

Minutes of WMOA Committee Meeting 12th December 2022 at 7-30pm

via Zoom

Present: Adrian Bailey, Marian White, Barry Elkington, Ian Gamlen, Ray Collins, Kirsten Strain, Carol Dredge, Henry Morgan, Richard Rogers, Marian Denham, Jonathan Howell, Rick Roberts

1. Apologies: Jim Cooke, Dave Ellis, Mel Elkington

2. Declaration of Interest: None

3. Acceptance of Previous Minutes: Accepted

4. Matters Arising: None

5. Correspondence: a) BOF Update- minor changes to some rules eg British Sprints. Sent to all BOF Members in monthly BOF Newsletter.

b) JK 2024 Update from Andy Yeates. Agreed postponement of next JK in West Midlands to 2031 was a good idea. Richard Rogers reported that WRE members were in principle willing to provide volunteers for Day 2. IG asked if there would be any financial involvement from WMOA but all underwritten by BOF.

c) WM League – Lesley Ross stepping down after 20 years so need for a new results coordinator. AB to write and thank her on behalf of WMOA. MW to put an advert on WMOA website and email to all clubs to disperse to members.

RC questioned whether there should be some changes to courses/categories as so many competitors now on Green and Short Green. Agreed to keep as it is this year as entries are open for first event.

d) Email from Bob Brandon re limited parking for CSCT event at Park Hall. Suggestions were made as to how to get round this problem- clubs come by coach, encourage car sharing, allocate number of car park spaces for each club dependant on their entries. MD to report these back to POTOC.

e) Email from Richard Lewis re clash of dates with WRE Woodside Urban in UKUL and Euro City League race in Harrogate. Neither event can change date. Rick Roberts to raise issue at next Fixtures Meeting to try to avoid in future.

6. Chairman's Report: AB

1. Many thanks to Richard for being such a good chair, as exemplified by how well he conducted the AGM.
2. Thanks to those at the AGM who accepted me as his replacement. This idea hadn't been discussed until the day before the AGM, but I have had experience chairing meetings so I'm happy to give it a go. It is of course an honour to have this position! As some of you know, I have plenty of ideas, but I'll do my best to ration them to one a meeting, and spend more time listening to what you want.
3. As I said at the AGM, my priority is that the clubs should simply be supported in putting on the events they can. Some clubs are currently unable to put on as many events as they have in the past, but there should be no pressure, only support. There is an uptick in demand as we move out of the Lockdown Era, but our volunteers are a precious resource and they should always be thanked for doing what they can and not pressurised to meet demand. We also need to save some energy for our major event commitments, most of which we do still have the resources to meet effectively, especially if clubs work together.
4. The number of events has been really quite high over the last two months. Many thanks to the clubs for this. We should use effective communication and car-sharing to enable orienteers from one part of the region to participate in events 30 or 50 miles away, so that they can fulfil their orienteering needs.
5. Many thanks to OD for putting on an excellent WM Championships in Sutton Park, and to COBOC for an excellent Peter Palmer Junior Relays at the same venue. An issue has been raised regarding the prize categories at the WM Champs, and we'll discuss that tonight.
6. Congratulations to OD for winning the West Midlands League, and it was also nice to see such keen competition for second place. The League is a friendly rather than an elite competition, and I say we should have a reasonably relaxed attitude to what events can make up the league – most level D and urban events are good enough, and their inclusion in the league can only increase participant numbers, which makes volunteers happier.
7. I've suggested (as have others) that in order to increase competition, the Midlands' urban leagues should merge. We'll continue the discussion of this at this meeting.
8. Many thanks to Rod Postlethwaite for his work as newsletter editor. Since no-one has come forward to replace him, options have been discussed regarding how best to communicate necessary information to members. A regular email digest will probably be reasonably effective.
9. Unfortunately I won't be able to be at the Laurie Bradley Club Championships on Jan 1st – a great event that I almost never miss – but I encourage everyone to make it their first New Year's Resolution to take part.

7. Treasurer's Report –IG

Levies are still to come in from some HOC events.

No financial worries .WMOA have a balance of £8,000 plus and WMJS £2,000 plus.

8. Fixtures Report- R Roberts

The Club Fixtures Secretaries met by Zoom on 3rd November when all of the clubs other than HOC were represented.

2023

West Midlands League – A list of the 7 events currently registered was circulated with the papers for this meeting. Some of the clubs indicated that other potential events were in the pipeline although permissions remains a particular problem.

Urban League – Only one event has been registered to date and this has been included in the UK Urban League as well. Again, indication was given that other events were likely to follow.

This leaves us without a full compliment in either league currently, although that might improve a little.

A particular concern is the urban league. As mentioned at the AGM, the Club Fixtures Secretaries discussed the possibility of approaching the East Midlands about some form of collaboration or event sharing between the two leagues. There was a strong consensus in favour of such an approach with just a few concerns, mainly that some individuals might be put off by travelling distances and costs.

I subsequently emailed Ursula Williamson, my opposite number in the East Mids seeking her views on the matter. In the email I postulated several possible models that could be considered for development. Namely: -

a) Create a joint Midlands League (possibly extending to East Anglia if there is sufficient interest). This would be analogous to the wide area Southern League.

Alternatively,

b) Agreement for “overlapping” the existing two leagues. This would maintain two separate leagues but allow points collected in a number of pre-specified events “close” to the regional boundaries to count in both league tables simultaneously. Or, perhaps, in either at the choice of the competitor.

To date she has responded saying that the proposals were interesting and that she was forwarding them to Chris Phillips, the East Mids Chair, for discussion at an EMOA meeting. I have no indication of his response or the likely timeline on a further response at present.

In the meantime, we are dependent on clubs coming forward with more proposed events if we are to have a sensible league.

Still in 2023 mode, the other list pre-circulated for this meeting is the schedule of **West Midlands Major Events** for next year. I have not included venues but almost all have either registered final venues on the BO database or at least let me know for information.

Comments on above- AB suggested we abandoned the Urban League for next year. Rick concerned if we abandon it clubs may stop putting on proper Urban events. AB suggested financial incentive for clubs to map urban areas.

Some discussion on whether Forest league and Urban league could be combined. Problems with Juniors running at Urban events. KS pointed out that WM Relays clash with JIRCS so very few Juniors to be expected at Relays- JH/RC to report this back to Chasers. BE-WRE event at Wrockwardine clashes with Northern Champs at Burbage Moor.

The Planning Horizon

One of the things that has become clear since I took up this role a year ago is that the forward planning horizon for events post-covid has moved much closer to the present day than it was when I was a club fixtures secretary pre-covid. There are a number of very good reasons for this – not least of which is the time taken to catch up with re-populating a programme that was stopped in its tracks by the pandemic.

However, there are also problems associated with this. One symptom is the lack of league events I have mentioned already, but also only one event for UKUL – traditionally we should have had at least 2 – and, very few events that I can put forward for UKOL. These get decided a long way in advance. Nationally, the Events Scheduling Group has already filled virtually all the slots for the first half of 2024.

To get back in the game, so to speak, there needs to be an effort to plan further ahead than at present. Quite apart from any other reason, we have probably all heard that Forestry England is routinely requesting 3 months notice of an event together with details of control sites for approval in advance – and in some cases alterations then requested – and they aren't the only challenging landowner. That's just for local / regional events – the time overhead on majors is even longer with BO seeking earlier band earlier identification of hosts, venues & dates to avoid clashes and bunching.

Comments on above- Rick Roberts- Next WM Fixtures Meeting in January- need proposals for 2024. Will send round a date grid for WM clubs to fill in to try and avoid clashes. Clubs need to think further ahead in order to expand Leagues.

9. WMOA Website

Richard Rogers- no technical updates.

MW- West Midlands League Events for 2023 and WM Major Events in 2023 to be added to website along with WM League coordinator advert.

10. Development- HM

Controllers Course had 6 people on it. Only one of these has completed all requirements needed to qualify. Thanks to Brenda Morgan and Richard Lewis for help on the day.

4th March Organisers and Event Safety Workshop to be held at Sutton Park. Open to other regions as well.

11. Coaching Co-ordinator- Dave Ellis not at the meeting.

DE has sent a draft survey to WMOA committee to look at re coaching in individual clubs for comments before sending out to clubs.

12. West Midlands Junior Squad -KS

Day trainings were held at Callow Hill (Wyre Forest, HOC) and Pooley Country Park (OD). We had to cancel one of November's Zoom trainings due to coach availability, but December is set to have two as usual.

The November training weekend in the Lake District was a success. 8 juniors participated, accompanied by 8 adults. Accommodation was in a bunkhouse with catering facilities and a good social space for evening activities. The training areas, organised by the JROS Hawkshead camp, were Holme Fell, Colonel's Drive and Blawith, which provided nice variety and ample opportunity to practise navigating through intricate contour detail.

Cake sales at Sutton Park and Brandon Wood WML events have been successful, raising £207 and £197, respectively. We have been donated a box of good-quality new orienteering equipment from Ian who previously ran the Ultrasport shop. We will be looking at the best opportunities to sell this equipment. To help with sales of higher value than cakes, we have applied to Lloyds Bank for a card reader and are in the process of getting it set up.

We will soon be looking at dates for trainings for the start of next year. Help from clubs with obtaining area permission and maps is much appreciated.

We are looking forward to the Finland trip next summer, led by Mark Saunders. Suitable accommodation has been found and should be booked soon.

In the last 3 months, it has been felt by KS and HL that the combined workload of all aspects of squad management has been unsustainably high. Since the start of September, we have had 4 day trainings, 2 residential trips, 6 Zoom trainings, 2 cake sales, 3 WMOA meetings, all of which requires planning, preparation and a lot of communications via email. We are aiming to address this in two ways. Firstly, by accepting support from the network of parent supporters on specific tasks – such as fundraising (Julia Allinson), website management (Pete Rose) and Zoom backup adults (Julia Allinson and Alistair Landels). Secondly, by adapting our coaching offering to reduce the preparation demands without reducing the regularity of the opportunities for the juniors to come together, for example making occasional use of half-day post-event squad meetings instead of quite such frequent full day trainings. We will review the situation again in a few months. In addition, we would welcome offers from any other coaches who want to organise a training for a full or half day.

AB suggested that any clubs that can help out would be appreciated.

13. Communication between West Midland Orienteers with no West Midlander being published-

At the AGM it was suggested that an email digest every couple of months may work. After discussion it was agreed to collate newposts from website and any articles from club newsletters. Also communicating WMJS activities. To be sent out every two months, beginning in February, to clubs to disperse to members. AB to collate. To be reviewed at next meeting.

14. WM Championships Rules- AB

Controller of WM Champs felt it unfair that members running up classes were eligible to become champions. After discussion AB to bring some options to the next meeting to be discussed – circulated to clubs prior to this to discuss.

15. Event Officials Honorariums- AB

At the Peter Palmer Relays officials were each given a bottle of wine. Should this become WM Policy where main officials are given a bottle of wine / voucher/ free entry to upcoming events?

BE felt it was up to each club to decide how they did things.

AB to write to all clubs about this idea.

16. Clubs Round Up

HOC- IG (JL not present.)

WM League Event in January in Wyre Forest.

OD – BE

2 WM League Events had been put on – both with over 200 competitors.

Level C events for next year have been sorted- dates and venues. Some Level D events planned.

MapRun Events both urban based and parkland being run regularly.

Xmas Relays -27th December.

COBOC- IG

Continuing Beginners/Families/School Events on 4th Saturday of month in term time.

Discussions taking place re merger of COBOC and HOC. Would still be keen to promote Beginners/Families/Schools.

Cannon Hill Park event – end of January.

WCH – JH

Not an easy time getting organisers for events.

WM League event – November . Map ready for Urban event but need Organiser and Planner.

2024 CSCT round will be held in February due to proximity of JK at Easter.

WRE- RR

Laurie Bradley New Year's Day event closing date 18th December.

Local event at Boreatton Park on Sunday.

Wrockwardine in February.

ChocO on Long Mynd from 23rd December to January 8th.

POTOC- MD

Hem Heath event – new area was well supported.

No Parks series next year as struggling to get planners and organisers.

Night event in January.

Temporary website- new website launched early February – potoc.org

17. Any Other Business

HM – PA System owned by WMOA was used at the British Schools Score Championships. No hire charge as we use BSOA license for WMOA Zoom meetings.

18. **Date of Next Meetings-** Monday 13th March 2023

Monday 12th June 2023.

Meeting finished at 9-35 pm.

Thanks to Barry Elkington for coordinating Zoom Meeting.