

Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting

held at the Great Barr Hotel, Birmingham, on Saturday 30th November.

Present: Grace Hall (Chair); Janice Kaufman (Vice Chair); Nicola Thompson (Finance Officer); Marian Williams (Administrator) plus the following members of the management committee, Mick Bond; Dave Paver; Stuart Horsewood; Tim Soutar; Nichola Skedgel (EA representative) plus:

The following clubs were in attendance:

Midland region (27 teams represented)

Cannock & Stafford AC; Cheltenham & County Harriers; Coventry & Leamington; Dudley & Stourbridge Harriers; East Wales; Gwent Harriers; Kidderminster & Stourport AC; Leamington AC; Northampton AC; Nuneaton Harriers AC; Rugby & Northampton AC; Solihull & Small Heath AC; Swansea Harriers; Swindon Harriers; Team Avon; Telford AC; Tipton Harriers; Yate & District AC

Northern region (15 teams represented)

Blackburn Harriers; Chesterfield & District AC; City of York AC; Gateshead Harriers; Liverpool Harriers; Rotherham Harriers; SY Dons; Trafford AC; Wigan & District Harriers

Southern region (11 teams represented)

Blackheath & Bromley Harriers; Brighton & Hove AC; Cambridge Harriers (Kent); Highgate Heathside; Portsmouth/Winchester; Winchester & District AC; Woodford Green with Essex Ladies

Apologies: Leslie Roy (Scottish area co-ordinator); Altrincham & District AC; Bedford & County AC; Bicester AC; Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde AC; Bolton United Harriers & AC; Border Harriers & Seaton AC; Bournemouth, New Forest Juniors & Salisbury; Bracknell AC; Bromsgrove & Redditch AC; Cardiff Athletics; Chiltern Harriers; City of Portsmouth AC; Crawley AC; Croydon Harriers; Daventry AAC; Deeside AAC; East Cheshire Harriers & Tameside AC; Falkirk Victoria Harriers; Gloucester AC; Guildford & Godalming AC; Halesowen A & CC; Harrogate Harriers; Havering AC; Herne Hill Harriers; Hillingdon AC; Holland Sports/Dorking & Mole Valley; HY AC; Inverness Harriers; Kilbarchan Harriers; Kilmarnock Harriers & AC; Kingdom Athletic; Kingston upon Hull AC; Leeds City AC; Leicester Coritanian AC; Llanelli AC; Macclesfield Harriers, Manchester Harriers; Marshall Milton Keynes AC; Medway & Maidstone AC; Neath Harriers; Paddock Wood & Folkestone; Pitreavie AAC; Rushcliffe AC; S Factor; Saffron AC; South Wales; Springburn Harriers; ST Helens Sutton AC; Stevenage & North Hants/HAWCS; Tamworth AC; Team ATIPS; Team Dorset; Team East Lothian; Team North Cumbria; Team South Lanarkshire; Team Sussex; Tonbridge AC; Victoria Park, City of Glasgow AC; Walton AC; Waverley AC; West Cheshire AC; West Wales; Windsor, Slough, Eton & Hounslow; Wirral AC; Wycombe Phoenix Harriers.

1. **Grace Hall, chair**, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to the AGM. Before the main agenda items, she invited everyone to observe a minute's silence to remember Alan Johnson, who had actively served on the YDL committee since its inception in a variety of roles, until he passed away in December 2023; she also suggested that it would be a timely way to remember others from around our regions who had passed away during the course of the year.

2. **Minutes of the 2023 AGM**

P9, Item 6.3.1 **Crispian Webb (Cheltenham & County Harriers)** pointed out that he had raised an issue regarding the proposal to alternate middle distance events; he had suggested that it would penalise clubs with a larger number of middle-distance runners, as opposed to those who had more sprinters in terms of points scored, he had further commented that long

travelling times also impacted these athletes as they would in all likelihood only have one event to compete in.

It was agreed to amend the 2023 minutes to include this statement.

The chair then asked the meeting to approve the updated minutes, and their acceptance was proposed by **Joyce Tomala (East Wales)** and seconded by **Crispian Webb (Cheltenham & County Harriers)**.

With just three abstentions, the minutes were approved by the meeting and signed by the Chair.

3. Chair's Report.

Grace's report had been circulated to clubs and published on the website.

There were no supplementary questions.

4. Administrator's Annual Report

The report had also been circulated as outlined above, there were no supplementary questions.

Marian re-iterated her thanks to clubs for their co-operation during the year and to all the committee, especially the Chair, who had done a lot of work to help.

5. Financial Report.

5.1 **Nicola Thompson, the finance officer**, presented the accounts as circulated.

5.2 **She** asked if there were any queries about the report which had been circulated.

Crispian Webb (Cheltenham & County) asked where the note was regarding the National Finals' expenses. Nicola pointed him to the final page of the accounts which gave further detail in the breakdown of the costs and income.

Simon Baker (Highgate Heathside) raised the issue of increasing costs of track hire and first aid etc incurred to host a match so clubs can be out of pocket when hosting. **Marian** reminded everyone that our rules do specify that clubs should host at least every other year which means that everyone has to shoulder those costs in a fair way, however it's never as straightforward as that, because some clubs manage to avoid hosting which is something we need to address. She also pointed out that some leagues offer no payments for hosting.

Karen Higgs-Smith (Woodford Green w Essex Ladies) commented that her club regularly host YDL fixtures, often in both age groups in one year, they try to offset costs by selling food and snacks to raise revenue. A number of people pointed out that this isn't always possible as it can depend on who owns the stadium, as permission to sell food or drink, or to provide officials refreshments, is often refused, or if the snack bar is franchised so no profit is made by the host club.

Grace informed the meeting that the Accounts show how much money is paid out for hosting, and, if necessary, the league will propose a change to the affiliation fees in order to be able to pay out more to host clubs.

Nicola indicated that she intends asking host clubs for more information about the costs incurred and will be looking at this over the next year, together with looking at the cost of travel for clubs going to matches.

It is likely that the league will change dramatically in 2026, and this will affect both fees and payments made out.

5.3 Adoption of the accounts

- **Arwel Williams (Liverpool Harriers)** proposed that the accounts be accepted
- **Margaret Grayston (Wigan Harriers)** seconded the proposal

The meeting voted unanimously in favour of adopting the 2023 accounts.

5.4 Subscriptions for 2024/2025

Nicola then moved on to the proposal to maintain the team subscriptions at **£135 per match scheduled**, this would go directly to the host club reimbursements.

She commented that with 2025 being the last year of the league in its present form it had seemed prudent not to make any substantial changes

- **Shaun Ainge (Cannock & Stafford)** seconded the management proposal.

The meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal

5.5 Re-imbursements to teams

- 5.5.1 The management proposal for payments to reimburse travel payments was to remain at the same level as in the current year:

Less than 400 miles – no payment

400 miles or more - 50p per mile

The maximum support due to any team, attending a single away match, to a maximum of £500 per match in total (towards transport and accommodation).

(NB Claims amounting to less than £25 will not be reimbursed)”

Crispian Webb (Cheltenham & County) seconded the management proposal.

The meeting voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.

- 5.5.2 The Management Committee proposes that, for the 2025 season, the host club reimbursement should remain as follows:

A fixed amount of £375, and a variable amount of £40 for each team timetabled to compete at the match, plus £200 for the use of Photo Finish, £80 for the use of EDM and £40 each for the use of track and/or field wind gauges.

Arwel Williams (Liverpool Harriers) seconded the management proposal.

The meeting voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.

6. Proposals

6.1 Proposals from Clubs –

- 6.6.1 **Proposed by Cheltenham & County Harriers**, and supported by Blackheath & Bromley Harriers & AC, Cardiff Archers; Cardiff Athletics; Charnwood AC; City of York AC; Liverpool Harriers; Kingston-upon-Hull AC:

Where Clubs form a composite Team with a view to aiding the participation of smaller Clubs who could not otherwise reasonably compete; of the Clubs forming the composite Team, only one of the teams may have a pool for selection in the relevant age group(s) greater than (45) athletes combined across male and female.

Crispian Webb spoke to the motion; He suggested that whilst in recent years, composite teams have worked well for smaller clubs who themselves would be unable to compete in the league, however in the UAG in the Premier SW division they have a very large composite team, who dominate the league such that it is impossible for any other team to progress to any further competition, and without the Area finals this has become a demotivating factor. In addition, they feel that with so many athletes there is a very strong probability that some of the athletes

in the teams that make up the composite won't have an opportunity to compete in the league, so in their proposal they have tried to find a way to make it fairer by introducing a cap restricting the number of athletes to 45 for each club in a composite.

They had checked Po10 to count how many athletes from each club had competed in any event across the season and found that the numbers were excessive. **Grace** asked if they had counted each individual in all the events, this was confirmed; **Grace** pointed out that this would be a massive undertaking to do for every team in all the composites across the country.

Lesley Nunn (Team Avon) commented that none of the clubs in their composite had more than 45 athletes, however Grace refuted this as she had carried out some checks when the proposal had come in, she pointed out that 2 of clubs in the composite had 61 and 57 athletes respectively on the Team Avon portal. She strongly requested that all teams should keep tidying up their portals whenever they gained, or lost, an athlete, only then could the numbers be accurate. It was especially important after July when EA registration rolled over their numbers. She then asked Cheltenham if they had a specific time in mind as to when this check would take place.

Crispian asked when did UKA approve the composites? Marian explained that the applications have to go to the leagues first for them to approve, or otherwise, all the applications. For YDL, this is done at the first meeting after the end of September. The lists are then compiled and sent to UKA at the end of October for their approval.

Martin Smith (Swindon Harriers) felt that composite teams should not be excessive in size and become 'Super Teams'.

Sandra Woodman (Yate & District) informed the meeting that they had first formed a composite team in 2011 for NJAL and although not very successful at that time, over the years they have developed their team to the level it is now, which is surely one of the points of a development league. She pointed out that there are 160 individual events to cover which requires quite a number of athletes to fill a team, even allowing that some athletes do more than one event. She felt that this rule would punish them for developing their team.

Arwel Williams (Liverpool Harriers) commented that his team have just 51 athletes and compete in a Premier division.

Marian suggested that when a composite team develop sufficiently they should then be looking at splitting the composite up; she cited the example of West Wales: Swansea was originally part of that composite when their numbers were too low to compete in the league due to not having a home track, but once they'd built their numbers up they left the composite and became a standalone club competing in their own right. She thought that the situation isn't an issue in the LAG but whilst it does exist in the UAG it's not many teams that are causing any angst.

Kevin Thomas (Rotherham) stated that they had formed part of a new composite for 2024. He pointed out that approx. 50% of their eligible athletes don't compete in YDL so the number of registered athletes doesn't give an accurate picture of the strength of a team in the league. He then asked when the count would take place, and who would manage it?

Grace had also checked the number of athletes on their portal and 2 of the clubs had 48 and 54 athletes respectively showing on the portal but demonstrably not all had competed in the league. She had done some further checking of numbers in some composite teams and has been surprised to see how some composites have grown since they first registered, notably Harrow and Dacorum now have 63 and 97 athletes on their portal and they are one of the biggest teams in the UAG.

Tim Soutar (Blackheath & Bromley) suggested that it was fairly clear that there is a significant level of disquiet about the current model. However, he wondered if we were looking at it from the wrong end of the telescope; whilst there is no desire to penalise success and development,

and a composite team should enable clubs to band together to grow, but at what stage does this growth become unfair? Other factors such as 2nd claim athletes also muddy the water. Restrictions on numbers alone is not enough. He questioned how long a composite team should last? If they are keeping clubs going then that's fine, but if a composite grows to the point of becoming a cuckoo in the nest, then it has possibly outlived the original purpose.

Janice echoed what Tim had just said, she reminded everyone that whilst a team in the Premier division can't form a composite there is the possibility that over time they could become 'Super Teams' but in that process how many athletes are left behind? She commented that this problem wasn't a new one, but a solution hadn't been found. She asked the meeting if they would give the management committee permission to come up with some sensible and workable solutions.

Joyce Tomala (East Wales) commented that she was team manager for a composite team of 5 clubs, one club on paper looked very large but in reality, very few of their athletes compete in YDL. She reiterated Grace requests for clubs to tidy up their portals. She felt that this proposal is a sledgehammer to crack a nut; she had volunteered to check some of the results so was aware of the number of athletes competing for the clubs in those divisions which in many cases isn't a large number.

Simon Baker (Highgate Heathside) described the situation that his team were in. They had initially formed a composite of 3 clubs, but over time as they grew in size, one club left to compete as a standalone club with the 2 other teams remaining as a composite. He felt it was an ethical question, as a team with too many athletes doesn't allow the opportunity for all athletes to compete. He suggested that once a team has outgrown the composite they should split.

John GerCs (Rugby & Northants) asked what the current criteria is for composite teams?

Grace replied that there were no formal criteria laid down. When the league had first formed any composite teams who had been competing in NJAL were allowed to continue, but over time things do change and what started as a reasonably sized team often developed and grew into some of the teams we now have.

The problems are:

- a) how we define when a composite team is too big?
- b) how do we review it?

She suggested that we can either take a vote on the proposal now or mandate the committee to come up with some strategies.

Karen Higgs-Smith (WGEL) asked if it would be possible to limit the large teams in a composite to only use 80% of their athletes. She felt that other competing clubs could monitor this on match days.

Grace reminded the meeting that the job of monitoring athletes was an extremely time-consuming job and as part of the scrutinising process can take several days to reach a successful outcome. She felt it wasn't practical to add a further criteria to the already difficult process.

Craig Smith (Swindon) said that Tim had spoken eloquently on this, he wondered whether having a system that restricts the number of athletes who could be entered on the portal would be an option.

Crispian Webb declared that they would withdraw the motion with the proviso that the committee would take it forward to look for a solution.

Janice replied that Tim was the ideal person to take this on, and if anyone is interested in forming part of a working group to please add their name onto the list which will be available at the lunch break.

6.2 Management Committee proposals for rule changes:

6.2.1 The Management Group propose the following changes to the Rules of competition for 2025:

RULE 5. OFFICIALS

5.2 The chiefs appointed by the host club and all other officials used by any club, must 'sign in' using the Health and Safety Attendance Forms indicating their level and registration number. These forms will be supplied to the discipline chiefs appointed by the host club.

To be amended to:

5.2 *The chiefs appointed by the host club and all other officials used by any club, must be declared on the Team Manager portal 7 days prior to the match. On arrival at a match, they* must then 'sign in' using the Health and Safety Attendance Forms indicating their level and registration number to verify their attendance. These forms will be supplied to the discipline chiefs appointed by the host club.

This proposal is to bring the rules into line with current practice. In 2024 we introduced a new system regarding the declaration of officials which enables clubs to add their officials to the portal ahead of the season and then select them in the same way as the athletes. The majority of officials could be verified prior to the start of the season, and it had saved a lot of work having to verify officials' qualifications for each individual match.

It has also meant that for the first time we have been able to collect the data that EA requested as part of our Grant funding, it shows which clubs are struggling to recruit or retain officials.

Nichola Skedgel, on behalf of EA, thanked YDL for the information, she had forwarded it to the relevant individuals who wanted the information. She acknowledged the amount of work Simon Fennell had done to produce all the statistics.

Karen Higgs-Smith (WGwEL) asked if officials could be amended in the same way as the athletes as the officials declared may not all be the same as those who actually attend a match. **Grace** assured her that they could, and should, be changed if any officials are substituted. They must still sign in on the H&S sheets at each match in the usual way.

Joyce Tomala (East Wales) seconded the management proposal

The meeting voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.

6.2.2 FOR 2026 AND BEYOND:

Due to the changes imposed by the HCAFs, the management group propose the following changes for 2026:

YDL competition will be offered to 2 age groups: U14/U16 replacing U13/U15, and U18/U20 replacing U17/U20. Timetables would have to be modified to cater for the changes in the age groups whilst being mindful of the need to avoid lengthening the competition day.

Mick Bond spoke to this proposal as he had done a lot of work on it on behalf of the committee. He stated that whilst there may be some disquiet remaining about the changes, nevertheless they will be introduced for the 2026 season, and we need to make the best of any opportunities. The management group had agreed that U12 provision should be down to local competition providers, as YDL competition wasn't suited to that age group.

They felt that it was necessary to retain an U20 age group, although it was envisaged that the number of athletes is going to be low due to the narrowing of this age band.

The LAG of U14/U16 will have more events to cover than the current arrangement. However, we are conscious of the need to avoid extending the length of the day significantly.

Once the specific format has been agreed by the members attending this meeting, then more work on the actual timetables to be adopted would be required, and these will be for consultation during 2025, to be brought to the 2025 AGM.

Margaret Grayston (Wigan Harriers) asked what the effect of this would be on year 6 pupils who wouldn't be able to compete as U14s?

Grace suggested that this was a question to be addressed to EA. There is a lot of information on their website, and the current thoughts were that U12s should be looking at local competitions consisting of a run, jump, throw structure. It is up to clubs to educate their athletes as to what will be happening, it is a minefield but one we all have to navigate.

UKA do not deal with grassroots athletics, that is all under the jurisdiction of the HCAFs, so approaching their regions is the way clubs will need to go. Unfortunately, the greater number of competitions will inevitably mean more clashes, and not all licence providers look at what is taking place in their area when issuing a licence.

Shaun Ainge (Cannock & Stafford) commented that we are stuck with what we've got and will have to make the best of the situation. Removing the U12s, as well as effectively losing a year of the U20s will cause problems for his club.

Grace concurred with him over the problem of diminishing numbers in the U20s, but whilst the stock answer is to say that they can compete in senior leagues, that does nothing to help technical events and the need for athletes to be able to compete in their own age group.

John Gercs (Rugby & Northants) asked what other models had been looked at? Had any consideration been given to an U14/U16/U18 league?

Janice replied that all combinations had been considered but our primary concern was to look at what is best for the athletes, and the need to avoid longer competition days whenever possible. Grouping 3 age groups together would inevitably mean a longer day and a necessity to alternate more events. It is likely that the LAG timetable would be longer than the UAG given the projected numbers.

Lesley Nunn (Team Avon) commented that this rule change had removed a lot of options for U20s, so it was vital that YDL continue to offer competition for this age group.

Grace also added that UKA isn't prioritising competition for Junior athletes as they don't have sufficient funds available to offer the opportunities.

Simon Baker (Highgate Heathside) wondered if there would be enough U20 athletes to have a useful league competition and suggested that there needs to be an analysis of the number of athletes competing in 2024 in each age group.

Grace assured him that this would be looked at, but current evidence suggests that numbers are increasing after the Covid situation, and as time progresses, there should be more coming through. Janice confirmed that they had looked at the stats from 2020 – 2024.

Mick Bond commented that this would be looked at when the timetable was being worked on.

Craig Scott (Swindon) thought that the age groups suggested in the proposal would be advantageous to them.

Jo Wood (Swansea) asked which school years would be involved in each of the new age groups. It was confirmed that years 7 & 8 would be U14, years 9 & 10 would be U16, and years 11 & 12 would be U18 with year 13 remaining as U20.

Marian asked if it had been confirmed that the end of competition year would remain as 31st August and not change to 31st December? (*Clarification: this question referred to the age group end of year specifically*).

Arwel Williams (Liverpool Harriers) affirmed that Gary Shaughnessy had stated that this wouldn't change while he is in charge, although there was a possibility that it may do if it was requested.

John Gercs (Rugby & Northants) thought that most clubs won't have enough U20s to make a viable competition and that maybe this just benefitted the larger clubs.

Karen Higgs-Smith (WGwEL) replied that the U17's were mostly underpinning the UAG at the moment, so this would likely mean that it will predominantly be U18s who will be competing.

Jane Woolley (Cheltenham) affirmed their support of YDL offering competition opportunities for the U20s as Open meeting and senior leagues don't offer these particularly in technical events.

Nichola Skedgel reminded everyone of the EA Competition Conference taking place on 14th December in Birmingham where some questions raised may be answered.

Arwel Williams (Liverpool) seconded the management proposal

Votes against: 0

Abstentions: 2

The meeting voted in favour of the proposal by a large majority.

7 Constitutional amendments: there were no constitutional changes proposed.

8 Election of management committee members. Nominations received for: -

Chair: Janice Kaufman (to 2028) – nominated by Gateshead Harriers

General Committee:

Stuart Horsewood (to 2026) serving as Southern Area Co-ordinator – nominated by Winchester & District AC

Tim Soutar (to 2025) – nominated by Blackheath & Bromley Harriers & AC

Dave Paver (to 2025) – nominated by City of York AC

Mick Bond (to 2026) – nominated by Cambridge Harriers

plus

One further vacancy to 2026 to act as Midlands Area Co-ordinator

Bob Willows (Brighton & Hove) seconded the management proposal to vote for the above posts en bloc

The meeting voted unanimously in favour of all the above nominations.

If anyone else is interested in taking a role on the committee, they are advised to contact Janice Kaufman, Chair of UK YDL for further information. The UK YDL website contains information about the Roles and Responsibilities of all committee posts.

Janice suggested that anyone with marketing expertise would also be most welcome.

9 The meeting voted unanimously to support the management group's nomination of **Grace Hall** as **President** of the league

10 **The 2025 Annual General Meeting is scheduled to take place in November 2025 (date to be confirmed).**

- 11 **Janice** then introduced the management group's paper regarding the sustainability of the finals weekend. She outlined the different options to be considered as circulated with the AGM paperwork and opened the discussion to the floor.

Mary Johnson (Trafford AC) commented that Trafford would prefer not to have any national finals but to just hold regional finals instead of the 4th round matches.

Jane Woolley (Cheltenham) thought that it was good to have a national champion as we are a national league so the club would support Option 1 with finals for both age groups; she wondered if it would be an option just to have one athlete in each event which would shorten an otherwise long day. She thought that Yate would be a good venue for the finals.

Janice felt that as clubs qualify for the final with 2 athletes per event, it would mean leaving some athletes behind who had worked hard to get the club qualified.

Karen Higgs-Smith (WGwEL) said that her club would be willing to host.

There were a number of clubs who felt that Option 1 was their preference.

Arwel Williams (Liverpool) said that he would send a quote from Liverpool to host the finals, he would then also be willing to act as Finals Co-ordinator.

Grace commented that the venue for the finals has to be accessible for all regions from Scotland down to the South, she also reminded everyone that the administrative side of the finals, and additional officials would be needed.

Tim Soutar (Blackheath & Bromley) affirmed that his club would be devastated if there were to be no finals. They preferred Option 1 as they felt that the LAG final is good for development, and they too would be willing to host and understood the need for the additional personnel. He understood that it was a long way to travel to South London. But suggested that if a club are capable of hosting an UAG Premier match then they should be able to host the national final.

Liz Hinds (DASH) thought that Nuneaton would be a possible venue as they run a number of big meetings each year.

Marian commented that **Nichola Skedgel** had suggested that EA would be willing to come on board as a partner to help with the admin if needed.

Janice suggested that it appeared that the feeling of the meeting was for Option1, this was agreed.

The AGM closed at 13:59

The Chair thanked everyone for their input to the meeting and wished them a safe journey home.

Signed:	Date:
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