



Oxfordshire Cross Country League

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## 2021 AGM Minutes

*Date:* Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021

*Time:* 19:30hrs

*Venue:* Zoom Online Meeting

### **Present:**

#### *League Officers:*

Dene Stringfellow (*League Manager*)

Ros Kelling (*Treasurer*)

Emma Gould (*General Committee Member / Bicester AC*)

Richard Gould (*General Committee Member*)

Dan Wymer (*General Committee Member / Witney RR*)

#### *Club Representatives:*

*Abingdon AC:* Abielle Hallas

*Alchester RC:* Gary Warland

*Banbury Harriers AC:* Ian Robinson

*Bicester TC:* Lucy Davidson / Elliot Newman (*non-voting*)

*Didcot Runners:* Sarah Rogers

*Eynsham RR:* Benedict Pollard

*Harwell Harriers RC:* Claire Shorrock / Sabiene North (*non-voting*)

*Headington RR:* Kit Villiers

*Hook Norton Harriers:* Steve Frame

*Kidlington RC:* Liam Hosier

*Newbury AC:* Phil Marshall

*Oxford Tri:* Daniel Anderton

*White Horse Harriers AC:* Simon Leech

*Woodstock Harriers AC:* James Bolton

**Voting Members: 16**

## Welcome

All participants were welcomed and thanked for attending the meeting. The League Manager handed the meeting over to Dan Wymer (*OXL/Witney Roadrunners*) to clarify the rules for the meeting including those for how voting would be handled. Dan clarified the rules for the meeting as follows:

- a. All participants other than the committee to mute their microphones.
- b. Participants to use the "hand up" facility to raise a question or make a comment.
- c. All voting delegates to use the same "hand up" facility to vote.
- d. The meeting would proceed on the assumption that everyone had read or had to hand to refer to the meeting documentation provided with the meeting notice and that the documentation would not be shared during the meeting to avoid unnecessary delays.

### 1) Apologies

The following apologies were recorded:

*Abingdon AC: Gary Richards*

*Abingdon AC: Steve Smith*

*Bicester AC: Paul Groves*

*Cherwell Runners & Joggers: Clare Curnow*

*Great Milton AC: Emily Johns*

*Highworth RC: Chris Carter*

*Oxford Brookes R&AC: Raya Luna*

*Oxford City AC: Richard Hart*

*Swindon Harriers: Bryan Clinton*

*Team Kennet T&AC: Colin Price*

*Woodstock Harriers AC: Neil Preddy*

*Woodstock Harriers AC: Mike Shipway*

### 2) Minutes of 2019 AGM & 2020 EGM

The minutes of the last AGM and EGM held respectively on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 were unanimously accepted as an accurate record of both meetings.

### 3) Matters Arising (2020 EGM & 2019 AGM Minutes)

There were no outstanding matters arising from the 2020 EGM Minutes. The following matters arising remained outstanding from the 2019 AGM Minutes:

- The correction of the misspelling of "Haedington RR" to "**Headington RR**" under the **Present** section of the 2018 AGM Minutes – **DS Done**.
- An online entry system incorporating athlete consent requirements remains to be addressed – **action OXL Committee ongoing**.

- A review of the existing entry system to investigate switching to either a club or individual entry system with future income meeting the setup costs (*including the cost of chip timing*) of all fixtures (*for the season*) with the retention of any surplus funds as a cushion against future costs remains outstanding – **Review inconclusive** (*OXL Committee exploring other avenues*).
- The organisation of the Oxon XC Championships to be handled by the OXL – **DS Done** (*Lead to a much smoother handling of the County Championships entries, results and presentations*).
- A meeting within one calendar month to establish a working party to review and to put together a more clearly defined proposal on the subject of achieving gender equality race distances, covering the issues to be addressed, to be presented to member clubs in due course – **Done** (*– see Proposal A under this AGM's Voting Proposals*).
- Liaison with James Bolton to finalise the standings calculation details ready for the start of the 2019-20 season – **DS Done** (*– and incorporated into the new results tool*).
- Add an additional rule to cover athlete disqualification in relation to wearing a wrong event race number to the OXL Rules – **DS Done**.
- Missing (EGM) abbreviation to be inserted to the League Constitution – **DS Done**.

#### 4) League Manager's Report

*The following League Manager's reports were summarised briefly to ensure the meeting proceeded in a timely manner.*

##### **2020 AGM Report**

For the 2019-20 a full season of fixtures completed with high attendances at all fixtures as confirmed by the accompanying 2021\_OXL\_AGM\_Appendix-A\_Statistics.pdf document.

The shadowing of the fixture referee and timekeeper roles continued for the second season and hopefully this should prove beneficial as the League looks to migrate to digital results and timing in the future having run barcode scanning trials at Lawns Park, Swindon for the Round 4 fixture. The intention for the 2020-21 season will be to run a full-scale trial along with the traditional timekeeping and recording methods currently in place.

Round 1 took place at the new venue of Bicester Heritage hosted by Bicester AC. This was arranged at very short notice, to the great credit of Bicester AC, owing to the unavailability of the Newbury Showground venue that had originally been scheduled. The response by clubs and athletes was extremely positive and resulted in the highest ever turnout of athletes for an OXL fixture. The only disappointment was athletes ignoring the out-of-bounds notices despite all of the notices and pre-warning. Consequently, the airfield will now have to be closed for the duration of future fixtures resulting a significant rise in the cost of hiring the venue that may require a review of the car parking fees in the near future.

Round 2 held again at Cirencester Park, co-hosted by White Harriers AC and Didcot Runners, continued with the high athlete attendance. The weather preceding the

fixture ensured the conditions were ideal for cross country: lots of mud to be negotiated! Having ironed out the course issues that emerged during the previous season's fixture held at the venue the races progressed without a hitch. Given the conditions, the refreshments on hand were also very welcome and much appreciated.

The Round 3 fixture returned to Bo Peep Farm, co-hosted by Banbury Harriers AC and Bicester AC with fixture also held in conjunction with the Oxfordshire Cross Country Championships. Once again, the co-host clubs demonstrated that the organisation of this fixture is a well-oiled machine – a real credit to the League. Favourable weather conditions, in stark contrast to the snow for the fixture at the venue the previous season, ensured the fixture went smoothly as did the delivery of the County Championship results and medals, compared to the previous season.

Lawns Park, Swindon was once again the venue for the Round 4 fixture, hosted by Swindon Harriers. The conditions proved to be the most challenging of the season: cold, windy, muddy and very wet – perfect really! The first trial of producing results via scanned barcodes was undertaken by volunteers from Bicester AC and despite initial glitches proved encouraging enough to pursue the idea further. However, it has to be said that with some visitors choosing to ignore parking instructions this necessitated a significant amount of diplomacy to be employed by the host club to continue to be able to host the fixture at the venue. As the League is not in the position of having a plethora of venues for its fixtures, it is incumbent upon all clubs to inform their members that they are to follow the instructions provided ahead of fixtures and the instructions from marshals on the day of a fixture without hesitation or animosity.

Compared to the previous season the weather was positively balmy at Henley Showground, despite the wind, for the Round 5 fixture co-hosted by Abingdon AC and Radley AC. Unfortunately, the further trial of barcodes on race numbers failed due to the weather conditions. However, sufficient positive feedback had been gained to proceed with a full-scale trial running alongside the existing timekeeping and recording methods for next season. The turnout, as always, is lower at the final fixture, which is a shame given it is such an excellent venue. There is a proposal afoot that may help to raise the profile of the fixture and encourage greater athlete attendance.

The end-of-season presentations at the final fixture went smoothly largely thanks to the introduction of a new results system – a great relief to all concerned after the debacle the previous year. Congratulations go to all the prize winners and in particular to Sophie Lloyd (*White Horse Harriers AC*) and Simon Byrne (*Swindon Harriers*) as 2019-20 Overall Women's and Men's Champions as well as to White Horse Harriers AC and Swindon Harriers who respectively secured the Women's and Men's Division 1 titles.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank once again all the host clubs and their volunteers for organising the fixtures that enjoyed by so many. In addition, without the support of all the volunteers and officials who freely give their time this League simply would not exist. Once again, I thank them all.

Two clubs underwent their initial trial season during the 2019-20 season: Benson Striders and Heyford Aardvarks RC. Benson Striders filled all their allocated athlete entry slots and were very positive with their feedback. Having demonstrated strong

commitment to the League Benson Striders will be put forward at this AGM for election to the OXL. Although positive feedback was also received from Heyford Aardvarks RC the club has decided not to apply for election at this stage.

Lastly, but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues, Ros Kelling, Emma Gould, Richard Gould and Dan Wymer for all their support and input over the past two years. *(As you may be aware Emma and Richard are standing down as OXL committee members at the end of this meeting.)* It has been greatly appreciated. You have been a great team to work with and the experience has demonstrated that a larger OXL committee generates more ideas, greater discussion and a healthier outcome for the future of the League.

### **2021 AGM Report**

Given the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown over the past year and a half the decision to cancel 2020-21 season, albeit it in two stages, was vindicated. Although that will have been disappointing for athletes, coaches and officials alike, there really was no option. Any suggestion of promoting virtual fixtures/races was rejected owing to the harm to goodwill among local communities that would almost certainly ensue in the event athletes congregated in the limited locations within the counties where cross country routes can be viably be undertaken. The League simply cannot afford to jeopardise any of its existing venues, however frustrating that may seem.

Now that the UK government has lifted the pandemic restrictions OXL committee is planning for the 2021-22 season to go ahead as normal as far as is possible. There will no doubt be some changes put into effect as host clubs determine what requirements need to be in place in order to allow them to host their fixtures safely both for athletes, coaches, officials and supporters as well as the general public *(should public access be available to the venue during the course of a fixture)*.

## **5) Treasurer's Report**

- a. The membership fee income received for the 2019-20 season was the highest received by the OXL thus far: £3,220.00. A total of £2,954.15 deducted from the membership fee and sponsorship income resulted in a net income surplus for the year of £465.85 giving a healthy bank balance of in excess of £1,930.00, an increase of just over £400.00 as compared at the time of the previous AGM.
- b. As to be expected, despite the 2020-21 season not going ahead the OXL still incurred some costs: EA affiliation fee, website costs and AGM hall hire *(cancelled in the end and a refund is pending that will appear as a credit in the 2021-22 accounts)* notwithstanding.
- c. The expenses incurred for the 2020-21 season has therefore resulted in a net income deficit of £258.56. Despite this the League's finances remain in a healthy position with the League's bank balance standing at just under £1,675.00.
- d. No questions were raised regarding the accounts as presented for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons.
- e. The accounts for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons were unanimously accepted.

## 6) Entry & Results Secretary's Report

- a. The 2019-20 fixtures averaged approaching 790 participants over the course of the season. This represents the highest average participants since records were first produced for the 2006-07 season
- b. As ever the popularity of the OXL and total number of athlete entries continues to rise. Approaching 2,400 race numbers were issued for the 2019-20 season.
- c. The new results tool has proved to be reliable despite some initial teething issues. The new results output format has been well received.
- d. In addition, with the OXL taking over the administration of the Oxon XC Championships at the combined Round 3 fixture, the delivery of race numbers, results and presentations went much more smoothly.

## 7) 2021-22 Season Notices

The following notices ahead of the 2021-22 season have been confirmed:

### a. Dates & Venues for 2021-22 Season

All the fixtures are scheduled for the first Sunday of the month with the exception of the combined Round 3/Oxfordshire County Championships fixture which will be held on the second Sunday of January. The following venues and host club(s) are therefore provisionally confirmed for the 2021-22 season:

#### i. 2021-22 Fixtures:

**Rnd 1: Sun, 7 Nov 2021** – Bicester Heritage, Bicester (*Bicester AC*).

**Rnd 2: Sun, 5 Dec 2021** – Cirencester Park (*White Horse Harriers AC/Didcot Runners*).

**Rnd 3/Oxon XC Champs: Sun, 9 Jan 2022** – Horspath Stadium, Oxford (*Oxford City AC/Headington RR*) *tbc*.

**Rnd 4: Sun, 6 Feb 2022** – Bo Peep Farm, Adderbury (*Banbury Harriers AC/Bicester AC*).

**Rnd 5: Sun, 6 Mar 2022** – Henley Showground, Greenlands (*Abingdon AC/Radley AC*).

#### ii. 2022-23 Provisional Fixtures:

**Rnd 1: Sun, 6 Nov 2022** – Venue *tbc* (*Newbury AC*).

**Rnd 2: Sun, 4 Dec 2022** – Venue and host *tbc*.

**Rnd 3/OxonXC Champs: Sun, 8 Jan 2023** – Venue and host *tbc*.

**Rnd 4: Sun, 5 Feb 2023** – Lawns Park, Swindon (*Swindon Harriers*).

**Rnd 5: Sun, 5 Mar 2023** – Venue and host *tbc*.

### b. Divisions for 2021-22 Season

It was learned shortly before the 2021 AGM that that Team Kennet T&AC had taken the decision to resign from the OXL.

In answer to the query from Phil Marshall (*Newbury AC*) as to the reason Team Kennet T&AC had taken the decision to resign, the League Manager confirmed that being a predominantly junior club Team Kennet T&AC felt its interests would be better served by entering a junior league.

The following team promotions and relegations have therefore been confirmed on the basis of the two-up-two-down ruling as voted on at the 2016 AGM. As a consequence of the resignation of Team Kennet T&AC from the League, the top three teams in Men's Division 3 as at the end of the 2019-20 season have been automatically promoted to Men's Division 2 in this instance.

<b>Women</b>	Division 1:	<b>promoted:</b> Oxford TC A, Didcot Runners A <b>relegated:</b> Alchester RC A, Banbury Harriers AC A
	Division 2:	<b>promoted:</b> Kidlington RC A, Oxford TC B, <b>relegated:</b> Abingdon AC B, Woodstock Harriers AC A
<b>Men</b>	Division 1:	<b>promoted:</b> Kidlington RC A, Didcot Runners A <b>relegated:</b> White Horse Harriers AC A, Eynsham Roadrunners A
	Division 2:	<b>promoted:</b> Swindon Harriers B, Oxford TC A, Witney Roadrunners B <b>relegated:</b> Hook Norton Harriers A, Eynsham Roadrunners B, <b>withdrawn:</b> Team Kennet T&AC

**c. Member Club Affiliation Fees Review**

It was confirmed that the League the affiliation fee structure for member clubs for the 2021-22 season will remain unchanged from the 2019-20 season.

**d. Barcode Scanning/Timing Update**

At this point the meeting was handed over to Emma Gould (*OXL/Bicester AC*) who announced that, following the initial trials run towards the end of the 2019-20 season, a full-scale trial of the digital barcode scanning and timing system would be run with race numbers incorporating barcodes during the forthcoming season.

As mentioned during the course of the League Manager's report only 2 full sets of race numbers will be issued to clubs (*one full set at the beginning of the season and one full set at Round 3*) during the course of the forthcoming season.

Emma stated that 1-2 volunteers from the host clubs would be required to attend the Round 1 fixture to shadow the scanning and timing procedures during the fixture. It was felt that it would be better for the volunteers to witness the operations live rather than simply receiving written instructions.

In order to facilitate the digital barcode scanning and timing system some additional volunteers will be required. Details will be distributed to host clubs before the start of the season and updated as required in the lead-up to each fixture.

It was confirmed that the trial would be run alongside the traditional timekeeping and race number recording system following the query raised by Ian Robinson (*Banbury Harriers AC*).

**e. Sponsorship Update**

Dan Wymer (*OXL/Witney Roadrunners*) was then invited to provide an update regarding sponsorship. Following the notice that the Oxford Mail had taken the decision to end their partnership with the OXL this was viewed as an opportunity by the OXL Committee to re-engage and see what could be done in terms of sponsorship.

One of the leads is looking promising. The OXL Committee is currently working with the potential sponsor to iron the details of the sponsorship and sees this as an opportunity to support and enhance the League, with anything might require additional funding, be it new technology, more portable toilets, access to additional venues, etc.

The OXL Committee will hopefully be in a to announce the details of the new sponsor shortly.

No questions were raised in relation to the sponsorship developments.

**f. Fixture Cancellation Insurance Update**

Following the OXL Committee's enquiries to explore the possibility of taking out insurance to cover the possibility of fixture cancellation, particularly in the event of last-minute, it has transpired that no cover would be available in the eventuality of a pandemic or government restrictions.

It was pointed out that in recent memory the only cancellations that had taken place, aside from last season's fixture cancellations owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, were as follows:

- 2014 Round 3 – Warmington (*OxonAA cancellation*)
- 2017 Round 3 – No Venue (*No costs incurred*)
- 2018 Round 5 – Farmoor (*Snow/ice preventing course setup*)

As the fixture cancellation insurance question had largely been driven by the likelihood of fixtures being cancelled in the event of pandemics and government restrictions the OXL Committee were now of the opinion, given the rarity of past cancellations, it raised the question as to whether or not the insurance option was worth pursuing. It had been agreed that host clubs' feedback would be sought.

Once host clubs have provided their feedback a decision will be made by the OXL Committee as to whether or not to proceed with insurance cover accordingly.

Gary Warland (*Alchester RC*) made the point that it would be important to ensure that a force majeure clause was included in any insurance contract.

Benedict Pollard (*Eynsham Roadrunners*) raised the point that, without the insurance that had been taken out to cover the Farmoor fixture scheduled to take place at Hill End Centre at the beginning of March 2018 that subsequently had to be cancelled due to heavy snow and ice, the host clubs would have been faced with financial difficulties.



### **g. Post COVID-19 Pandemic Guidelines**

It was noted that given the pandemic that there would inevitably some changes to procedures in order for host clubs to be comfortable hosting fixtures. It is therefore incumbent on all clubs to ensure they and their members are fully of the UKA guidelines in place at any given time and that the procedures in place for any given fixture are followed to the letter.

### **h. UKA Rules Update**

It was felt there was no need to go through all of the rule changes listed other than those that might directly have an impact upon the League.

The most obvious being the new ruling in relation to unsporting or improper behaviour in the light of COVID that includes spitting being treated as an offence. It was felt that spitting is seen during races at every cross country event one way or another.

The only other potential ruling that was felt to present an issue was that in relation to shoe construction. The point was made that it would be virtually impossible to monitor this aspect in relation to cross country.

Other delegates' thoughts were invited. Both Dan Wymer (*OXL/Witney Roadrunners*) and Phil Marshall (*Newbury AC*) felt it would not be an issue given cross country race conditions and that the ruling in all likelihood is only really applicable to track and field athletics.

## **8) Proposals for Discussion & Voting**

**Note:** *Owing to the work of the dedicated Equal Gender Race Distances Working Party during the course of Summer 2019 whose proposals were presented to clubs at the EGRD Review Meeting held at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground, Bicester on Wednesday, 11th September 2019 the decision was taken that the first voting proposal (**Proposal A**) of this meeting would go straight to voting without any further discussion.*

The remaining proposals were all discussed and voted upon as normal during the meeting.

### **Proposal A – Equal Gender Race Distances**

The first question address for the proposal was to vote upon whether or not clubs are in favour or not of a move to equal gender race distances for all races.

The initial proposal was therefore is your club in favour of equal gender race distances?

#### ***Votes for Proposal A (part 1):***

For:	11
Against:	5
Abstention:	0

The delegates having voted in favour of equal gender race distances the next step was to address which of the following two relevant options proposed were to be implemented.

**Note:** *Option C listed in the proposal document was for reference in the event the initial vote rejected the proposal.*

Before part 2 of the proposal was voted upon Benedict Pollard (*Eynsham Roadrunners*) made the point that at a venue such as Farmoor where the course was effectively a single loop it was difficult to plan different race routes for the different age category races.

It was felt that equalising the distances for the genders actually helps reduce the planning overhead. Dan Wymer (*OXL/Witney Roadrunners*) also made the point that Option B of part 2 of the proposal allows for more flexibility in terms of host clubs being able to set the course distance for the adult races. It was also pointed out that the distances are and have always been target distances with, historically, the driving force behind the target distances set being OxonAA, in order to meet its athlete selection criteria for regional championships.

As requested by Simon Leech (*White Horse Harriers AC*) the difference between Options A and B in the presented proposal as clarified by Dan Wymer (*OXL/Witney Roadrunners*) is simply that Option A stipulated a matching course distance of 8km (+/- 0.5km) distance for the Men's and Women's races, whereas Option B allowed flexibility host clubs to be able to determine a matching course distance for the Men's and Women's races of between 7km and 9km.

#### **Votes for Proposal A (part 2):**

Option A:	0
Option B:	16

On the basis of the vote in relation to part two of the proposal the following races and distances were confirmed:

U9	1.2km ( <i>boys and girls run together</i> )
U11	1.5km ( <i>separate boys and girls races</i> )
U13	<b>3.0km</b> ( <i>separate boys and girls races</i> )
U15 Boys & Girls	<b>4.5km</b> ( <i>boys and girls run together</i> ) *
U17 Boys & Girls	<b>6.0km</b> ( <i>boys and girls run together</i> ) *
Men	<b>7.0-9.0km</b> ( <i>U20, sen. and vet. men run together</i> ) **
Women	<b>7.0-9.0km</b> ( <i>U20, sen. and vet. women run together</i> ) **

\* *The combined U15/U17 team results are to be determined based upon the best three finishing positions of club athletes across both the U15 and U17 combined races. For example: if a club had the following female finishers in the U15 and U17 races: U15 2<sup>nd</sup>, U15 9<sup>th</sup>, U15 17<sup>th</sup>, U17 2<sup>nd</sup>, U17 9<sup>th</sup> and U17 18<sup>th</sup> the combined team score for Team A would be 13 points (U15 2<sup>nd</sup>, U17 2<sup>nd</sup> and U15 9<sup>th</sup> – with an U15 athlete's finishing position taking precedence over an equivalent U17's finishing position) and the combined team score for Team B would be 44 points. The overall team standings remain as set out in the Overall Standings Calculation available under the **Resources** section of the League's website.*

\*\* *Men and women to race over the same course and distance to be determined between a minimum of 7.0km and a maximum of 9.0km at the discretion of the host club(s).*

**Note:** *The changes to the target race distances stated above are highlighted in bold.*

- **Important Note:** *In the process of reprogramming the results tool for the coming season following the 2021 AGM it was subsequently established that it would not be possible to generate team results for U15/U17 Girls and U15/U17 Boys. A Team Competitions Survey has subsequently been sent to all member clubs in order to obtain feedback and for the OXL Committee to make a decision as to the race formats and team competitions ahead of the 2021-22 season.*

Following the completion of the voting for Proposal A it was announced that Steve Frame (Hook Norton Harriers) would have to leave the meeting owing to an unforeseen last-minute meeting double-booking. As Steve had been in attendance at the meeting it had been agreed by the OXL Committee that Steve's advance voting decisions on behalf of Hook Norton Harriers would be accepted. No objections to this decision were raised by the remaining delegates.

### **Proposal B – Mixed Cross Country Relay**

Following a brief introduction to the proposal as set out in the proposals document the League Manager invited questions and comments from the delegates which are laid out below along with the responses.

- Elliot Newman (*Bicester TC*): Will the proposed mixed relay be limited to one team per club?
  - Phil (*Newbury AC*): No. It might be possible that with the potentially longer race distances for the adult races some runners may prefer to just run in the mixed relay.
- Benedict Pollard (*Eynsham Roadrunners*): Will it impact the League races beforehand? Some clubs might choose to hold back their better runners.
  - Phil Marshall (*Newbury AC*): It is the athlete's decision as to whether s/he runs in the League race and/or mixed relay. Effectively the mixed relay is a one-off race that is intended to be a bit of fun and helps reinforce the gender equality issue.
- Abielle Hallas (*Abingdon AC*): As a runner with a 400m background, would there be batons? Would there need to be a change-over zone? The concerns are the logistics of setting everything out being one of the Round 5 fixture host clubs.
  - League Manager: This simple solution would be to follow the example of the County Road Relays that Abingdon AC has already had experience in hosting deploying a cordoned-off hand-over zone where athletes either touch hands or pass on a baton.
  - Phil Marshall (*Newbury AC*): Similar types of events have already witnessed at elite level in European and World Championships where wrist bands have used. Batons were not felt to be appropriate for cross country.
- Ian Robinson (*Banbury Harriers AC*): The timings of the mixed relay would need to be borne in mind. At what point should the mixed relay start? Would there be a fixed time or would a certain gap be allowed after the last runner of the preceding race had finished? The real concern being the extension of the day both for the runners and the volunteers.
  - League Manager: If the decision is to for the proposal, the points raised will need to be taken into consideration in planning of the fixture and

the mixed relay on a trial basis. The trial event will then need to be reviewed to see how it goes, what, if any, improvements may be necessary and what the feedback is received.

- Daniel Anderton (*Oxford TC*): Is the mixed relay adults only or will juniors be allowed to participate? A concern about holding the proposed event at the end of a fixture is the impact it may have upon team spirit, with colleagues congregating to cheer their last runners. Having another race taking place alongside could detract from the team spirit by drawing people away. Could the mixed relay be a separate fixture?
  - Phil Marshall (*Newbury AC*): Initially the mixed relay will be for the adults (*U20, senior and veteran runners*) only. If after the vote the trial proves popular, the question of whether or not to hold it as a separate event is something that will then need to be reviewed.
- Emma Gould (*OXL/Bicester AC*): If there was a mixed relay opportunity for the juniors, the juniors would no doubt love it. However, picking up on the points raised earlier about the fixture timings another important consideration that will need to be addressed is the potential impact on the timings of the season end presentations that also take place at the Round 5 fixture. The juniors and parents of juniors would also not be prepared to wait until the end of the fixture to run in a mixed relay either.
- Dan Wymer (*OXL/Witney Roadrunners*): At this stage the details should not be of concern. Those should be left to Phil and the host clubs to iron out, should the vote for the trial to go ahead be passed.
- Simon Leech (*White Horse Harriers AC*): Provided the mixed relay can be run without impacting or delaying the results, it would be embraced.
  - League Manager: Not publishing the mixed relay results on the day may be an option to avoid any further delays.

Following the discussion and the points raised the mixed relay proposal was put to the delegates for voting: Should a trial mixed relay event for adults be introduced at the Round 5 fixture?

#### **Votes for Proposal B:**

For: 11  
Against: 4  
Abstention: 1

**Action:** *On the basis of the above vote, it was agreed that Phil Marshall/Newbury AC are to liaise with Abingdon AC and Radley AC to work out the details for a trial of the mixed relay after the end of the last race of the 2021-22 Round 5 fixture.*

#### **Proposal C – Athlete Attire**

A short discussion followed a summary of this proposal by the League Manager that led to the comments and concerns below before the vote was taken.

- The League Manager raised the point that it is understood that some clubs have great difficulty in obtaining their correct colour club shorts. As far as the OXL is concerned the rules state that club vests are the sole requirement.

- Gary Warland (*Alchester RC*): Alchester RC feel particularly strongly about this as their club shorts colour is officially white! Firstly, that is not conducive to cross country and, secondly, white athletics shorts are simply not available to buy any more. A lot of the success of the League in the recent past has been due to the emphasis on inclusivity. Many women don't like running in shorts. That needs to be taken into consideration. This kind of proposal harps back to the 1970's and 1980's when only blokes ran, and also of elitism. It is felt there are far greater priorities to be focussed on. In addition, where runners are out on the course for a long time in adverse conditions wearing long-sleeved vests or long-johns underneath their vests/shorts should be allowed.
  - League Manager: It was confirmed that the existing OXL rules do allow for under-garments to be worn under vests and shorts.
- Liam Hosier (*Kidlington RC*): His reaction to the proposal mirrored that of Gary Warland (*Alchester RC*). The proposal was considered to be inappropriate in this day and age. It was also felt this may be a slight the women who wear brightly coloured tights. As long as a club vest is worn and the race is number is clearly visible it was felt there should be no issue. Buying official club colour shorts is also an issue for Kidlington RC having been recently changed to a fluorescent green.
- Sarah Rogers (*Didcot Runners*): Sarah stated that Didcot Runners don't have any official club colour shorts. There are no guidelines within the club as to what shorts are to be worn either. Neither do Didcot Runners have an official vest. The club stipulates only that they must wear either a blue vest or blue t-shirt bearing the club's name clearly. From Didcot Runners perspective what is worn from the waist down is irrelevant as long as a club top is worn.
- Kit Villiers (*Headington Roadrunners*): The query was raised: are vests specifically to be worn? It had been noticed that some people had not worn their club vest or top.
  - League Manager: There are instances where Guest runners are permitted to run without wearing club vests/tops, namely where clubs are undergoing their initial trial season, or where runners missed the fixture entry deadline.

On the basis of the discussion, comments and thoughts provided by the delegates the proposal was put to the assembly for voting: Should athletes be required to wear club colour shorts as stated in the club's profile on the UKA website?

#### **Votes for Proposal C:**

For:            0  
 Against:       16  
 Abstention:  0

#### **Proposal D – Women's Team Size**

Kit Villiers (*Headington RR*) outlined the argument for increasing the size of women's teams to 5 athletes from 3 in an effort to reduce the number of competing women's teams. The differential between the men's and women's team was felt to be anachronistic with statistical evidence given to back up the proposal. One of the arguments raised when the issue was brought up as an AOB item at the previous AGM

was that some clubs struggle to get three women for a team. The Headington RR argument was if that is the case surely those clubs would struggle to get seven men for a team and that in any event only one finisher is required for a team score to be registered.

A lengthy discussion then ensued with the comments and points raised by delegates given below.

- Ian Robinson (*Banbury Harriers AC*): When comparing the numbers competing in the U13 Girls races to the Women's races, for example, the case could be made for the required number of runners to comprise a team to be reduced on a sliding scale descending through the divisions. There are potentially an infinite number of possible proposals would suit clubs in different ways. The impact on clubs would clearly change from year to year as well from club to club.
  - League Manager: Adding such a sliding scale for the required number of runners to comprise a team would add an additional layer of complexity to the production of the results.
- Liam Hosier (*Kidlington RC*): It was pointed out that this matter has been raised at each of the last three AGMs. Point number 5 of the proposal summarises the club's position that it struggles to raise three women for a team. The counter-argument to point 5 a) of the proposal is that the club doesn't struggle too much to raise seven men for a team as there is a higher proportion of men than women within the club membership. There is a big difference between a team size of three runners and a team size of five runners. With respect to point 5 b) of the proposal, if a club struggles to get three women for a team and the team size is raised to 5 then the team would effectively be penalised ending up with two last place +1 scores. Therefore, Kidlington RC's position remains unchanged on this matter.
- Gary Warland (*Alchester RC*): Alchester RC supports the points raised from Kidlington RC's perspective. In addition, Gary confirmed Kit Villiers' assertion that a club will get a team score if there is just one finisher for the team. An example was given that in a race where there were 200 finishers a team with just one actual finisher would result in team scores of 201 for each of the other four non-finisher team places.
- Ros Kelling (*OXL/Banbury Harriers AC*): Banbury Harriers AC do struggle to raise three women. The point is that the Banbury women are very much a team. If the team size were to be raised to five, it would inevitably lead to some Banbury Harriers AC women being less inclined to turn out owing to the likelihood of there not being a complete team. Irrespective of the last place +1 for team non-finishers, the team aspect is fundamentally diminished. For club such as Banbury Harriers AC which is largely comprised of juniors and far fewer adults any decision to increase the women's team size to 5 would have a negative impact on the club.
- Simon Leech (*White Horse Harriers AC*): Apart from parity between adult gender team sizes what is trying to be achieved? Although currently White Horse Harriers AC have a strong team and raising women for teams is not an

issue, all clubs experience ups and downs, and there is sympathy for those clubs that have a smaller ladies' turnout.

- Kit Villiers (*Headington RR*): The "gigantic" women's Division 3 was referred to. It was admitted that the large number of women's teams might be contributed to by a small number of larger clubs and that had not been analysed. The point was reiterated that it appeared anachronistic given the large women's fields. In addition, the position seems out-of-date to have just three for a women's team and seven for a men's team when the turnout of women is becoming ever more comparable that of the men.
- League Manager: The equalisation of the gender race distances as voted for earlier in the meeting may well result in a lower turnout of women in any case, the knock-on effective of which would be fewer teams.
- Benedict Pollard (*Eynsham Roadrunners*): The reason for voting against the equalisation of the gender race distances was that it would have a negative impact upon the turnout of the Eynsham Roadrunner women. It was felt that increasing the women's team size would have an even more pronounced effect on the turnout of women. The point was also raised, albeit not one to be considered at this AGM but possibly at a future AGM, that the League is not just about participation but also competition and trying to raise seven men for an Eynsham Roadrunners team with any consistency during the 2019-20 season was a real struggle and very frustrating from a Team Manager's perspective. In the light of this, a counter-argument could easily be given for reducing the team number for men to 6. That might be another avenue to explore in order to progress towards equalising the team sizes for the women and men.
- James Bolton (*Woodstock Harriers AC*): In terms of the men the point was made that only two clubs were raising 'C' teams and the majority of clubs were raising two teams across the divisions. No team will win anything last place +1 scores. It might allow a team to remain competitive with just one last place +1 score, if the team is one runner short. With respect to the women although there are few more clubs with 'C' teams it is only Headington RR that was able to raise a 'D' team. Across the divisions for both the men and women on average clubs are able to raise two teams which seems more than reasonable.
- Phil Marshall (*Newbury AC*): In the past Newbury AC has always taken the position for increasing the size of women's teams. As a bigger club, it has been easier to fulfill the team size requirement. However, because of the equalisation of the gender race distances and the likelihood there could be a negative impact upon the turnout of women the increasing of women's team sizes would be a step too far. It remains to be seen what impact the equalisation of the gender race distances will have upon the turnout of women.
- Ian Robinson (*Banbury Harriers AC*): The turnout for the coming season will be a considerable unknown in any event. A number of runners have been lost to the club for whatever reason. In the aftermath of the pandemic the turnout for the Banbury 5 was 180 runners compared to the 300-350 or so the previous time the race was held. The appetite across the running population might be lower.

- Steve Frame (*Hook Norton Harriers* – had returned to the meeting by this point): Backing up Ian’s point, race participation levels are lower than in previous years with currently just short of 200 entrants for the Hooky 6 scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> August. The appetite and reservations of runners are important aspects to factor into any decision.

**Note:** Daniel Anderton (*Oxford TC*) was not available for further voting having had to leave the meeting and it was therefore agreed that any further Oxford TC votes would be counted as abstentions.

On the basis of the discussion and input received from the delegates the proposal was put to the assembly for voting: Should the size of women’s teams be increased to 5 athletes?

**Votes for Proposal D:**

For:	3
Against:	11
Abstention:	2

**9) Club Membership Election**

Benson Striders successfully completed their trial taking up all its allocated athlete entries and the club had clearly demonstrated a strong commitment to the League. The club also provided very positive feedback from their athletes.

On the other hand, Heyford Aardvarks RC was unable to fill all its allocated athlete entries and at the end of the season felt the OXL was too big that this early stage in the club’s development.

On the basis of the above information provided it was put to the delegates: Should Benson Striders be elected as a member club of the League?

**Club Election Votes – Benson Striders:**

For:	15
Against:	0
Abstention:	1

**10) Election of Officials**

It was noted that no contact had been received from volunteers offering to take on the committee roles vacated by Emma and Richard Gould at the end of this meeting, despite member clubs having been informed in advance of the meeting, directly by email, via the website and via social media. From the Committee’s perspective this was disappointing.

The League Manager reiterated to point that a larger committee generates more discussion, a greater breadth of ideas as well as a healthier outcome for the future of the OXL. The point was also made that although long-term commitment of some officials is and has been laudable, it becomes more of a hindrance to the long-term future of any organisation. Examples were provided and the delegates only needed to look at their own clubs to find similar instances. Typically, it is the same people volunteering time and again for their clubs and in many cases as well as for other voluntary organisations within their local community.



He also stated that it has long been his conviction that the OXL committee should comprise 6 members, a member of each club should sit for 3 years on the OXL committee within each period of a 12-year cycle (*based upon the current number of member clubs being 24*). That effectively would limit a club's commitment to provide one volunteer to sit on the OXL committee to just 3 years out of every 12.

In response, both Liam Hosier (*Kidlington RC*) and Benedict Pollard (*Eynsham Roadrunners*) stated that, albeit not being in a position to volunteer at present, having an exit strategy in place would be very beneficial and would allow them, as well as others, to be in a better position to consider standing for voluntary roles on the League Committee.

**Action:** *On that basis, it was agreed that OXL Committee would prepare a proposal outlining the future structure of the League's Committee along with strategy limiting the length of term of office.*

The League Manager thanked all his colleagues for their commitment and support. It was stated that Ros Kelling (*OXL Treasurer*), Dan Wymer (*OXL General Committee Member*) and Dene Stringfellow (*OXL Manager & OXL Entries/Results Secretary*) confirmed their willingness to stand for re-election.

The following officials were therefore duly and unanimously voted in:

<i>League Manager:</i>	Dene Stringfellow
<i>League Treasurer:</i>	Ros Kelling
<i>Sponsorship:</i>	Dan Wymer
<i>League Entries/Results Secretary</i>	Dene Stringfellow

## 11) AOB

No other business was arising.

## Close

The meeting was closed at 21:40hrs.

*Dene Stringfellow*

***League Manager***

21 September 2021