



Welsh Athletics Joint Track and Field and Officials Committees

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 7th April 2021.

Present

Rhiannon Linington-Payne (RLP), Sue Hooper (SH), Joyce Tomala (JT), Jeff Mapps, Lynette Harries (LH), Kath Elias, Alan Currie (AC), Lynne Brier (LB), Jake Morgan, Darran Williams (DW), Phil James (PJ), Zoe Holloway (ZH), Geoff Wickens, Chris Moss, Adrian Palmer

1. Apologies

Sue Maughan, Crispin Backsall, Eban Geal, Bethan Akanbi-Mortimer

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest. JT reminded people to fill in the Conflict of Interest forms and send them back to Rob Sage as soon as possible.

3. Welsh Athletics Updates:

a. Performance Update

AP expressed his thanks to those who organised and presented on the physical preparation conference. It was a successful conference with more than 50 participants on the day.

AP went on to confirm the following:

- Two new appointments have been made on the performance team within Welsh Athletics, namely Bethan Davies and Seb Moran.
- Chris Jones will be working for British Athletics two days a week as part of their endurance programme. His role will be backfilled within Athletics to ensure that endurance in Wales does not suffer.
- The Loughborough International has been confirmed for May 23rd.
- Welsh Athletics will soon be launching their new vests made by Joma.
- Development programmes – Welsh athletics are currently reviewing regional and national athlete development programmes and AP confirmed that information can be found on the Welsh Athletics website.
- Regional development activities are to take place across the whole of Wales on 24th April.
- The performance team are working on a competition programme for the forthcoming season and athletes and coaches will need to apply to be part of the programme.
- Bethan Davies will be producing a single document that includes all competition from track and field, cross country, mountain and trail etc. This will appear soon on the Welsh Athletics Website.
- Welsh Athletics will be inviting individuals to express an interest in team management roles for forthcoming competitions. This will be publicised soon on the Welsh Athletics website.

- Commonwealth Games – AP confirmed that the nomination period has been moved to 8th May 2022. Three sites had been named as games villages – Birmingham University Campus, Warwick University Campus and NEC hotel campus, Birmingham. A strategy group will be in place to look at logistics, policies and procedures etc and make decisions. It is likely that a much smaller team will be selected for Birmingham 2022, with a 15% - 18% reduction in team size from the Gold Coast 2018. Athletes across the individual sports will have to compete for 90 individual places. This will make it difficult to select relay teams. This is being discussed at UKA Sport on a CEO level, as well as the fact that the marathon is fully supported at the CWG. Eight athletes have already achieved the nomination standard in Wales.

JT thanked AP for his contribution and expressed her disappointment that only 90 athletes across the individual sports will be selected for what is effectively a home games.

b. Facilities Update

CM confirmed that Welsh Athletics had followed all Covid-19 procedures as updated on 26th March in line with Welsh Government guidance.

CM confirmed that he had been in contact with all facilities regarding opening and possibly returning to competition. He said that the limits for usage on landing mats, pits and hurdles had been removed and there were also no restrictions on the number of athletes aged 18 and under who were able to use facilities. CM recognised that each facility would need to return at their own pace, depending on their personal circumstances and the bodies that govern them. However, Welsh Athletics would be encouraging as many as possible to open.

CM recognised the good work of clubs and facilities in putting covid officers and risk assessments etc in place for a safe return to sport.

CM confirmed that financial assistance and grants were to be invested in facilities to support facilities to open and Welsh Athletics have budgeted for the next financial year to support clubs and facilities who may need financial assistance.

CM mentioned that there are currently some challenges at certain sites in Wales, such as issues with throws cages across Wales, but highlighted some positives as well. For example, there are to be some upgrades to sites in North Wales and a new site in Caerphilly opening soon. Also, all facilities have now been contacted to confirm that Track Mark status has been put back to 31st March 2023 by UKA.

JT asked if there was anything that could be done to support Maldwyn Harriers, who are dropping out of all league competition this year because they can't get onto their facility until at least May 3rd.

CM confirmed that Maldwyn Harriers use the Freedom Leisure site, which is currently a testing and vaccination centre, and this makes it difficult for the club to have access to the car park and site.

JT asked on behalf of BAM about the new site in Caerphilly and expressed concern that Rhymney Valley Athletics Club was not going to be considered as the priority user of the new facility.

CM said that he didn't think that the council could give them as much use of the facility as they were requesting, but they would be classed as the priority users. However, the facility has to be made available to other users as well. CM said that a meeting is to be held in the near future about this and hopefully any confusion would be rectified.

JT thanked CM for his input and contribution.

c. Competition Update

RLP confirmed that the provisional fixture framework had been updated and released, with the Welsh Senior Championships confirmed for Saturday 14th August and Sunday 15th August.

RLP requested that the date of the Welsh Junior Championships on 28th and 29th August be swapped with the Inter Regional Championships on 31st July and 1st August to avoid a clash with the England Age Group Combined Championships. This was accepted by the committee on the basis that Welsh Under 15 and Under 17 athletes would now be able to attend both championships if they wished to do so.

AC asked if the Inter-Regionals would be held on the Saturday or Sunday of the bank holiday weekend at the end of August. RLP felt that the Saturday would be the most favourable date as it would free up two consecutive days on the bank holiday weekend.

AC asked if about the venue and RLP confirmed that West Wales would host the Inter-Regionals, if they go ahead.

JT reminded the committee that the new handbook suggested pilot events for Under 15s as an Inter-Regional competitions. However, as the pandemic situation worsened, it was suggested that competitions be held on a more localised basis within each region. This would be for 2021 only and 2022 would revert to normal arrangements, with regions hosting this meeting on a rota basis. JT confirmed that West Wales were happy to support any of these suggestions moving forward.

JM supported this, stating that even a limited programme for Under 15 athletes would be better than no competition. JM referred to a limited programme creating a shorter and more manageable event. JM confirmed that West Wales would support making this work.

RLP agreed that shorter meetings would be key to a safe return to athletics.

PJ asked if regional championships would all be on the same day, as this would create a problem with equipment and staffing.

JT replied that the next meeting about Inter-Regional Championships was to be held on 22nd April, where dates would be further discussed.

RLP moved on to junior club competition formats for this year and possibly beyond. With current restrictions and limits on facilities, a full day of events that caters for the masses of junior athletes is unrealistic this year. RLP said that Welsh Athletics had previously considered the possibility of moving the Welsh Junior League more towards an athlete development model, in preference of a competitive league. Current restrictions now provide an opportunity to work on this model. RLP has worked closely on this as part of a working group with Bridgend AC on a new format of competition. RLP referred to six designated weekends in the fixtures calendar for these events to run. RLP said that these events would extend to mid-week so that clubs can run them during existing training sessions. RLP confirmed that Welsh Athletics will provide as much structure, support and flexibility as needed.

The designated weekends are:

1st and 2nd May

22nd and 23rd May

19th and 20th June

24th and 25th July

21st and 22nd August

18th and 19th September

All these dates are on the fixture matrix on the Welsh Athletics website.

RLP went on say that the first fixtures will be run in house by the club volunteers and then more of a triangular match will evolve when restrictions ease. DW has created a toolkit for clubs to collect results and plan how long an event will take to complete etc. Events will be pre-prescribed per week to create virtual scoring system with DW collating each week the results each week. DW will speak to the clubs who participate and offer support and a tutorial. This is currently being worked on and it is hoped that a formal launch of this initiative will take place as part of Welsh Athletics wider strategy for athlete retention. This could essentially replace the Junior League in its current format.

JM expressed his opinion that this offered opportunities for more athletes to try out everything and allow the smaller clubs to perform well against the larger clubs.

LH praised the initiative and felt that it would also help official's development, as well as athlete development. LH asked if it be possible to involve volunteer co-ordinators to identify a group of people to manage these meetings as volunteers within the clubs, hence widening the pool of officials and allowing clubs to become more self-sufficient.

JT thanked RLP and her colleagues for the work that had gone into this initiative and emphasised that parents should not expect to see performances from these events on Power of 10.

RLP stated that this initiative is not competitiveness. It is about development and exposure to competition. Development for the athletes.

RLP went on to say that a number of financial grants have been put into the budget this year for clubs to deliver more localised micro-competitions. RLP is awaiting confirmation before making this public. Clubs will be expected to submit applications for grants so that it is financially viable for them to run micro-competitions.

JT asked if there would be a deadline for grants. RLP confirmed that there would be deadlines to avoid last minute applications making it difficult to release funds.

JT thanked RLP for her work on this.

d. Officials' Update

i. Officials' Conference Update

ZH provided the committee with an officials' conference update. Thirty seven out of sixty eight attendees had responded with feedback. Every topic received positive feedback, with the main feedback being aligned to the need to cover more endurance topics and providing greater disability awareness. ZH confirmed that training on disability and inclusion would be arranged and she had taken the issue of endurance back to the endurance committee. In the main, most attendees felt that the event was accessible and user friendly, although some said that more question and answer time in the afternoon would have been appreciated. The sessions are being made available for people to look back on.

SH agreed with ZH and felt that the conference was much more accessible to more people on a virtual platform.

JT thanked the organisers and presenters of this conference.

ii. Officials' Survey

ZH said that the survey was geared towards encouraging officials to discuss what they wanted and how they wanted to develop on the pathway and did they want a mentor etc. ZH asked if anyone wanted to amend anything in the survey.

SH said that they had wanted to keep it short and simple, to find out what support was needed by officials.

SH suggested it went on the website and the newsletter as well and would be shared as soon as possible.

PJ suggested that the survey went back eighteen months or longer to help retention and encompass those officials that no longer officiate.

ZH referred to Menai's positive recruitment drive for new officials and said that clubs need to take charge of their officials' recruitment.

JT expressed concerns about how many athletes and officials have not returned or will not be returning to athletics.

JM felt that some of the challenges that we may face could be made worse by the exclusion of parents from sites and facilities on club training nights. This could potentially make recruitment more difficult this year.

SH expressed her hopes that localised in-house competitions would provide a route for recruiting parents as new officials.

ZH hoped that new courses would soon be held outdoors once again, rather than virtually.

JT thanked SH, ZH and SM for their work on the survey.

Action: Regions to contact clubs to feedback to this committee on the potential number of athletes and officials who intend to return to athletics.

iii. Officials' Pathway

ZH confirmed that the pathway will be sent out with the survey.

iv. Officials UKA Selections

SH confirmed that the following Level 4 nominations have been made:

Field Officials

British Championships – SM nominated Sue Alvey, Gareth Jones and Becky Gibbs, as well as herself as reserve.

Anniversary Games – Chris Price and Amy Price were nominated, with Dave Jessett as reserve

Track

British Championships – Rory Mckerlich

Anniversary Games - Geoff Wickens (timekeeping)

No nominations were made for starts team and photo finish.

v. Mentoring Update

LH confirmed that she has produced a first draft of guidelines for mentoring technical officials, as well as a series of appendices to support a wider fraternity of officials, not just track and field. This will hopefully be completed by the end of April and will need to be proof-read. JT and SH have agreed to do this. LH has approached endurance officials to support this, as it needs to be an all-embracing approach to officiating across the sport in Wales.

LH confirmed the need for more officials to keep the sport going.

ZH referred to the training sessions taking place this on 14th April and 28th April, which will be a replica of the November events. A mentor model has been created by Rob Hooper, where a progress report will be submitted at the beginning and end of the season, rather than after every event. Some people have already signed up for the training to be officials' mentors.

JT thanked LH and ZH for their work on the mentoring officials programme.

4. Discussions

a. Policy and Procedures for Ratification of Records

AC responded to a query from Scottish Athletics about our procedures for ratifying records in Wales. AC decided to review this and produced a document to share with the committee. AC brought the following points to the committee, having referred to the UKA rule book on British records, as a starting point of reference. He referred to UKA having national records, allcomer records, Under 23 records, Under 20 records and UKA Under 18 records. Everything else is a best performance.

AC raised the following points from the UKA rule book for British records and made the following suggestions:

- UKA rule book ask for a record of application form being submitted. Welsh Athletics do not always insist that a record of application form is submitted. If the record is set in a major event, AC suggested that we should accept the record.
- Best Performances - if a performance is accepted on Power of 10, we should accept it as a best performance in Wales, unless there is no wind reading.
- Up to 400m must be fully automatic, although some older records exist with hand timing and will remain in place until replaced by an electronically timed event.
- No performance should be accepted in an individual event, unless it is in an official competition with a minimum of three competitors taking part. AC recommended wording changes to state a minimum of three finishers, rather than three competitors.
- UKA has a committee to ratify records and the rule book says that UKA will decide if a competition is bonafide and whether the record should be ratified. AC suggested that this committee should have the same authority to ratify records in Wales.
- Mixed competition performances will not be valid as qualifying times for major events and championships and will not be valid for the purpose of records. AC suggested that we also accept this ruling.
- AC suggested that Welsh records should be kept for under 18 athletes.

- AC suggested that Welsh Athletics introduce records for mixed relay teams and female decathlon, an event that is to be introduced in the near future.

JT agreed that the wording should be changed to three finishers in a race, rather than three competitors in a race. Also, instead of official competition, the wording should be changed to licensed competition.

PJ suggested that whilst we are looking at records, we cut out the 50m women's Welsh record and cut back on some of our records for events that no longer exist.

RLP expressed her opinion that consistency between home nation records would be good. Also, we should not over complicate the process. Clarity and simplicity of processes is vital. In terms of minimum numbers of competitors, we should not punish the athletes for something that is not essentially their fault e.g. race walkers are few and far between and therefore should not be denied a record due to lack of participants in the race. Also competing alone is not advantageous to any athlete and therefore makes a record more difficult to achieve and even more deserving when achieved.

JM expressed his opinion that if a record is set in an event at a bonafide competition, the committee should use their discretion to reward the athlete and honour the record.

GW added to previous points by pointing out that a race walk could start with ten athletes and end with nine of them being disqualified. The remaining athlete should not be denied a record based on something that is out of their control.

DW asked whether a 400m record would need to be automatically timed to stand as a record, as not every event will have photo finish. He also asked if the record would stand if enough qualified, graded officials were present.

AC replied that UKA will not accept it as British record, but this committee would have the discretion to make this decision. UKA would be more likely to accept it as a best performance, especially in the case of a younger age-group athlete.

DW also asked about eligibility and why we specify that only Welsh athletes can break Welsh records. DW pointed out that some Welsh athletes still hold Under 15 and Under 17 records from other home nations.

JT suggested that we look at the document produced by AC between now and the next meeting, send suggestions back to AC and copy JT and LB into the email.

KE suggested that more time and thought was needed before making any decisions.

Action – any comments back to AC to be discussed and decided upon in the next meeting.

JT thanked AC and BC for the work that has gone into the above task.

b. Track and Field Handbook – Lynette Harries

LH pointed out that there has been wide consultation on the handbook and a small group of people worked diligently, co-ordinated by JT. It has been very well received and is now complete and ready to use.

LH thanked JT for the work that has gone into producing the handbook.

JT named SH, RLP, DW, LH, as well as the regional reps and the athletes voice group, who have all been involved in the production and endorsement of the handbook. It has now been disseminated across Wales and JW has praised the thorough consultation process. JT said that the next step was to present the handbook to General Council in May, followed by the board. It will be published on websites as PDF.

The handbook was signed off by the committee and will be reviewed at the end of the two-year cycle.

5. Actions from Previous Meeting

a. Photo Finish Training Update

ZH is looking to set up a virtual photo finish course in May for five attendees in North Wales. The five clubs will need to allocate one person each to attend the course. At a later date in May, PJ will set up a photo finish technical course to deal with the setting up of the equipment. This is in response to concerns that North Wales will not have any photo finish officials for much of this Summer.

PJ is considering running his technical course in Crewe, where he has access to a suitable area for officials to have hands on experience of setting up the equipment.

JT pointed out that this is not a North Wales issue, but a whole of Wales issue. JT pointed out that there are not enough photo finish officials to cover all competitions in Wales.

PJ pointed out that training could take place in NIAC.

SH confirmed that only three photo finish officials have responded to the elite competitions coming up in May.

JT requested that ZH advertise on the newsletter that photo finish training will be coming up in the near future.

RLP pointed out that timekeeping was also going to be an issue in the near future and there needs to be a wider understanding of the current situation. RLP expressed her opinion that some responsibility needs to fall upon the regions to encourage new officials to train in areas that are struggling for officials.

Action – all regions to encourage volunteers to train in photo finish and contact ZH about this.

6. Reports

a. Regional Issues

North Wales

CB reported the following via email:

- Colwyn Bay Council have agreed to invest in the track.
- In Menai, refurbishments are to take place later this month and this will last for about ten weeks. They hope to host competitions later in the Summer.
- Deeside will be holding no competitions this year.
- Wrexham will be the main venue for competitions until later this summer,
- Maldwyn will not take part in any league matches this year due to lack of training for athletes during the pandemic.

CB also reported concerns from North Wales about lack of photo finish officials and Grade 3 track judges.

East Wales

Nothing to report. The next meeting is to be held next week.

West Wales

Nothing to report

South Wales

Nothing to report

7. Any Other Business

a. Changes to UKA rules for Competition 2202 - 2024

AC has offered to collate any suggestions that this committee have for rule changes. The deadline for suggesting changes to UKA is 31st July.

JT set the 15th June as a deadline for this committee to submit their suggestions to AC.

RLP will publicise this date on the website for endurance to respond as well if they have any suggestions to make.

b. Welsh Schools

KE said that the next meeting is to be held on 17th April. Schools and districts have been asked to find out which district schools competitions will be going ahead.

KE confirmed that a SIAB meeting will take place on 24th April and in this meeting, they will decide if this competition is to go ahead. The date for SIAB is 17th July. KE will keep the committee updated on this matter.

c. EDM

PJ confirmed that some older EDM units will be donated to Welsh Athletics.

8. Date of next meeting:

Wed 9th June 2021 at 6pm

9. Dates of Future Meetings: All Meetings commence at 6pm

Wednesday 11th August

Wednesday 13th October

Wednesday 8th December

Wednesday 9th February

JT confirmed that officials will now meet separately with one joint meeting per year.

JT asked SH to provide her with dates for officials' meetings to be placed on the meetings matrix.

The meeting ended at 8:45pm

