

Welsh Athletics General Council Meeting Minutes

Held on the Wednesday 13 March 2024

Meeting held remotely via video link

Present: Lynne Brier (Chair), Christine Vorrés, (Secretary)

Lynette Harries	East Wales	Graham Finlayson – President WA
Rob Champion	West Wales	
Sharon Leech	Road/ Cross Country Secretary	
Arwel Lewis	Mountain/Trail/Fell	
Kay Hatton	Chair - North Wales	
Joyce Tomala	East Wales	
John Hatton	North Wales	
Lee Hayward	South Wales	
James Williams	Welsh Athletics	

Papers circulated in advance: Agenda

Actions from meeting

Item Number	ACTIONS	Person responsible
3	James Williams take back to team that Lee needs support with Open Track	JW
3	James will ask Zoe Holloway to engage with regions to explore ways to recruit more officials.	JW
4.	Ask JW if the regions pay a volunteer to find sponsorship? (a % of amount raised)	LB
4.	Trail and Mountain licencing – Can WA accept an event licenced with WFRA or amend their licencing requirements to be similar. Ask JW.	LB
4.	Eligibility – Can an athlete who lives in Wales (but is a member of an English Club) run in regional without paying an additional registration fee to WA – Aks JW for advice.	LB
4.	Regional boundaries on a Map. Ask JW if a map can be purchased and the regional boundaries added by each region.	LB.
5.	Invite Euan Coney from WA to next meeting regarding the website	LB.

1. Apologies for Absence – Sue Hooper, Dai Williams, Fred Malkin,

2. Declaration of Interest – None declared.

3. Actions from Previous Meeting:

James Williams was invited to attend the meeting to discuss regional boundaries, the affiliation process for 2024 and regional funding.

James recapped for the members the current situation regarding funding, where cuts have been made to the funding received by Welsh Athletics.

The Welsh Government, UK Athletics and Sport Wales have all reduced their grants, and some of the costs that were previously covered are now falling on Welsh Athletics – safeguarding courses for example.

WA have offset some losses by increasing the athlete affiliation fees and have sourced some commercial sponsorship. (and will continue to seek more commercial deals)

Challenges keep coming, Insurance premiums are up by 30%, costs incurred hosting events has increased. WA delivers approx. 50 events a year.

WA continues to try to protect core aspects, the front-line services. Areas to reduce costs have been staffing, the comms department has effectively been removed, from 3.5 members of staff to 1 member. They are exploring other areas to cut costs.

James told the members that regional funding proposed is £1,500 per year, and £750 to cover the cost of medals.

Current year some regions have yet to receive this year's funding, that will be with them before the end of this current year. There has been an underspend on development, and this will be passed to the regions as a one-off grant of £1,000.

Lynne – thanked James and acknowledged how challenging finances are.

Rob asked if we must apply for the grant?

James stated that although the grants will be paid WA are keen for the regions to continue to produce development plans to provide focus and keep the regions in line with the strategic plans for the growth/development of the sport. The grant may be used to support the transition to the funding for next year. The money is there to support the regions.

In respect of the regional medals James told the members that it is entirely up to them what medals they use, the design and the supplier are their choice, but they may use the WA contact at Running Imp if they wish.

Joyce – The criteria for applying for modernisation grants needs modernising, recently only 6 applications were received. Many aspects of the grant application are no longer relevant. Why are the regions charged full price for hiring photo finish and edm equipment from WA? JW replied that the expensive equipment maintenance costs need to be covered and its only one event a year that they have to hire the equipment as WA host events and cover all the costs. Joyce stated that a region of WA should not be charged full price for hiring WA equipment – when the regions are short of funds. She asked what they as a governing body are doing to help the regions find income streams.

James told the members present that WA host events and their staff are heavily involved in many competitions. A financial grant is given to support the inter-regional championships.

James stated that in the past when they have tried to work with the regions and modernise and evolve the competition structure – in the main – they have been criticised heavily for it. WA want to empower the regional councils to own the competitions. It's a difficult position. He acknowledged to Joyce that the East Region have made significant strides to evolve and bring clubs in. Just recently James and his staff have received very negative criticism that is very challenging and has a detrimental effect on his staff.

Lee – told James that he sits on the South Region, and acknowledged that some of the criticism aimed at WA was unfair, but some things do need to be asked. Some modernisation was put into effect without consultation and has been hard to 'sell' to their members. Lee understands the challenges, and that maybe regions should become competition providers and obtain their own equipment and host events, but that they need support to do so.

James asked Lee what that support would look like – to which Lee responded that he is trying to set up a Junior League but feels completely out of his depth in respect of Open Track. He has lots of support from clubs, and stressed that he is not criticizing, but needs help. James stated that WA are fully supportive of the Junior League, and Darren Williams and Ieuan will help, but WA want to step away from exclusively delivering events. WA is the only governing body that delivers localised events, and its not a sustainable situation. WA will support the transition of the competition delivery to the clubs. WA have been trying really hard to get a Junior League set up in the north and are trying to mimic what is available in the other regions in that region. There is a lack of domestic competition in the north. WA are trying to prioritise areas where it is felt that there isn't enough of an offer, but also work to develop new competition providers and support people to become more confident in hosting events.

Lee acknowledged and agreed with James' comments, more ownership should rest with the clubs. Support from WA is good, but sometimes if staff members are off there is a gap in the support. Lee has downloaded Open Track manuals to try to get to grips with the system. James suggested that maybe a webinar could be arranged to demonstrate using the system, but also that they don't have to use opentrack, other systems are available. Lee also said clubs need help to produce event results. He suggested a manual should be produced – a step by step guide to setting up events.

James reiterated that there are not enough open meetings, they need for clubs to set up events and WA will underwrite any losses so that making a loss is not a barrier to organising events. Over the border there are lots of events and many make money. WA are willing to support but their staff cannot be at every meeting.

Sharon – Can WA help the regions gain sponsorship? Provide supporting letters and marketing opportunities for sponsors? Make sure sponsors receive exposure.

James asked the members what are the regions spending their money on?

Kay – Divides the money equally between 5 disciplines. Contributions to transport, team managers expenses, admin costs, website, entry fees etc

Lee – Gazebo, Vests, Branding – one off spends. Ongoing costs are expenses for officials for events.

James – Suggested go back to the development grant and put officials costs into your plan. WA may be able to put on more Official's courses so that there are more officials. Lee did state that even if the courses are available then we cannot find people to step up and become officials. James will ask Zoe Holloway to engage with regions to explore ways to recruit more officials.

Lynnette – There are good examples of people within regions doing fundraising. Regions need to put this on their agendas to raise sponsorship. Regions need to be more self-sufficient and take

on board what James is saying regarding funding.

Joyce – East accounts are spot on and transparent. Facility hire is extortionate. Cardiff is too expensive. Newport cannot be used due to Football. Photo-finish is expensive. Officials need to be sourced from England – not enough time-keepers, track judges, officials expenses. Cwmbran used to host successful open meetings, but AAW prevented them. This is a historical decision that is impacting how things are done and the challenges we face now. James agreed that we need to get back to this sort of situation. He advised speaking to the facilities provider to negotiate the price.

WA cannot continue to put on as many events as they have done, but they appreciate that they need to work with people and develop more competition providers, event directors and adjudicators. We cannot be afraid of failing, we have to innovate.

The members present continued to discuss hosting events, what is needed, sharing best practice, creative and innovation practices.

In respect of Road Races WA are re-introducing the £2 levy on unaffiliated runners taking part.

Affiliation:

James was also asked by the members to clarify the affiliation process this year. Cost per athlete is increasing by £1.50, and there have been significant investments in the members' portal, enabling athletes to pay subs directly to reduce the burden on club member secretaries. They hope that all athletes will use this method by 2025 – especially in respect of signing the terms and conditions.

Age Groups:

Age group changes will be introduced in April 2026. Webinars will be held to advise of the changes.

Officials:

Changes will be introduced to help simplify the Officials' pathway – they will be backdated to Jan 2024.

Lynne thanked James for attending and acknowledged that everyone is feeling the pinch, and asked if James wanted to send someone to attend a future meeting to let her know.

4. East Wales matters for discussion.

Could the regions pay a volunteer to find sponsorship? – Lynne will ask JW.
The members discussed options for finding and obtaining sponsorship.

The regions voted unanimously to keep the regional championships due to the positive outcomes from them

Regional medals – the East will source and design their own medals.

Trail and Mountain event licensing.

It is easier to licence these event via WFRA – the main sticking point is the need for a race referee

when licencing via WA. WA will not allow a regional champs to take place within an event not licenced with WA. LB to take this back to JW.

Regional Eligibility

After a discussion regarding eligibility requirements it was decided to ask JW for clarification regarding athletes who live in Wales, but register with an English club they are then required to also register with a welsh club (2nd claim or social member) in order to run for the welsh region. Clarification required from James.

4. North Wales Region

A map is required showing the regional boundaries. Suggested Euan Coney purchases a digital map and the regions are marked. Lynne will ask JW. Kay will email the address of the map that she found on google to Lynne. (dated 2021)

5. Reports Submitted

None submitted, but Sharon advised that their committee members are producing a collated report for improving XC events. They have a further meeting at the end of this month.

Kay – Website regional pages need updating.

Lynne thanked the members for attending this constructive meeting.

6. Dates of Future Meetings – always at 6.00pm.

08-05-2024, 10-07-2024, 11-09-2024, 06-11-2024

Minutes Written by:

Christine Vorrés
Secretary.
20/03/2024

****Footnote****

Response from James Williams:

A few points on the regional queries raised....

- It would be for the regions to agree any deal with any company or persons who scope for sponsorship – it is a tough market, and the regions would probably get success by sending emails to existing team members requesting support. The value of a regional assets would probably be too small for a commercial agency – this is our problem as a NGB as well.
- We would not accept any license from a separate body. Welsh Athletics is the only recognised NGB for the sport. I have grave concerns about any alternative license even being considered. We have significant concerns about the WFRA regarding governance, safeguarding, H&S and previous disciplinary matters. Given the challenges financially that I outlined, I am amazed to see that the regions would consider not supporting the governing body, but would be happy to put money into an organisation that has not remit to reinvest back into the sport. I will aim to write to the Regions about this.