

Proposal for a Unified Karate Body for English Karate

1. Introduction

An exploratory meeting on Karate Unification was convened by the Sport and Recreation Alliance (S+RA) at their offices on 28th October 2011. The meeting was attended by 4 out of the 5 Karate members of the S+RA: AMA, EKF, FEKO and KE. NAKMAS did not attend but their Chairman, Joe Ellis, sent his best wishes for a successful meeting.

The meeting received a presentation by Tim Lamb, Chief Executive of the S+RA, on the opportunities for Karate if it could be unified; principles of Karate Governance and a possible structure for a unified body, working title 'The Karate Council of England'. The meeting agreed that it would be worth exploring this idea in more detail at a future meeting of the same membership, with the possible addition of NAKMAS.

A second meeting took place on 16th December 2011, attended by AMA, EKF, FEKO, and KE at which an earlier version of this paper was discussed. The identification of unification as a key issue in the development of Karate in England was supported by all present although it was recognised that the WKF mandate held by the EKF and the WKF statutes would be problematic.

At the conclusion of the meeting Tim Lamb felt that progress that had been made and the 4 groups should meet again on their own to see if the obstacle of the WKF Rules could be overcome. This course of action was agreed by all present. Subsequently the EKF felt unable to join another meeting unless all groups agreed to conform to the WKF statutes and resign from all other World bodies (see paragraph 9, below). This requirement was not felt to be reasonable by the other 3 groups who agreed to meet on the 24th January 2012 and discuss the formation of the Council described in this paper. At that meeting it was agreed to form a unified body to be called the English Karate Council with the governance structure set out below.

2. Support for Karate unification

Some of the most senior Karateka in the major styles of Karate in Britain as well as many of England's most successful competitors have formally lent their support to the principle of a Sport England recognised Governing Body for Karate.

3. Why unification should be discussed

The popularity of Karate in England continues to grow. While this provides a significant opportunity for Karate, it also creates a significant threat to the sport as a whole. While undoubtedly there are a number of bone fide Federations and Associations that are promoting participation and excellence in a safe and disciplined environment, there are also many 'one-man-band' type bodies that seek only to use Karate for personal gain and profit.

While it may not be difficult for those already involved in Karate to identify such 'rogue-traders', for a member of the general public with little or no experience of Karate it may be virtually impossible to distinguish between the 'good' and the 'bad' of the Karate world. This lack of differentiation poses

a significant threat. In the eyes of the public one bad news story has the potential to tarnish all Karate Federations and Associations and the sport itself.

While unification would not eliminate bad practice, it would provide a platform which allowed Karate to continue to develop and excel to the overall benefit of Karate.

4. Governance Principles

a) The Voluntary Code – The S+RA have published a Voluntary Code of Good Governance for the Sport and Recreation Sector which is supported by Government and Sport England. The Code is divided into 7 Principles, which are:

1. Integrity – Acting as Guardians of the Sport
2. Defining and evaluating the role of the Board
3. Delivery of Vision, Mission and Purpose
4. Objectivity – Balanced, Inclusive and Skilled Board
5. Standards systems and controls
6. Accountability and transparency
7. Understanding and engaging with the sporting landscape

Thirty governing bodies who are members of the S+RA, plus the S+RA itself, have already signed up to the Code and the English Karate Council has agreed to work towards the Code's seven principles.

b) Timothy Dutton, Q.C.

Timothy Dutton was asked to investigate and report on the World Class Payments Bureau set up by Sport England. The Bureau was used to fund a number of sports, including Karate. Mr Dutton devoted 40 pages of his report to Karate and made a recommendation that Karate establish "economical and effective governance" with appropriate professional advisors on any new Karate governing body.

5. The English Karate Council – a possible structure and method of operation

The Council would be established from major Karate Federations and Associations in England who each have a substantial membership of over 5,000 and are active in governing Karate. It would initially draw its membership from:

Amateur Martial Association

Federation of English Karate Organisations

Karate England

Plus any other bona fide organisations having a minimum of 5,000 members.

In order to promote inclusivity:

Associate membership would be available to those organisations that fall below the 5,000 figure but have a minimum of 500 members. Smaller groups could join by seeking membership of the three founder groups.

It is important to note that the English Karate Council would not seek to interfere with or replace the work of its member Associations or Federations. Members of individual Federations and Associations would continue to be members of those bodies. It is the Federations or Associations that would be members of the Council.

Rather the Council would work with the member organisations and establish portfolios of activity, which would consolidate good Karate practice and use those agreed protocols to govern Karate.

The portfolios could be:

- a) Instruction/Coaching guidelines,
- b) Grading system and technical standards
- c) Child and Vulnerable Adult welfare
- d) Equality and diversity
- d) Promotion of Karate and press and public relations
- e) Karate development from grassroots to elite

The Council would be an over-arching umbrella body which would not duplicate what already exists or add unnecessary bureaucracy. It would, however, need to demonstrate to Sport England that it effectively governed a substantive part of Karate in England, so all member Associations and Federations would need to 'sign up' to the portfolios above, and ensure their clubs followed the protocols.

The English Karate Council would be composed of, say, up to 3 representatives of the major groups currently giving a 9 person Council rising to 15 if the EKF and NAKMAS joined at a later date. The Council would elect a Chair from those representatives on an annual basis. It would set out the vision and strategic direction for Karate in England. It would appoint a Management Committee who would be charged with implementing the portfolios referred to above and report back on a quarterly basis.

6. Composition of The Management Committee

It is proposed that the Management Committee be composed of the following:

- 1 The Chair
- 2 Karate representatives drawn from the current groups on the Council. There would be one representative per group, inclusive of the Chair - at this point, up to 3 inclusive of the Chair (5 should the EKF and NAKMAS become involved).
- 3 Advisors (ex-officio), in the following fields:

Governance

Finance

Legal Matters

4 An Administrator (non-voting) - who would also be responsible for Press and Public Relations

7. Appointments to the Committee

The Chair would be the Chair of the English Karate Council

Karate Representatives

These would be chosen on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of the political and technical history and present structure of English Karate and have extensive experience in Karate teaching/coaching and administration. They would need to demonstrate robust evidence of their commitment to Karate's development for the benefit of all its practitioners and share a common role of promoting high quality Karate throughout England, irrespective of style or affiliation.

Advisors

Each of the advisor roles would be defined by a job description agreed by the English Karate Council. Recruitment to the roles (which could be unpaid) would be by inviting expressions of interest from Karateka in the membership groups who have the necessary skills and experience to fulfil these roles. This would reflect the Dutton recommendations for economical governance; it would also capitalise on the rich variety of skills available within the Karate community. Appointments to the posts would be determined by the Council.

The Administrator

This post would be recruited from within or outside the participating groups.

The position could be paid, when funding is available, and would provide support to both the Council and the Management Committee.

8. Future Funding

In the future, should Lottery or other public funding be awarded to Karate these arrangements would need to be reviewed and full or part time appointments made. Alternatively the Council could in the future consider entering into an arrangement with another governing body, buying in services from them.

9. International Affiliation and Competition

It was proposed that the 3 member groups of the English Karate Council would retain their affiliation to World Union of Karate Federations ,World Karate Confederation and World United Karate Organisation as well as relevant World Single-Style Associations. It was proposed that competitors would be free to choose which Rules they wished to follow and an agreed system of transfer across codes could be explored to enable the largest possible pool of Karateka to be selected from in the national context. The member groups would maintain their current affiliations to the relevant world bodies. At national level there would continue to be single Association championships as happens now. Thus far it has not proved possible for the EKF to commit to joining the new body because of WKF rules and therefore the affiliations would not include the WKF at this time.

Timescales

If the above principles are agreed, the following timescale could be followed:

Agreement to the formation of the English Karate Council	January 2012 (Achieved 24/1/12)
First meeting of the English Karate Council and adoption of a constitution	15 March 2012
Appointment of Management Committee	15 March 2012
Preparation of Portfolio plans	Jan - April 2012
Agreement of Portfolio plans by Council	June 2012
Pre-application submission to Sport England	July 2012
Full application for Governing Body status to Sport England	Sept 2012

Conclusion

The above proposals could work given the goodwill and co-operation of all concerned. The support and guidance of the Sport and Recreation Alliance will be important in the development of Karate Unification in the months ahead.

John Bell
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 Chair of Karate England

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