

NORTHERN ATHLETICS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th November 2019

The Chairman of Northern Athletics, 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.

1) Attendance

Present:

Officers & Executive Board of Northern Athletics

K.F.Carr, T Wood, ND Orr, R Brimage, M Fletcher, IM Rogers, K Smith, A Williams, Mrs E Williams (*co-opted*)

Club & County Representatives:

2 Dash AC (J Howley), Altrincham & DAC (M Welford), Barnsley & DAC (M Fletcher, K Binney), Bingley H&AC (C Daniel), Blackburn H&AC (GS Davies), Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde AC (S. Taylor), Bury AC (K Smith), Cheshire County AA (A Wort), City of Sheffield & Dearne AC (Mrs S White), City of York AC (P Baxter, R Everton), Darlington AC (M Tallon), Derby AC (B Parker), Doncaster AC (T Bailey), East Cheshire & Tameside AC (EJ Murphy), Holmfirth H & AC (SD Green, T Cock), Kendal AAC (Mrs M Belk), Leeds City AC (S Linsell), Leeds Schools AA (Mrs P Schofield), Leigh H& AC (J Galvin), Liverpool H& AC (Mrs E Williams, A Williams), Liverpool Pembroke & Sefton AC (Mrs K Brown, D Brown), Longwood Harriers (D Owen), Middlesbrough AC (RA Ward), Preston H&AC (M), Queensbury RC (A Dovernor), Rotherham H & AC (S Gaines), Rothwell & DH (M Randall), Roundhay Runners (J Carvello), Sale Harriers Manchester (J Frost), Skyrac AC (GA Agar), Spensborough AC (F Reddington), Steel City Striders (Ms N Parkes), Trafford AC (A Johnson, Mrs M Johnson), UTS Run Club (M Stone), Valley Striders (R Jackson), Wallasey AC (Mrs A Brimage, R Brimage), Wigan & DHAC (Mrs M Grayston), Yorkshire RWC (T McDermot).

Past Presidents/Trustees:

Mrs A Brimage, Mrs FM Clarke MBE, Mr B Heywood, R Lawton, GL Outwin, RR Swinbank.

Apologies for Absence:

Oldham & Royton AC, Lytham St Annes RRC, Chesterfield & DAC, Ilkley H&AC, Blackpool Wyre & Fylde AC, Chorley AC & T, Hyndburn AC, Stockport H&AC, N Bishop, S Taylor, JL Driscoll, C Betts, Mrs J Simpson MBE, J Simpson, KF Carr, Mrs M Crompton, D Nicholson, M Harris, G Clarke, M Bateman.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2018 were approved as a true record.

Acceptance was proposed by M Fletcher, seconded by A Williams and unanimously approved.

4) Annual Report

The Chairman introduced the Annual Report to the meeting outlining the contents and thanking the Executive Board members and staff for their work on the Report and invited the Board members for each discipline to present their reports.

i) Cross Country

Steve Gaines spoke on the Cross Country Report and highlighted the following items.

- The 2019 Cross Country Championships at Pontefract had been held successfully and had returned a reasonable profit.
- Feedback from the Northern hosted ECCA National Cross Country Championships at Harewood House had indicated that it had been one of the best ever National Championships. The venue, organisation and even the weather had been praised and the event had even been showcased on BBC Look North. On the negative side SG noted that the venue had been expensive but ultimately it had been worth the price.
- The October XC Relays had celebrated its 10th anniversary with a further increase in entry numbers and revenue.

Tony Wood reported that a letter had been received from Roundhay Runners asking for Northern Athletics' view on the equalization of distances for men's and women's competition. SG answered on behalf of NA by saying that the only evidence currently available was feedback from an ECCA survey (at the National Champs) of 3400 competitors. Of those only 227 were completed and showed that a clear majority did not support equalization. There had been no further evidence presented that suggested that there had been any change in this view. He added that although the CAU had introduced equal distances at the behest of the IAAF, many female athletes had complained about the change. SG said that he would be happy to conduct a survey of Northern affiliated clubs if asked to do so and would ensure that any survey would be fully representative. Anne Brimage (Merseyside AA) said that three of the leading Merseyside athletes had refused the invitation to compete at the CAU Cross Country due to the increase in distances.

Gordon Agar (Skyrac AC) agreed that the proposals to change distances were putting many women off competing and felt that participation would decrease if proposals to increase distances were implemented he was against the proposed changes.

George Davies (Blackburn Harriers) asked whether the matter had been raised amongst replies to the recent NA club survey and SG replied that it had not.

Roger Lawton (PP) asked whether there had been any suggestion to reduce male distances rather than increase female ones, SG said that the ECCA had reported that no one in their surveys had favoured that approach, he added that it was the duty of competition providers to increase participation and deliver events that the

majority of people want and at the present time NA affiliated clubs do not appear to want a change.

Freda Clarke MBE (PP) said that she had attended the CAU Championships and that there had been a litany of complaints from athletes and coaches regarding the women's actual running time exceeding that of the men's and this had been compounded by bad weather and fading light due to the competition day being extended to accommodate the increased distances.

TW stated that NA was serious about its democratic process and he respected the right of clubs to raise the matter. However there were many issues to consider whether on reducing men's or increasing women's distances and also the effect on officials, course clearance and available daylight. Input would also be needed from officials regarding the viability of increases in the length of the competition day.

Steve Jamson (Leigh Harriers) suggested a practical assessment such as embedding some female athletes into men's events to assess the effect and outcomes.

Arwel Williams said that the matter had already been addressed the previous year when only one club had supported the proposal. He stressed that the CAU XC was a UKA event and had to conform to IAAF rules which did not apply to NA events and that he felt that further discussion was pandering to a minority view.

Brian Heywood (PP) noted that if any changes were made to Cross Country then other disciplines would also be affected eg 12/6 stage road relays. BH went on to propose that further discussion of the matter should be left to the discretion of the Executive Board if or until any other clubs submitted a further proposal. Barry Parker (Derby AC) suggested that there was no need for equalization in NA events as the equal distances were only currently applicable in CAU events to reflect IAAF distances. Paul Baxter (City of York) added that even though NA events were very well organized, under current distances finishing times could be very late and would inevitably be even later if women's races were of equal distance to men's.

Roundhay Runners then put forward the proposal that a survey be carried out to assess whether changes are required. TW concluded by saying that it would be discussed at Board level and if there was a majority agreement then the matter would be taken forward, he added that clubs would be kept informed of any progress

Steve Gaines confirmed that distances would remain the same for the current year.

TW thanked Steve Gaines and Arwel Williams for their work on Cross Country this year.

ii) Road Running

Ken Smith and Bob Brimage spoke regarding the Road Running report. KS began by summarizing the individual championship events: The Brampton to Carlisle race had successfully hosted the 10 mile Championship at which there had been 665 finishers. The Ribble Valley 10K had once again proved a very popular with 1500 entries and was a high quality race over a fast course and the 5K Championship at Sunderland had been of a high standard but as it was a midweek event had seen only a limited number of clubs entering.

BB reported on the Road Relay Championships and noted that high turnout for the 12 & 6 Stage Relays at Birkenhead Park along with increased numbers for the Junior 5K races. The Autumn Relays had once again been held very successfully at Sport City with a high turnout, a full report is included in the Annual Report. BB thanked the Sport City staff for their invaluable help and support in setting up the event.

BB continued by saying that the 2020 12/6 Stage which had been scheduled to be held at Catterick Garrison had had to be moved at short notice due to building work at Catterick being brought forward and would now go back to Birkenhead Park for a second year. An offer to host the 2021 event at Redcar had been made by New Marske Harriers which was being followed up. TW noted that the difficulty in finding suitable venues for events and said that invitations to host events to try and ensure movement around the North would be included in communications with clubs.

iii) Track & Field

Malcolm Fletcher, Malcolm Rogers and Elaine Williams were responsible for the T&F report and MF spoke to the meeting.

He began by saying that NA exclusively promotes 10 days of competition each year alongside 4/5 days in conjunction with other bodies. He mentioned that County Champions had once again been granted free entry into corresponding Northern events and several had taken advantage of the opportunity which had led to increased entries in certain areas. The U20 outdoor championships had benefitted from a change of date to the County Schools events which had previously clashed with NA Championships and there had been subsequent increase in U20 entry numbers.

He added that there had been a decline in the number of suitable venues for championships and mentioned that the 2020 Senior championships would be at Wavertree (Liverpool) due to increased costs at Sport City.

David Brown (LPS) said that his club would be paying NA entry fees for their athletes in the hope of increasing participation and MF said that Yorks AA had applied for the EA county grant and would be using it to pay entry fees for Yorkshire athletes, and he thanked them for this initiative.

TW thanked MF particularly for his work on T&F and stressed that it is a very challenging time across all disciplines with facility availability reducing and costs increasing and that it was necessary to encourage participation

numbers across the Championships to ensure NA's viability. He added that there was currently a drive to increase NA presence and image on social media through promotion of events and engagement with athletes which is looking encouraging. Margaret Belk (Kendal AAC) congratulated Northern Athletics for their work on raising the social media profile but added that ultimately the governing bodies hold the purse strings and people should ensure that clubs should continue to press those in elected posts and hold them to account. TW added that NA is now in a sustainable position due to the affiliation scheme and as funding (from EA) will soon be unavailable there was a need to continue driving entry numbers up.

Bernard Johnson (NSP Club) said that he had visited every councillor in his area to try to raise awareness of the necessity for track refurbishment and suggested others do similar. Bob Jackson (Valley Striders) mentioned that the cost of all venues is rising and we cannot control that. TW noted the point and said that he did not want to increase entry fees and that there was a small surplus and a contingency fund within the NA accounts which could be used for extra venue hire if necessary.

Paul Baxter noted that one issue driving athletes away from Championship events is the emergence of elite training groups and suggested that EA should be made accountable for the shortfall in area funding. SG pointed out that NA were currently working with EA which is proving fruitful in that they have allocated a grant of £33K ring-fenced to run the Officials Group projects in lieu of the competition grant which will be paid to the other areas. NA will be fully controlling the allocation of the funding. SG went on to outline the effect of the grant on T&F. He said that there had been a 5 year ongoing debate around funding but particularly nationwide the sport had been struggling with a reduction in the number of officials. NA therefore made a bid to secure funding to address the problem by establishing a dedicated group which would develop and fund projects to improve recruitment and development of officials in all disciplines.

Alan Johnson (T&FL) said that this was what the league's management had been requesting for the last 2 years and he was pleased to see that it was now happening.

Karen Brown (LPS) asked when Endurance courses would be implemented and Arwel Williams replied that they would be commencing in February. SG said that County officials' Secretaries were currently formulating procedures for holding courses. He added that NA was currently developing an officials page on the website with easy links to courses and information etc. which will be coordinated via the County secretaries. TW thanked SG for developing and fronting the project group. and Nichola Skedgel for developing our social media presence and the associated website items.

Colin Daniel (Bingley Harriers) asked whether NA would be delivering courses and SG replied that courses would continue to be delivered by EA but NA may add additional aspects such as EDM training which is part of what the grant will be spent on.

The Chairman then proposed acceptance of the Annual Report which was unanimously approved.

5) **Financial Report**

The Hon Treasurer, Nigel Orr introduced the Accounts for 2018/19 and reported a net surplus of £28K and a balance of £291K.

He specifically noted the following items:

- i) Affiliation income had exceeded expectations. 6 months of the fees had been included in the accounts with a further 6 months being carried forward to next year's accounts. This had made a big difference to the overall picture although he also pointed out that the EA competition grant had been paid for 2018/19 which will not be available for 2019/20 and without that there would have been a deficit of £4K.
- ii) With regard to expenditure NDO noted that investment had been made in a new website and a large stock of medals had been purchased.
- iii) A good contribution had been received from competition income, particularly the endurance events.

He concluded that NA was currently in a stable position thanks to the affiliation scheme which offered future sustainability.

Brian Heywood asked for clarification around the EA grant. NDO confirmed that NA will not receive a competition grant for 2019/20 but there will be a ring-fenced payment of £33K for the use of the Officials Project Group. Anne Brimage (M'side AA) asked whether the MCAA and SEAA were still going to receive the 2019/20 competition grant from EA. TW understood that they would be doing for now. EA were trying to persuade the other two areas to adopt an affiliation scheme and had confirmed that they would receive next year's grant but would not commit to any further grants being available. TW noted that in comparison Northern Athletics is financially secure but wholly reliant on the continuing support of affiliated clubs.

David Brown (LPS) asked how EA justifies charging the same affiliation fee to Northern athletes as those from other areas whilst giving grants to them but not to NA. Paul Baxter (City of York) commented the YDL are in their final year of UKA funding and that clubs with junior sections competing in the league will have to fund the competitions. He mentioned that West Yorkshire and the North East Counties had already established their own leagues and that £50K of UK funding would be lost. TW noted that it is a sign of things to come.

Gordon Agar (Skyrac AC) questioned the reasons for paying £16 affiliation fees to EA when nothing was being received in return and added that without the basics being in place EA would no longer exist.

TW replied that the areas were trying to establish a strong voice which EA would have to acknowledge and that areas still have to work with EA to develop and deliver resources etc for officials but will continue to hold them to account in other areas.

Alan Johnson (NT&FL) pointed out that whilst the YDL were still receiving funding from UKA then they are in a position to dictate policy but once the funding is withdrawn then the leagues destiny will be in its own hands,

Roger Lawton suggested that if the three areas linked together then in a few years EA would no longer be needed. TW reiterated that everyone needed to voice their concerns.

Freda Clarke (PP) said that she was pleased that the North had taken action through the affiliation scheme and congratulated the Hon Treasurer and Board. Mrs Clarke went on to remind the meeting that the AAA Athletics for the Young charity was still operating and that forms to apply for grants were now available to clubs. She asked club representatives to remind their members that these grants are available.

Acceptance of the Accounts was proposed by Barry Parker and seconded by Bob Brimage and unanimously approved.

The Chairman thanked the Hon Treasurer for his work throughout the year.

6 Appointment of Auditors

Nigel Orr (Hon Treasurer) reported that he had been looking into the options regarding the appointment of auditors and asked if he could take this back to the Executive Board for discussion and decisions which was agreed.

Brian Heywood (PP) asked that this decision be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting as it was an important item.

7) Elections to the Executive Board

a) Election of Officers

i) President

Mr Ron Needham was confirmed as President for 2019/20

ii) Chairman

Mr Tony Wood was elected Chairman.

iii) Honorary Treasurer

Mr Nigel Orr was elected Honorary Treasurer.

8) Election of Discipline Representatives

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

Cross Country

Steve Gaines Arwel Williams

was no guarantee that additional clubs would affiliate. George Davies (Blackburn Harriers) made the point that all clubs were aware of why the NA scheme was necessary as it had been debated over the previous two years and it was more about agreeing with the principle rather than the level of payment. He concluded that clubs should either support NA or not and fee level should no longer be part of the discussion.

Allan Wort (Warrington AC) asked the Board to consider changing the wording of the affiliation scheme agreement in the Constitution and on entry criteria from 'must be affiliated to EA' to 'must be affiliated to one of the Home Nations'. The Chairman said his comments had been noted.

The Chairman thanked the delegates for attending and expressing their views and declared the meeting closed at 1.00pm.

Signed :

Date :