***NORTHERN ATHLETICS***

***ANNUAL OPEN MEETING***

*Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November 2014*

The President of Northern Athletics Miss Janette Tomlins, took the Chair and read the notice convening the meeting.

A one minute silence was observed in memory of colleagues who had passed away during the year. These included:

Peter Allen Bill Dance Maureen Fletcher

Mike Morley Bill Woods

***1) Attendance***

*Present:*

*Officers & Executive Board of Northern Athletics*

Miss J Tomlins (President), B Heywood (Chairman), M Fletcher, S Gaines, K Taylor, A Williams.

*Club & County Representatives:*

Altrincham & DAC (M Welford), Barnsley & DAC (M Fletcher), Barton & DAC (Mrs C Bellamy), Bingley H&AC (C Daniel), Blackburn H&AC (G Davis, T Wood), Border H&AC (K Taylor), City of York AC (KR Everton), Doncaster AC (T Bailey), East Lancs CC (W Cooper), Gateshead H & AC (C Betts), Holmfirth H&AC (B Heywood), Humberside AA (E Bellamy), Leeds City AC (S Linsell, Mrs P Schofield), Liverpool H&AC (A Williams), Liverpool P&SAC (R Wood), Middlesbrough AC (Mandale) (A Ward), North Shields Poly (B Johnson), Preston H&AC (A Parker), Rotherham H&AC (S Gaines), Sale Harriers Manchester (J Frost), South Yorks AA (GL Outwin), Spenborough & DAC (Mrs S Bolland, Ms A Pearson), Stockport H&AC (J-P Kearns), Trafford AC (M Harris, A Johnson, W Murphy), Wigan & DHAC (Mrs M Grayston, Mrs J Lishman), Wirral AC (LJ Carroll, N Waterson), Wombwell SAC (Miss J Tomlins),

Past Presidents:

Mrs PM Green, JN Green, R Lawton, W McGuirk, KA Oakley

Apologies for Absence:

ND Orr (Hon Treasurer), GA Agar, M Bateman, Mrs A Brimage, Mr R Brimage, M Dooling, W Nicholls, GA Wright. Birkenhead AC, Chorley AC, East Cheshire Harriers, Skyrac AC

***2) Minutes of the Previous Meeting***

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2013. Acceptance of the Minutes was proposed by A Williams and seconded by T Bailey and were unanimously accepted as a true record and duly signed.

***3) Matters Arising***

No items were raised for discussion.

***4) Annual Report***

The President presented the Annual Report for 2013/14 and thanked the Executive Board and the various contributors for their work over the year and for their support in his role as President.

The President invited the discipline representatives to speak.

1. *Cross Country*

Arwel Williams summarised the Cross Country report and particularly mentioned the importance for the development of athletes through representative matches. He added that the 2015 Cross Country Championships would be held at Pontefract Park.

Steve Gaines reported on the Northern Cross Country Relays and noted that entry numbers were now increasing. SG also noted that a grant of £1500 had been received from the ECCA for attendance at the Home Countries International and that this would be repeated in 2015.

1. *Road Running*

Ken Taylor reported on the Road Running activities over the past year and said that he had tried to include all activities in the Annual Report. He commented on the increased entries in the Ribble Valley 10K (NA Championship) and said that the 10M Championships would be at the Stockport 10 this year.

He went on to thank Ken Smith, Championship Secretary for Road Running, for all his work on championship events, the officials and volunteers and the clubs that had hosted our various championships although he added that there had been some concern about the lack of available marshals at Heaton Park and that the problem of marshals had also arisen at Birchwood Park for the Autumn Relays. He summarised the results of the 6,4 and YA relays at Birchwood and ended by thanking the Road Team manager Rob Cameron.

1. *Track & Field*

Malcolm Fletcher spoke to the Track & Field report and noted that entry numbers had increased across the championships apart from u20 age group which had suffered due to the recurring clash with the County Schools championships, a problem which will probably arise again in 2015.

Free entry to the NA Senior Championships will once again be offered to senior county champions in a continuing effort to increase and improve entries.

MF noted that Under 13 events were being introduced into the Indoor Championships and, if successful, would be brought into the outdoor championships too. Indoor Open and Championship competitions had continued to flourish and he thanked the very professional officials who managed the events in the face of huge numbers in many events.

Chris Betts asked if free entry for County Champions would be extended to younger age groups but MF said that it was only for senior athletes in the hope of increasing their participation. Arwel Williams remarked that Merseyside AA had used the grant from EA to fund U17/U15 county champions’ entry into Northern Championships.

AW raised the possibility of hosting additional Open Meetings at EIS but it was agreed that there would be difficulties in finding additional dates at appropriate times.

Malcolm Rogers addressed a number of technical issues including information on a national shortage of gunpowder for starters and noted that an electric gun was being looked at for use with the NA Start equipment used for the indoor meetings and with photo finish equipment. Jan Lishman had been looking at a system used for deaf athletes and she would be sitting on the UK consultation group for the system

MR also reported that Moira Gallagher had received an award as Development Official of the year for her leadership and work with officials moving through the levels.

With reference to Championships, MR added that it was time to look beyond the usual officials, who could now be appointed as mentors, and appoint those officials looking to move forward as Competition Directors. He noted that techniques of planning and event management which had previously only been used at televised events could be adapted to Northern events and added that the North were at the forefront of such innovation.

The President then thanked everyone who had contributed to the Annual Report and commended it to the meeting. Acceptance of the Annual Report was proposed by Robbie Wood, seconded by Les Outwin and carried unanimously.

***5) Annual Accounts***

In the absence of the Hon Treasurer the Chairman introduced the Annual Accounts and raised the following points:

1. A balance sheet to the year end had been circulated and BH noted that yearly income had reduced due to lower bank interest and less income from photo finish.
2. Expenditure had also been reduced and Track & Field expenditure had seen a big drop due to the loss of the Malta fixture. The deficit had reduced by £14,000.
3. Sponsorship payments from Start Fitness had also reduced and NA was becoming increasingly reliant on the EA Competition Grant.
4. BH expressed his thanks to Derek Nicholson and the photo finish team who had continued to raise hire fees.
5. BH ended by pointing out that a reasonable amount of money remained in reserve but levels continued to fall. BH referred the meeting to the Annual Report for the Hon Treasurers full report.
6. Acceptance of the Accounts was proposed by Mrs Pat Green, seconded by Ken Taylor and unanimously approved.

***6) Elections to Executive Board***

***a) Election of Officers***

*i) President*

Mrs Jean Simpson was confirmed as President for 2014/15

*ii) Chairman*

Mr Brian Heywood was elected Chairman

*iii) Honorary Treasurer*

Mr Nigel Orr was elected Honorary Treasurer

***b) Discipline Representatives***

The following were elected as discipline representatives to the NA Executive Board:

*Cross Country*

Steve Gaines Arwel Williams

*Road Running*

Ken Taylor Bob Brimage

*Track & Field*

Malcolm Fletcher Malcolm Rogers

Mrs Jean Simpson took over the President’s chain of office from the 2013/14 incumbent Miss Janette Tomlins. Janette thanked NA for a great year as President and wished Jean an enjoyable term of office.

***7)***  ***Appointment of Auditors***

The accountancy practice of Baker Tilly was re-appointed as Northern Athletics Auditor.

***8) Future Funding***

Steve Gaines led a discussion on the future of Northern Athletics. SG had re-iterated the previous year’s position in pre-reading which had been circulated.

The Hon Treasurer had assessed that reserves and funding at current levels would allow 2-3 years of continuation of current levels of competition provision but EA had informed the areas that the current level of grant would taper down to zero over the next few years. A survey conducted online by NA had received 1600 responses with 98% of those supporting the continuation of Northern Athletics, 92% had agreed that they would be happy to make a financial contribution to support that.

The other two areas (South & Midlands) had been brought into the discussions and a ‘partnership’ with EA was being sought in which areas could support grass roots functions of EA as they are much closer to clubs/athletes and local coaches than EA.

SG then brought the meeting up to date with the progress that had been made since the 2013 AOM. Meetings between the areas and the EA Board had taken place and Chris Jones (EA CEO) had pledged his support for the areas and asked for a formal proposal to the EA Board asking for funding from the affiliation fee to be directed to the areas. Meanwhile CJ had confirmed that the area competition grants would be maintained at the same level for 2015/16 rather than being cut as had been originally planned.

Currently NA reserves were £40-50,000 better than had been expected and the aim now was to achieve sustainability for the future, hence the request for funding from affiliation fees. In addition to maintaining competition at the same level, some certainty of the future was also required for succession planning amongst office staff and management boards in all the areas.

The proposal submitted by SG has now been tabled for the next EA Board meeting in February and SG had offered to speak to the Board to answer questions and put forward supporting evidence for the plan such as the reduction in costs that had resulted in the lowest NA budget deficit since 2007. These cuts in expenditure included lower expenses payments to officials, reduction in contract hire etc and a rise in income through such as entry fees.SG went on to say that in order to break even NA needed £72K pa but a little extra on top would allow NA to help EA in areas where assistance was required or in development areas.

George Davis asked whether a levy of £3 on the affiliation fee be enough to sustain NA or would that be a top up in addition to the EA grant. SG replied that the EA accounts would show a £1.5m deficit next year which they will have to consider with regard to affiliation fees, grants etc. GD went on to say that EA could stop the current competition grants and divert the £3 levy to the areas which would save them money as the clubs and athletes would be paying for the areas.

Ken Taylor asked about sustainability if the levy was introduced and SG said that it could be a continuing arrangement as the funding of the areas became an established part of the affiliation fee. It was also noted that a further solution could be sought by re-introducing the Road Race Levy fee which could then be diverted back to areas.

Tony Wood referred back to the previous year’s AOM at which there had been much discussion about links with EA. He went onto say that as nothing had been decided it sent a message of a lack of determination to control the destiny of NA, and that unfortunately there had been no opportunities for club representatives to discuss the proposals with their club committees and members, and he asked who had given permission for NA to submit to EA. Hewent on to say that from the results of the recent survey it is very clear that NA is valued by clubs and asked whether, if the £3 proposal is accepted by EA would it be possible to maintain NA’s independence and what control would areas have over their own finances. There was also a distrust of EA given that although they may say that they would divert the £3 levy to the areas, as they would be in control of the money, it may not all be paid.

The Chairman offered a little background to the relationship between EA and the areas and explained that a few years previously although EA had produced a contract for each of the areas to sign, nothing in the agreement dictated how NA should run their affairs. As it turned out, the agreement was never signed but the competition grants were still paid annually. BH concluded by saying that EA know the benefits of area competition and now recognize that it is a necessary level for the development of athletes and officials.

SG continued by saying that the intent is to work in partnership with EA for two reasons, a) because it’s the right thing to do for the Northern clubs and athletes and b) for practical reasons as in raising the levy, the work we can do on EA’s behalf and the impact and advantages that will bring to clubs. SG said that NA should pursue partnership in the first instance but have a fallback position if that proposal is unsuccessful.

TW accepted this but reiterated the distrust of EA at grassroots level and warned of the danger of NA losing control of it’s own future and relying too much on EA for funding, and wondered how many others felt the same way. SG said that should agreement be reached then a legal framework would be put in place to ensure that this would not happen. Ken Oakley observed that the sport has always lost through fragmentation and a partnership would be advantageous. He added that the wording would need to be tight but as a principle it is acceptable and necessary. He added that a level of trust needs to be exercised but that the terms should be legally enshrined. He noted that although the idea of NA being independent had been raised it would cost at least £1 per athlete to set up a system and as there is already a governing body they should be made use of to establish a firm foundation for the future if the procedures are followed through correctly.

Freda Clarke complimented SG on his work and recalled that when EA were first established there was an immediate distrust due to the loss of income to areas and the fact that EA wished to close down the areas. She said that it appears that intentions have now come full circle and the areas are now seen as being important in competition terms, however she concluded that all agreements should be legally watertight before proceeding. FC also thanked all those who were continuing the fight to maintain the three areas.

Roger Lawton pointed out that the areas had not been included in the current edition of the Rule Book but should be back in in the future. He suggested that if the areas can achieve sustainable funding then they would have to be accepted and reinstated in the Rule Book. He also said that the cost of starting a Northern registration scheme would be approximately £100K which was prohibitive.

The Chairman then asked the meeting to vote on the proposal of whether NA has support to continue with negotiations with EA regarding future funding. A show of hands recorded a large majority and therefore the motion was carried and approval obtained.

The Chairman thanked Steve Gaines and there being no further business, closed the meeting at 12.45pm.

Signed : ………………………………………………………. President

Date : ……………………………………