

OXFORDSHIRE AA

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 21 OCTOBER 2022 AT EXETER HALL, KIDLINGTON

Present – Will Atkinson (HRR, Chair), Claire Lacey (RAD, Vice Chair), Hugh Morris (Treasurer), Alan Vincent (BAN), Peter O'Keefe (RAD - Oxon Schools), Gwyneth Hueter (OCAC), Jackie Breslin (RAD), Doug Scott (BAN), James Bolton (WOOD), Noel Blatchford (ABI), Andrew Garner (ABI), James Charles (BAN), Kit Villiers (HRR, Acting Minutes Secretary).

1. Apologies – Daniel Bremner, Steve Frame, Paul Groves, Lyn Hopkins, Kay Reynolds, John Sear, Mike Shipway and Dene Stringfellow.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 22 October 2021 - Agreed as a true record, save that the final line "All will be held at Exeter Hall, Kidlington at 7.30pm" should appear under Item 11 and not Item 12.

3. Matters Arising

Re: 8 b) WA had contacted Didcot who, though interested in hosting the County Road Relays, are concentrating on getting their own Didcot 5 race reinstated after the pandemic. Re: 12 a) Duty of care: AV had nothing to report; WA commented that perhaps this was largely a club issue.

4. Chairman's Report

In last year's report from the Chair, WA looked back on a year when we were just coming out of the restrictions imposed by Covid. There had been no T&F or XC County Championships and only one of the county Road events took place. Now, thanks to an army of volunteers we were almost back to a full program of events.

However, despite this there was worrying decline in the numbers participating in athletics. In Road Racing, the area WA knows best, this year, the White Horse Half numbers were down 20% compared with 2019; Thame 10k down 34%; the Charlton Motivation down 30% and the Banbury 15 down 40%. Cross Country was also affected with Chiltern League numbers down about 16% and Oxfordshire League down a similar amount. The number of women and girls had fallen faster, and most worryingly, the number of under-9s had more than halved between 2019 and 2021. WA hadn't looked at participation in Track and Field, but reports were of a similar trend there. Even Parkruns were reporting reduced attendance.

He supposed there were several worries. One was that events which depended on numbers for their viability would drop out of the calendar and that standards at the grass-roots of the sport would be further eroded. For the county it would eventually reduce the pool of potential volunteers.

He hoped this was a temporary problem and that athletes who had got out of the habit of competing would gradually come back. But in any case, it was something we should be aware of, especially at club level. The clubs were in the best position to fire up their athletes with the zest for competition and he hoped they would.

After that slightly gloomy assessment he wanted to emphasise that there was still loads of enthusiasm in the sport. And in particular he wanted to thank all the officers and volunteers, many of whom were in the hall, who have kept things going.

Comments

A propos to the decline in numbers, AV said that the situation was deteriorating amongst officials too, with meets struggling to find enough qualified personnel to put on events. However, AG

commented that there were signs that we'd possibly reached the nadir in the decline of runners, and he'd noticed that numbers were starting to pick up again; PO'K noted the same rising trend recently amongst younger athletes.

5. Communications

(a) Secretary's report and correspondence

In the absence of the Secretary, WA reported that DB is shortly moving and that we therefore need a Secretary. No significant new correspondence had been received.

(b) England Athletics/UKA matters

AV said that both are in a parlous state, with financial difficulties and staff shortages. Venues are uncertain, not helped by cash strapped situation of local councils which are finding it difficult to maintain infrastructure at tracks, etc.

(c) Schools report.

PO'K, as indicated above, stated that junior level athletics was thriving, which is good news for the future.

(d) Website

WA said he found it a useful resource, and it's easy to update. The Facebook page could do with more contributions – anyone can post on it.

6. Treasurer's Report

Audited accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting. Since we have a surplus, it was agreed to keep affiliation fees for Oxfordshire clubs at the current level for another year.

WA indicated we should still try to break on events such as the Grand Prix.

WA also reported that we were still discussing the amount of compensation Oxon AA should offer the OXL in return for the league hosting the county XC championships, our current proposal being to offer the cost of the production of the extra set of numbers required. HM advised that last year seniors paid £4 to enter the championships and juniors £2; he'd like to recommend a reduction to £3 for seniors, but the meeting agreed to defer this decision until the OxonAA/OXL discussions were resolved and it was seen how the new financing system for the league pans out.

7. Track and Field

Track & Field Committee

- The group, consisting of Jackie Breslin, James Charles, Claire Lacey, Kay Reynolds and Alan Vincent, with the recent addition of Tracey Fernandez-Jones, has met on a number of occasions during the year.
- The group oversaw the County's planning for the County Championships, for which we returned to the partnership with Bucks AA. We are currently planning a Field Judge Development Day on 29 October.
- We continue to work on attracting new officials and on encouraging active officials to seek upgrading.

COFSec

- *Oxfordshire database.* Oxfordshire now has 118 technically active officials [an increase of one on last year's figures]. Nine of these are Endurance only (no change), with 22 total in Endurance (excluding those who remain on file, but who have chosen not to renew their qualification online). There are 95 qualified Track & Field officials and 16 on assistant official status only. The past year has seen 14 new Level 1 qualifications in the County, plus 3 upgradings to Level 3).
- *SEAOA Conference.* The Conference and AGM are returning to 'real time', with this year's event scheduled for Sunday 20 November, in Chertsey. All details are on the SEAOA Website.
- *Record of experience form.* There has been a trickle of returns to date, so further returns from Levels 1- 3 would be welcomed by AV.

Photofinish

- Bookings were higher than ever this year and we covered 46 meetings (compared with 23 in 2021 and only 5 in 2020 and a pre-Covid norm of just over 30). We have not yet purchased an electronic start kit, but have upgraded much of our kit, which now puts us in a stronger position to take on double bookings. We have some initial discussions about creating an autonomous entity to take the photofinish services forward and propose that the Officers of the two county associations be empowered to agree any further decision on this matter.

Comments

A big problem on the photofinish is that no new operators are coming forward and so we are totally dependent on the existing two. The meeting decided to keep this under review.

8. Road and Cross-country**(a) Cross-country**

In DS's absence there was no report. In fact DS is standing down so there is a vacancy for an XC rep, both to report on XC general and to represent the county in respect of the Oxon XC championships. (As League Manager DS considers there is conflict of interest between league and county, over for example race distances as well as potentially over entry fees and OxonAA contribution.)

(b) Road

Last year at this time WA was reviewing a year, half of which had been lost to the Covid crisis, including two county championships, and in which there was uncertainty whether some of the most important events in the calendar would survive. Happily, things looked a lot brighter now, though not without some hangover from lockdown.

By the end of the year we will have had over 30 licensed races, including the welcome return of the Abingdon Marathon for the first time in three years. Only the Didcot 5 has failed to resurface after pandemic.

We are nearly back to a complete program of County Championship races this year. The short course championships were held at the Headington 5, and the long course was the White Horse Half. The marathon will be held tomorrow at Abingdon. In a break with tradition, as a trial, WA will be awarding the medals at the Road Race AGM on 9th December, instead of immediately after the race. We hope to avoid the problems we have had in the past of medals being awarded to the wrong people and teams after over-hasty calculations on the day.

We are still looking to reinstate the popular county road relays. Eynsham and Witney are looking at a course at Farmoor and Hook Norton have also enquired about what the race could involve for them.

The Road Race Grand Prix is back to an almost full program and has provided the closest competition for years in both team events.

The Road Race AGM will take place at Exeter Hall on Friday, 9th December, 7pm – 9pm.

9. Election of Officers and General Committee for 2022/23

President Eileen Kear

Life Vice-Presidents Alan Corfield

Eileen Kear
John Sear
Jill Slatter
Alan Vincent

Chair Will Atkinson
Vice Chair Claire Lacey
Secretary Vacant
Treasurer Hugh Morris

Officials Secretary (T&F) Alan Vincent

Website Joe

Road Race Co-ordinator Will Atkinson

XC Champs Co-ordinator Vacant

T&F Subcommittee Jackie Breslin

James Charles
Claire Lacey
Kay Reynolds
Alan Vincent
Tracey Fernandez-Jones

Schools Reps Peter O'Keefe

Alan Vincent

Welfare Officer John Sear

General Committee Andrew Garner

Dene Stringfellow
Gary Warland

10. Provisional date for 2023 AGM – 27 October 2023 at Exeter Hall, Kidlington

11. Dates for committee meetings – all will take place using Zoom

20th January 2023

14th April 2023

9th June 2023

1st September 2023

12. A.O.B.

(a) As there has been some confusion over the awarding of county medals, WA had sent round a policy document for discussion at this AGM. Essentially the rules which have been applied in road races are that:

The gold medal is awarded however low the number of entries in a category

The silver medal is awarded only if there are 5 or more entries

The bronze medal is awarded only if there are 8 or more entries.

WA believes that this is how the rules have been applied in the other disciplines too, except that in the T&F championships the rules have been relaxed for junior (U17) groups, i.e. all medals are presented if there are enough finishers to receive them.

After some discussion it was decided to retain the above system without alteration.

(b) Also on awards, it was decided to leave the year off the medal centres so that they could be awarded any year.