern Ireland, and community health programs.

The UK Ice Hockey Foundation has already secured £1 million annually in private funding. The merger would make the organization more "investable" to these bodies.

**Q: Will there be more investment in foreign or independent coaches at grassroots level without being associated with a club?**

A: Yes, there will be investment in both domestic and international coaches. The foundation is hiring several experts including Kevin McLaughlin (former USA Hockey director) and an NHL goaltending coach who also coaches a national team. These resources will help develop British coaches and provide expertise to clubs across the country.

**Ice Rink Development**

**Q: What's the plan for addressing the ice rink shortage?**

A: Several approaches are being considered, including smaller three-on-three facilities like the Ozone model, synthetic ice surfaces as more cost-effective alternatives, working with councils and funding agencies to build new facilities, using the NHL Street Programme to demonstrate demand by targeting 30,000 children annually, and collaborating with existing rink operators on energy efficiency to potentially reduce ice time costs.

**Q: Are smaller rinks like Ozone a viable solution for the future?**

A: Yes, smaller three-on-three rinks are seen as part of the solution. They are more cost-effective to build and operate, with traditional rinks costing £30,000 to £50,000 monthly in energy alone. Three-on-three hockey may become an Olympic sport by 2034, giving GB a better chance of Olympic qualification in this format.

**Merger Process, Voting and Implementation**

**Q: What exactly are we voting for at the EGM on December 17th?**

A: The vote is for members to agree that they would like to proceed with creating a merged entity. If approved, this will be followed by 12 months of detailed consultation with all sections using five guiding principles to reshape sport operations.

**Q: After the merger, how will the Board be structured? Will all current directors stay?**

A: The vote on 17 December is **not** to approve a final Board structure. It's to allow the three Boards to negotiate and design a new structure. Any final set-up will be **Sport Code compliant** meaning a board that skills-based, diverse, independent oversight, and clear separation of roles. It won't just be three Boards combined. There will be a proper governance design process, likely with consolidation and reshaping of roles. Members will have a voice and a vote before anything is finalised.

**Q: Will member voices be weaker after the merger?**

A: No. The plan is for stronger member input through things like Councils (e.g., junior, senior, officials) to give structured routes for feedback and accountability.

**Q: Do all member categories carry the same voting rights?**

A: No. In England, each club gets one vote plus additional votes for each team they operate (with at least 13 members). In Scotland, junior affiliated clubs get one vote, senior affiliated clubs get one vote, and recreational clubs get one vote. The recreational section alone cannot pass or block the vote.

**Q: What is the voting threshold required?**

A: 75% of votes cast on the day must approve for the merger to pass.

**Q: Is enough information being provided for clubs to make an informed voting decision?**

A: More detailed information will be shared through a communications plan running from November 17th through December 17th. Additional details will be provided on key points such as the referee section, along with multiple town hall sessions for different sections, individual responses to questions outside of town halls, and the five guiding principles that will direct the 12-month consultation process.

**Q: Why would this merger attempt succeed when previous attempts failed?**

A: The current attempt differs because all governing bodies are now code compliant and investable, collaboration between them has already increased, new independent board members have been recruited through open processes, and personality conflicts that hindered previous attempts have been addressed. The focus is on adding value rather than taking anything away, and there is demonstrated cooperation through joint development programs and tournaments.

**Q: What would the first 12 months of the merger look like?**

A: The first 12 months (January-December) would focus on legal framework implementation, member consultation on detailed principles, and creating proper resource structures including paid accountable roles. An integration management office will be established with board members from all groups to manage areas including governance, safeguarding, finance, technology, and competition.

**Q: If the vote doesn't pass, what is the next plan?**

A: The organizations would continue with status quo but with slight improvements as they try to address legacy issues. However, progress would be limited as funding would remain fragmented and coordination difficult.

**Q: If the vote goes through on December 17th, when does the merger officially happen?**

A: The December 17th vote approves the merger in principle. If approved, the boards will be authorized to negotiate and finalize agreements until approximately June 30th, with implementation before the next season starts (around July).

**Practical Implications**

**Q: How will the merger affect rules and regulations across different regions?**

A: The merger will create unified rules across England and Scotland, eliminating current difficulties in managing player transfers between countries due to different regulatory frameworks. This will make administration simpler for clubs and ensure consistency across the UK.

**Q: How will the merger affect volunteer roles within the sport?**

A: The merger aims to provide better support for volunteers by having paid, accountable staff in key positions. This does not mean replacing volunteers but ensuring they have professional support and do not have to work excessive hours—sometimes 30 to 40 hours weekly—in certain roles.

**Q: Will everyone fall under the Ice Hockey UK banner or will there be a new name and logo?**

A: The leadership is open to creating a completely new name and logo. While the limited company structure would remain for regulatory reasons, the trading name and brand could change completely. Henry emphasized this is not about Ice Hockey UK taking over but creating a collective where everyone has equal voice.

## **Growth, Development and Coaching**

### **Q: Will we see new manager's courses and coaching courses with the merger?**

A: Yes, there are plans to revitalize coaching education programs and team manager roles. The goal is to make these simpler, more accessible (some online), and reduce costs for volunteers. The IHF will provide resources to support this development.

### **Q: How will the merger address the issue of British players being blocked by imports at senior levels?**

A: Import numbers will not increase and will gradually decrease through collaboration with the Home Office. A GB Talent Academy is being created for 16-18 year olds so they don't have to go overseas, and initiatives are being developed to ensure graduates have opportunities in the Elite League or National Ice Hockey League.

### **Q: What initiatives are planned to grow the sport?**

A: Key initiatives include the NHL Street Programme, which targets 30,000 children annually with an expected 8-12% conversion rate to membership. Other plans include a major events strategy that could involve hosting Canada for matches in 2027-2028, bidding for the World Men's Championships in 2031, developing synthetic ice facilities for additional training opportunities, deploying Ice Hockey UK foundation-funded coaching resources regionally, and improving talent pathways from grassroots to GB level.

### **Q: What can be done about the lack of ice time? Cardiff is a good example of this particularly with pad two being closed?**

A: We are developing a solar opportunity to reduce energy costs for rinks, which could save money for rinks with increasing energy costs. For example Sheffield could save around £1.5 million in energy costs over 10 years. Cardiff, in particular, talks are being held with Sport Wales about potentially reopening the second pad and exploring ways to move Fun HQ to free up the space, though this would be costly.

### **Q: Will Welsh women's hockey see benefits from the merger?**

A: Yes, the merger would provide better access to funding, especially from Sport Wales. It would give ice hockey more influence on facilities development and create potential for new ice facilities in Wales. Henry mentioned they would have "a far greater chance of influencing that and accessing it if we were one" organization.

### **Q: How will the merger address issues with player pathways and showcase selections?**

A: The merger would create paid, accountable roles focused on pathways, ensuring more inclusive selection processes. Grant mentioned they would implement more inclusive selection processes and better communication between national programs and clubs. They acknowledged current issues with players being overlooked if they're not in junior clubs or in lower divisions.

### **Q: How will the merger benefit women's hockey specifically?**

A: Benefits would include increased investment (similar to the 170% increase at GB level), equal treatment and opportunities compared to men's hockey, better access to funding specifically for women's programs, and support for clubs to develop players and improve facilities.

**Q: How will the merger address the issue of clubs having too many players and not enough ice time?**

A: The merger would help by creating a unified strategy for facility development, providing better opportunities for public funding, supporting clubs in accessing grants and funding, and working with local councils on facility improvements. This is acknowledged as a growing problem as the women's game has expanded by about 40% in recent years.

**Q: Will education programs be improved under the merger?**

A: Yes, with plans to repurpose education to be simpler and more accessible. Grant mentioned making coaching education more relevant to clubs' needs, developing young coaches including bringing in GB players, and creating regional coaching roles to support clubs. They aim to invest in education to support the many volunteers in the game.

**Gameday**

**Q: Why can't we pull out of GameDay early if it doesn't meet our needs?**

A: We can't just terminate the contract because the original T&Cs were signed before Henry or Grant joined. Walking away without following the proper process would breach our legal obligations.

**Q: Why does the system feel like it doesn't work?**

A: The deal only covers the basic system. Anything outside that scope counts as "development," which is expensive and slow. That's why it feels limited.

**Q: What's being done about it?**

A: We've started to work on finding a better platform. Clubs will help define what's needed so the next system works properly and is delivered on time.

**Officials**

**Q: Why are officials being shoved, punched, or abused, and why isn't this reflected in DOPS?**

A: Those behaviours are unacceptable. Any incidents must go through the proper channels (DOPS, DRS, complaints) so they can be evidenced and sanctioned. If you have examples where outcomes don't match the behaviour, please send details.

**Q: What's the role of clubs in this?**

A: Clubs must set the tone in their own dressing rooms – language, respect, and conduct. We can set frameworks and sanctions, but culture change needs partnership.

**Q: Will body-worn cameras be introduced?**

A: They're being considered, but we need to check legal, safeguarding, data protection, and cost implications first. It's not ruled out – it just has to be done properly.