

**Outcomes of the meeting of the
England Athletics National Council
held on 26 August 2020**

Present:

Members of the National Council:

Ellie Brown (EB)
Jon Clarke (JC)
Tim Cook (TC)
Janice Kaufman (JK)
Richard Llewellyn-Eaton (RLE)
David Lodwick (DL) - Chair
Myra Nimmo (MN)
Stuart Paul (SP)
Julian Starkey (JS)

England Athletics Officers:

Dan Isherwood (DI), Head of Operations
Chris Jones (CJ), CEO
Ben Patel-Sadler (BPS), Board and NED Secretary
Martin Rush, (MR), Head of Coaching and Athlete Development
Nichola Skedgel (NS), Competition Partnerships and Innovation Manager – For agenda item 10 only

Other Representatives:

None.

1. Apologies

Moira Gallagher (MG), Clive Poyner (CP), Emma Davenport (ED).

2. Update Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

National Council agreed that the draft minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

Resolved and Actions:

1.) Board & NED Secretary to provide a copy of the minutes for signature by DL.

4. Actions/Matters Arising

National Council noted that the action relating to the deadlines associated with the 2021 Regional Council election process would remain on the document until January 2021 (immediately prior to the elections).

Resolved and Actions:

1.) National Council agreed that all closed items be removed from the Document.

2.) In relation to traffic management, DL would schedule a meeting with Charlotte Fisher to progress this matter further.

3.) Nichola Skedgel to provide an update in relation to the list of UKA officials.

5. EA CEO Update

National Council noted that an announcement had been made by EA on the morning of 26th August to state that there would be no change to the affiliation fees for 2021. An announcement had also been made in relation to the club development fund which would be advertised during the latter stages of 2020, with the first grants being made available in early 2021. The communication had also highlighted the staff structure changes at EA which had recently taken place (and which reflected a reduction in staff following a month-long consultation). 19 staff would leave EA during September 2020 – there would be 45 EA staff from 1st October 2020. National Council noted that the reduction in head-count would need to be appreciated by the membership in terms of what would be realistically deliverable by a reduced executive team. Although remaining staff were aware of the challenges ahead, it would be important for workloads to be manageable and sustainable. CJ was confident that the existing structure would ensure that clubs and the wider sport were provided with an appropriate level of support in the future.

The remaining staff were aware that risks in relation to future income existed, particularly in relation to road running licensing (a number of large-scale events would not be taking place before the end of 2020). It was hoped that large-scale road running events would take place during 2021.

National Council noted that EA was currently working to secure a sponsor to replace DW Fitness who had recently been placed into administration. EA was currently seeking to recover the outstanding monies owed by DW Fitness. The communication also demonstrated how EA was currently funded and where these funds had been invested.

National Council noted that there were currently no plans to return to Head Office in the short-term and discussions were taking place to determine if an office was required and if it was, where it might be located in the future. Flexible and virtual working had demonstrated that a central office might not be required in the future. DI informed National Council that EA was already a largely remote organisation and as such, home workers were required to complete a self-assessment risk assessment. This process would be completed again from October 1st when the new structure would be in place. Equipment requirements would also be assessed as part of this process.

National Council noted that EA was currently 34% down on affiliation numbers when compared to the same period in 2019, although numbers continued to rise which was positive. More than 100 track and field competitions had been licensed by EA across England (further competition applications had been received which may indicate that a further rise in affiliation numbers could be expected).

CJ informed National Council that delivery of education courses would commence from October 2020 – there would be a blended approach of physical and virtual delivery which would be how education was delivered due to the resources available to the business following the restructure. There were risks associated with this timeframe due to the unknown future impact of Covid-19 over the winter months.

CJ praised the work of EA staff throughout the pandemic.

National Council wished to place on record their thanks to BPS who would be leaving the organisation to take up a position elsewhere. An individual would be recruited to the vacant position which would be a part-time role going forwards. It would be important for National Council to be cognisant that the newly appointed Board Secretary would not have the same capacity working on a part-time basis (2.5 days per week).

Resolved and Actions:

1.) NC noted the CEO Update Report.

6. Framework Agreement

National Council noted that in relation to Schedule 2, decisions had been taken in regards to which organisation would be responsible for delivering a certain area of responsibility going forwards. This information would be shared with National Council as soon as the final negotiations had taken place. All CEOs were content that the document was now ready to be signed.

DI informed National Council that the proposed EA future strategy was seeking to align itself to the strategies of the other home nations to ensure that collaborative and effective working took place (for the good of the whole sport) going forwards. CJ informed National Council that there was a great deal of optimism in relation to this work – it was hoped that by the end of the strategy in 2032, Team GB would have a representative in every event at the 2032 Olympics (which National Council believed was an appropriate stretch-target).

In relation to officials, National Council acknowledged the important role they played – without whom there would be no opportunity for athletes to compete and reach their targets.

National Council noted that performance, increasing general participation (and highlighting the associated health benefits) and clubs, coaches, officials and the support mechanisms in place for those individuals by the sport underpinned the entire UK-wide strategy. Improved commercialisation to ensure continued investment in the sport was also a key aim.

As part of the strategy, it was a central aim that there were no barriers to coaches, athletes, officials and other individuals in progressing through the sport whilst acknowledging the importance of providing support to participants through all levels of the sport.

National Council noted that in relation to athletes performing just under world-class level, EA were focusing on targeting specific athletes and their coaches with enhanced support via enhanced training camps in attempt to enhance performance. National Council noted that Ed Hunt was working to ensure that facilities could continue to open whilst adhering to government and EA guidance. EA was also working with facility owners to offer support in an effort to ensure as many facilities opened as possible. National Council acknowledged that a significant number of people had taken up running during the pandemic – there was an opportunity to grow clubs by ensuring some of these individuals joined and became a part of the EA structure. National Council noted that training and competition guidance was available for facilities to digest – it was reflected across the country whereby many local authority owned facilities remained closed. One reason for this was possibly due to the economic pressure currently facing local authorities.

Resolved and Actions:

1.) National Council noted the update in relation to the Framework Agreement.

7. Welfare and Safeguarding Review

National Council noted that the home countries would have a mitigation role to play in welfare and safeguarding to manage issues locally. UKA would retain oversight and responsibility of formal investigations. UKA were undertaking work to ensure that they were sufficiently resourced to manage this area of business adequately which included appointing panel members to report to the UKA Safeguarding Committee in relation to any future investigations. CJ informed National Council that EA and the other home countries would continue to work across the next 12 months (and beyond if necessary) to ensure that the recommendations of the review were fully implemented across the sport. There may be a need to appoint 'safeguarding champions' on each Regional Council who would be the designated safeguarding lead to support clubs and organisations in relation to welfare and safeguarding issues. This could work in relation to a conduit role – ensuring that issues were raised with EA at the earliest opportunity. If issues were significantly serious, then it would remain the responsibility of the police and/or UKA to manage the process. If Regional Councils did have a safeguarding champion then it was acknowledged that significant training may be required to ensure that the particular individual was aware of the role and responsibilities of such a position. National Council expressed a view that if Regional Councils became fully constituted during the 2021 elections, the ability for Regional Councils to fairly share out portfolios of work/responsibilities would be enhanced. National Council agreed that the existing terms of reference for Regional Councils should be reviewed and amended if necessary to ensure that a good recruitment takes place during the 2021 elections. The issue of fair representation and diversity could also be addressed as part of reviewing the Regional and National Council terms of reference. National Council expressed a view that supporters of candidates should be able to register their support electronically given the current Covid-19 situation.

Resolved and Actions:

1.) National Council noted the update around the Welfare and Safeguarding Review.

2.) National Council would review the terms of reference for Regional Councils at the November 2020 meeting.

8. EA Diversity Action Plan Review

National Council noted that the staffing and governance of the sport should be representative of all communities. The 2021 Regional Council elections presented an opportunity to improve diversity across the governance structure across the country. CJ informed National Council that diversity champions could also be appointed across Regional Councils.

UKA were also undertaking initiatives to increase diversity across athletics officials.

Resolved and Actions:

1.) National Council noted the update in relation to the EA Diversity Action Plan

9. Return to Competition Update

National Council noted that competition updates were issued on a Friday due to work on the guidance having been completed throughout the week. Updated guidance was being released on a Friday so that competition organisers had the most up to date information as soon as possible. There had been positive feedback from participants after the return to competition, with comments being made that the competition atmosphere felt safe and that it was good to be back to competing. National Council acknowledged the significant amount of work which had been undertaken by volunteers in order that events could go ahead.

EA was working alongside UKA in relation to event licensing – Regional Councils were also playing a role in ensuring that events could be licensed. The event licensing process was working well at this point. Clubs were working effectively together to ensure that events could take place (it was noted that the work involved in ensuring events could go ahead was significant). Every venue and every event was different and so the challenges were different in relation to each event/competition. National Council noted that competitions could still go ahead if a local lockdown was in place, provided that the relevant risk assessments were completed and government and EA guidance followed. If the proposals put forward by Scottish Athletics were implemented (no restrictions on number of competitors across all events within the competition bubble) then EA would consider its own guidance to determine if this could be replicated for competitions in England.

Further work was being undertaken in relation to fell running and cross country to ensure that a return to competition in these disciplines could take place. Feedback had been given with some providers expressing the view that the guidance should be more relaxed, with others stating that more

conditions were required. After areas had approved any guidance, it was felt that UKA would still need to formally approve it before competitions could take place. National Council noted that cross country events would operate differently going ahead with a limited number of competitors taking part via a staggered start/waves of athletes (under current guidance). It was hoped that pilot events would take place from mid-September. One significant challenge would be to ensure that public areas could be made Covid secure when competitions were taking place.

National Council noted that guidance did stipulate that social distancing must be adhered to in order that events could be licensed. EA would continue work with all competition/events providers to ensure that licenses could be granted wherever possible.

National Council wished to place on record their thanks to EA staff and all volunteers involved in ensuring that a return to competition had taken place.

Although EA had produced guidance to ensure that competitions could take place during the pandemic, feedback would continue to be sought in order to determine how events and competitions would be held in the future (including the format for events). National Council noted that there were always challenges in scheduling events on specific weekends (the EA framework would be consulted wherever possible to minimise clashes between national, area and local events whilst acknowledgement was made that a complete avoidance of clashes was not possible). One workaround for this could be to hold different types of events on different weekends.

Resolved and Actions:

- 1.) National Council noted the update in relation to a return to competition.
- 2.) JS would share with National Council a paper which he had produced in relation to a return to competition.
- 3.) National Council and Regional Councils were encouraged to submit any ideas around innovation to events/competitions to NS or MR.

10. Volunteer Awards 2020

National Council noted that there would be potential difficulties in facilitating an awards ceremony virtually – the utilisation of current webinar technology could help in this regard. Some areas were seeking to facilitate their awards virtually.

An alternative could be for award winners to be announced and then awards could be given out in a socially distanced manner as part of a club night.

National Council expressed a view that past winners should also be involved in the 2020 awards process.

Resolved and Actions:

1.) National Council agreed that the winners of awards should be announced virtually with awards then handed out physically as part of a club night (with the aim of the process being completed nationwide during late September/October).

11. Council Conference 2020

Suggestions in relation to content for the 2020 Council Conference included how Regional Councils can work more closely with clubs and the diversity and make up of Regional Councils. Participants could be encouraged to make written submissions on the topics for consideration via their respective Regional Councils. Following the Conference, Regional Councils could make additional time available to discuss any issues arising as part of the event. It would be important to publicise the date and topics for discussion at the earliest opportunity.

In relation to possible speakers at the Conference, National Council agreed that Kelly Sotherton and Jo Coates should be invited to present. Possible topics for Jo to present on could be rules or safeguarding for example.

Resolved and Actions:

1.) It was agreed that the Council Conference would take place on Saturday 17th October 2020 (using either Teams or Zoom).

12. 2021 National Council Meetings

Resolved and Actions:

1.) Following discussion it was agreed that informal monthly catch-up calls should continue to take place for the foreseeable future.

13. AOB

In relation to the National Volunteer Awards, these will be led by the timings associated with the Regional Awards. An athlete of the decade award would be presented as part of this ceremony. It was hoped that the Hall of Fame Awards would recommence in 2021.

National Council noted that due to Covid-19, the AGM votes would be collated via proxy. A webinar would be taking place on 15th September to enable members to pose any questions in relation to AGM business in advance of the meeting. National Council noted that it would be important to encourage all clubs to submit their proxies as part of AGM proceedings.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place from 11.00-14.00 on Wednesday 25th November 2020 via Teams.

MEETING CLOSED AT 13.45PM

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