

Athletics Northern Ireland Management Summary

Wednesday 5th April 2023

1. Matters Arising

- The Board accepted the NI Code of Good Governance via email on 21st March 2023.
- The staff handbook has now been completed.
- The new Track Manager post will be replaced by a Facilities Manager, with wider responsibilities including H&S across MPT and Athletics House.
- The discus throwing area is unusable at present and needs to be fixed as soon as possible for summer events.
- The use of OpenTrack for club and athlete registrations has had some teething problems. These are being addressed. Athletes are required to sign in to complete their profile and accept the anti-doping requirement.
- A draft Heads of Agreement document between ANI and Mary Peters Track Ltd was presented to the Board. The Board accepted the general direction of progress, with the possibility of MPT becoming a subsidiary of ANI.

5. Finance Report

Sharon Louise McKay presented a financial dashboard for the 11 months ending February 2023, with figures showing actual expenditure, budget and variance together with a balance sheet. The Board discussed variances to budget whilst acknowledging an improvement in reporting expected in 2023-24 when it is hoped to produce reports by department and by specific events.

6. Strategy Report

The CEO reported that the initial strategy discussion on 7th February is being followed up. The Board continues its Strategy discussion with a meeting scheduled for Saturday, 29th April.

7. Board Positions

David Seaton has resigned after many years of service. The HR Board position is yet to be filled and the application deadline has been extended. Consideration is being given to delaying appointments to the Board until the new committee structure is set up later this year.

8. Selection Policy and Commonwealth Youth Games

A draft selection policy for the Commonwealth Youth Games in August was presented. The Board discussed matters such as the nomination panel composition, the appeals process and the requirement to compete at least once in NI in 2023. The panel is to be composed of a chair (who has the casting vote in the event of a tie), two from Track & Field, one from Cross-Country and Road Running, and an independent coach. David Marrs was appointed chair of the nomination panel. An independent observer is to be included. Bearing in mind the nomination timescale, the need to get the policy published as soon as possible.

Age Group Discussion (led by England Athletics)

The Board joined an online discussion led by Scott Grace (Youth Development Manager, England Athletics). Scott outlined a proposal to move the age group categories from odd ages to even ones to align with World Athletics categories ie to U12, U14, U16, U18. The aim was to reduce the dropout rate from young athletes, discourage early specialisms and avoid having important competitions in the same season as athletes may be undertaking major school examinations

It was noted that school academic years differ between the four home countries. It would simplify competition within Ireland, as the latter uses even age bands.

The Board was generally in favour of the change. An agreement needs to be obtained from each of the HCAFs and, if reached, an operational group set up to examine its implementation.

9. Urgent matters emanating from Titanic 10k

The Board discussed issues with the organisation of the Titanic 10k the previous weekend and identified key learning points from it, including but not limited to budget setting, appointment of a Race Director, pressure on staffing, poor communication and risk assessments.

A further apology will be issued by the Chair and CEO accepting the organisation's full responsibility for the event. A partial refund to athletes was considered but rejected.

10. Governance Report

- a) **The Chair** listed issues we face as an organisation incorporating feedback from the Board self-evaluation exercise. There is an increased need to relate to our stakeholders, better succession planning, introduce an induction process for new members, and terms of reference for committees. A suggested four-year performance evaluation was proposed. A timeline for key areas for improvement was indicated.
- b) **Sport NI Review.** This governance audit was submitted to Sport NI on 22nd March with all the required documentation included. Policies and procedures are being updated and will need to be signed off by the Board.
- c) **M&A Review.** The draft Articles of Association were introduced by KW. Board members provided input. The Articles will be revised and will be represented to the Board and stakeholders before being put to the membership at an EGM.

11. Safeguarding

A training session for the Board has been arranged for 26th April. A Safeguarding Action Plan was presented to the Board.

12. Anti-Doping

UK Anti-Doping Agency has written to ANI indicating that at least one requirement of the Assurance Framework was still to be reached. (*Note a letter of compliance was received on 6th April*).

13. CEO Report

- A number of staff have resigned from ANI and MPT and will be replaced.
- The pool of casual workers is being revised and will be updated annually.
- The Sport NI submission was made on 16th February.
- The transition to new licensing arrangements for Coaches is underway, with more responsibility being given to HCAFs.
- UKA Transgender Policy for transgender females means they will no longer be able to compete in the female category but will be able to compete in an Open category.
- A number of safeguarding cases are ongoing and are being carefully managed.
- Discussions continue, along with other sports, on the Road Closure/Event legislation.

14. Role of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair and Vice-Chair will complete their terms of office by the next AGM. It is the responsibility of the Board to invite either or both to continue for a second term or to seek alternatives. The Chair and Vice Chair left the meeting whilst a discussion of their roles and suitability ensued.

The Board subsequently agreed to put them both forward as Chair and Vice-Chair for a second term.

Going forward, it is expected that new structures should allow the Board to focus more on strategy and be less involved in operational issues.

15. Subcommittee Reports

Reports were received from the President, T&F, Mountain Running, Ultra Running, Cross Country & Road Running, AAI and Senior Managers

A British Championship Mountain Race was held on 25th March with over 200 competitors, most from outside NI. The Angle-Celtic Plate 50K and 100K races were held at Craigavon Lakes on 1st April with teams from the 5 home countries. The NI Senior cross-country championship was held on 26th February and included the final race in the Cross Country League. The Track & Field committee reviewed the Indoor Championships held at Athlone in March.