

## **England Fencing AGM - 18 November 2019**

Venue: St Gabriel's School, Newbury (Southern Region)

### **Attendees:**

Tristan Parris (President), Anthony Crutchett (Vice-president), Milind Pradhan (Treasurer), Jonathan Katz, Beth Davidson, Chris Cranston-Selby (board members).

Marilyn Wheelbold, Caryl Oliver, Antonio Frulio, David Bradlen, Daniela Bucuresteance, Famica Bucuresteance, Ainsle Rose, Jeff Rosenbaum, Alan Knowles, Allen Cooke, Rochelle Dazeley (all Southern). Luke Deamer (Southeast)

Virginia Bailey, Hannah Gavin (British Fencing)

### **Apologies:**

Dan Redshaw, Alex Savin, Chris Smith, Neil Bromley, Viv Mills

### **Votes by proxy:**

Jane Brown, Charles Henderson

### **Presidents welcome - Tristan Parris**

- 1 Welcome to all and thank you for coming. Thank you to Southern region, and in particular Rochelle.
- 2 Minutes of previous AGM -
- 3 Activity since the last AGM:-  
A much quieter year than last year in terms of events without the CJCFC!

EYC – yet again went well and was well attended – a huge thank you to Alex and his team as it was his first time. Thank you also to the board members who attended it is a time for us to be visible to the membership. I received a lot of positive feedback esp on an even better experience for the young people involved. We will continue to strive to put the experience of the fencer at the heart of the event.

JHI – For the second year running England finished at the top of the individual, team and overall medal tables. Teagan Williams-Stewart won the WF and Darcy Holdsworth won the MS. WS won bronze in the teams while every other event was won by England. In Cardiff, England won 2 gold, 3 silver and 9 bronze in the individuals with 4 team gold and 2 team silver. This time, 2 gold, 4 silver and 5 bronze. Fewer medals were won overall, but that reflects the higher standard of opposition in this year's event.

### **Senior Five Nations**

Youth trips - we will continue to work with young fencers and their coaches to assist in their long term holistic development - only sending fencers to EF registered events as more clarity that events are run to good standards of safety and safeguarding. Won't be sending TMs for England trips except JHI and CJCFC – this is in line with BF – however, will also support as best we can all fencers and their 'team'

TP activity – working more closely with BF although has been slower than desired due to being a very very busy year. The goals of clarity of England and thence regions role in fencing and within BF still main aims. Looking to create pathways and therefore succession planning for all involved – fencers, volunteers, workforce and to clarify EF and BF roles in this.

- 4 Jozef Thomas left - replaced by Hannah Gavin as Development Officer – a role funded by EF and managed by BF to promote grass roots development of the sport and better link clubs, regions and governing bodies.
- 5 More clarity over role within the board - what is president's job, Anthony as deputy president etc., and how can it be distilled so it can be passed on.
- 6 Appointment of independent director – Chris Smith
- 7 Peter Huggins - has stepped down from EF board (appointed director) – Tristan Parris is currently developing a job spec for workforce development and we will be seeking candidates for the role in the new year.
- 8 Huge thank you to the board and Anthony in particular

#### **Representative fencing – Beth Davidson**

Caryl Oliver is team manager for Senior 5 nations - happening in Durham next weekend.  
Youth 5 Nations, led by Dan Redshaw and Danielle Foxwell - Moss.

Youth selection development - rather than selecting Wroclaw, England Fencing has chosen to send athletes and support to under 14 and under 17 ECC certified events, where we can be sure of the quality of the competition and suitable welfare arrangements. It is a competitive circuit so we need to manage the development needs of young fencers. We will review after this year to assess outcomes vs goal.

It is likely that the following countries will host upcoming Commonwealth events:

Junior Commonwealths 2021 – India (tbc)

Senior Commonwealths 2022 – England (England Fencing is assess potential sites and has been asked to make a bid / host by CFF).

The next Veterans is in Toronto 2020.

Beth Davidson manages the programme of representative teams and selection – and wishes to convey particular thanks to the ranking coordinators, team managers (e.g. Caryl, Dan, Danielle) and all those involved in this process.

Tristan Parris is on the board for The Commonwealth Fencing Federation - one of the key aims is to try and get fencing back integrated into the main Commonwealth Games - therefore how we run 2022, could be important to that continued effort.

Personally - Tristan would like to thank the board for all their support through some tough times over the last year or so, particularly with the change to selection of international youth events.

#### **Minutes of the 2018 AGM:**

Vote to approve – Milind Pradhan proposes, Beth Davidson seconds

Unanimous vote to approve the minutes.

### **England Fencing accounts:**

Year-end Jun-19. Published on website c10 days ago.

Summary of accounts provided by Milind Pradhan: key messages - annual turnover and cost of sales are much higher as accounting for the Junior Commonwealths held in Newcastle. Turnover and costs are exceptional in this year and are expected to revert to the mean next year.

The Junior Commonwealths made a loss of £41k, vs an EF budgeted loss of £35k. Deficit was higher due to bad debts from two countries. [Note: the loss from hosting the event was planned and largely offset by the budgeted cost of not having to send a team abroad].

*Have these countries been blocked from other events in future?*

Tristan Parris - CFF is aware and are working with these countries to try and stop this happening, however, they are reluctant to throw them out. Nations can apply for Commonwealth funding to assist attendance at events, and then on that basis had committed to certain volumes. They subsequently didn't turn up. However, there were also issues with the Home Office which wouldn't provide visas for some of the Nigerian team, as they thought there was a risk of visa scammers, who have historically targeted sporting events in the past.

*Why is EF on the hook?*

Tristan Parris: Because England Fencing took on the ownership of the event we are therefore liable to meet the costs of the venue / accommodation providers etc. Part of the arrangements with any CFF event are such that the host country takes on the event liability.

Overall the accounts show a surplus of £7k for the year, and reserves of £192k. Milind is happy to take further questions either directly or via email.

Vote to approve - Caryl Oliver – proposes, Rochelle Dazeley seconds.  
Unanimous vote to approve the accounts.

### **Board elections**

Notice of the AGM was sent out in August along with forms to apply to stand as a director on the Board.

Jonathan Katz and Chris Cranston-Selby's first 4 year term expired at this AGM. England Fencing rules state that each directors term is for 4 years, with re-election allowed at the end of the first term. Directors must then leave the board for a period of at least one year.

Last year only Alex Savin was elected while Steve Cowan and Dan Redshaw left the board after serving two and one term respectively. Therefore there were 3 open director roles available.

Three completed nomination forms were received and accepted.

Chris Cranston-Selby and Jonathan Katz were elected back onto the board – serving until Nov-23  
Dan Redshaw was elected back onto the board – serving until Nov-22.

## Honours Committee

Led by the Vice-President. England Fencing to follow up with detail on the website with regards to the make up of the committee, the honours available and the nomination process.

## Reappointment of the accountants: Manningtons

Vote to approve – Anthony Crutchett proposes, Marilyn Wheelbald seconds  
Unanimous vote to reappoint the accountants.

## Q&A forum:

*Would like to see more help in developing the regions.*

- *Sustainability of Southern Region providing low cost courses, and relying on volunteers is a risk longer term.*
- *Have to work on a shoestring budget.*
- *Engaging more with the regions to help, to help subsidise training / development etc.*
- *People close in at clubs, so supporting the regions provides a safety net for grass roots. The youngsters need to be talking to each other, to encourage people to carry on.*

England Fencing agrees that working with regions is a priority and our aims including improving communication (in part through Hannah Gavin's role as development officer) and providing more support with grants.

We did have athlete grant schemes. Applications for grants were not good at all and it was difficult to objectively assess need. Some fencers had just started and wanted club / coach / equipment fees and some going towards major championships. We need a more robust / better guideline of what we will give money for. People will have great ideas - this is a good forum. Keen to use this a forum to develop ways to support activities.

*Would like to see more region-specific grants rather than athlete grants or support, for example:*

- *A dozen potential referees at this development day. But because they come and do courses with the region, when they go to competitions to help with Southern or to actually fence, it is better for them and the region – can support be made available?*
- *We want to encourage welfare officers and welfare understanding. BF pricing is so expensive. So, if we want volunteers to do that, we can't say its £65-80 each to volunteer – can support be made available?*
- *Issues with repetition of some of the courses e.g. the Engarde Ready course every 3 years. It started out being run at major competitions alongside events, it is an expensive course. Would make a huge difference for people coming from clubs to come if EF could help subsidise those courses.*
- *Coaches have to do safeguarding - some make a living and its their profession. Others help out at a club, and coaching development is expensive.*

England Fencing has recently supported welfare days recently and we recognise that many clubs are running on shoestrings. We will continue to assess what further support we can provide the regions to assist with the subsidising of the cost of courses.

*There is reference to EF policy on welfare being different to that for the other home nations in the British Fencing safeguarding report – what is the highlighted difference and why is it called out.*

England Fencing unaware – Tristan Parris to follow up with British Fencing.

*Vast majority of coaches are part time. Work in the day and train in the evenings. In the past could put on coaching courses quite easily. Now I have the perception that volunteers and coaches are getting older, but not sure replacements are coming through quick enough. If there is funding available – e.g. for Sundays, where there might be availability. I would like to see coaching seminars with regions put on, e.g. one in South, North and Midlands, so we can go and learn. We want to improve our skill sets. Should be getting together more rather than working in isolation. Has there been any thoughts in putting together a coach education and development programme?*

Coach education is a difficult topic given the range of opinions and one that British Fencing is responsible for it rather than EF.

*BF don't do anything - no progression and same courses across year.*

Tristan Parris is meeting with BF and Steve Kemp in December. Will take this up with BF then.

*Development and referring - Home nations own referring levels 1 & 2. BF had a referee working group so you had that progression. Is there a plan to let British Fencing take back over level 1 & 2?*

BF wants continuity of the referee pathway. However, the delivery system of levels 1 & 2 is supported by the Home Nations. There needs to be consistency through the home nations and collaboration. At present there are plans to align, but delivery will continue to be through the Home Nations. Aware that Luke Deamer has written the Welsh course, Alex Savin the England one.

We need to create a strategy for sustainable support and development across all roles and one that is wholistic across the clubs, regions and wider fencing network. Josef did a lot of work focused on the experience you get as a fencer when you go into your first session, first taster, first clubs and competition. Some clubs are struggling (e.g. for adult fencers) - regions / counties important so that clubs and individuals can feel part of something bigger - support network and make people welcome. Get everyone involved.

*I run qualifiers for BF in the region, £10 per levy going to BF, seems madness as we don't get money back. As a volunteer 1/3rd of my effort goes to BF and if it was my job, I wouldn't do it. How is this fair? Membership goes to British Fencing and they charge a lot of competitions and Sport80. Venue prices vary across regions - some regions have to spend a lot of money on venues. Last 4 years - venue hire has seemingly doubled at local sports facilities - £600 to £800 for venue for regional qualifier in last year. The floor is good, but the rest of it is horrible. Large venues are over £1k. British Fencing is pricing themselves out of the market.*

We're aware that fee increases caused issues with participation in other regions (e.g. The North East). Tristan Parris to follow up with Georgina.

*Could England Fencing arrange resources to attend regional development days e.g. a psychologist and also a physiotherapist from outside coaching fraternity. I don't know anyone who could do it. But maybe EF can provide a list of those that are qualified / available to do it.*

Nickie Bailey does volunteer development at BF and is hugely helpful. It is impractical for England Fencing to arrange resources for development days, but British Fencing should be able to suggest qualified individuals. Physio & psychology is something that we do not get involved in but if you

sourced your own trainers and were putting a grant in to ask for support for this with then it would probably be received well. England Fencing has the list of referees, welfare, and other volunteers. But we do not have an external list of other practitioners. Difficult for EF to advise on who is good / bad on psychology.

*There was a club called the Coaches Club - used to have a conference each January and bring people in to talk and advise until there was a falling out between professional and amateur coaches. However, it used to be a whole wide group of people sharing experiences. Used to motivate amateur coaches. Marilyn used to be Secretary and they'd talk about all sorts of topics. The event broke even, and volunteer committee used to do all the organisation. Can it be reintroduced? Can something similar be done?*

It was an impartial club and it was solely focused on helping coaches develop. Tristan Parris started south West coaches WhatsApp thread to encourage communication between coaches within the South West region, share best practices and build a community. Would encourage other regions to do similar.

### **Closing comments**

Thank you for your involvement in the AGM & for use of the venue – particular thanks to Rochelle Dazeley who helped arrange.