

**WELSH ATHLETICS ROAD/CROSS COUNTRY COMMITTEE  
2023/2024 SEASON**

**MINUTES TEAMS MEETING WED 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 5.15PM**

**ATTENDEES: -**

Alaw Evans, Graham Finlayson, Nikki Haines Jones, Steve Jones, Sharon Leech, Steve Mitchell, Kevin Tobin, Chris Type

**APOLOGIES: -**

Alex Donald, Martin Green, Derek Osborne

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None**

**ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (30<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2023)**

- *SM to update following last meeting's discussion and KT's request to discuss with Chris Type the possibility of having a representative fixture for those just below top tier funded athletes. SM confirmed that he and Chris have discussed the issue. Last year much of the performance budget was spent on athletes who were not at the higher level and not expected to reach representative level at higher than national level. SM stated that the performance budget should not be spent on the tier below those athletes who are expected to deliver at Commonwealth Games etc. WA are currently screening those athletes who will be supported next year. Those athletes will be expected to represent Wales and will be deemed as the 'Welsh Team'. KT stated that the Committee understands the purpose of the performance team, but again queried whether there's room for a representative tier below that supported tier, to provide opportunities for those athletes, to ensure they are motivated and stay in the sport. CT stated that all the pathways of the various disciplines under WA umbrella have been different. CT wishes to align them somewhat and instill the feeling that gaining a Welsh vest is difficult and therefore more worthwhile when achieved. He wishes to add value to the vest. There was a large amount of athletes who turned down representative opportunity last year, which meant some money was wasted. This year the budget is particularly tight and so a restructure was needed. CT is prepared to review the situation at the end of the year.*

It was confirmed that there will only be one opportunity for cross country and one for the road. CT reiterated that the performance budget is to be spent on performance, not

community sport. KT queried why there wasn't a further budget for the lower tier, as has happened in the past. CT stated that over time, this line has become blurred and so changes need to be made. This change is being made across the board. He stated that the performance role is to take athletes to a level where they will be accepted onto UKA world class programme. AE said that she's a representative of fellow athletes in that tier just below the supported tier. She confirmed that athletes do value Welsh vests, she also stated that some of the funded athletes turned down Welsh representation, in order to run in a sponsor's vest. She also stated that WA need to be realistic with regard to their performance expectations – as such a small nation, how often are we likely to have an Olympic athlete or a world level medal? The fear she has is that many of the athletes such as herself, will cease to compete at some of the national championships. The goal of reaching representative level has been taken away and as such motivation and morale is low. SM replied to AE's comment that WA are missing a generation of athletes who sit in their 20s to 30s and who may well have potential, as the development programme has now been extended that it won't cater solely for 15-17yo athletes, it will also include older athletes who show promise, those athletes will be screened. KT asked if there could be a 'regional' vest opportunity for athletes which AE was talking about, SM stated that the mini marathon vest is one such 'regional' opportunity. CT repeated the need for 'cultural' change, that the Welsh vest needs to be valued and having a representative 'regional' vest will create confusion as some may see it as a full Welsh vest, hence the value of the Welsh vest will be undermined. Situation will be reviewed in a year's time but SM stated that this year has been a difficult one in terms of results. He also stated that the Trail Committee has changed its policy and is now very selective in who it selects and whether there's a need to fill a team.

AE also stated that if an athlete hits the representative standard in a selection policy, then he/she should be selected, despite not being a supported athlete. SM stated that that conversation would be had in the selection meeting, it also needs further discussion between himself and CT. CT confirmed that no decision will be made to fill a team unless it aligns with the performance strategy. Standards will be clear for athletes, with various criteria. Outcome standards will be published and selection policies will be in public domain. Setting standards for cross country is more difficult for cross country, Cardiff X and Liverpool results will be considered.

NH stated that as a WA Coach, she 100% agrees with AE's comments and feels quite disheartened for the athletes with this new structure. CT stated that athletes need to aspire to be international athletes and not sub international athletes

- *Welsh Schools XC Championships – SJ to confirm whether the date of 28<sup>th</sup> February has now been agreed by WSAA. SJ stated the date is still provisional*
- *Selection policies for representative opportunities to be published by end September. See above, selection policies not yet ready*
- *5K and 10K expressions of interest for hosting the Welsh Championships. \*AD to update and website updated. AD not present so no update*
- *AD to update regarding need to have a UK passport to represent Wales. \*AD to update and website updated. AD not present so no update*
- *Feedback Road Relays 9<sup>th</sup> September Pembrey. Successful event, however the results were frustrating as they were incorrect and took a long time to be sorted. The masters were unable to receive their medals. The website write up needs to include the age group. SJ also said that the Open Track system created problems at the School Cup and Plate T&F competition and certainly needs addressing by next year*

## **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

- Chris Type updated the endurance community with the latest staffing changes to support the development of endurance running, key changes: “Firstly, Chris Jones has taken on a new role as the Lead Endurance Coach, and will work with specific named athletes with the view of developing an endurance hub based at the National Indoor athletics Centre. Secondly, Steve Mitchel has taken on the role of National Talent Development coordinator on a full time basis and will be the point of contact for all endurance areas. This is a significant increase in resource to support the development of the endurance pathway of which I feel will greatly enhance the Welsh Athletics offer to endurance athletes and coaches”
- GF circulated endurance fixture list from Graham Healey
- SM sent an email with further information regarding the proposed changes to competition age groups in athletics, in a bid to halt the drop out rate post 17. Webinars available during September for further information. Proposal is that age groups will align with IAAF age groups, it would be UK wide, however school age groups will remain as year groups. SM has no update on how the webinars have gone

## DISCUSSIONS

- For performance discussion, see actions above

## FIXTURES

### DOMESTIC

- Welsh HM Championships Cardiff October 1<sup>st</sup> 2023
- *English Cross Country Relays 4<sup>th</sup> November (possibility of Welsh Teams competing) – SM will update*
- Cardiff Cross Challenge November 11<sup>th</sup> 2023
- Welsh Inter Regional & Inter Schools XC 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023 (Dolerw, Newtown)
- *Liverpool Cross Challenge 25<sup>th</sup> November*
- *European Cross Country Championships 10<sup>th</sup> December Brussels Belgium*
- Welsh Cross Country Championships Brecon Sat 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024
- Welsh Schools Cross Country Championships Brecon, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (date tbc)
- UK CAU Champs and Cross Challenge Final XC Prestwold Hall Loughborough
- *ERRA National 12 & 6 Stage Road Relay Championships Sutton Park Birmingham*
- London Marathon (inc Welsh Marathon Championships) 21<sup>st</sup> April London

### REPRESENTATIVE

- Home Countries International 20<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 2024 (Senior and U20)
- Walks event March 2024
- SIAB Santry Dublin, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024
- WSAA Mini Marathon London April 2024
- Valencia Marathon Dec 2024

### SCHOOLS

- IR Schools and Colleges Cross Country 18<sup>th</sup> November, Newtown

## **PERFORMANCE**

- Nothing further to report, apart from the above documented structural changes and that the programme athlete list is being compiled soon

## **AOB**

- None

## **DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

- **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 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](mailto:media@welshathletics.org)) and emailed to members