

ESG Gaming: Strategic review

As usual, I have produced and published this strategic review before our board meeting on Tuesday, 07 November, at 1100. This review provides a top-level snapshot of activities undertaken in summary form, which can be elaborated upon, at the board meeting.

Fellow directors are asked to read this report before the meeting as usual, with actions marked in **green text** for ease of reference. Following the board meeting, I will update and publish our live-action log. Please note that you may have to double-click on the links below to open them, as not all open on the first attempt.

Misc. Governance items.

Register of interests.

The latest copy is available here: [Click here](#)

ACTION: The Board are asked to review the register and report any updates.

Risk assessment.

The latest copy is available here: [Click here](#)

ACTION: The Board are asked to review the assessment and report any updates.

Governance Handbook.

Our agreed Governance handbook has been updated to reflect (i) a focus on our two products and (ii) feedback from the Investors in People assessment and ongoing B Corp assessment. To view the latest version of this handbook (pages updated are 10 – 14 only), [Click here](#).

ACTION: The Board are asked to review pages 10 – 14 and report any updates.

Founder & NED payments.

The highest-paid director (L Willows) received a remuneration of £89,993 Gross for 01 August 2022 – 31 July 2023 and is employed full-time within ESG Gaming. The board agreed that the maximum salary for this post is £125,000, which I now propose to be fixed until 31 July 2025. Between 14 August 2021 – 31 July 2022, this post holder drew down a salary of £900 Gross.

Other directors at ESG Gaming drew honorariums as follows: £4,500 Gross (C Jones) / £6,000 Gross (S Cooke) and £500 Gross (P Romero). These were agreed honorarium payments for the role of Non-Executive Directors (NEDs). The board have decided that NEDs can draw down £250pcm, with additional payments made for work over and above their fiduciary roles (i.e. the agreed 10% fee to help with fundraising). Between 14 August 2021 – 31 July 2022, these directors did not draw any honorarium.

ACTION: (i) The Board are asked to re-confirm these arrangements and (ii) extend the salary cap of the Founder, which is proposed to July 2025 (i.e. propose no salary review for 24 months).

Investors in People (IIP) accreditation.

This has now been achieved. To view our report, [Click here](#). IIP assessor to attend board meeting in Q1 2024 to plan for next (three-year) assessment. Propose we plan to achieve Silver (Established) or Gold (Advanced) level. Propose we also consider IIP Investing in Mental Health Accreditation in Q1 2024.

Pride 365 accreditation.

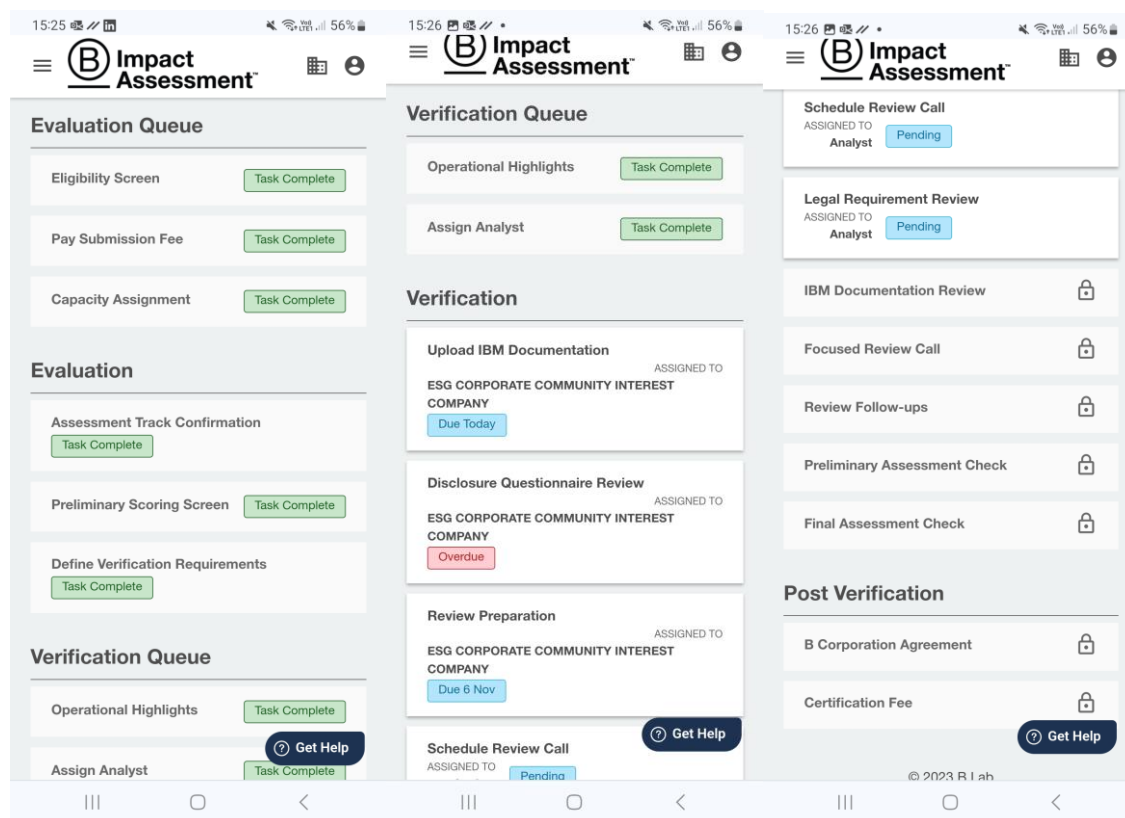
This has now been achieved. To view our report, [Click here](#).

Armed Forces Covenant.

As well as signing the Armed Forces Covenant, we also have been awarded Bronze accreditation in October 2023. To view the certificate, [Click here](#). Given the nature of ESG Gaming’s social purpose and activities, it is unlikely we’ll go for the Silver or Gold standard.

B Corp Certification.

Certification is progressing well, and below is a snapshot of our dashboard. We aim to enter the Post Verification stage in January 2024, with potential certificate issued in March 2024.



Information Commissions Office (ICO).

ESG Gaming has reviewed the annual membership of ICO on 10 March 2023. To view our public listing, please [click](#).

Insurance.

Our public and employers liability insurance expires on 31 January 2023. Confirmation of our insurance and certificates have been uploaded to the ESG Gaming website. [Click here](#) and we are currently getting quotes for the renewal insurance.

Living Wage accreditation.

ESG Gaming renewed our Living Wage accreditation on 15 February 2023. Confirmation of our accreditation is available on the Living Wage website – search for ESG in the search tab. [Click here](#)

Fundraising Regulator.

ESG Gaming was successfully re-registered with the Fundraising Regulator on September 2023. To view our inclusion on the register, [Click here](#).

Income.

Securing income remains at the top of the list of priorities currently. Below is a summary of our fundraising pipeline as of 01 November 2023.

Pipeline summary as at 01 November 2023						
Source	Status	Total income	ESG Gaming allocation	Partners allocation (i.e. academic or delivery partners)	Application, decision or payment date	Purpose and NOV 23 update
Merkur UK	Pledged	£40,000	£40,000	£0	Jun-23	Web3 (received counted in 22/23 income)
AG	Pledged	£62,400	£62,400	£0	Dec-22	Research & Films (received counted in 22/23 income)
Gambling Commission	Pledged	£223,580	£123,040	£100,540	Jul-23	R Streaming / 2nd stage (received counted in 22/23 income)
TOTAL PLEDGED		£325,980	£225,440	£100,540		
All income below counting as 23/24 income.						
Collective Four	Pending	£154,000	£100,000	£54,000	Oct-23	Nov update: Collective Four, no longer viable due to commitments
GambleAware	Pending	£291,275	£241,275	£50,000	Sep-23	Nov update: Safer Gambling metaverse parents - Declined - see report
GambleAware	Pending	£87,294	£87,294	£0	Nov-23	Nov update: Grant from SSF (£100k max as part of ITT)
GambleAware	Research	£297,000	£297,000	£0	Nov-23	Nov update: Grant - new SSF proposal. ITT opens Nov 23
Gambling Commission	Application	£210,000	£60,000	£150,000	TBA	Nov update: UKGC advise we speak to GambleAware
RET (misc)	Application	£183,000	£153,000	£30,000	Jan-24	Nov update: UR esports & Web3 (in progress)
Innovate UK	Research	£250,000	£125,000	£125,000	Jan-24	Nov update: Web3/Older esports
Horizons Europe	Research	£250,000	£125,000	£125,000	Jan-24	Nov update: Web3/Older Esports
NL UK Fund	Research	£500,000	£250,000	£250,000	Feb-24	Nov update: Web3/Older Esports
NL Awards for All	Research	£9,000	£9,000	£0	Feb-24	Nov update: Community engagement
IESF	Research	£4,000	£4,000	£0	Feb-24	Nov update: Research with Esports Insider
Anonymous	Research	£100,000	£100,000	£0	Feb-24	Nov update: Older Esports
Anonymous	Research	£160,000	£160,000	£0	Feb-24	Nov update: Vanguard Programme
25 Club	Research	£125,000	£125,000	£0	Jun-24	Nov update: Unrestricted
TOTAL PENDING		£2,175,294	£1,495,294	£680,000		Pending total excludes proposals in red as unsuccessful
Pipeline	Researching	£3,000	TBA	TBA	TBA	Breakdown pending
TOTAL RESEARCHING		£3,000				
Year-end position 2021/22: Actual - Surplus £60,196 / Year-End Cash: £57,709 / Debts: £3,200 for year end accounting. HMRC and all invoices up to date, no debts. Donations £2,000 to orgs, paid via Chair salary sacrifice.						
Year end position 2022/23: Actual - Surplus £123,185 / Year End Cash: £188,775 / Debts: £17,696 for year end accounting. HMRC & all invoices up to date & no debts. Donations £30,000 to orgs, paid via Chair salary sacrifice.						
Year end position 2023/24: Forecast - Surplus £154,000 / Year End Cash: £196,000 / Debts: £16,000 for year end accounting. Plan for HMRC & all invoices up to date & no debts. Plan for donations £30,000 to orgs, paid via Chair salary sacrifice. Plan for 50% of fundraising applications to be unsuccessful or take longer to secure.						

Collective Four.

A number of projects were proposed for a collective four donation. All these have been turned down due to the collective four commitment to GambleAware.

GambleAware – System Stabilisation Fund.

ESG Gaming has committed to full transparency and publishing all funding proposals to GambleAware / Levy Board and Statutory sources. We have also committed to publishing all monitoring and financial returns to these bodies too. Timeline of our SSF proposal:

18 August: Our application was submitted to GambleAware and posted on our website. [Click here](#)

26 Sept: Our initial application to the SSF was not successful. [Click here](#)

28 Sept: I wrote to ask for more detailed feedback from GambleAware. [Click here](#)

03 Oct: I sought to respond to their outcome letter as no further feedback was received. [Click here](#)

24 Oct: Following a useful Teams call, I wrote again to GambleAware with an amended proposal.

[Click here](#)

As of 01 November, we do not have a decision on the amended proposal. We are also looking to apply to the SSF once the new round re-opens w/c 06 November. I intend to upload all this communication to our website in the coming couple of weeks, given the commitment to transparency. I will do this once we have feedback on our amended proposal.

Updated KPIs:

Updated as at 011123				
Strategic: actions required	Owner	Review	RAG Rating as at 011123	Comments
Make application to CIC regulator	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Secure HMRC UTR / PAYE / VAT etc	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Open Community Bank Account with NatWest Bank	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Open savings account	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Make application to UKGC to join RET List	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Founding Board in place	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Commence and secure ISO 9001 Accreditation	Lee Willows	Annually	REMOVED	Nov update: Remove all together - not needed
Commence and secure Investors in People Accreditation	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Commence City & Guilds Assured	Lee Willows	Annually	PENDING	Nov update: Commenced
* Secure B Corp Certification	Lee Willows	Annually	PENDING	Nov update: Final stages
* Secure Pride 365 accreditation	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
* Register with Army Covenant	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
* Register with Metaverse Standards Forum	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
* Fundraising Regulator re-approval	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	Nov update: Completed Nov
Recruit Ofsted / additional NED's as needed	Lee Willows	Annually	REMOVED	Nov update: Remove all together - not needed
Create LMS / QMS creation	Lee Willows	Annually	REMOVED	Nov update: Remove all together - not needed
Create initial website / branding	Chris Jones	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Website updated with current projects	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Monthly trade Press pieces	Chris Jones	Monthly	PENDING	Media and Comms plan needed CJ / Esports News UK LW speaking with Dom
Complete and consultate on enabling plan, values, vision and actions	Lee Willows / Chris Jones	Annually	COMPLETED	
Secure initial funding to establish ESG Gaming c£95k	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
*Secure year two income c£250k	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
*Secure presence at trade events inc EAG / ICE / NextGen / ESI / LTW / non-gambling	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Secure initial academic partners	Lee Willows	Annually	COMPLETED	
Secure initial delivery partners for esports and web3	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Annual Review, Statutory Reports for 2022/23	Lee Willows	Year end	COMPLETED	
* Annual accounts examination - Crowe UK LLP	Lee Willows	Year end	COMPLETED	
* Corporation Tax, D11P, VAT returns and completed	Lee Willows	Year end	COMPLETED	
* AGM / Accounts and statutory reports published	Lee Willows	Year end	COMPLETED	
Operational: actions required				
Feasibility Study completed	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Develop proposed proposition, consultate, produce 2023 Enabling Plan	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Agree initial strategic, delivery and evaluation partners	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Develop elevator pitch, video and assets	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Digital inequality film completed	Lee Willows / Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Mental health film completed	Lee Willows / Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Pending funding
Equality film completed	Lee Willows / Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Pending funding
Comms & Educational Plan for films	Chris Jones	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Pending funding
Arrange external training & certification in NFTs / blockchain / Crypto	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Web3 tech plan and wireframe	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Secure Web3 tech partner - Mishcon de Reya LLP and HTC VIVE	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Secure Web3 academic partner - Bath Spa and Bournemouth Universities	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
Enable functionality of crypto donations	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Next quarter task with MDRx
Enable functionality of NFTs around Safer Gaming	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Next quarter task with MDRx
* Seek legal support from Mishcon de Reya LLP as named Lawyers	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Pending agreement
* Scope esports for older people project & evaluation	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Secure partners for older esport project	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: venue partner pending only
* Deliver esports for older person project pilots	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: Pilot delivery planned Nov / Dec 2023
* Secure ESI Film Festival prize fund	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
* Develop plan around ESI London	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	COMPLETED	
MDRx Discovery Report completed	Lee Willows	Monthly	COMPLETED	
** Scope and propose KPIs for 2024	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Update Enabling Plan for 2024 (focus on older persons / player protection / research)	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Update and propose budget plans for 2024	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Plan bett 2024 (Excel, London) - 24 - 26 January	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Plan ESIC / ICE 2024 (Excel, London), 6 - 8 February	All	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Plan MWC 2024 (Fira de Barcelona), 26 - 29 February	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Plan NextGen 2024 (University of Oxford) - 06 - 07 March	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Commence IESF Research	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New Action - due Jan 24
** Commence influencer research	Lee Willows/Sam Cooke	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Develop, evaluate and publish Parents site	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Develop, evaluate and publish Metaverse education & experience platform (for bett)	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Establish consumer group for Metaverse platform	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: new action
** Bank £100k new income by Jan 24 / Bank a further £100k new income by Apr 24	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Renew Insurance	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action - due Dec
** Update Articles to include Older People	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action - filed, pending CIC
** Review policies	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action, on website
** Secure funding for Vanguard Group and launch	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
** Develop and propose Parliamentary Plan and launch	Lee Willows	Monthly	PENDING	Nov update: New action
* New Tasks added as at 26 June 2023				
** New Tasks added as at 01 November 2023 - critical, must-do tasks				
All Green actions (completed) to be removed on next update				

Points of note.

ESG Gaming 25 Club.

Here is the draft paper to help establish the Club: [Click here](#)

ACTION: The board are asked to consider how they might help.

Vanguard Programme.

Here is the latest candidate proposal application pack. Seeking to launch this at NetGen 2024, pending funding: [Click here](#)

Metaverse platform.

Good progress with the metaverse project. Scope and proposal: [Click here](#) and [Click here](#). James Fraser-Murison and I are working with HTC / MDRx to have the initial platform built and ready for bett education show at Excel in January 2024.

Mishcon de Reya LLP / MDRx (metaverse).

Strategy session planned for 09 Nov to take our joint proposal forward for the metaverse platform and joint funding pipeline: [Click here](#).

Mishcon de Reya LLP / MDRx (strategy).

Here is the Discovery Sprint we completed last month: [Click here](#)

Older Persons esports pilot.

Seeking to deliver the pilot in December 2023 or Jan 2024. Tentative plans for three-day course:

Day one: [Click here](#)

Day Two: [Click here](#)

Day Three: [Click here](#)

Evaluation scope at the final stage of development and will follow. Link to NHS to assist.

ESI London & BAFTA – interesting comment....

Both were an outstanding success, and humbled by the kind reception ESG Gaming (with Sweet Cabin and Fraser Esports) received. Interestingly, a few people suggested (i) 'ESG Gaming' as a brand isn't what we do and (ii) comments on our vision statement.

ACTION: No action right away, but discussion point.

Director of Education.

It is proposed that we appoint James Fraser-Murison as our Director of Education. Mindful of our diversity, we propose (i) the Vanguard Programme is focused on prioritising members who are aged 18 - 25yrs and, where possible, those from minority communities, women and members of the LGBTQI community and (ii) we will bring on a couple of students to help with events and input into projects, again we target recruitment to bring in different insight.

ACTION: Discussion point at the meeting.

Lee Willows

01 November 2023