

NORTHERN ATHLETICS ANNUAL OPEN MEETING

Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th November 2016

The Chair of Northern Athletics Mr Tony Wood, took the Chair and welcomed all present to the meeting.

A one minute silence was observed in memory of colleagues who had passed away during the year. The silence also reflected that the meeting was taking place on Remembrance Sunday.

Dr Leo Carroll
Roger McCall

Sheila Markendale
Arthur Cockroft

John Newsome
Eric North

A request to add David Parry to the obituary list was noted.

1) Attendance

Present:

Officers & Executive Board of Northern Athletics

T Wood, R Brimage, M Fletcher, IM Rogers, K Taylor, A Williams, Mrs E Williams
(co-opted)

Club & County Representatives:

AAA of England (W Nicholls), Altrincham & DAC (MJ Welford), Barnsley & DAC (M Fletcher), Bingley H&AC (C Daniel), Blackburn H&AC (GS Davies), Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde AC (Mrs M Crompton), Border H&AC (K Taylor), Bury AC (J Simpson, K Smith), City of Sheffield & Dearne AC (Ms L Rushworth), Darlington H&AC (ND Orr), Derby (J O'Sullivan), Doncaster AC (T Bailey, T Winmill), East Cheshire & Tameside AC (EJ Murphy), Gtr Manchester AA (Mrs J Simpson MBE), Hallamshire Harriers Sheffield (IM Rogers), Holmfirth H&AC (B Heywood, T Cock), Lancashire AA (T Wood), Leeds City AC (S Linsell), Leeds Schools AA (Mrs P Schofield) Leigh H&AC (S Jamson), Liverpool H&AC (A Williams, Mrs E Williams), Liverpool P&SAC (W Bridson), Liverpool & DXCU (R Wood), Longwood H&AC (D Owen), Merseyside AA (Mrs A Brimage), Middlesbrough AC (Mandale) (A Ward), North of England T&FL (A Johnson), Preston H&AC (A Parker), Rossendale H& AC (S Johnson), Rotherham H&AC (S Gaines), Sale Harriers Manchester (J Frost, M Delaney), Salford Mets AC (Ms J Crowther), Skyrac AC (GA Agar), Trafford AC (M Harris), Wallasey AC (R Brimage), Wigan & DHAC (Mrs M Grayston, Mrs J Lishman), Wirral AC (N Waterson), Wombwell SAC (Miss J Tomlins).

Past Presidents:

Mr B Heywood, Mrs J Simpson MBE, R Lawton, D Nicholson, JL Driscoll.

Apologies for Absence:

M Bateman, J Dennis, M Dooling, S Gaines, F Gorman, Mrs PM Green, JN Green
W McGuirk ND Orr, L Outwin, GA Wright, Bridlington RR, Chesterfield & DAC.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 14th November 2015 were approved as a true record. Acceptance was proposed by Mrs A Brimage and seconded by Mrs M Grayston and carried by a unanimous vote.

4) Annual Report

The Chairman introduced the Annual Report for 2015/16 and noted that it comprised three main areas each of which were prepared by the Executive Board members responsible. These being: Cross Country – Steve Gaines & Arwel Williams, Road Running Ken Taylor & Bob Brimage, Track & Field – Malcolm Fletcher & Malcolm Rogers.

i) TW then invited AW to speak to the Cross Country Report. AW stated that the report as published makes the current situation clear and asked if there were any questions. He went on to say that it had been a successful season which had seen increased entry and finisher numbers in both the Championship events. He also noted that Northern teams had been present at three matches and had had a very successful season with many Northern athletes being selected for England representative teams following impressive performances in Northern vests. AW thanked Steve Gaines and Team Administrator Rob Cameron for their hard work in pulling teams and arrangements together and improving the selection and administrative process over the year.

AW concluded by reminding the meeting that the 2017 Cross Country Championships would be at Knowsley Safari Park.

ii) Bob Brimage presented the Road Running report and noted that all results were available in the Annual Report and on the NA website. BB went on to thank Ken Taylor for producing the report and Ken Smith for his work as Championship Secretary. KT added a report of the Inter Area match at the Abbey Dash. The Women's team had finished in first place and the Men's team had placed third. There were also thanks extended to Eileen Ingham for the photographs that she had submitted to the website to accompany the reports.

iii) Malcolm Fletcher led the Track & Field report and said that it had been a long process throughout the year with the Indoor season becoming ever more important. He thanked Malcolm Rogers and Elaine Williams for their assistance and support.

MF reported that the 1st Indoor Open Meeting had been held at the EIS Sheffield the previous day and thanked the Officials who attended the meeting without claiming expenses which helped to make the events profitable. All the Indoor meetings were scheduled to be held at the EIS and the 2017 summer events would be at Sport City, Manchester, Leigh Sports Village and Costello Stadium, Hull. MR continued by saying that although ideally venues across the North would be used this sometimes was not possible which was why there had recently been a bias towards North West venues as support and costs as well as facilities have to be taken into account.

Bob Welfare asked why the Northern Combined Events Championships had to be held at Bedford with the EA event as he felt that it was an unacceptable distance to expect athletes to travel for a Northern Championship and asked whether a solely Northern Championship event could be re-introduced to the calendar. MR replied that it was the first time there had been a complaint about the NA Championships being held alongside the EA event but that he was happy to take the request on board and look at the feasibility of a single Northern event.

TW asked BW to submit his ideas and suggestions to MR and the matter would be discussed by the Executive Board.

TW asked whether there were any further points to raise with reference to the Annual Reports after which KT proposed acceptance, seconded by Anne Brimage and the Report was accepted unanimously.

5) Annual Accounts

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his work and commitment over the previous year. He was unable to be present. TW said that in his report Nigel Orr commented that he had been pleasantly surprised by the steady improvement in the financial situation over the last two to three years

The Income and Expenditure sheets and Budget report were included in the Annual Report and it was pointed out that the deficit was now £13K, half that of the previous year and substantially less than the projected deficit. TW went on to say that if similar progress continues then by March it should be possible to have a balanced budget assuming that the EA grant of £41K was received as expected. NDO in his report had added that the £12K grant from Start Fitness was very valuable and also very much appreciated.

The report continued by noting a 21% reduction in office costs and the success of Cross Country and Road events had generated a sizeable income and although Track & Field events were more costly, the deficit on T&F was also greatly reduced partly due to the cut in officials' travel expenses for which he thanked them all for their acceptance of the reduction.

NDO in his report mentioned an item on the Income/expenditure sheet which referred to the Northern T&F League and a sum owing to Northern Athletics of £18K. He said that a League EGM would be held following an agreement which had been reached between the League and NA with regard to the repayment of the sum.

NDO concluded his report by thanking the NA office staff for their assistance over the year and TW asked whether there were any questions.

Steve Jamson asked to what 'other income' on the Balance sheet referred and TW replied that it was income for Photo finish equipment hire after which he thanked Derek Nicholson for his continuing work with the Photo finish system.

Brian Heywood asked why there was a road relay event listed in April when the 12 and 6 Stage relay date was 25th March and TW replied that there would be three road relay events listed in the 2016/17 accounts.

John Driscoll asked whether the net income reflected whether more or fewer athletes had taken part in NA events and it was suggested that in future competitor numbers could be included in the Annual Report. TW replied that numbers were often dependent on venues and that numbers often increased when central venues were used with a drop being seen when venues in the outer areas were used. However he added that NA still wanted to ensure that outlying areas were still supported by being used as event venues although numbers often dropped significantly and official's expenses were higher.

Tim Cock made a proposal that in future participation numbers should be included in the Annual Report and BH added that in the past Cross Country entry and finisher trends had been shown. Arwel Williams pointed out that the Cross Country Relays had shown a 20% increase in entries and BH asked that the trend document should be published on the NA website.

BH proposed acceptance of TC's proposal and this was seconded by Roger Lawton and passed unanimously.

6 Elections to Executive Board

a) Election of Officers

i) President

Mr Roy Swinbank was confirmed as President for 2016/17.

ii) Chairman

Mr Tony Wood was elected Chairman.

iii) Mr Nigel Orr was elected Honorary Treasurer.

b) Election of Discipline Representatives

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

Cross Country

Steve Gaines

Arwel Williams

Road Running

A ballot was held for the Road Running representatives to the Executive Board and Bob Brimage and Ken Smith were duly elected.

Track & Field

Malcolm Fletcher

Malcolm Rogers

Mr Roy Swinbank took over the President's Chain of Office which was presented by Mr Malcolm Fletcher. Mr Swinbank gave a short speech thanking Northern Athletics for the honour and noted the sad loss of the 2015/16 President Dr Leo Carroll.

7) *Constitutional Amendments*

The proposal to amend Clause 5.2 :

'The Chairman of the meeting shall be the President or in his/her absence the Chairman of the Organisation'.

to read:

'The Chairman of the meeting shall be the current Northern Athletics Chairman or in his/her absence the President of the Organisation'

The amendment was accepted and approved with BH voting against the amendment.

8) *Appointment of Auditors*

NDO reported that he was in the process of negotiating with alternative auditors with regard to reducing costs and asked for approval for the matter to be dealt with at Board level when negotiations are completed. The request was unanimously approved.

9) *The Future of Northern Athletics*

The Chairman introduced the discussion by outlining the chronology of events since the 2015 AOM.

TW said that the areas had been waiting for further discussions with EA and funding had eventually been confirmed as £41K for 2016/17 based on the number of registered athletes at £1 per athlete. The three areas had met in January and pressed for a further meeting with EA in March to obtain confirmation of their plans. All three areas had been represented along with a significant number of EA members. TW said that the areas could not have expressed their requirements any more clearly and had left the meeting believing that they had been heard and that action would be forthcoming. However when the EA Board met and discussed the matter they had decided that due to possible cuts to their own funding from Sport England they could not commit to any further funding and were now only willing to commit to a six month pro-rata payment of £20.5K payable from April to September 2017 giving the justification that they were unsure of Sport England funding and were considering redundancies within EA. The areas emphasized that they were not asking for money from the SE grant but rather from the athlete registration fee.

Certain alternative suggestions were made by EA to boost area funding such as a basic nominal club affiliation fee but this was rejected as insufficient to meet demand and it was agreed that other possibilities must be explored.

The areas then agreed that all three areas would conduct a nationwide survey to assess what the feeling was amongst clubs and athletes with regard to area funding. EA was informed of this and the 6 month offer of £20.5K was subsequently withdrawn by the EA CEO, Chris Jones. The survey was currently underway and had so far had 2000 responses with 95% supportive of the areas continuing to provide competition with most supporting an athlete affiliation fee of between £3 and £5.

TW stressed that although the areas want to continue co-operating and communicating with EA he said that the areas must begin to look out for themselves and keep the funding issue at the top of the agenda. He also noted that the need to cut costs and increase income must continue as although the budget should balance next year, this will only be achievable if the EA grant is forthcoming.

Steve Jamson said that it appeared that the governing bodies had a lack of interest in the work of the areas and that the analysis of the survey was easy to interpret. TW said that the information was now on the NA website. Tim Cock asked whether all clubs had been emailed with the information and that all club members should be encouraged to pay and that he wouldn't be against all paying an additional registration fee for area competition and that it was necessary to take action in order for NA to continue.

Brian Heywood asked whether the Midland Counties and the South of England areas were taking the same actions as NA by holding a survey of their athletes. TW replied that they were and the SEAA had launched their survey at the same time as NA although MCAA were a little later and would be keeping the survey open longer but that he hoped that by the time all the surveys closed an accurate assessment of views could be made. BH added that former EA Chair Peter King had previously demanded that the problem should be sorted it seemed that now a new EA Chair had been appointed things were grinding to halt once more and suggested that Mike Harris (member of EA Board) should be asked for news. TW said that the duration of the survey would probably be extended to cover the December Open event at Sheffield in order to build up as much evidence as possible and stressed that funding cuts did not only affect areas but county associations as well. The EA 2017 plans in their latest booklet made no mention of either area or county competition and it seemed that much more emphasis was placed on jogging/health projects and similar initiatives. This booklet showed the direction of travel for EA pressing for more money from Sport England for jogging/health initiatives.

J O'Sullivan expressed frustration that more importance was placed on increasing participation than on competition and suggested that entry fees should be increased.

Andy Parker asked about the impact on administration costs if an affiliation fee was introduced bearing in mind that not everyone pays fees on time and that it would be advisable for EA to collect any fees. It was noted that electronic payment systems make collection easier and cheaper.

SJ said that if athletes want to compete then they must expect to pay and asked how NA would ensure that they did, it was also suggested that an extra £1 or £2 could be added to each athletes first competition entry each year. Anne Brimage said that it would be easier for clubs to add the extra fee to their subs and then submit the payment to NA which would cause no conflict with EA. TW said that if subscriptions could be built up then EA could withdraw their funding and NA would be in a better position to control its own destiny.

A discussion on the EA accounts followed and TW mentioned that Andy Day had attended a AAA meeting at which he had said that the cost of sending a team to the Commonwealth Games was £140K and included 25 Team Managers, and 25 guests. Ironically this was the amount needed to keep the areas going. TW pointed out that the allocation to the areas worked out at 87p per athlete out of the £14 paid to EA.

It was suggested that EA's future looked increasingly precarious with significant cuts looking likely and the confirmation of Sport England funding had been put back from November to February and this was one of the reasons that talks on area funding had stalled. EA has said that the areas are still an important part of the competition pathway but their strategic funding document was geared towards Sport England aims rather than the grassroots of athletics.

BH said that it was disappointing that the glossy strategy document contained so little about competition and Mike Harris defended the EA position by saying that there had been much discussion at Board level about increased focus on competition rather than participation over the next few years.

Malcolm Rogers said that the wider implications of the reduction of area competition meant that opportunities for athletes and officials would have a massive impact on the future of the sport resulting in fewer athletes and officials progressing through the levels of competition.

Roger Lawton concluded the discussion by saying that EA should realise that ultimately areas were not looking for funding from EA, just for them to collect area affiliation contributions and deliver it to the areas which would result not only in sustainable funding for the areas but an increase in EA income as they would no longer have to award grants to the areas.

10) Additional Item

Brian Heywood raised the matter of the eligibility of Past Presidents of NA to have an individual vote at Open Meetings. He proposed that a Constitutional amendment to allow Past Presidents to vote should be tabled and voted on at the next AOM and that this should be included on the 2017 Agenda. The proposal was approved and will be included as per the proposal.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 1.10pm

Signed : Chairman

Date :