

Co-Chair Report from Andy Hind & Mike Bale

Haywards Heath Harriers – 2024 Annual General Meeting

Dear Harriers

As another year passes for our club, there's plenty to say and even more to do as we continue to build for the future. With the pandemic thankfully behind us, 2023 was the first full year of relative normality. We were thankful to see a return to competitive racing across our senior and vets with participation levels approaching pre pandemic levels. Of note has been our participation levels in the WSFRL and various cross-country events which we have seen a good deal of racing appetite from our membership. Our cross-country performances over the 2023/24 season have been very noteworthy with a good deal of medals making their way into the hands of the Beetroot Army. We have also seen big spikes in participation at key road races, with a lot of credit going to our endurance coach, Ian Dumbrell for his tireless 'encouragement'. Here's hoping we can see even more participation and success this year!

Juniors are only slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels, due in part to the ever-increasing range of activities there are for them to get involved in. There was good turnout in general though in the U13 League with athletes competing for the first time in a variety of events. They also displayed excellent team spirit cheering each other on.

The U15's saw a poorer turnout with the same athletes there most times. This will hopefully improve this year with some keen athletes moving up and encouragement from our coaches.

It is also good to see that some of our juniors are entering open competitions with several already lined up to do the Crawley Open at Easter. These are invaluable for experience and the opportunity to get pb's.

Those that have both donned the Beetroot, be it Sportshall League, XC, track or endurance, or supported our many events in any way, have proved excellent ambassadors for the club, and we hope their success encourages others to get involved.

The Senior Athletes League remains static with the same athletes covering many events each in conjunction with Lewes AC.

For the Vets League we have great enthusiasm and camaraderie with Haywards Heath Harriers and Lewes AC competing as one team. It is great to see so many athletes trying their hand at different track and field events and finding out they are actually quite good at them!

On a different note, one problem we are facing is a shortage of officials to support our many track and field leagues as well as county championships. We are down to only 4 qualified officials in the club with perhaps only two active and 2 partially active. This is something that has been commented to me on more than one occasion. The club has a duty to provide a field team and a track official to most league matches and to support the county.

Being an official is not particularly hard or onerous. Just helping out 5 -6 times a year makes all the difference. Generally, we are expected to officiate one event, e.g. long jump or discus, in a league match, so a team of 4 is sufficient plus providing a track judge or timekeeper to support the track team.

Qualifying to the first level is a simple online course. If you can help, I will be only too happy to talk to you about it, and we can easily put on a demonstration evening on our return to Whitemans.

Our track aspirations took a hit as the Northern Arc development pushed ahead without any serious focus on the provision of an athletics facility. Ultimately, we were facing a challenge due to the lack of support from England Athletics, but we continue our efforts regardless.

We continue to work with Burgess Hill Runners to find other options/opportunities.

Notwithstanding this, or perhaps because of it, we have also taken a more direct route with our monthly hiring of the K2 track in Crawley over the winter months, a move that has proved popular across the whole club. We are currently making provision to secure the K2 track for the 2024 winter months so we can continue to offer a mix of training while we are away from our summer track home.

The club continues to astutely manage its finances. We have invested in new storage at Warden Park, additional track hire fees as well as new

athletics and coaching equipment. On the technology side, the club has purchased a race number scanner and is now able to take card payments at our events. Although our member fees do not cover our expenses directly, our event income fills the gaps. For this reason, we are pleased to confirm that Membership fees for the coming year will remain at 2023 levels.

In other news, the club has provided its support for the development of the HHRFC clubhouse facilities at Whitemans Green. In conversation with the management team at HHRFA, we are exploring what benefits this facility could provide to members, be it training, event or social opportunities. We will keep you up to date as this develops.

Our collective thanks go out to all the volunteers, coaches, officials, group leaders, social planners, and committee members. We sincerely couldn't run the club with individuals who selflessly give their time, energy, and skills for the good of the club. At this year's AGM, we will see several changes with Secretary, Kath Buckeridge, stepping down and Tim Hicks moving out of the Membership role and into a general committee role. Both Kath and Tim have done amazing work on all our behalf, and we truly thank them for their dedication and service. I would really urge everyone to take look at vacancies and consider if you could step up and help us continue to operate this wonderful club.

In related news, this will be my last AGM as your co-chair. I too will be stepping down and will hand over to the very capable Mike Bale. It's been a

rewarding and exciting privilege to act as co-chair these last 3 years. Like Tim, I also intend to remain as part of the wider committee group.

As we look forward into 2024, here's to a successful year for the club and continued growth of the Beetroot Army.

Andy Hind (Co-Chair) & Mike Bale (Co- Chair)

March 2024