



### Consultation review

Following our announcement in the summer of 2017 that Northern Athletics needed to consider ways of funding itself, given the failure of England Athletics to commit to grant funding us beyond April 2019, we launched our booklet 'Your support, Our survival, Your future' that sought to detail and justify a proposal which was put to our Annual Open meeting in November.

The proposal asked the clubs to affiliate to Northern Athletics by October 2018 on the basis that the clubs would pay an affiliation fee to us representing £2 per EA registered competitive athlete. This was passed by an overwhelming majority at that meeting and it was agreed that there would be a consultation period up to the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018 when questions and issues could be raised. This process was outlined in our document 'The Way Forward' which was circulated to all clubs late last year.

Since then we have had many e mails from the clubs of the North asking questions about the scheme, making suggestions and overall helping us in this process. We have also had much support for the scheme from clubs across the spectrum. We had said that we would ask clubs to commit or not to our proposals after this document was circulated but we have had already over 40 clubs committing to it on a voluntary basis and most of them had had that decision ratified by either their club committee or by way of AGM or EGM.

We are very grateful for the encouragement and backing we have received and although this is a testing time it has enabled us to carry on holding our latest championship events with vigour in our steps. We hope many of you enjoyed our Senior and Junior Indoor Track & Field Championships at

Sheffield as well as our cross country championships held at the magnificent setting of Harewood House near Leeds. Next year Northern Athletics is hopeful of hosting the National Cross Country Championships there.



### Questions raised by Clubs

- What happens after you have consulted with the clubs?
- Answer: From the 1<sup>st</sup> March through to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 we are asking each individual club to confirm their commitment to the scheme of affiliating to Northern Athletics by payment of a club affiliation fee based on £2 per EA competitive registered athlete. The payment would be made annually on the 1<sup>st</sup> October each year.
- How will this payment scheme work?
- Answer: This will be a simple and straightforward process via our website. The club will pay by bank transfer online along with their list of EA registered competitive athletes being forwarded to us to confirm the payment made matches up with the list. Once the payment is made there will be no further need to update payments for the next 12 months or add athletes to the list. The club affiliates and all athletes belonging to that club including newly registered athletes will be eligible to compete in our events for the next 12 months.

- **If our club fails to affiliate will our athletes be able to compete in our events?**
- **Answer:** No they will not be able to compete until the club affiliates to us. The simple reality here is that we need to raise approximately £35000 to £40000 to balance the books and anything other than this scheme will not raise the money required. Moreover if we fail to get the commitment needed by clubs affiliating we will not have our championship events in the future.
- **Have other schemes been considered?**
- **Answer:** We have spent much time considering every option. Our survey in 2017 resulted in the majority suggesting an affiliation scheme such as this but at a rate of £3 per athlete. We took the view that this was too much given with enough support we could raise annually the money we need. We also factored in that some clubs will not affiliate at this stage. It is a finely balanced exercise to ensure we get sufficient money but still give value for clubs and their athletes. Some of the options are considered below.
- **As we are a road running club only could we affiliate at a reduced rate as we will not take part in track and field championships.**
- **Answer:** We fully appreciate your position at present. The paramount aim of this scheme is to ensure we can keep going. We will continue to review the scheme on a regular basis which could include in the future an option to reduce the annual fee per athlete if the response is better than expected. We currently need a figure in the region of £35000 to £40000 per annum. We need to monitor our position assuming the scheme proceeds and the first review will be post October 2018. We have no intention to build up an unwanted surplus of money nor expand unnecessarily.

We also feel that we need to be fair to all disciplines and try to get over a message that we are one sport which includes track & field, cross country and road running. We ask all clubs to take an overall and long term view on this issue and ensure that we survive. If we do then we

will keep hold of a lasting legacy for under 13s through to masters and for those young sprinters, jumpers and throwers through to our marathon runners.

- **Why not increase entry fees?**
- **Answer:** This option was not a majority view in our survey. Entry fees have increased over the last few years and there is a limit on the level of entry fee increases especially when part of our ethos is to encourage young people to compete and for us to provide individual and team competition at a reasonable cost. To raise the money we needed would involve huge increases in existing entry fees such that it would deter athletes from entering and send us into spiral towards less entries and less competitive events.
- **What about a flat club fee?**
- **Answer:** The survey we did late last year came out fully in support of us continuing and the majority suggested an affiliation fee. A basic straight fee for each club in the region of £200 would not secure sufficient funding for us to continue based on the number of clubs likely to affiliate.

We accept that it is likely that some clubs will not affiliate because they say they do not compete in Northern Athletics events. We do however ask our clubs to look to the future when their athletes may want a higher level of competition and we are gone. We ask clubs and their athletes to ask what may be the impact on the sons and daughters in their family as well as their grandchildren. Could they in the future have missed out on Northern Championships? We ask those who may have rigid views to consider a wider picture. Unfortunately we cannot wait. So we ask our Northern clubs to back us now to ensure we are still here for that future.

- **We have noticed that NA had a surplus of £24,000 last year. Why the panic?**
- **Answer:** The reason is simple. Firstly the accounts last year include the surplus from the 12 stage of 2015 so the surplus in real terms is £18,000. If we take away the EA grant and take away our sponsorship, which may not continue for ever, this leaves a deficit of £35,000. This is the minimum figure needed to sustain us.
- **You have reserves of £260,000 so why are you worrying?**
- **Answer:** The deficit of £35,000 will kick in from April 2019 assuming EA fulfil their reduced grant of £32,000 in April 2018. If you add on to that run off costs at £30,000 plus, the reserves will be reduced to nominal amounts very quickly. We cannot wait until the grants run out before dealing with this. Dealing with it now is the only way to ensure we get the answer from our clubs and in turn survive.
- **Have you tried to reduce your costs enough?**
- **Answer:** You can see from our reports and booklet that over the last two years there have been considerable reductions in our expenditure and costs. Our office costs are low in Dewsbury and have been reduced. Judith and Pat, who live locally, do a great job keeping us going day to day. We do need a base to operate from and a storage area. Reducing office costs even more is almost impossible. By trying to re-locate raises its own expenditure issues and staff issues including payments under our statutory obligations.

We are a large competition provider covering the whole of the North relying on our volunteer Board of nine, one full time member of staff and one part timer. This dedicated small team hold Northern Athletics together. We are passionate about area competition and conscious of our history going back to 1879, the oldest athletics governing body in the world. We all feel it has to continue and thrive.

- **You have asked the Clubs to affiliate to Northern Athletics. What will happen if insufficient clubs affiliate?**
- **Answer:** We are asking all clubs to affiliate to ensure we receive sufficient funding to be able to continue. At this stage the level of the total affiliation fees we receive from the Clubs will determine whether we can continue. Those that commit by registering by the 1st April 2018 will enable us to determine there and then the total sum we will receive six months later in October 2018. In turn this will give us the information necessary to decide as to whether we can continue. Our guaranteed funding runs out in April 2019 so the lack of potential funds in October will result in us having to gradually wind down Northern Athletics.
- **If we do not affiliate what alternatives for Northern Athletics are there to ensure competition continues?**
- **Answer:** If insufficient clubs fail to commit to affiliation by April 2018 then our Championships could be reduced in number by early 2019. Our reserves would then be used to wind down Northern Athletics. The run off costs are considerable so sufficient time needs to be given to that process to ensure all our liabilities are covered and we close in an orderly manner. So the answer to this question is that failure to affiliate in sufficient numbers will lead to closure and we will cease to exist.
- **Have other options been properly explored with England Athletics?**
- **Answer:** Our Board have been negotiating for many years now, firstly to ring fence a proportion of the fee from the registration fees paid by athletes to EA. This was turned down and secondly to guarantee the grants to us to 2021. EA refused to give us those assurances.

Many hours and days have been spent putting the argument for area funding. Our volunteer Board have used up their own time to make what seemed an obvious and just case for funding out of the millions of pounds paid in by athletes in registration fees currently standing at

**£15 per annum. We have failed to persuade the EA Board that our case justifies the funding. We are now going to our grass root clubs and athletes direct which will ensure, if we are successful, we are independently funded, free from restrictions and able to speak for those in the North that need a voice.**

- **What do we get if we pay the fee?**
- **Answer: I hope you will read our booklet 'Your support, Our survival, Your future' which explains what we offer, what we can offer in the future and the possibilities if we receive the right level of funding. We will ensure entry fees for competition do not rise year on year, we will develop some new ideas and restore some old ones to give better value and we will ensure you have a say in the way we take things forward. We will spread the opportunities for championship competition around the North which requires the right level of reserves. We will also continue to explore new areas for increasing competition together with supporting the clubs and counties in their endeavours within the grass root sport.**
- **Do you believe you have consulted with as many as you can?**
- **Answer: Yes we believe we have. We have organised two surveys over the last three years in which the athletes, coaches and officials urged us to continue and volunteered funding to help us. Many told us to 'get on with it now'. We hope we are doing that. We have given maximum publicity to our booklets and many have done their bit in getting the message out there. Athletics Weekly has published articles on our crisis for which we thank them together with the many stars of athletics who backed us.**

**During the consultation process the Board have made visits to clubs and other organisations as well as arranging meetings with them. We have met with all the County Associations who are supportive of Northern Athletics. We have assured the Counties of increased support and links with them including in return for a nominal affiliation fee we will continue to host and fund the Northern Inter Counties Track &**

Field Championships. The chance for athletes to represent the North on the road, cross country and in track and field would continue if we can survive.

### Conclusion

We again thank everybody for your support and contributions.

Could we now ask you to e mail Judith Temperton at our office [judith@northernathletics.org.uk](mailto:judith@northernathletics.org.uk) to confirm you are prepared to affiliate to us. The deadline will be the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

We will keep you informed after the deadline as to the outcome which we hope will be positive for us and then clarify the plans over the coming months.

Best wishes to you from all of us at Northern Athletics.



