

WELSH ATHLETICS ROAD/CROSS COUNTRY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF TEAMS MEETING WEDNESDAY 30th AUGUST 2023
5.15PM
2023/2024 SEASON

ATTENDEES: -

Alex Donald, Alaw Evans, Graham Finlayson, Nikki Haines Jones, Steve Jones, Sharon Leech, Steve Mitchell, Kevin Tobin

APOLOGIES :-

Martin Green, Derek Osborne

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (28th JUNE 2023)

- *SM to update regarding new policy for representation selection and the tier system, following a change in policy over the summer, as a result of a dropout among senior athletes at recent events.* SM stated that the policy is still work in progress, however could share some information. Performance team have been working on a strategy that ensures the athlete pathway leads to world level standard. There's currently a gap between those qualifying for GB internationals and those qualifying for World championships. The performance team covers all disciplines, for our purpose we shall focus on road and cross country. Road and Cross events are used by track athletes also as preparation for their main event. At a junior level, athletes value team events, SIAB will continue to be supported. A senior, U20 and U17 will be selected for the cross country on 20th January but no team will be selected for the Celtic Cross. Funded athletes will have written into their agreement that they must run for Wales in certain cross country races. The road is separated into non marathon / non walks and others. There will be a team sent to Armagh, senior and U20. Funded athletes and NDP will be selected first, if not enough athletes accept selection, then the focus will be on taking one development team. Funded athletes will be asked for their preferred races and so instead of sending teams to a particular race, individuals can choose their race, but they will be expected to wear a Welsh vest. So for example, there won't be a team representation at Trafford 10K. A Welsh team is hoped to be sent to the Valencia marathon in 2024 – it's the fastest marathon (arguably) and so will serve as a good selection race

opportunity for the Commonwealth. There will also be a selection event opportunity for the walks. Following SM's explanation, KT asked for further clarification and SM explained that the focus will be on offering more opportunity for the top tier, less opportunity for those just below the top tier (funded) level. The change has come as a result of the seeming indifference to wearing a Welsh vest among many of the best Welsh athletes. This has meant that some teams have been filled with athletes who may not otherwise have made the team based on performance. It's hoped that this will improve the value of representing Wales and increase standards. Discussion ensued between KT, AE, SL and SM regarding concerns for the grass roots if there's less opportunity at the top, however SM stated that athletes who are below the top tier will be encouraged to attend competitions such as the English AAA Champs and Inter-counties. Selection policies will be set so that funded athletes are seen as being in the Welsh squad and so will be expected to take up their selection place in a team (cross country or road/ off road). NHJ queried about standards and whether other athletes who meet those standards will be considered if a funded athlete turns down a place. SM stated that current standards are going to be adjusted. AE stated that for those athletes (like herself) who are non-funded but currently qualify for Welsh teams – is there any purpose in her continuing to push hard, if there is no longer going to be the chance of her competing for Wales (something which she values greatly). She also mentioned that her performances inspire the next generation (via her job as a teacher)

- *Helena Tipping 10K Inter-Regional 10K Championships 23rd July 2023 (also part of the WA 10K series).* AD gave some feedback on the event, initially the thought was that Regions wouldn't be interested – and in reality there wasn't much interest, apart from the North. There were no south Wales travelling senior teams, so perhaps the future of an IR 10K event needs to be discussed among the Regions
- *Summer 5K Podium Bute Park 12th August 2023.* SM confirmed that it was a great event, however there's a question mark over whether it needs to be an international. Scotland didn't send a team and many Welsh and English athletes entered as individuals. AD stated that having the international teams made the event a little more complicated and many athletes preferred to compete for 'composite' teams, such as Adidas, Sportshoes etc. England won the men's and women's team events – they had stated that athletes, if selected for England, were then not allowed to run for a composite team

- *World Championships Budapest* – congratulations to Natasha Cockram, 30th in the women’s marathon

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- AD forwarded an invitation from James Vallely of Armagh International Race committee, inviting a Welsh team to compete on 8th February 2024. SM has replied to confirm that a Senior and U20 team will be attending
- SL attended the GC meeting with the Board in July – once minutes received they’ll be shared with the Committee

DISCUSSIONS

- See ‘actions’ section above
- AD confirmed that the Cross Challenge has been confirmed as a gold label event
- SM confirmed that selection policies for forthcoming representative opportunities will be published at the end of September
- SL queried whether the Welsh Cross may move to a location with better infrastructure, which may increase numbers, (as per Scottish model), however also agreed that the course at Brecon was good and spectator friendly. Other members of Committee also said there were two ways to look at the issue, although consensus seems to be that Brecon is central. Query regarding using further field in Brecon, however that field is unable to be used. AD has time to look at other options, although there are few places to consider, Committee then agreed that Brecon be confirmed as the host venue
- AD to ask for expressions of interest to host road Champs at 5K and 10K. The Half Welsh Champs is favoured to be in Cardiff, London preferred for the Marathon Welsh Champs, as both offer a high level of competition at that distance. Discussion ensued that certain races could be ‘chosen’ as flagship events for the Welsh Championships or expressions of interest put out for 5K and 10K. Confirmed that AD would advertise expressions of interest to host 5K and 10K Welsh Champs

FIXTURES

DOMESTIC

- Road Relays, Pembrey 9th September 2023
- Welsh HM Championships Cardiff October 1st 2023
- *English Cross Country Relays 4th November (possibility of Welsh Teams competing)*

- Cardiff Cross Challenge November 11th 2023
- Welsh Inter Regional & Inter Schools XC 18th November 2023 (Dolerw, Newtown)
- *Liverpool Cross Challenge 25th November*
- Welsh Cross Country Championships Brecon Sat 17th February 2024
- Welsh Schools Cross Country Championships Brecon, Wednesday 28th February 2024 (date tbc)

REPRESENTATIVE

- Home Countries International 20th January 2024 Parliament Hill London (inc World Trials) (Senior and U20, also U17 – but not an international at U17 age group, part of X Challenge)
- Armagh 5K/ 3K Thursday February 8th 2024 (Senior and U20)
- SIAB Santry Dublin, 23rd March 2024

SCHOOLS

- IR Schools and Colleges Cross Country 18th November, Newtown
- SJ will take the proposed date of Welsh Schools XC Champs (28th Feb 2024) to the WSAA committee to confirm. SJ stated that the closer to the SIAB the better, so he assumes the 28th February will be fine

PERFORMANCE

- See various items above for info from SM/ Performance Team. KT asked SM to take back to performance team the idea of having a representative opportunity for the level below the funded athletes

AOB

- AE asked if athletes are allowed to wear headphones at road events. GF and SJ confirmed that athletes are not allowed to wear headphones, as per UK rules. AD stated that athletes are only allowed if the race organiser allows it, but it can never be allowed if the route runs along part of a 'live road'. At an entirely closed road race it's at the discretion of the race organiser (most prefer not to allow them)
- NHJ stated that the WA website needs to be updated to reflect the fact that athletes representing Wales must have a UK passport. AD queried as to whether that is actually correct and so will check – if it is, then it will be updated

DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- **Wednesday 27th September 2023 5.15pm.** Microsoft Teams invite will be sent to members for another virtual meeting, minutes will be available on WA website (emailed to media@welshathletics.org) and emailed to members