

OXFORDSHIRE AA

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 27th OCTOBER 2023 HELD VIA ZOOM

Present – Will Atkinson (HRR, Chair), Claire Lacey (RAD, Vice Chair), Hugh Morris (EYN, Treasurer), Alan Vincent (BAN, Acting Minutes Secretary), Jackie Breslin (RAD), James Charles (BAN), Heidi Lancaster (KRR), Kay Reynolds (RAD), John Styles (AAC), Kit Villiers (HRR)

1. **Chairman's Remarks** – WA referred to the recent sad loss of the Association's President, Eileen Kear, and of Committee Member, Noel Blatchford. A period of silence was held in tribute.
2. **Apologies** – Emma Gould (BIC), Neil Preddy (WOOD), Mike Shipway (WOOD), Doug Scott (BAN)
3. **Minutes of the previous AGM held on 21st October 2022** – Agreed as a true record – proposed Kit Villiers, seconded Will Atkinson.
4. **Matters arising** – There was still no replacement for Daniel Bremner as Secretary. WA thanked AV for agreeing to take the AGM minutes.

5. Chairman's report

The previous year WA had reported that, following the pandemic there had been a significant drop-off in the number of athletes participating in events. He was pleased to report the numbers had bounced back strongly, especially among women athletes and, in the events he had looked at, were back to the level of 2019.

On volunteering, one area where there had been concern was the Photo Finish System. However, earlier this year, the two counties came to a financial agreement with the PF team to hand over the equipment in return for continued preferential support for the next 5 years. The team now had the freedom to run the system on a more professional basis.

Sportshall was one of the areas where the County was very active, but it had gone under WA's radar when he was mainly concerned with endurance running. This year he had attended a Sportshall event in Bicester and was blown over by the enthusiasm of the young athletes and by the number of adult volunteers it took to give them such a great experience.

Besides Sportshall, the County had continued to mount successful County Championship events, the Cross Country in January, Track & Field in May and on the Road this autumn. It had also sent teams to several Inter-County events. For all this we were dependent on our affiliated clubs and a great many dedicated volunteers. WA hoped they knew how appreciative the County was and that they felt that the County was adding something worthwhile to the athletic life of Oxfordshire.

6. Communications

(a) Secretary' report

No report in the absence of a Secretary.

(b) England Athletics/UKA matters to report

AV said that at national governance level the year had been overshadowed by financial difficulties. This had been particularly evidenced by staff downsizing at UKA. Finance and resources had also been a factor in the Home Countries (England Athletics for Oxfordshire) taking over responsibility for Officials at Levels Trainee – Level 3. Another significant development was the proposal to change the age groups for ages 12 – 18, with a final decision likely to be made at the end of the current year.

(c) Schools report

AV had recently attended the Schools' EGM and AGM, along with Peter O'Keefe. The Schools' AA had had a very successful year, taking an individual bronze in the National Schools Cross Country, three golds and a silver in the Track & Field Championships and team gold in the SB Combined Events.

(d) Website

WA reported that this remained a very useful resource. He now had full access. The background software needed some updating, which Joe would be taking on. The Schools' page had been developed further.

There was some discussion of the Facebook page, which was rather dominated by Endurance content. There was a need to look at format and possible restructuring. **Action: WA**

7. Treasurer's Report

The audited accounts had been circulated prior to the meeting, along with papers on Club Affiliation Fees and a financial statement on income and expenditure.

The transfer of the PF system to Running2Time Ltd had a major impact on the accounts, with reserves up by £3k as a consequence, with some additional surplus elsewhere, eg from the Track & Field Championships.

There were 22 affiliated clubs for the year 2022-2023. Only 15 of the 22 had paid up for the Grand Prix. WA asked for a list of non-paying clubs. **Action: HM**

With reserves increasing, there might be a case for reviewing entry fees, but it was noted that Track & Field entry fees needed to be aligned with Buckinghamshire if the joint Championships were maintained. It was agreed to revisit the possibility of free polos shirts/fleeces for officials. **Action: Oxon AA Committee.** WA said that any good ideas for some spend from the reserves would be welcomed. **Action: ALL**

HM referred to his updated paper on affiliation fees. He recommended keeping these fees and those for GP entry at the same level. Agreed (proposed AV, seconded JB).

There was no offer of a venue for the Road Relays as yet. It was agreed in principle to keep the level of entry fee the same, though a final decision should be left to any organising group.

It was also agreed to peg the fee for hire of the road clock.

8. Track & Field

(a) **Track & Field Sub-Committee**

The Sub-Committee, consisting of Jackie Breslin, James Charles, Annie Fernandez-Jones, Claire Lacey, Kay Reynolds and Alan Vincent, had met on a few occasions during the year. It had again overseen the County's planning for the County Championships, for which we returned to the partnership with Bucks AA. The Sub-Committee was also planning further development days and was trying to improve conversion rates, in particular to Level 2.

(b) **COFSec Report**

AV reported the sad loss of three long-serving and loyal officials over the past year: Ray Lacey in January and then recently our President, Eileen Kear and only the previous week Noel Blatchford. They had all made a huge contribution to Oxfordshire Athletics and would be sorely missed.

Oxfordshire now had 116 technically active officials [a decrease of two on last year's figures]. Eight of these were Endurance only (one fewer), with a total of 21 qualified in Endurance (excluding one who remained on file, but who had not renewed his qualification online). There were 96 qualified Track & Field officials and 12 on assistant official or trainee status only. The past year had seen 15 new Level 1 qualifications in the County (up one from the previous year), three new Level 2 qualifications (none the previous year) plus 2 upgradings to Level 3 (two the previous year).

Further Record of ±Experience returns from Levels 1- 3 would be welcomed by AV.

The switch of the PF system to Running2Time had been completed in April 2023, thanks to excellent co-operation between the two county associations and the new company, Running2Time. The new company was flourishing, taking 60 bookings in the period May – September. It continued to enjoy a close relationship with both Counties, including the continuation of discounted charges.

(c) **Coaching**

JB said that the coaches on the Track & Field Sub-Committee were planning to set up some coaching development days.

(d) **County Championships**

These had been discussed earlier. The 2023 event had again been a success, both in terms of competition and financially, though there was some concern about falling Bucks numbers, with the matter being under review.

9. Road & Cross-Country

a) **Cross Country**

Dene Stringfellow who had organised the County Championships for several years had stepped down from that role at end of 2022 to concentrate on the League. Emma Gould had now taken on the role of Cross Country Coordinator, but before that happened HM and WA had taken on the administration of the Championships with much help from Ros Kelling, Emma and Dene. The Championships were hosted by Oxford City at Horspath in conjunction with the League fixture. 370 athletes took part and both individual County Champions were under-20s, which bode well for the future.

Oxfordshire had sent a total of 67 athletes across all age groups to the Inter-Counties championships at Loughborough in March. There were many good results. As the team manager, Ros Kelling said, "*As a small county we definitely punched above our weight this winter*". There was no doubt that Ros's XC training sessions contributed significantly. She intended holding three or four County XC training sessions at various locations around the County for U13s upwards over the winter.

The first OXL fixture would be Sunday 5th November at a new venue - Cornbury Park. Same format as the previous year - online entries by club managers. Numbers were up on this time last year so all looked very positive. Cross country was thriving in Oxfordshire!

Ros would be selecting Oxfordshire teams for Southern Inter Counties, to be held at Horspath Saturday 9th December. U13 to U17. If numbers were good she would enter two teams per age group as per last year as that worked well developmentally and prepared athletes for the Inter-Counties in March.

Preparations for the 2024 County Championships would be starting soon.

b) **Road**

WA reported that by the end of the year, we should have had over 32 licensed races. There was one new race in the calendar, the Ducklington Dash, organised by Witney RR, but a couple of long-standing fixtures did not take place. The Hanney 5 could not find a new organising committee and the Hornton 6 suffered from a lack of entries. It was not clear whether they would reappear in the future. The White Horse Half had to be cancelled at the last minute due to flooding on the course, but would take place in 2024, according to the organisers.

To date only one of the County Championship events had taken place - the Marathon Championships at Abingdon. The short course event would take place at Eynsham in November. The long course race should have been the cancelled White Horse Half and no substitute was found. The previous year WA had trialled awarding the medals at the Road Race AGM instead of immediately after the race. It had been hoped to avoid the past problems of medals being awarded to the wrong people and teams after over-hasty calculations on the day. In the event there had been too few medallists there to make the presentations a success, so WA would revert to making the awards on the day.

It was hoped to reinstate the popular County Road Relays which had not been held since 2019. HM had been investigating a course at Farmoor, though communication from the authority there had been patchy.

The Road Race Grand Prix was back to an almost full programme and had provided the closest competition for years in both team events.

The Road Race AGM would take place via Zoom on Friday, 1st December. WA would send out the calling notices soon.

There was some discussion about age bands for the Masters' competition. All favoured 10 year age-bands for both Men and Women, ie 35 – 45, 45 – 55 etc. WA would plan to build a consensus around this change of approach by consulting with the clubs. **Action: WA**

10. Election of Officers and General Committee for 2023/24

President	vacancy [WA agreed to invite Jill Slatter, has done so since the meeting and Jill has accepted]
Life Vice- Presidents	John Sear Jill Slatter Alan Vincent
Chairman	Will Atkinson
Vice Chairman	Claire Lacey
Secretary	vacancy
Treasurer	Hugh Morris

Officials Secretary (T&F)	Alan Vincent
Website	Joe [NB appointed rather than elected]
Road Race Co-ordinator	Will Atkinson
XC Champs Co-ordinator	Emma Gould
T&F Subcommittee	Jackie Breslin James Charles Annie Fernandez-Jones Kay Reynolds Claire Lacey Alan Vincent
Schools' Reps	Peter O'Keefe Alan Vincent
Welfare Officer	John Sear [as named contact]
General Committee	Jackie Breslin James Charles Annie Fernandez-Jones Andrew Garner Kay Reynolds Dene Stringfellow Gary Warland

It was also agreed to consider co-options at the first full Committee meeting, but also noted that the clubs have the right to one vote per club, in addition to any individual representation on the Committee.

11. Provisional date for the AGM 2022 – 25th October 2024.

12. Date for first Committee Meeting – 29th January 2024.

13. A.O.B. – None

The meeting closed at 9.07 pm.