



Oxfordshire Cross Country League

ESTABLISHED 1987

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Equal Gender Race Distances Working Party Review Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, 11th September 2019

Time: 19:30hrs

Venue: The Turnpike, Yarnton

Present:

League Officer:

Dene Stringfellow (*League Manager*)

Club Representatives:

Bicester TC: Stephanie Harrison

Eynsham RR: Jackie Pinnock

Harwell Harriers: Ashley Shepherd

Kidlington RC: Liam Hosier

Woodstock Harriers AC: Neil Preddy

Working Party Members:

Alchester RC: Richard Gould

Banbury Harriers AC: Ros Kelling

Bicester AC: Emma Gould

Bicester TC: Lucy Davidson

Didcot Runners: Robert Dalglish, Sarah Rogers

Headington RR: Madeleine Ding

Witney RR: Dan Wymer

1) Apologies

The following apologies were recorded:

Cherwell R&J: Clare Curnow

Woodstock Harriers AC: Mike Shipway

2) Review Discussions

Although only a handful of club representatives turned up to the review meeting, the questions raised and ensuing discussions were very productive.

Liam Hosier (*Kidlington RC*) thanks the working party team for all their hard work and stated that everything was clearly set out and positive from his perspective. He pointed out that the table (*Appendix A*) presenting the options comparison was particularly helpful.

Jackie Pinnock (*Eynsham RR*) raised the point as to whether or not it would be possible to have both short and long distances courses for the men and women. Emma Gould (*Bicester AC*) responding on behalf of the EGRD Working Party (*WP*) stated that this point had been covered at some length by the *WP* and the conclusion that had been reached was that it was not a viable option due primarily to the fact the courses would not be able to cope with the volume of athletes on the course at the same time. In addition, the point was made that it would then require two separate championships each for the men and women. Additionally, if athletes had the choice of short or long distances at each race and chose to alternate or switch distances it was very likely there would be a high dropout rate from the overall standings.

Neil Preddy (*Woodstock Harriers AC*) was concerned that there were target maximum distances specified within the options presented. Neil raised the point that his club's women athletes were much more likely to be happy with an 8km upper distance limit to their races. Otherwise he felt the options as presented were likely to be very hard to sell, particularly trying to sell distances up to 9km. Plus there would be the risk many women athletes could be put off from running again in future.

It was explained that the *WP* had reached the conclusion regarding the overall race distances question that it was paramount to ensure there would be gradual increase in race distances as athletes progressed through the age groups over time. That was perceived to be a major drawback of the current target race distances specified with the jump in race distances from the Under 17 categories to the senior ranks being a major concern for clubs incorporating junior sections. It was agreed among the *WP* that the objective should be to present the increase in race distances as stepping stones for athlete progression rather than large race distance increases that are much more likely to cause young athletes to be off, if not leave the sport altogether.

Ashley Shepherd (*Harwell Harriers*) raised the question of numbers of athletes per team. Specifically, it was asked if the ladies' teams could be raised to 4 athletes, in the first instance, and secondly if the size of the men's teams could be reduced owing to the club struggling to find sufficient men to run. In answer to that question it was pointed out that a proposal to increase the size of ladies' teams had been presented for voting at the last AGM by Kit Villiers (*Headington RR*) and the proposal had been rejected on the basis that some clubs would then struggle to raise sufficient athletes. With regard to the question of reducing the size of the men's teams, there was nothing to prevent such a proposal being put forward to be presented to clubs for voting at the next (2020) AGM, albeit there would inevitably be concern from some

parties owing to the size of the teams required for higher level competition. It was however pointed out that at national level there are two team sizes for men: 6 to count and 9 to count.

The question was also raised the why it was felt necessary to present 3 options. Would it not have been possible to have just 2 options, namely Equal Gender Race Distances or Distances Remain Unchanged? In answer to that question the WP felt there was a need for some scope in determining race distances for the clubs that organise the fixtures. Otherwise it was felt that those clubs who organise fixtures might vote differently to those who don't organise fixtures.

Stephanie Harrison (*Bicester TC*) raised the point that there appeared little to distinguish options A and B which was why the query as why it was necessary to have 3 options. At the

Dene Stringfellow (*OXL League Manager*) stated that to have a proposal covering such complex issues, to just have an initial vote whether or not in favour of change and for the in-favour choice to be a limited and automatic acceptance of a single option would not give the clubs any real alternatives and the net result would be that clubs might be more inclined to reject the proposal on that basis.

The question was then raised regarding the procedure for voting on proposals at AGMs. It was confirmed that the best approach would be for there to be the initial vote as to whether or not clubs are in favour or against the proposal for equal gender race distances. If the subsequent vote is **not in favour of change** then the proposal will be deemed to have been rejected. If clubs vote **in favour of change**, then the proposal will proceed to next stage of the vote. It was felt important that there should be more than one option on the table for the clubs, having initially voted through the proposal in favour of change.

As a result of the ensuing discussions it was agreed, complying with the point Neil Preddy (*Woodstock Harriers AC*) raised earlier, that **Option A** for the revised EGRD Proposal should be **amended to state proposed target maximum equal gender race distances** to provide a meaningful distinction between the Options A and B to be presented at the 2020 AGM.

It was confirmed, as per the current Constitution, that in the event of a tied vote the League Manager may exercise a casting vote.

It was also confirmed, again as stated in the Constitution, that **no proxy votes are permitted at either an AGM or EGM**. Those clubs that fail to send a representative to an AGM or EGM lose the right to have any say or a vote.

3) Outstanding Actions

- Redraft revised proposal and submit to those present at the review meeting for approval – **action DS**.
- In the meantime, it was felt both important and incumbent upon those present to make the effort to sell the positive aspects of the revised proposal to all clubs– **action EGRD WP members and all club representatives**.
- Revised proposal to be presented to clubs for voting at the 2020 AGM confirmed – **action DS**.

4) Close

The meeting was closed at 21:10hrs.

Dene Stringfellow
League Manager

15 September 2019