

Sedgefield Harriers

AGM 2024

Report of the Committee

The committee

The club is currently in its 19th year and we look forward to celebrating 20 years in 2025. The committee had 10 members up til May then 9, following the resignation of our Chair Jane Spink earlier this year. The Committee would like to thank Jane for her contribution to the Club in her role as Chair and Coach. We are pleased she continues to be a member and represents the Club in both her Sedgefield and England vests.

Our longest serving member was Roger Whitehill who continued his role as Club Treasurer having served in the role for almost the entire life of the club.

Beth Raine continued to do a lot of unseen work in her role of Club Secretary.

Andrew Featherstone continued in his role as Membership Secretary, a role he has undertaken for the past 9 years.

Sheree Lyons continued as both our Junior lead coach and safeguarding lead for the club.

Gary Foster and Fay Uphill continued to work tirelessly on club merchandise and member engagement respectively.

Sue Dobson took on the role of organising the Serpentine race, a role she did spectacularly well.

A recent addition to the committee, Enya Killen brought insight from the beginners group, a group she co leads on Mondays.

The club wishes to thank Stuart Park, who is standing down from the committee. Stuart has worked on Health and Safety for the club, for which we are very grateful, alongside his role as a junior coach.

The Committee has recently established sub groups to work on specific activities within the club to both share the work out and expedite decision making. It also aims to keep committee meetings shorter.

The plan going forward is to ask non committee members to join these sub groups to assist with the smooth operation of the club.

Seniors and General Developments

2024 has seen the club go from strength to strength, with the expansion of both Junior and Senior sections and a growth in club membership.

The simplest way to reflect on the club and its senior provision is to look at a typical week for the club.

We continue to have a beginners group under the guidance of Claire and Enya providing a stepping stone into the club for those less confident in their running ability.

Harriet Morris has taken on the leadership of our Core Stability sessions on Monday building on the session established by Jane Spink.

Ean Parsons continues to develop our Strength and Conditioning provision on a Monday evening.

Tuesdays have steadily increased in numbers, being the most popular session for the club. Led by Rosie Warnett, supported in delivery by Peter Milburn, John Haycock and John Heywood, the sessions work on runner's speedwork through a combination of sprints and hill work. The attendance of Over 14s at senior sessions has continued to provide not only stiff competition for our senior members, but also has developed them as athletes, with progress evident in their parkrun times, handicap placings and most recently race times.

Wednesday interval sessions led by Chris Lines and Roger Whitehill continue to have a small merry band of committed regulars.

Thursday provision sees the club deliver 2 sessions in different venues with Ean Parsons leading an endurance session at Netpark and Matt Cooke delivering a newly established satellite group at Wynyard.

Although no formal sessions are delivered on Saturdays and Sundays, attendance both in terms of runners and volunteers at Sedgefield parkrun has continued to rise, with the first Saturday of each month providing the opportunity for our time trial which has been hotly contested. Many thanks to Helen Letts for her role in facilitating this. Sunday social runs continue to occur with many runners heading out.

This year the Club Grand Prix has been organised by Rosie Warnett, with a wide variety of races, in terms of distance, terrain and days of the week with the aim of increasing the opportunity to participate to more members. Rosie also changed the structure, with age related divisions which has widened the range of opportunities for club members to succeed. Many thanks to her for her efforts with this. We look forward to the 24/25 Schedule.

The culmination of the 2023/4 North East Harrier League Cross Country season saw the men consolidate their position in Division 2. The 2024/2025 season has shown an equally strong start.

Our women's team has been boosted in numbers of women competing and continues to compete well.

The club has seen a significant number of strong individual performances in the year since the last AGM. We apologise if we have missed anyone. Club Members Mark Raine and Lisa Darby gained a coveted BQ, and completed the 2024 Boston Marathon. Jane Spink set a club record in the Marathon in London, and went on to represent England at Chester Marathon recently. Gary Thwaites continues to excel in the Ultra endurance field with significant placing in a number of major events including the Lakeland 100, 13 Valleys Ultra and the Dragons Back race. Frances Barlow represented her country on the track in the World Masters Championships in Gothenburg, sprinting to great results in the 100 and 200m.

David Bentley qualified to race for England at the half marathon distance after a great race at Redcar Running Festival after a short training block due to injury.

Club Events

January 2024 saw the club host its largest and highest calibre event hosting the 2024 Northern Cross Country championships with athletes from Liverpool to the Scottish borders visiting East Park to undertake a challenging course. Chris Lines was integral to the event's success.

April 2024 saw the Neptune Relays return under the leadership of Jane Spink. It was great to see a strong attendance from local clubs and groups despite 2 other events taking place on the running calendar. We look forward to the event in 2025.

The committee worked together with Stuart Park (Winter) and Beth Raine (Summer) taking the lead in organising the Gerry Kearsley Summer Handicap and Winter Handicaps which again took place on a two lap course around Bishop Middleham and these were well attended by the local running community.

Most recently under the guidance of Sue Dobson we held the Sedgefield Serpentine Race with over 140 entrants taking on our undulating trail race and dodging the local livestock enroute.

Juniors Section

The junior section under lead coach Sheree Lyons has gone from strength to strength with the provision of a minis session lead by Stuart Park returning after a nearly 5 year hiatus. We have an influx of new members joining us at sessions and beginning what we hope is a long and successful journey with Sedgefield Harriers..We have had representatives in the North Eastern Cross Country championships, CDAN events and Sports Hall athletics. We continue to extend coaching capacity through new coaches and the return of previous volunteers .

David Graham has started an additional session for the junior endurance athletes on a Monday evening and the level of commitment from the junior athletes is great to see.

Coaching/Officiating

Having qualified coaches is vital to the ongoing success of our Club. This Committee has worked with the coaches and volunteers to develop individuals over the past 12 months to extend the ability to provide beginner, senior and junior athletics as well as providing more structure to the social/long run programme. A number of individuals have expressed interest in coaching and the club is supporting them through funding of coaching courses in conjunction with funding partners. We are always open to welcome new volunteers at sessions.

The club also has a desire to increase the number of officials we can provide on the local athletics/running scene and should any member wish to upskill in these areas we look to support them.

Development of the track -

Although EDCAT is a separate entity to Sedgefield Harriers, the Harriers are seen as a key stakeholder in track developments as one of the proposed clubs which will use the track. Although EDCAT will give an update later it is important to share the implications for the club. As a club using the track we have to make sure we can meet any financial commitments as a user. The present proposals for usage show that our costs compared to the hire of SCC Sporthall will rise and as such we need to be financially viable.

Survey

In 2023 we sent out a survey to get feedback from members and provided feedback earlier this year. It was an opportunity to listen to members and see how we needed to develop the Club.

We can now report that:-

- The Tuesday sessions are the most popular and this was causing concerns for some of the coaches and athletes during the winter months when the sessions are held in the village. Following discussions with the coaches we have decided that the session on the first Tuesday of the month will be held at NETPark. The other Tuesday sessions will start at Ceddesfeld Hall. This will be monitored over the winter.
- We will be relaunching all of the sessions very soon with more information on each one so that athletes can try some of the sessions that are held on other days. Sometimes not knowing the coach or fully understanding what the sessions involve deters people from giving them a go. New athletes have already joined Core Stability and S&C.
- There was a request for a session at Wynyard. This has been discussed at length by the Committee and we have supported Matt Cooke in the launch of a regular session in Wynyard on a Thursday evening.
- About 20 people said they would like to volunteer in the Club in some way. As it was an anonymous survey we don't know who they are but we would be very happy to have more people involved, especially supporting the junior section of the Club.

Communications

The survey was a useful exercise in starting a dialogue with members and we are keen to continue this. We will be revamping the website and will make use of the various communications channels to facilitate conversations between members, coaches and committee members. Please use today's AGM meeting to ask questions or make comments.