



Essex County Athletic Association

Minutes of the Essex AA Endurance meeting held in the clubhouse of Chelmsford Athletic club, Melbourne Park, Chelmsford on Monday 2nd October 2023 start time 19:00 hours

Representatives from all Essex AA 52 affiliated clubs were invited. Nineteen clubs were represented.

Participants:

Andy Catton (Ilford AC) (Essex AA Chair), Malcolm Bailey (Tiptree RR), Gerry O'Doherty (Billericay Striders), Diane Wooller (Colchester Harriers and Essex AA Officials Secretary) Paul Mingay (Colchester Harriers), Allison Gillan (Springfield Striders), Richard Charleston (Chelmsford AC), Claire Levey (Ilford AC), Michael Wilson (East London Runners), Scott Darney (Witham RC), Bernie Johnson (Thurrock Harriers), Elaine Forrest (Brentwood Beagles), Mark Lawes (Tiptree Road Runners), Ron Dawson (City of Southend), Peter Eates (Phoenix Striders), Nick Wetheridge (Basildon AC), Morven Hurding (Tiptree Road Runners), Neal Clark (Phoenix Striders), Grace Wade (Pitsea RC), Marion Wade (Pitsea RC), Vicky Trevor (Brentwood Beagles), John Clark (Mid Essex Casuals), Neal Beaumont (Dengie 100 Runners), Chris McDonnell (Dengie 100 Runners), Barbara McDonnell (Dengie 100 Runners), Ken Bench (Brentwood RC), Peter Blacklock.

1. Apologies for Absence

Tom Beedle (WGEL), Gary Chandler (Springfield Striders), Linda Bates (Pitsea RC), Peter Bates (Pitsea RC), Martin Chester (Havering AC), Paul Dellar (Colchester Harriers)

2. Minutes of the previous meeting dated 30th January 2023

The minutes of the meeting on Monday 30th January 2023 were **approved** as a true record of that meeting.

3. 2024 Essex 20 mile update

The event is being organised by Active Training World ("ATW") in conjunction with Essex AA. Venue Debden Airfield and will take place on Sunday 17th March 2024.

It has been agreed that in 2024, there will also be a 10 mile race, to ensure that the event is financially viable for ATW. The event will open for entries in the near future.

4. 2024 Essex Road Relay Championships

These will take place at the same venue as this year, Northern Gateway, Colchester on Sunday 7th April 2024. Hosted by Colchester Harriers.

A suggestion to include an event for U11's in 2024 was discussed but there was limited appetite for this proposal. It was agreed to retain the same programme of races as this year. It was agreed to start the event at 9.30am rather than 10am.

5. Howard Williams Trophy for the Best Road Race in Essex.

Over the last few years, there has been a low response from all the clubs eligible to vote. Noted that some clubs are focussed on Track & Field so acknowledged that they would not, necessarily vote.

It has been up to clubs to rally membership. Clubs Secretaries are contacted when entries open (with voting slips) and posts placed on Facebook.

Agreed, that we would promote this for at least one more year, although with a change as to how voting will take place.

It was proposed, that:-

- This will open up on 1st January 2024 (or soon after)
- Responses from individual runners. They will list their top three races and advise what club that they are a member of.
- When voting closes, the votes cast by each club member would be consolidated into one vote (1st, 2nd and 3rd) from that club and then the overall winner would be calculated.
- As in previous years, club members would not be able to vote for their own club event.
- Closing date 31st January 2024.

Scott Darney has agreed to set up the Survey Monkey.

If there is not a great response this time, it was proposed that the trophy be donated to the Ingatestone 5. Howard Williams organised the first event (this year it was the 38th anniversary) and was the Run Director for a number of years. It was agreed that this would be a fitting tribute to the memory of Howard.

6. Road 5k Championships

The 5k event, held on a Friday night in July, was first trailed in 2022 and was awarded, this year Essex Championship status. This was on a trial basis, for one year for review at this meeting.

Event was deemed to be a huge success and very popular with those that took part.

The meeting agreed to continue to support this as an Essex Championship race although for the future it would not be designated as an Essex Grand Prix event. (See below for discussion of the 2024 Grand Prix series)

7. Review of 2023 and structure of 2024 Essex Grand Prix series

The last race of the 2023 series takes place at Tiptree on Sunday 8th October.

Currently, the Grand Prix tables are calculated manually. This is a fairly time consuming exercise.

Martin Clarke (Ilford AC) has written a computer programme (which he has adapted from a programme that he uses for the Elvis East London 5 mile series) for use from the 2024 series going forward. This year, the two systems have run alongside each other to iron out any potential problems.

A number of issues were considered for the 2024 series:

- Do we continue with the 5 year age banding?

Since this was adopted, there have been a number of occasions where there have been very few entrants taking part in some of the age categories.

Prior to the meeting, Gary Chandler had produced some stats:

In the 2023 series in the Ladies, the total number of different athletes who have competed in at least 1 race are (based on the first 5 events)

V50 – 25

V55 – 25

V60 – 10

V65 – 4

V70+ - 3

In some of these events a medal was guaranteed just by turning up and finishing the race.

It was proposed that we retain the 5 year bands for 2023 and 2024 (as the mementoes have already been purchased) but that if numbers continue to dwindle then this would be reviewed for the 2025 series.

- Changing Date of Birth age banding for athletes during the Grand Prix Series

Manually, it is very difficult, due to administrative issues, to process the tables when an athlete moved up an age band during the year. Currently, when an athlete moves into a new age band they also go up in the Grand Prix series. Points that have accumulated in the previously have remained in the lower age group. Points earned in the new age group have started at zero.

This has prompted some complaints from athletes during the year.

The computer programme written by Martin Clarke is able to accommodate this and two proposals were received at the meeting:-

- a) Date of Birth for the Series would be the 1st January of that year
- b) Date of Birth for the Series would be the 31st December of that year.

This was debated and a vote taken which was 14 – 12 in favour of proposal a).

Agreed that we would seek the views of Gary Chandler after the meeting (as he was unable to attend). He favoured option a). We also spoke to Martin Clarke after the meeting and he advised that he preferred option a) as option b) would be difficult to programme.

AGREED that for the Grand Prix Series (Only) the age for the category that an athlete competes in will be taken as at the 1st January.

For each individual championship event, the age category will be the one that they are in at the date of the race.

- Number of events that will be deemed to form part of the 2024 series

With the 5k dropped from the series it will revert back to **Best 5 out of 6**. Bonus points will revert back to only **5 races** counting. For the 2023 series it had been agreed that all seven events would count for bonus points.

- Should we continue to retain an U20 championship event for the 5 miles and 10k event.

It was proposed that this be dropped due to lack of interest. In most events, there were very few running and medals have not been awarded.

Of those present, most were not aware that there was a Championship event for U20's at these distances.

Agreed that these would be re-instated for 2024 and that we would try and publicise them in race literature and on Social media to see whether this generates any further interest. If not, they will be discontinued.

8. 2024 Grand Prix races (provisional)

5 miles – Ingatestone (the RD is to be contacted to see whether the date of the event could be earlier in the year. This is to avoid too many clashes with XC events. Other events suggested included the Writtle 5 miles (Good Friday) and Witham may also be putting on a 5 mile alternative at their 10 mile event.

10K – High Easter suggested (July)

10 miles - Stebbing 10 (November)

Half Marathon – Pleshey (September)

20 miles – Carver Barracks (March)

Marathon - Halstead. Entries open (May 12th)

The organisers, of the High Easter and Stebbing 10 miles will be contacted to ask whether they would be happy to host.

9. XC relays debrief

Event took place on 23rd September at Weald Park

Allison Gillian reported back to the meeting, the following

- Event was hosted by Billericay Striders
- There was a late change of date to 16th September from the 23rd September after the SEAA moved their road relays from 16th to the 23rd to coincide with Aldershot RR.
- ATW were asked whether they were able to support the change. They said yes, but on reflection it was felt that they had over stretched themselves as they were also covering two other events that day. They only sent one person to manage the chip timing at the relays. In our view it needs a minimum of 2.
- There were problems with a new entry system that ATW had set up that caused significant problems for Team Managers when entering their runners.

- ATW brought with them Chip timing 'side mats' and not 'ground mats'. ATW were concerned that runner's spikes would cause damage to their mats but at other XC events this had not caused any issues.
- The side mats sensor picked up chips that were being worn by athletes who were not taking part in that race but were standing in a reasonable proximity, despite a cordon being set up.
- Weather for the event was excellent and all County medals were presented shortly after each event
- Junior races went well
- In the Ladies race, some runners were still out on the course when the Men's race started.
- There was concern from those present at the meeting that runners were seen walking with teams taking longer than 2 and a half hours to complete the course. One team manager commented that she tried to get out as many runners as possible to support the event.
- Currently, not all team managers have declared their runners. It seems that the link had not been received by some. Brentwood RC are still to receive a link and Allison will follow this up.
- Despite seeking volunteers from all clubs to supporting marshalling, only one club came forward. This put severe pressure on the host club.
- Felt that the event is too early in the season and it has been agreed to defer the 2024 event until October (possibly the weekend before the start of the Essex League XC season).
- Suggested that for 2024 both the Ladies and Men compete in the same race.

There have been a few problems with Chip Timing companies used at Essex events this year. ATW are very helpful and receptive to supporting our needs. A meeting has recently taken place with ATW (Andy Catton, Gerry O'Doherty representing Essex and CEO of ATW, James Shipley)

Essex AA requirements for events were made very clear, and do need fully addressing if we are to continue using them at future events:

Entry system

1. All athletes must include EA registration URN on entry prior to the event - as an EA requirement
2. All athletes must declare Essex eligibility and correct age category
3. Entries for champs must close say 5 days before the event so we can check eligibility (Essex born or resident 9 months and not competed in or for another County).
4. All above to team relay entries (Road and xc) as well as

Results

5. Age categories must be clearly sorted in the system for both individual and team results for Essex Champs independent of any open race.
6. Team points scoring must relate to eligible seniors (or any vets) only excluding positions of non Essex runners, ineligible athletes and be separate for men and women's finish positions

Other

7. Timing chip failures to be addressed and mats used for all events including xc
8. Relay changeover areas require better management and more ATW staff needed

10. Essex Cross Championships update

Basildon AC are hosting the County XC Championship events in January at Gloucester Park. Nick Wetheridge (Basildon) advised the meeting that they are seeking to re-invigorate the Championships to make them more spectators friendly and enhance the running experience for the athlete.

Nick has planned a shorter course (whilst still retaining the hills) with a 1.5K and 3K lap. Seniors would run 4 laps.

Runners would at one point on the lap run through a 45metre marquee where features such as jumps would be placed. The event would be compered by a DJ. It is estimated that hiring the marquee and DJ, etc. would be circa. £3k. He is currently seeking sponsorship to cover this cost.

Entry requirements would need to be reviewed to avoid runners being lapped on the course. Potential of the Vets championships being held on the same day in the future could be considered, in a separate race.

Some of the top Essex athletes will be encouraged to run.

The Essex League fixture on the 28th October will be used as a test event.

Following this a decision will be made as to whether it will be used for the County Championships.

11. Inter County Championships

An Invitational Inter County 10k will take place at Cambridge on 15th October. We have entered a team. Team Manager is Richard Charleston.

Selection is based upon the performances at the Southend 10k. Richard has contacted the first three (a runner has already expressed interest in selection who was not in the race) and most have rejected the offer of representing Essex as they have other commitments that day. Gerry O'Doherty suggested that Richard should contact runners in order that they finished in the Southend 10k and he will provide him with email addresses.

Another Invitational race is taking place at Brighton on 19th November, teams being based upon the performances at the Billericay 10k on 5th November.

A question was raised about the selection criteria for the SEAA Inter Counties XC Championships at Oxford on 9th December 2023. This event is for boys and girls u13, 15, 17 & senior women. It was felt that the trial event should be agreed by the Executive Committee. There has been some confusion around what the trail event for the 2024 Inter Counties Championships, would be. Whilst this was acknowledged it has been the practice for a number of years for our Team Managers to agree which event will be the selection race for these championships.

12. Any other business

Chris McDonald raised concern about the increase in the number of 'on line clubs'. He is a member of Dengie 100 and they feel that these clubs are having a negative impact of the membership of his club. It was mentioned that other clubs have also lost members to these clubs.

Whilst this was noted, it is up to each club to promote itself within the area.

Andy Catton advised the meeting that he had attended the AGM of the UK Counties Athletics Union. Meeting held, virtually.

There had been a proposal to wind up the CAU.

Andy reports, that firstly, the good news is that although the UKCAU is pretty short on funds (£11,134 in the bank) they are not bankrupt and there is no question of them being wound up. The proposal to "terminate" the CAU came from a disgruntled former committee member

who did not attend the meeting, there was no seconder and the proposal was totally dismissed.

It was acknowledged that this year's T & F inter counties was a complete disaster. A complete mess with EA & CAU blaming each other but basically the entry system (Roster) was flawed and details went out too late for just about everyone. Only two counties entered athletes so the event was not held.

Andy made the point that despite this the number of athletes in county champs at senior level had plummeted and lack of interest in competing in county T & F champs carried through to there being no great desire to represent a county at an inter county event. All counties reps attending agreed with Andy apart from the Yorkshire rep who said their championships were thriving at senior level.

Very obvious that EA is not interested in having the CAU inter county event in their English Champs.

CAU committee to discuss continuing or not with the T & F champs.

Regarding the Inter County XC it was stated by the CAU XC Secretary that this had "guaranteed" funding from UKA for next 10 years! Concern was expressed that with UKA being pretty much bust, how could that be the case!?

Again it was stated that the event costs £35,000 > £40,000 to put on with all but £2,000 subsidised by UKA.

Event is in the planning for 2024 with World XC trials being included.

Andy stressed, as he had written previously, that in the event UKA money does not materialise the entry fees should be massively increased. In order to keep the highly valued event going Counties should and could pay £500 > £1,000 to enter all age groups. Majority agreed but a few reps said their counties could not possibly afford (N. Wales for instance said they only had £1,000 in the bank).

Their Gen Sec commented that the UKCAU was an "athletics" association and they should still be doing their utmost to promote inter county events over XC, T & F, Road and Fell.

Meeting closed at 20:56