

England Athletics Consultation Report 2015

Context, Format and Approach

The England Athletics annual consultation process is now a regular feature of the calendar following consultations with stakeholders in 2013 and 2014. In both of those years the format was broadly the same: live “roadshows” or meetings in March/April/May, followed by an online survey, open to all. In 2013, the survey was live at the same time as the meetings were taking place, whereas in 2014, the survey followed in the summer months.

In 2015 the approach from 2014 was followed and, as in previous years, the survey was seen as an opportunity to ask the wider membership and sport about the same issues that were covered at the meetings.

Again, as was the case last year, while there were fixed topics on the agenda (EA updates, Club Support, Volunteer Recruitment, Finance and the Future), an attempt was made to allow open discussion and for those in attendance to air their views on all EA matters and issues of concern to the sport.

10 events took place between March 30th and May 13th at venues in each of EA’s nine regions. Two events took place in the South East (Oxford and Crawley).

The slides used and the notes taken at each meeting can be viewed and downloaded at www.englandathletics.org/consultation-2015.

The issues on the agenda were:

- Updates from EA and the National Council
- EA’s Club Support Package
- Volunteer Recruitment (a new volunteer recruitment strategy and video resource were showcased)
- Finance (including an update on the 2014 slides)
- The future

The extent to which attendees discussed matters varied from region to region. In the East Midlands, where there was a small attendance, all attendees sat around a single table, while in London the event was attended by 60+ people and involved presenters at the front and theatre-style seating. The events in some regions were led and facilitated by the regional chair(s), while in many this function was performed by a member of EA Staff – Dean Hardman.

As with 2014, the atmosphere at the meetings and the approach of attendees was positive and collaborative. The events in the East, North East, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West in particular were described as the best consultation events so far in terms of the constructive challenge and ideas provided by attendees.

Results/Broad themes

The nature of the meetings and the quality of the notes (taken by different individuals) meant that it was impossible to quantify any results from the events.

However, as might be expected, some broad themes/topics did emerge, albeit many of them pertained to matters for which EA does not have full responsibility:

- Opposition to age group changes
- Coach Education
- Competition Strategy (particularly in the North and Midlands)

Other issues were also raised, albeit with less regularity:

- Affiliation and registration year
- Foreign Athlete Registration

It was a coincidence that the consultation events took place at the same time as UKA's own consultation on potential changes to age groups. Club representatives, therefore used the meetings as an opportunity to discuss their views and these were largely (although there were exceptions) in opposition to the proposed changes. EA made it clear at every event that those with an interest in the topic should inform UKA using the advertised channels. EA also committed to feedback to UKA the views expressed (and this was done).

Comments on coach education mirrored those already received via other means (the regional councils and a coach education meeting chaired by EA elected director Neil Costello). These were that the lack of event-specific focus in the Athletics Coach qualification and the requirement to keep a diary was a barrier to more coaches taking and achieving the qualification. Again, EA committed to feed this information back to UKA, and, indeed, already had done.

On Competition Strategy, specifically the future of area competition, the issue was raised at events across the North and West Midlands, where strong support for competitions held by the area competition providers was evident. In the East Midlands, South West, East and South East, such support was not discussed widely or even raised in some cases. On this evidence, there is a view in the North and West Midlands that the area championships are a key component of the championship pathway. In the East and South West, for geographical reasons, there possibly is not as much of a tradition of engagement with the area championships.

At some events, representatives identified the April 1-March 31 affiliation year as an issue, as their clubs operate a rolling membership or calendar year memberships. Likewise, in the East Midlands a university representative pointed out that university clubs are disadvantaged by the current affiliation year, as postgraduate students who are first claim to their university club generally registered with EA for the first time in September and therefore have to register twice in a year to remain fully registered for a full 12 months of study. The vast majority of clubs mirror EA's own affiliation year.

On foreign athletes, some attendees pointed out the unfairness of foreign nationals resident in the UK for many years having to pay an annual fee of £10 to UKA. EA has requested as part of the UKA rulebook consultation that this requirement be removed for resident foreign athletes.

The Survey

The survey published this year was shorter than the one published in previous years and again focused on the main topics discussed at the consultation events. Given that EA was/is developing a strategy, the opportunity was also taken to consult clubs on the proposed strategic priorities that had been identified by the group working on the strategy.

Given the need for EA to consult on registration fees prior to any decision to raise them, questions on this topic were also included in order to inform the board's discussion at their September meeting. A supporting document was also published alongside the questions on registration fees, which gave an indication as to where registration fee income is spent.

Survey Results

Below are the survey results.

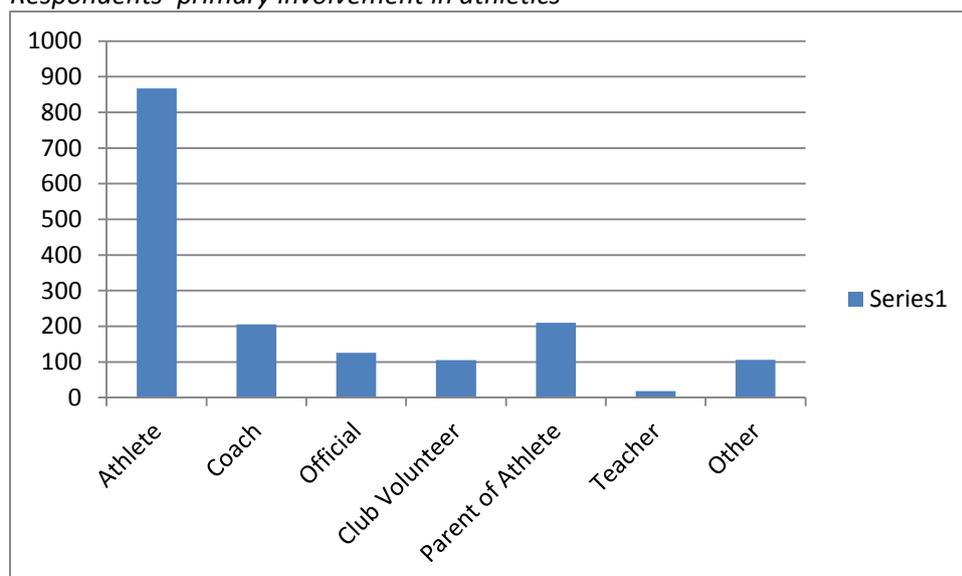
The survey was split into four sections:

- Club Support
- Volunteer Support
- Finances
- The Future

A total of **1729** surveys were attempted, compared to **1576** in 2014. As with last year, not all questions completed by all respondents, including personal information.

Respondents were asked to identify their primary involvement in athletics:

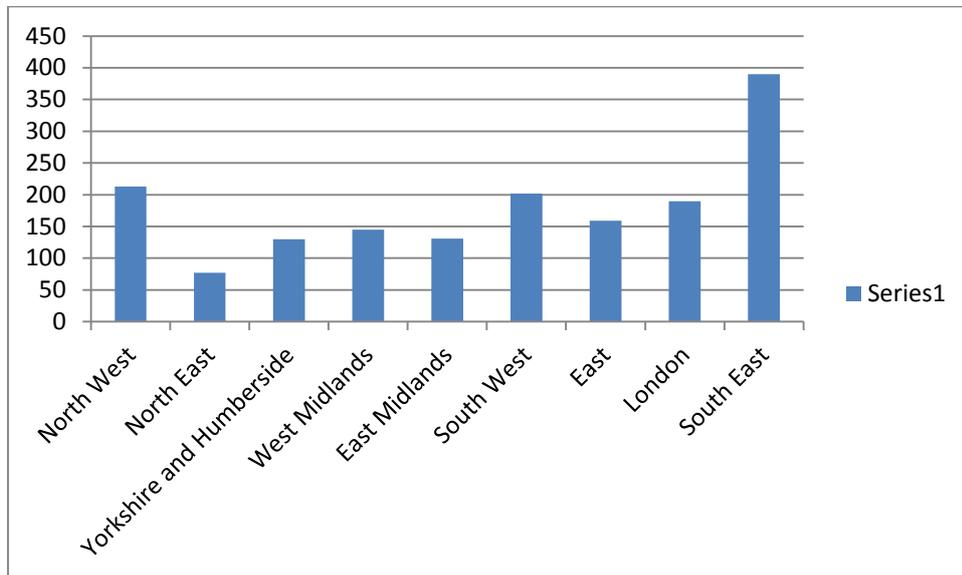
Respondents' primary involvement in athletics



NOTE: It should be pointed out that it is "primary" involvement that is being self identified. This is highly subjective and, of course, many of the athletes can have alternative involvement. The same could be said of coaches.

A large number of the respondents were able to provide athlete registration numbers or coach/official license details. 588 respondents were currently registered athletes and still more had URNs that were not current.

Region in which respondents lived

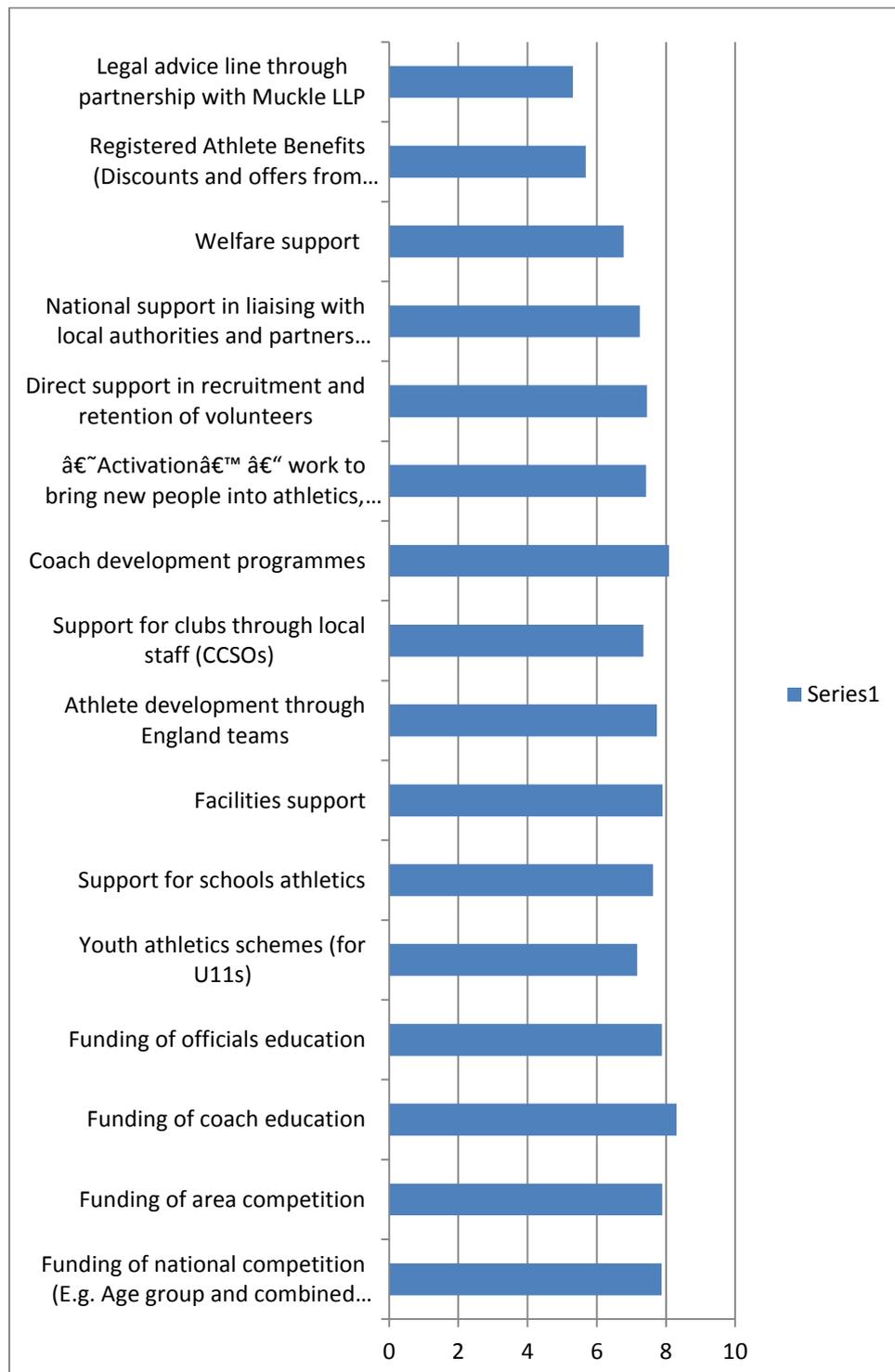


Section 1 – Club Support

The support that England Athletics offers to clubs and individuals is summarised here:
<http://www.englandathletics.org/library-media/documents/ea-club-support-v3b.pdf>

We want to hear your views on the support on offer and to better understand the areas that you value most.

Tell us how important you find each of these on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is very important and 1 is not important at all.



NOTE: The chart shows the average score received for each of the areas of support and suggests that all areas are largely valued.

Section 2 – Volunteer Support

England Athletics has recently developed some new volunteer resources. Details can be found here:
<http://www.englandathletics.org/volunteer>

Our Guide to Becoming a Volunteer can be found here:
<http://www.englandathletics.org/library-media/documents/ea-athletics-volunteer-guide-v5.pdf>

And our volunteer recruitment film can be found [here](#):

Please rate each resource on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is excellent.

Our Guide to Becoming a Volunteer: 6.9 average rating

Volunteer Recruitment film: 6.6 average rating

NOTE: This suggests a good start has been made, but that there is significant room for improvement. Comments received have been sent to June Swift (EA Volunteer Co-ordinator).

England Athletics' volunteer strategy involves two key aspects:

1. Providing the resources for clubs to use as they see fit
2. Using Club and Coach Support Officers to assist, where possible, in activating volunteer recruitment programmes.

Do you think that this approach is correct? Yes/No – *86% said yes*

Is volunteer recruitment an issue at your club? Yes/No – *56% said yes*

Section 3 – Finance

Respondents were provided with context to the following question:

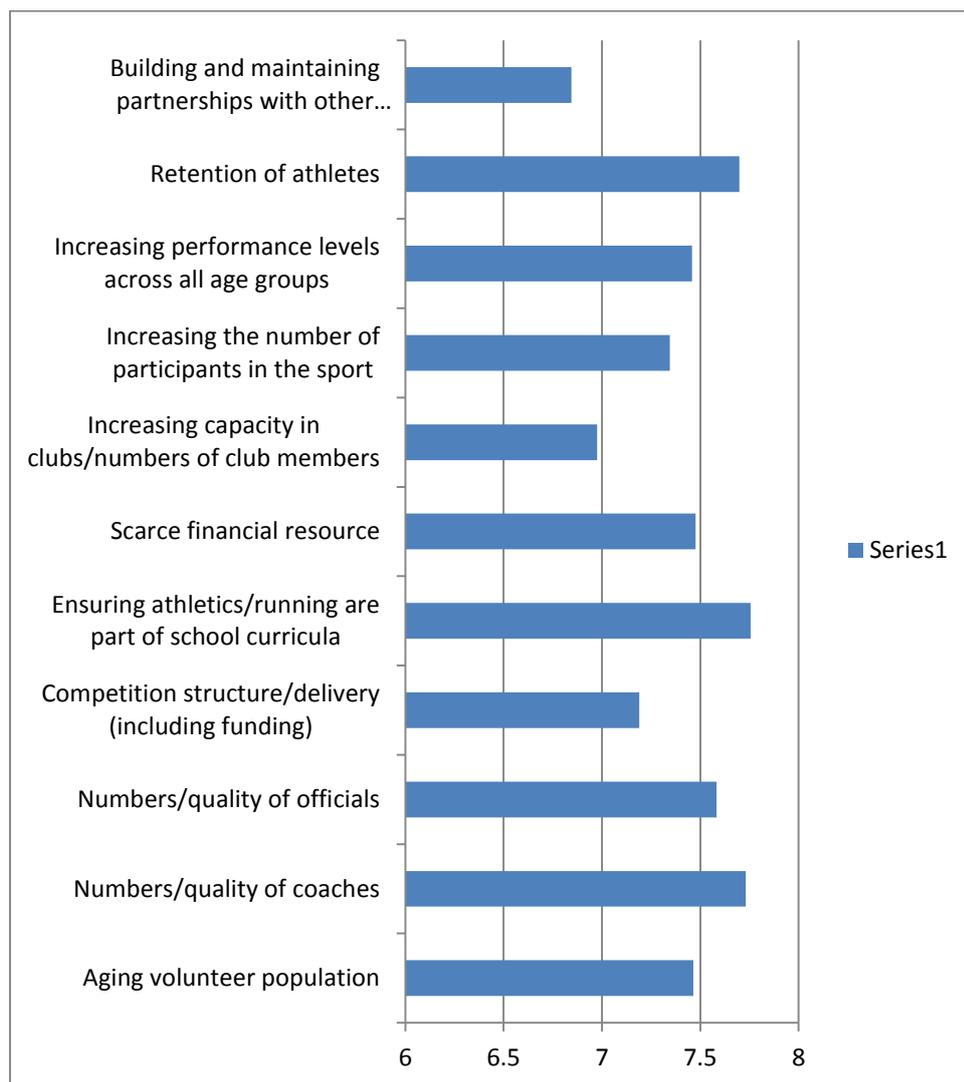
We would like to know whether you would prefer:

Fees to increase in line with inflation in order to allow EA to maintain service provision.	34%
Fees to be increased by small amounts incrementally year on year to allow EA to enhance service provision.	33%
Fees to remain static for 2016-17	33%

942 respondents answered this question. Taking solely the responses of registered athletes, the percentages do not vary significantly (33%, 33%, 34%).

Section 4 – The Future

What do you see as the main challenges facing the sport in the coming years? Please rate each on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is the highest level of importance.



NOTE: The three biggest challenges, according to respondents, are retention of athletes, ensuring athletics is included in school curricula and ensuring we have enough coaches and officials. These do feature in the draft EA strategy.

England Athletics is in the process of devising a long term organisational strategy that will guide our work in the coming years. We believe that it is very important that this strategy for EA as an organisation is closely aligned with the views and needs of the wider sport in England and we would therefore like you to consider the possible strategic priorities below, all of which could form part of a future strategic plan.

In each case, please state whether you agree/disagree/have no comment to make.

To work openly and to be the recognised point of contact for our members and key stakeholders in England.	Agree: 81% Disagree: 2% No Comment: 17%
To expand the capacity of the sport by supporting and developing its volunteers and other workforce	Agree: 89% Disagree: 3% No Comment: 8%
To sustain and grow participation and performance	Agree: 92%

levels in our sport	Disagree: 1% No Comment: 7%
To influence participation in the wider athletics market place	Agree: 69% Disagree: 6% No Comment: 25%
To work efficiently and to maximise revenues to benefit athletics in England	Agree: 82% Disagree: 3% No Comment: 14%

NOTE: Responses to this question suggest that, at the very least, there is no widespread disagreement with any of the priorities identified in the draft strategy. Supporting and developing volunteers and growing participation and performance are the priorities that more people agree with.

Conclusions

Attendances at events were largely in line with previous years and the quality of discussion and constructive approach taken by attendees was very pleasing.

In terms of practical actions to result from consultation, the key are as follows:

- Consider any increase in the registration fee carefully
- Registration income should be focused on strategic priorities and delivery of valued services
- Progress EA strategy in light of response to the survey
- Continue to revise volunteer recruitment resources
- Work with UKA to continue to improve coaching and officials education
- Work with area competition providers to ensure this level of competition is retained

England Athletics would like to express sincere thanks to all those individuals and clubs who contributed to the consultation.