**Sedgefield Harriers**

**AGM 2018**

**Report of the Committee**

**General**

The year from the AGM of 2017 has seen a decent increase in membership: we currently have 127 senior members which represents an increase of 15 on the previous year. The junior section is adapting to change as it restructures to accommodate coach drop-off.

The club again staged a number of successful events including the Neptune Relays, the Sedgefield Serpentine and the summer and winter handicaps.

For the third year running, a delegation of Harriers visited Hamminkeln to run in the local running club’s Citylauf race. The event was a great success and we plan to visit again next year. An invitation for a reciprocal visit was accepted and for the second year running a small delegation of runners from Hamminkeln SV visited for a very enjoyable weekend of running and sight-seeing which included Sedgefield Parkrun and the Sedgefield Serpentine.

Looking to the future, the committee is looking to grow the senior section of the club at all levels, investigate ways of improving participation for both seniors and juniors, and to work with the membership to negotiate ways to improve the club for all. I will be starting work on the website very, very shortly!

**Seniors**

The men’s cross country team consolidated their place in division 2 of the Harrier League and have got out two full teams so far in this year’s league. For the first time during my tenure as Chair, the women’s team has also fielded full teams and we’re hopeful that should this continue they’ll be in the running for promotion.

I hope I’m not being bumptious if I say the Grand Prix has been a success. I’m aware the removal of age grading hasn’t been to everyone’s taste and we will have to look at making the divisions more competitive next year, but it’s been a good competition with lots more people having goals to race for. The addition of bonus points has helped encourage people to try out track and field, as did the inclusion of a Track & Field Day, which – with the approval of the new committee – I’ll look to organise again next year. All bar one of the divisions went down to at least the penultimate race and one of them continues to the final race.

Attendance at senior sessions has been gradually increasing – I’ve counted 30 at a Tuesday night - and importantly the sessions have been delivered by a wider variety of coaches. Additionally, Sheree has begun a successful beginner’s group on Monday nights.

Sadly, we’ve gradually lost a number of athletes from the faster end of the club and the new committee will have to decide whether this is something that needs to be addressed. Certainly there are some very encouraging performances from older juniors that suggest there are good things ahead in that regard.

**Juniors**

The junior section continues to produce promising young athletes who enjoy their athletics and provide a great outlet for children in the town. There’s a degree to which the changes in membership criteria have reduced the number of parents using the junior session as a creche, which has happened in the past, but the feeling remains that those who are committed to developing as competitive athletes are being held back by the need to take care of the group as a whole.

Many initiatives have been suggested, such as mandatory competition entry, use of training diaries and individual training plans.

It seems that the junior section is bursting with promise and has a core of coaches eager to build it into something better but until more coaches are brought through to allow those initiatives to come to fruition, there is a growing sense of frustration.

On a more positive note, there have been several successful events hosted by the Harriers and representation at the NEYDL and cross country has improved. There are also some very promising athletes coming through who can hopefully help inspire their friends.

A personal opinion [of the Chair] is that the junior section needs its own leadership structure. And that leader should also sit on the steering committee.

**Coaching**

The Club Committee remain fully committed to supporting coach training and education to the long-term benefit of the club. A number of coaches have been trained this year benefiting all aspects of the club but we will always need more and particularly in the junior section.

**Volunteering**

Any amateur sports club is only as strong as its volunteers. Our core of volunteers remains strong but new, committed volunteers are needed to take up the baton. We find time and again that the same people are giving their time and we need to investigate ways to bring newer members into volunteering roles. To this end, we do have a list of people who stated they would be happy to volunteer when they renewed their membership. Alda is organising a volunteers evening to say thank you to those who have volunteered and the new committee will look to appoint a volunteer coordinator specifically to grow and support the volunteer base.

**Club Race Events Programme**

The Neptune Relays and the Serpentine Trail Race attracted strong numbers once again and both events went well and received positive feedback. Particularly mention has to go to Mark and Beth Raine who did an outstanding job taking over the Serpentine. The club winter and summer handicaps were also well supported.

Next year the club will once again organise the Neptune Relays, the Serpentine Trail Race and the Winter and Summer Handicaps. There is the possibility of once again hosting the North Eastern XC Championships, although this is just talk at the present time.

**Community**

The club continues to play an active part in the local community and supports events including Run Santa Run in aid of Butterwick Hospice and the annual Town Council Snow Party.

Chris Lines recently started a Plogging group which has been enthusiastically welcomed and supported by members of the club.

**Social**

The annual dinner was once again held in the Hardwick Hall Hotel and was a great success, as was the Christmas social at Planet Leisure in Newton Aycliffe. Personally, I’d like to see us doing more socially as a club.

**Summary**

In general, it’s been a very positive year – we’ve increased our membership, hosted several successful races, navigated GDPR, competed successfully in cross country, tasted track and field, deepened and renewed friendships with our twin town in Germany, trained several new coaches and competed well both internally and externally.

Moving forward, it’s clear there’s a lot to be done to develop the junior section and bridge the communication gap between it and the committee, there is the eternal challenge of recruiting and retaining committed volunteers, including at committee level and the new committee will be responsible for seeing through the new website and hopefully at some point the new track.