

Minutes of the Chiltern Cross Country League AGM

Held on Monday 19 May 2025 at Fusion 2K Ltd, Ampthill and on line

1. Attendees and apologies

Club	Attending in person	Attending remotely
Abingdon AC		Rachel Nixon
Ampthill & Flitwick Flyers RC	Mark Billington, Mark Waine	
Banbury Harriers AC		Ros Kelling
Bearbrook Running & Tri Club		
Bedford and County AC		Hayley Vinnicombe
Bicester AC		Emma Gould
Biggleswade AC		David Brown, Alison Bone
Bracknell AC		Justin Spencer
Buckingham & Stowe RC		Robby Taylor
Chiltern Harriers AC	Sue Slade, Tom Dixon	Katie Royals
Dacorum AC		Andy Wass, Steve Russell
Daventry AC	Tricia Thorp	
Gade Valley Harriers	Roland Kendall, Kim Morgan	
Handy Cross Runners		Frank Fulcher
Hazlemere Runners		Katrina Rints
Headington RoadRunners		John Griffiths
Higham Harriers AC		
Leighton Buzzard AC	Richard Inchley	
Leighton Buzzard Triathlon Club	Jamie Farmer	
Luton AC		
Marshall Milton Keynes AC	Richard Pownall	
Milton Keynes Distance Project		Jim Bennett
Northampton AC		
Olney Runners	Steve Dicks	
On The Run Aylesbury	Kev Mccullagh, Becky Honour	Andy Myall
Oxford City AC		Richard Hart
Queen's Park Harriers	Bill O'Connor	
Radley AC		
Redway Runners	Hannah Connelly, Simon Read	
Shenley Striders		
Silson AC		Julie-Ann Hammond
St Albans Striders	Louise Bentham	
Stevenage & North Herts AC		Adam Searle
Tring RC	Nigel Lacey	Liz O'Keeffe
Vale of Aylesbury AC		
Watford Harriers	Rob Finlay	
Wellingborough & District AC		Steve Stredwick
Wycombe Phoenix Harriers AC		

Apologies received from Bearbrook Running & Tri Club, Higham Harriers AC, Luton AC, Northampton AC, Radley AC, Shenley Striders, Vale of Aylesbury AC, Wycombe Phoenix Harriers AC.

2. Report from the Chairman

The report which acknowledged the support of the hosting clubs last season and the new members of the organising team was duly noted.

3. Match attendance for 2024/25

The number of appearances overall had increased by 1.5% from the prior year to 5,256. After adjusting for the change in policy, which restricted the number of guest runners to only under 11s, the new increase was actually 3%. Tables were included in the pre-read which broke this down by club and age group, as well as showing the average number of appearances by athlete.

4. Financial update and subscription fees

The league treasurer, Richard Hart presented the receipts and payments schedule for 2024/25 which showed a small surplus of £192 during the year compared to the £4k deficit of the year before. The increase in fees implemented last year had therefore successfully ensured that last season's match costs were covered, but only just.

Since a significant increase was implemented last year, it was agreed that the fees would remain unchanged for 2025/26. That said, a club's fees may still increase or decrease from the prior year if their number of appearances year on year mean that they move up or down a fee band.

It was noted that the closing bank balance of £2,488.57 only provides a small reserve if costs increase next year. Ideally the league should be aiming to build a contingency over time.

5. Update on the website and social media

There was unanimous agreement that the website had vastly improved since the start of last season following its redesign. The only significant issue that had arisen was the platform's ability to cope with the increase in volume when the results were released. The club members agreed to go with the recommendation of the website designer to upgrade the server which is reasonably modest in cost.

Katie Royals explained that she was keen to develop the social media side of things as this is key in engaging the next generation and opens up the potential for funding / sponsorship deals. There has been a huge growth in the popularity of running generally but this is not currently flowing through to cross country running. To move this forward she explained that she was looking to

create a team of content creators who would be willing to take photographs and videos at the fixtures.

Actions:

- KR to give Mei Li the go ahead to upgrade the server.
- KR to put together a brief description of what she would be looking for in putting together a content creator team. This will then be sent out to team managers via the league secretary.
- Team managers to then share with club members and encourage any enthusiastic budding influencers to put themselves forward.

6. Fixture locations and dates

The table of fixture dates and proposed venues was discussed. The dates were finalised in the meeting on the basis that they were in line with the EA guidance on regional league races.

Attendees at the meeting representing St Albans Striders, Oxford AC and Watford AC were able to confirm that their club was able to host the 1st, 2nd and 4th fixtures respectively and the Luton team manager had confirmed earlier in the day that they could host the 5th fixture. These locations were formally agreed.

That left the 3rd fixture which had been pencilled in as Campbell Park.

A question was raised around available parking at the St Albans fixture in Verulamium park which had historically proven to be a challenge. Louise Bentham responded that the situation remained the same and that people may have to use the paid parking facilities in town. She also confirmed that St Albans Striders would also explore the option of 200 spaces at St Columbus school for which there would be a charge (for the league to absorb or for the attendees using the facility to pay themselves to be agreed).

Actions:

- Richard Pownall to follow up with Jackson Ryan to see whether approval can be obtained from the MK Parks Trust, allowing the 3rd venue to be firmed up as Campbell Park.
- The St Albans hosting team to add clear guidance in their match info around where people could find parking, possibly exploring the option of gaining permission to use local office car parks and taking on any learnings on how ATW manage the volume of traffic for the St Albans Half marathon. Those who will be collecting numbers at the first fixture should be advised to build in extra time if it is likely that they will have a walk to the course from some of the parking options.

7. Fixture Coordinator role vacancy

The pre-read included a request for a volunteer to come forward to fill this role. It was stressed that this is one of the smaller roles on the organising team and that one of the larger components (i.e. finding 5 venues) was already close to completion.

LB stressed that as a learning from the past it was felt important to maintain the 9 roles on the organising team to make everybody's role manageable, and hence avoid roles being absorbed into the existing team. As there were no volunteers putting themselves forward at the meeting, LB asked that member clubs take the time to consider whether there was anybody at their clubs who they could ask to take on the role.

LB thanked Jim Bennett for his contribution to the league over the last year which had been very much appreciated.

Actions:

- **Team managers to ask around at their clubs to see if they can find a willing volunteer for this role.**

8. Changes to payment process for guest and replacement numbers

The following changes were approved:

- To introduce a tiered cost system to under 11 guest runners so that those registering for the first fixture pay £20 which will cover the cost of the remaining races in the season, reducing to £15, £10 and £5 if they register for the first time at the 2nd, 3rd or 4th/5th fixtures respectively.
- For any unpaid amounts for replacement numbers at the end of the season to be added to the club's invoice in the following season. It was noted that the registration coordinators will be able to collect payment on their phones on the day from next season which should reduce the need to chase unpaid amounts after the event.

An explanation was given as to why the policy is in place to charge for replacement numbers, which centres around providing an incentive to look after numbers and remember to bring them along to each event. There was support from clubs represented at the meeting to continue with this policy.

9. Discussion about the possibility of moving to a single league

Richard Pownall summarised the pre-read paper which had set out the advantages and disadvantages of moving away from the two division structure to a single league. The paper included ideas to offset the disadvantages which centred around ensuring that the smaller clubs would still have a good chance of winning awards.

There was very strong feeling expressed in the meeting around the effectiveness of the two division structure in motivating individuals to compete and being rewarded for their efforts with medals and trophies. Even though clubs might bounce between the 2 divisions, this was still seen as an incentive to move back up again. A view was expressed that if the 2nd division was removed then the smaller clubs would leave the league.

There was also some uncertainty as to how the idea of awarding team medals to clubs with less than 200 or 100 appearances in the previous season would work in practice.

After a lengthy discussion, the consensus was to leave the structure unchanged for now with the two divisions remaining. This is an area that can be kept under review, but as a learning any future proposals will involve a longer consultation period and a more detailed impact analysis.

Actions:

- RP to see whether there is still a way of simplifying the results process with the two Divisions remaining in place.

9. Miscellaneous points

- A horn rather than a starter gun will be used for all races from next season.
- It was noted that the guidance provided by the league to host clubs to follow when putting on an event needed to be updated to include health and safety checks and any best practice or learnings host clubs had built up over the years.
- Recognition was given to Nick Folwell, John How, James Charles and Richard Inchley who had been incredibly generous with their time last season and without whom the league would struggle to run.
- Sarah Davis from Events Sportswear to be invited to attend meetings in principle, with agreement given from race organisers on an event by event basis.
- The league will support charity cake sales where requested.
- The registration coordinators explained that they intended to be more generous with the number ranges given to clubs next season to reduce the possibility of them needing to use numbers outside their allocated range.
- Redway have kindly agreed to hand out the U11 guest numbers again next season.
- Opinions were canvased before the AGM from any 70+ males competing last season as to whether there was any appetite to start all 70+ males 15-20 minutes before the senior men's race or to run a shorter distance with the senior women. All those responding confirmed that they would prefer things to remain as they are. There is therefore no policy change being proposed, although M70+ can request that they start their own race ahead of the mass senior men's start if that would be helpful for them.

- A discussion took place on the race distances for the senior men which would typically be 8-9k in line with EA guidance, although hosts should have the discretion to consider the level of course difficulty when setting race distances.
- It was noted that the league is highly dependent on John Howe who is the only official who holds the Level 4 Endurance Referee qualification that is required, although James Charles is currently working towards gaining this qualification himself.
- It was highlighted that England Athletics plans to implement significant changes to junior age categories starting from 1 April 2026 when the track and field season starts. These will not impact the 2025/26 cross country season but we should be ready to implement the changes for the following season.

Actions:

- SS to feed back to the officials the decision on using a horn next year and approve the purchase of one if required.
- LB to update the league guidance on hosting events, after inviting clubs that have hosted in the last few years to share any documentation they may have compiled internally.

11. Meeting close

A huge thanks was given to Andy Inchly who had provided the venue for the physical meeting and the tech support for the remote access as well as helping us to manage through the technical issues that had incurred during the meeting.

A thank you was given to all clubs that had participated in the meeting and had shown patience during the technical challenges faced.