

NORTHERN ATHLETICS ANNUAL OPEN MEETING

Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th November 2015

The Chair of Northern Athletics Mr Brian Heywood, 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:

Frank Barraclough
Joe Shellhorn

Graham Botley
Ernie Slaughter

Stuart Pailor
Terry Willis

1) Attendance

Present:

Officers & Executive Board of Northern Athletics

Mrs JM Simpson MBE, B Heywood, ND Orr, R Brimage, M Fletcher, S Gaines, IM Rogers, K Taylor, A Williams.

Club & County Representatives:

Altrincham & DAC (MJ Welford), Barnsley & DAC (M Fletcher), Blackburn H&AC (GS Davies), Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde AC (S Taylor), Border H&AC (K Taylor), Bury AC (J Simpson), Clayton le Moors AC (J Hickie), Darlington H&AC (ND Orr), Doncaster AC (T Bailey, T Winmill), East Cheshire & Tameside AC (EJ Murphy), Gateshead H&AC (C Betts), Gtr Manchester AA (Mrs J Simpson MBE), Hallamshire Harriers Sheffield (IM Rogers), Holmfirth H&AC (B Heywood), Horwich RMIH (P Wibberley), Knowsley Harriers (S Doyle) Lancashire AA (T Wood), Leeds City AC (S Linsell), Leeds Schools AA (Mrs P Schofield) Liverpool H&AC (A Williams, Mrs E Williams), Liverpool P&SAC (W Bridson), Liverpool & DXCU (R Wood), Lytham St Annes RRC (B Porter), Merseyside AA (Mrs A Brimage), Middlesbrough AC (Mandale) (A Ward), Mid Lancs XC League (Mrs D Lock), North of England T&FL (A Johnson), Pendle AC (Mrs S Markendale), Preston H&AC (R Welfare), Rossendale H& AC (S Johnson), Rotherham H&AC (S Gaines), Sale Harriers Manchester (D Brown), South Yorks AA (GL Outwin), , Trafford AC (M Harris), Wakefield DH&AC (Mrs FM Clarke MBE), Wallasey AC (R Brimage), Wigan & DHAC (Mrs M Grayston, Mrs J Lishman), Wirral AC (LJ Carroll, N Waterson), Wombwell SAC (Miss J Tomlins), Wrexham AC (D Edwards).

Past Presidents:

Mrs PM Green, JN Green, R Lawton, W McGuirk, D Nicholson, KA Oakley.

Apologies for Absence:

GA Agar, M Bateman, M Dooling, W Nicholls, GA Wright. Birkenhead AC, Chorley AC, Skyrac AC

2) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2014. Acceptance of the Minutes was proposed by A Williams and seconded by T Bailey and were unanimously accepted and duly signed as a true record subject to the addition of D Nicholson to the attendance list.

3) Matters Arising

a) Freda Clarke referred to the Chairman's report (para 3 – Annual Report) and asked where the NoE T&FL funds sit in the NA Annual Accounts. The Hon Treasurer replied that this would be picked up in his report but explained that League accounts had always been shown within NA accounts and currently stood at £25K. He noted that there were currently some issues regarding the independence of the League and this was in the process of being resolved. IMR proposed that the discussion was postponed until later in the meeting and this was accepted and agreed.

4) Annual Report

The Chairman presented the Annual Report for 2014/15 and thanked the Executive Board and the various contributors for their work over the year and for their support.

The Chairman invited the Hon Treasurer and the discipline representatives to speak.

a) Cross Country

Arwel Williams and Steve Gaines summarised the Cross Country report. The event had been held at Pontefract Park and had proved very successful with the highest number of finishers since 2008 (2095) and team numbers had also increased to a similarly high level.

Steve Gaines reported on the Northern Cross Country Relays. This was the 6th year that the event has been held and numbers have continued to increase over that time. The event is also now included on the UK Fixtures calendar and has been allocated a permanent date after the Autumn Road Relays.

b) Road Running

Ken Taylor gave the report on the 2014/15 Road Running events. All events had been well supported and profitable.

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 ended by thanking the Road Team manager Rob Cameron.

c) *Track & Field*

Malcolm Fletcher spoke to the Track & Field report and noted that entry numbers had increased across most of the championships apart from u20 age group which once again suffered due to the recurring clash with the County Schools championships, but the outstanding events of the year were once again the two indoor open meetings at Sheffield which had attracted large numbers of athletes from right across Britain.

The Indoor season as a whole had proved very successful with a profit being made on the events and whilst outdoor championships had not proved quite so well supported there had also been improvements in balancing the books.

MF ended by thanking all officials and the Executive Board for their support throughout the year.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions and commended it to the Meeting. Acceptance of the Annual Report was proposed by Anne Brimage seconded by Arwel Williams and carried unanimously.

5 *Annual Accounts*

The Hon Treasurer presented the Annual Accounts and made the following points:

- i)
 - a) An improvement in savings on the previous year's budget had resulted in assets of £237K
 - b) Sources of income were similar ie Start Fitness sponsorship of £12K and the EA Competition Grant of £39K.
 - c) NDO also thanked Derek Nicholson for his continuing work with the Photo Finish system which had produced a significant income of £12K.
 - d) Savings had been made on office costs with the only increase being in the stock held ie medals.
- ii) Competition & Championships
 - a) A full range of competitions had been held with a surplus being generated from both Cross Country and Road Running events.
 - b) The deficit on Track & Field events had been reduced, due in part to a profit of £3.6K being made on the indoor season.
 - c) NDO reported that a document had been posted on the NA website which showed the trends in income and expenditure over the eight years since NA had been in existence. He noted that the deficit had been reduced from £60K to the

current level of £27K over that period. However, he added that NA was still unsustainable at the current level of deficit.

- d) EA had confirmed funding for the current year which may increase but was not guaranteed but NDO added that NA are still looking for more sustainable income sources.
- e) The Hon Treasurer concluded by thanking the office staff and recommending the Accounts for approval.
- f) Freda Clarke asked whether EA would object to other funding sources being found and added that if they refused to allocate part of the registration fee to the Areas then they could not object to other funding streams. SG replied that this had not been discussed and the current aim was to work in partnership with EA and that discussions were still ongoing.
- g) Chris Betts asked why it was not possible to send championship entry forms and information directly to athletes as EA had told him that this was not possible even though they would be receiving extra revenue from the rise in affiliation fees. Malcolm Rogers asked which events he was referring to and CB replied that he was referring particularly to Area and County Championships. Brian Heywood said that he would float the idea and ask that it be addressed. MR noted that EA are currently making a big investment in IT systems and data analysis which might allow this to be possible.

Freda Clarke pointed out that EA were unable to separate certain expenditures and added that it was time they had correct systems for their purposes.

- h) Acceptance of the Annual Accounts was proposed by Ken Taylor seconded by Malcolm Rogers and carried unanimously.

6 *Elections to Executive Board*

a) Election of Officers

i) President

Dr Leo Carroll was confirmed as President for 2015/16.

ii) Chairman

A ballot was required to elect a new Chairman following the retirement of Mr Brian Heywood.

Both candidates made a short statement outlining their aims and ambitions for Northern Athletics.

Following the ballot, Mr Tony Wood was duly elected as NA 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

Bob Brimage

Ken Taylor

Track & Field

Malcolm Fletcher

Malcolm Rogers

Dr Leo Carroll took over the President's Chain of Office from the 2014/15 incumbent Mrs Jean Simpson MBE. Both gave a short speech thanking Northern Athletics and Jean wished Leo an enjoyable term in office.

7) Appointment of Auditors

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

8) The Future of Northern Athletics

Brian Heywood introduced the topic by noting that the process was still not as far advanced as had been hoped at the 2014 Annual Open Meeting and asked Steve Gaines to continue.

SG confirmed that the result of the 2013 online poll had been submitted to EA for discussion in 2014. He stressed that NA was now approaching a period where sustainability was becoming even more necessary as new staff would be needed within the next few years.

Regular meetings were now being held with the other areas to discuss standardisation of certain issues and practices across the three areas. It had been agreed and accepted that if the proposal for a proportion of the registration fee be allocated to the areas then we would have a reasonable valid claim to enable sustainability. However, the proposal had been put to the EA Board in September and rejected. Although it had been hoped that by now we would have achieved a positive outcome we are still moving forward with plans to enable NA to continue. He also noted that a three year agreement with EA on funding was the much preferred option rather than a 12 month rolling agreement.

Discussion on this issue continued with SG reporting that NA expenses had been reduced and income was increasing due to rises in entry fees etc. However he

added that competitions needed to be made more attractive to ensure good entry numbers and feedback suggested that we still need to work harder on competitions.

SG went on to report that Mike Harris (Trafford AC & EA Board member) had undertaken the task of looking at funding for competitions and how funds from EA should be allocated, bearing in mind that other providers such as ESAA are also dependent on funding from EA and that EA funding itself was under review from the DCMS and UK Sport with some funding streams being changed and redirected.

SG continued by saying that continued partnership agreement with EA should still be pursued as going it alone would not be practical and we should be aware that this could be the end if it is wrongly addressed.

SG then invited Mike Harris to speak to the meeting. MH began by saying that SG had summarized the situation very well and that Chris Jones (EA CEO) had given assurances of a long term agreement with the Areas and had agreed that it was desirable to move away from the uncertainty of year to year agreements which he said were no good for anyone. MH went on to say that he was now chairing a new Performance Advisory Group, members of which include Chris Jones, Andy Day and Martin Rush. He added that they had hoped to be further on in the process by now but had been waiting for research carried out on their behalf by Sheffield Hallam University. MH and Andy Day had met with each of the Areas and would be meeting to determine long term strategy within the next few weeks, he also gave an assurance of funding for the next 12 months.

MH also said that he supported the NA proposal which had suggested that a fairer allocation of Area funding would be achieved by a change in the method of calculating the percentages, ie that it should be on numbers of registered athletes not by the current means whereby the North receives a smaller allocation than the MCAA which has fewer athletes. He added that this method could be implemented by the next financial year which would result in a small increase in income for the North. MH added that the goal of a long as EA's own financial future should term funding strategy should become clearer following the March meeting of the EA Board as the DCMS should by then have made their funding strategy for EA 2014-21 public.

Brian Heywood noted that the NA reserves were reducing and that everyone was trying to reduce costs but that encouragingly, the actual deficit realized in the previous financial year was less than that projected in the Budget. BH asked why the EA Budget had been planned as 'break even' when they had actually shown a £600K surplus in addition to holding large reserves and added that this did not sit well with the athletics community. He went on to say that in March 2014 EA had been told by the Chairman, Peter King, to resolve the funding situation with regard to the Areas and that had still not been achieved. He concluded by saying that this had to be resolved and verbal support from EA did not make anything actually happen. MH agreed that the clock was 'ticking' and that he thought that the new timetable for action would achieve an end result. He agreed that EA does have substantial reserves but said that if funding is cut then these reserves will be required to continue activities and that EA were currently trying to cut costs. BH

replied that EA must realise that additional costs for various transition issues (staffing) were important and could not be delayed much longer.

Freda Clarke commented that BH had addresses many of the issues which concerned her and noted the procrastination which meant that nothing had really moved forward since the previous year and that exactly the same items were being raised. She added that the cost per athlete in order to sustain NA promotions and activities had been stated the previous year and asked why EA could not accept that figure as this was not a percentage of the EA registration fee it was an additional levy on top of the affiliation and therefore did not affect EA income. If this happened then it would mean that NA (and the other regions) would be sustainable.

Anne Brimage said that if athletes and clubs are willing to pay that additional fee, as indicated by the NA survey, then how could EA refuse to allow it.

MH replied that the EA Board had decided that this was not the best way to fund Areas. Arwel Williams said that if this solution was agreed then it would cost EA nothing and in effect they would save them money as the Area grants would no longer be needed.

BH went on to raise the fact that without Area competition there would not be an adequate pathway for athletes but also for Officials education and progression, he added that UKA do not seem to recognize this as a problem and EA need to discuss it with UK representatives. Malcolm Rogers (TAG Chairman) said that the EA Regional Chairs were meeting in November to discuss a four year plan for Officials' progression.

SG reiterated that when the North meet with the other Areas, we are in a fortunate position in that we have a good connection with Northern clubs and can speak on their behalf whereas the other Areas do not seem to have the same relationship which gives NA a strong position but raises questions regarding the possibility of a unilateral agreement with EA. SG stressed that he would prefer to remain in partnership with the SEAA and MCAA but if that option proved unachievable then NA could end up having a sole agreement with EA.

Malcolm Rogers noted that there are significant differences between the North and the other Areas due to a synergy between NA and the Northern clubs which puts NA in a far stronger position than the South and Midlands.

Ken Oakley remarked that history appeared to be repeating itself and recalled the fight between the Areas and the Sports Council and UKA in 1997/98 when it had been suggested that the North, South and Midlands were unnecessary. He noted that no other sport has this facility and that we must stick together and single agreements are not the answer. He believed that the Government were beginning to see that regions are important and asked that NA and the other Areas continue to fight for partnerships with each other and the governing bodies.

Roger Lawton concluded the discussion by saying that he didn't see what the problem is, that NA should take the South and Midlands along with them and make

EA accept that the £3 solution is the easiest option. He ended by saying that we cannot sit here at the 2016 Open Meeting and say that the situation is still ongoing.

Alan Johnson proposed a vote of thanks which was agreed and the meeting was closed at 12.45pm.

Signed : Chairman

Date :