



## *Essex County Athletic Association*

Minutes of the Essex AA Track & Field meeting held at The Brentwood School Sports Centre, Middleton Hall Lane, CM15 8EE on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Start time 19:30pm

### **Participants:**

Andy Catton (Chair) Ilford AC, Gerry O'Doherty (Billericay Striders), Malcolm Bailey (Secretary) Tiptree Road Runners, Claire Levey Ilford AC, Rick Thompson Colchester Harriers, Tony Benton(via Zoom) Havering AC, Kaye Merrywest (Via Zoom) , Paul Merrywest (via Zoom) Elaine Forrest, Vicky Trevor (Brentwood Beagles), Jean Tierney (Havering AC), Jon Metcalf, Thurrock Harriers, Tom Beedell (Woodford Green & Essex Ladies).

Gerry O'Doherty chaired the meeting until Andy Catton arrived.

All Essex Affiliated Track & Field clubs were invited to the meeting. Six clubs were represented, two club representatives sent their apologies and six were not represented and did not send any apologies for absence. A hybrid option was offered to all clubs.

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

June Cork (City of Southend AC), Diane Wooller (Colchester Harriers), Joe Everitt (Woodford Green AC with Essex Ladies), John Weir (Chelmsford AC)

### **2. Minutes for the last meeting – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023.**

Minutes accepted as a true record of that meeting. No amendments proposed.

### **3. Review of the 2023 Outdoor Track & Field Championships held at Thurrock AC and consideration of changes to the 2024 championships.**

It was acknowledged that in common with most other County Championships, the entry into the Essex Senior Championships was down on previous years. This was also reflected in the entries into the Southern Championships.

In the other age groups, there was an excellent entry and it was mooted that we should consider only supporting a Championship for all age groups up to U17, going forward.

It was also proposed that we should consider making our championships an 'Open' event. However, it was noted that the majority of Counties also hold their events over the same weekend, so this would not be a viable option.

Of the 80 females that entered the County Senior/Vets Championships over the various events, 64 were awarded a medal. Similarly in the Male championships there were 163 competitors with 96 medals awarded. Considered, that there were too many 'soft' medals awarded.

Question was asked, 'Should we set a minimum number of athletes for an event to take place?' Feedback from athletes was that there was not enough strong competition and the reduction in Vets age to 35 meant that older athletes were reluctant to take part. Also, noted that membership levels at senior level is not strong at most track and field clubs.

Another area of concern was the difficulty in finding sufficient officials to support the championships; the field events in particular struggled.

To help support the officials, a suggestion was made that we could contact schools to ask them whether their 6<sup>th</sup> form students would be prepared to volunteer at the championships. This had happened in the past.

Havering AC have put on courses for Officials.

It was suggested that some officials are happy to support their own club events but are not comfortable about supporting County events in case they made mistakes.

Without officials/volunteers County Championships will not be able to take place.

Other Counties are also struggling to find sufficient officials to support their championships. It was raised that the time commitment could be an issue. Could officials volunteer for just part of a day?

Acknowledged that there is not an easy answer.

Prior to the meeting, Joe Everitt had sent in a note in which he commented that the new entry system had created some disruption but will hopefully in the future it will be a more efficient process for entering, once the issues encountered this year are resolved.

The question of whether there should be any changes to the 2024 championships.

Should we cancel the events, where, for instance, we are not attracting at least five entries?

WGEL consider events should not be removed – as it stops opportunities for all athletes. Due to their nature, technical events will always have a smaller entry and County should support these athletes who dedicate themselves to these events. Consideration to a separate day for these championships was discussed. Finding suitable dates in the calendar will be an issue.

Merging of races for U17/Seniors/Vets also discussed.

It was agreed that we would host the 2024 Championships on the same basis as this year's events but send out a warning that if these championships are not supported by athletes that they would be dropped the following year. Concern was raised that if events are omitted from the timetable, it was highly unlikely that they would return, in the future.

Proposed that the 2024 Championships would be held at Chelmsford – weekend of 12/13 May 2024.

#### **4. Review of 5k and 10k track championships**

5k took place at Ilford AC as part of their centenary celebrations. Evening went well with 50 taking part (Female 14 and 36 Male). Winners, Female Lizzie Wellsted (Colchester Harriers) 16:59 and Male Dean Williamson (Colchester Harriers) 15:08.

2024 Brentwood Beagles have offered to host, possibly with a 3k event for the junior age groups.

Woodford Green also offered to host and would like to be considered for 2025.

These championships will take place on either 12<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> June.

10k took place at Braintree with 18 athletes competing. (3 Female and 15 Male). Winners Female Lizzie Wellsted (Colchester Harriers) 34:31 and Male, Ben Felton (Chelmsford) 31:36.

These championships will be incorporated into Chelmsford's Miles of Miles event in 2024.

## **5. 2023 Track Relay championships**

These took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> July at Chelmsford AC. Competition was for U13/U15 and U17's. Weather not ideal and the event finished very close to the closing time of the track.

It was a very good meeting, enjoyed by all but some competitors struggled to get to the venue due to the high volume of traffic on the roads. Championships took place on a Friday evening with some of the junior athletes then getting home very late in the evening.

Suggested that we should try and schedule the 2024 championships on a Saturday/Sunday possibly August/September if a date can be found.

## **6. Inter County Championships**

Report received from Joe Everitt.

Firstly, many thanks to all the parents, coaches and officials for supporting the athletes this weekend and for many on navigating your way to Surrey for Intercounties on Saturday!

### **Results Summary**

- Team Essex performed superbly. U13 Boys were crowned Intercounty Champions & Essex U13 Girl were a tremendous 4th overall in tight finish with 14 counties competing
- The athletes gave it everything!
- 5 of U13 Girls achieved personal best performances and a number broke existing home club records

The blustery conditions mean some of these PBs were unfortunately wind assisted (+) but shows excellent level of performances on day.

### **Feedback**

- Amount of smiles and nervous excitement seemed to suggest girls enjoyed their day!
- As always sport delivered usual highs and lows. That is beauty of athletics and why we keep coming back for more!
- Paul Cheal (U13 Boys TM) and I also took good feedback on day. Some simple things to help improve event from a logistical perspective such as having an Essex team flag and more detailed vest sizes
- We also took on board practical notes and observations as team managers to help our athletes next time particularly in events requiring familiarity such as relays

We want to ensure we continue to provide best possible platform for our county's athletes!

## **Summary**

Excellent result for team Essex and 3 very proud team managers!

We must all remember that the athletes are not robots! At this early age they are still learning how to compete, prepare and manage all the physical and mental challenges of the sport.

### **7. Eastern/Essex Combined events Championships**

These championships took place at Peterborough on the 24<sup>th</sup> September, and were incorporated into the Eastern AA championships

Report received from Chris Akehurst.

It was a well organised event and successful championships for Essex athletes,

- 20 of the 85 athletes (23.5%) competing on the day in the various age groups were Essex Athletes
- Males accounted for 35 of the 85 competing on the day; of these 35 males, 6 were Essex athletes.
- Females accounted for 50 of the 85. Of the 50, 14 were from Essex
- 14 of the Essex athletes won an Essex medal, 7 Gold, 4 Silver and 3 Bronze
- 10 of the Essex athletes also won an Eastern Counties medal. 4 Gold, 3 Silver and 3 Bronze
- The U15 girl's competition was dominated by Essex athletes with the top 5 being from Essex (4 from Chelmsford and 1 Basildon).

The bonus for County is that in the past, we have suffered a loss putting on these championships and it is likely that in 2023, we will not incur any cost.

The meeting was supportive of seeking the agreement of Eastern AA to incorporate our **championships into their Championships in 2024.**

### **8. Feedback from the CAU AGM held on 24<sup>th</sup> September.**

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 reported 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.

#### 9. 2024 Essex AA Indoor Track & field Championships

Lee Valley booked for the weekend of 2/3 March 2024.

Our usual date had been taken by the SEAA. Andy has contacted them to express our disappointment that they have booked our regular date.

Anticipated that, as in previous years, that these will be combined championships with Eastern AA.

#### **10. County Trophies**

The County Trophy Secretary post has remained vacant for a number of months. We have sought a volunteer to cover this post. Advertised in County minutes and on Social media sites.

To date, no one has come forward,

A number of our trophies are missing, despite a significant amount of time invested to locate them.

Only a few trophies have any intrinsic worth and it is felt that they are not valued by competitors. The majority of trophies were donated many years ago and some events there is a trophy for one of the sexes but not for another one! This prompted a complaint from a

coach at Ilford AC. His male athlete was awarded a trophy but there was not a trophy for his female athlete who also won the County Championships.

With nobody coming forward to volunteer, it is proposed that this be discussed at the next Executive meeting with a view to 'mothballing' all track and field trophies.

Gary Chandler currently manages all Road Championships trophies and it is proposed that we continue to award these on an annual basis.

### **11. Any Other Business**

Concern was raised that we have not received any updates from Schools about the performance of Essex athletes at their events.

Hayley Hemmings was the County Schools representative on the committee but she stood down from this role, earlier in the year.

A volunteer has stepped forward to take on the role for 2024 and if they are still willing to stand they will be elected at the forthcoming AGM in December.

Meeting ended at 20:48