



## *Essex County Athletic Association*

Minutes of the Essex AA Track & Field meeting held via the Zoom platform on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022, start time 7pm.

### **Participants:**

Andy Catton (Chair), Gerry O'Doherty (President), Malcolm Bailey (Secretary), Claire Levey, Diane Wooller, Rick Thompson, Scott Darney, Ron Dawson, Tony Benton, Hayley Hemmings, Kaye Merrywest, Paul Merrywest, Claudia Rabess, Elaine Forrest, Sally Dobson, Jon Metcalf, Miguel Luque, Michael Wilson, Louise, Alan Cootes, Joe Everitt.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Allison Gillan (President Elect), Mary Knapman, Jean Tierney.

### **2. Review of the 2022 Track & Field County Championships**

Prior to the meeting, Andy Catton sent out a letter to all clubs (see appendix1).

Andy Catton started the meeting, referring to this letter. Diane Wooller (outgoing County Officials Secretary) had contacted Andy to advise that Rick Thompson would be happy to take over the role of Track & Field Officials Secretary for 2023. (Thank you Rick) We still have a vacancy for a Road & Country Officials Secretary and a volunteer is sought for this position. If we are unable to fill it in 2023, Diane has indicated that she might be prepared to stand for one year only.

To ensure that we are able to continue to host County track & field championships it is imperative that more volunteers step forward to offer to help,

Andy acknowledged the issues at this year's championships. IT system, Open Track, Timetabling and seeding.

If athletes do not fully support all the events, some may have to be dropped.

Andy has contacted Eastern AA in connection with the 2023 Indoor Championships. Should we reduce to one day (from two)? Should we incorporate the Essex Masters events into the Eastern Vets Championships?

Multi-Events – should we combine those with Eastern AA and possibly other Counties?

Tony Benton raised concerns that we are sending out the wrong message to athletes by cancelling some of the track relay races this year and enforcing the County Constitution ruling that we do not award a full suite of medals if less than 6 athletes enter an event. Tony asked why the committee had decided to enforce the ruling re the medals. It was felt by the committee that in some of the events, with a low turnout that we were effectively awarding medals for simply turning up.

Kaye Merrywest commented that she feels that there is a strong bias of road and XC members on the committee and they had voted that the Constitution be enforced.

We need more Track & Field representatives on the Executive committee and volunteers should put their names forward.

Any change to this ruling will have to be debated and agreed at the AGM in December and a proposal needs to be submitted for consideration at that meeting.

Tony Benton questioned the thought process regarding the cancelling some of the track relay events. We were already losing money on the championships so by cancelling some of the races; we were increasing the size of the loss. This had been debated at the July committee meeting, which was before entries for that event had closed. At the time, entries were very low and consideration had been

given to cancelling the entire championships. Historically, entries are always received just before the closing date. Also, clubs were struggling to enter using the Open Track system. It was acknowledged that cancelling some of the races may not have been the right decision.

Comment was made that the relays went well and that it was a good evening which athletes enjoyed.

A suggestion was made that we should contact those clubs that did not enter any teams and ask why?

At the 10k championships last week, only 16 turned up with 15 officials. This was disappointing and clubs need to advertise these events.

Volunteers – experienced people are needed to ensure that the championships run smoothly. An organisation committee needs to be set up and a list of the roles that need to be filled should be compiled.

Joe Everitt said that if this was done, he would be happy to seek support from within his club. Scott Darney and Elaine Forrest said that she would be happy to support.

Kaye & Paul Merrywest offered to meet with Andy Catton to discuss what actions need to be taken to organise the championships.

Tony Benton commented that it is the background/pre event work that is important to ensure that the events run smoothly on the day; it makes the work of the Championship Secretary much easier on the day.

There was a strong desire to maintain a full programme of events.

Question was asked whether the Lee Valley had been booked for the 2023 Indoor Championships. Confirmed that a provisional booking has been made (4/5<sup>th</sup> February 2023).

Debate took place as to whether the championships could be condensed into one day. If so, events would need to be dropped. Concern was raised that logistically this would not be possible, completion of field events, moving the photofinish being quoted as areas of concern.

Clubs are struggling to find volunteers themselves. Clubs suffered a loss of a number of officials/volunteers following Covid and are now working hard to build up their base again.

Club coaches for the junior athletes are encouraged to prepare and enter them for the County Championships. School championships are better attended but entries for these submitted by the District rather than the County Championships which is by the club or by the individual.

Joe Everitt indicated that Woodford Green with Essex Ladies might be prepared to consider hosting a County event.

Concern was raised that the dates County Championships are fixed by England Athletics. Hayley Hemmings mentioned that EA are actively considering agreeing to an opening up a period of 3-4 weeks for the Outdoor Championships. This would reduce the pressure on Counties to find officials.

Question was asked whether Open events are also putting pressure on an already busy calendar and why are licences granted to for these events?

Entries into the Open and schools events appear to be higher than County champs. Are competitors not confident in themselves to enter the County Championships. Coaches need to encourage.

Claudia Rabess commented that there is a view within the athlete's community that the Essex committee is not viewed as friendly or welcoming. Miquel Luque commented at the start of the meeting he had put a welcome message in the chat box but no one had responded!

Important that everyone is made to feel welcome and that we are an inclusive, friendly County.

Whilst it was agreed that changes needed to be made, that perhaps we made too many too soon.

Sally Dobson asked whether all future Track & Field meetings could be held virtually as it was more convenient to attend. Perhaps, hybrid meetings could be considered.

Andy thanked everyone for their attendance.

Meeting finished at 8.21pm

## SUMMARY

Issues to be considered at the next County committee meeting

- Formation of a T&F - roles required – send to clubs to seek volunteers
- Road and XC Officials Secretary for 2023
- Use of Open Track – change to Roster?
- Structure of future Indoor & outdoor champs. Full timetable or condense?
- Response from Eastern AA re Indoor suggestions and Masters?
- Venues for 2023 championships?
- Future track & field meetings via Zoom or hybrid?
- Contact those clubs that did not support the Track relays event and ask why not?
- How can we publicise the championships better?
- A suggestion was made after the meeting that consideration should be given to surveying all those that took part in the County Champs to ask for feedback.

## OTHER

- A proposal will need to be submitted to amend the County Constitution re medals (these are sought in the pre AGM paperwork that is sent to all clubs) for consideration at the AGM.

## APPENDIX 1

Dear Secretary

### **Critical Essex AA Officer Positions and job roles for 2023**

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of Essex County Athletics with a plea for you to circulate amongst your membership a request for volunteers to step forward to fill some very critical vacancies on the Essex AA committee. To put it very bluntly unless these roles are filled at the next County AGM (in December) there is a very real prospect that there will be no Essex track & field championships (outdoors or indoors) in 2023.

Firstly, after over a decade of sterling service in her role as Officials Officer, Diane Wooller is stepping down. As recommended by Diane and endorsed by the committee it would be ideal to split the work load and have a Track & Field Officials Officer and a Road & Country Officials Officer. Diane I am sure will give volunteers the benefit of her experience and knowledge in understanding and undertaking this role.

Secondly, we need a team of at least three experienced track & field administrators to organise the championships. This is to either assist the current, or a new, Track & Field Officer with the organisation of the Outdoor, Indoor, Multi Events, Relays, 5,000m & 10,000m championship events which will be fully supported by other Essex AA Exec Committee Officers as ancillary helpers.

An Essex AA Track & Field sub-committee meeting is to be held on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August via the Zoom platform. Start time 7pm.

This is a virtual meeting in order to encourage more participation from club representatives. In addition to constructive feedback on the last championships it will be a forum to discuss the future of Track & Field Championships in the County, streamlining of champs programmes, combining meetings with Eastern AA and other local counties, reducing number events, awarding of medals etc and hopefully have volunteers step forward to be nominated for the critically important roles mentioned above.

This is a serious plea, if these important positions are not filled at the AGM; there is a strong likelihood that there will not be any Essex track and field championships next year.

Many thanks and we look forward to seeing a representative from your club at this meeting.

Regards

Andy Catton

Essex AA Chairman for and on behalf of Essex AA Committee