

Juniors Report 2023 AGM

Lewis Ashton

Junior Coordinator

This is my final report as Junior Coordinator.

This year we have continued the pattern of runs (almost) every term-time Sunday morning, based on a philosophy of enjoyment of running and being in the hills, rather than elite performance. We have a core of regular runners in both the U11 and O11 groups. There is a program for training leaders & maintaining DBS checks for them.

Membership

We have signed up our 85th new member. We have an active role of about 30.

Leaders

We continue to train new leaders through the UKA Leader in Running Fitness (LiRF) Scheme, but this is struggling currently.

The leader training process keeps being added to by EA and is becoming unwieldy. The LiRF is an entry level qualification it gives a basic understanding of the purpose of training, the basic tenets of training, with some group management instruction and majors on the obligation of the leader. There is very limited actual coaching content. This takes the equivalent of a day's effort. (£160 fees)

Building on this, FRA have added an in-person extension module that is declared as mandatory for taking runners on hill terrain. This module takes a day. (£100 for FRA members, £120 for non-members).

In addition, EA have now added a mandatory first aid course for LiRF certification. Whilst an online (2 hour) course is available for stadium & track use, it is mandated that a 16 hour course be completed for taking users off road. (Example independent course £175)

So we now have a requirement for 4 days training and a cost of around £435 for each leader.

By far the biggest problem is time. The overwhelming majority of our leaders are parents with other calls on their time. There is no flexibility built into either LiRF course - we can not directly engage a course for a group of members. It is not possible to do them as cumulative training over a period.

The key benefits of the LiRF course are the DBS check that EA undertake, and the insurance cover provided.

Consideration should be given to identifying a method of the club directly engaging in DBS checks. This would add a vast amount of flexibility to planning the requirements of a training session.

Consideration should also be given to seeking an alternative licensing scheme for group leaders and an alternative insurance scheme. The value provided by the LiRF is disproportionately low for the cost and effort required. The scheme also has limited options for progression; the CiRF is the only further step on this pathway. That only provides limited guidance on coaching principles and has an inflexible 5 day input requirement. The time input far outweighs the perceived value. Although it is noted that EA have recently added a new "Endurance" qualification, that bears investigation.

Alternatives via EA, such as Coaching Assistant, require fulfilment of modules in either jumping or throwing as this is a track and field qualification. There are also requirements for Coaching Assistances to operate under the supervision of a Coach (also a Track and Field discipline).

The EA coaching scheme does not have meaningful entry pathways for under 18s to start on a coaching journey. Other sports (e.g. triathlon, sailing) have recognised that the way to maintain the interest and development of older teens is to provide them with entry pathways to coaching and leadership.

It is also recommended that this matter be brought to the attention of the FRA.

English Junior National Championships

Last years national Championships was not very successful from our club's perspective. The majority of the races were in the north west and so we did not have particularly high participation numbers. There were some stand out individual performances and some heroic family expeditions, but participation has to be an objective.

The logistics of racing has been compounded this year by having many championship races in school holidays & through exam periods.

It had been hoped that we could provide busses to encourage participation, but unfortunately nobody volunteered to make the necessary arrangements.

It is as well that our over arching philosophy is about adventure in the hills as elite performance!

Blog

We now endeavour to post a regular Juniors Blog page on the club website (<https://www.dpfr.org.uk/blog/index?blog=4&category=0>) - Content and photos are always welcome. It is important to maintain up to date news for all concerned.

Development Plans

Transition from the junior ranks to the senior ranks is an ongoing matter of concern. There would seem to be a limited purpose in putting all the effort into the juniors if we are not accepting them into the senior ranks and introducing them to the likes of Outer Edge, Bleaklow and the secrets of the Kinder plateau.

Plans to rename the Committee Post set up after the 2022 AGM from Young Persons Development to U23 Development and Training is not something supported by the outgoing Junior Coordinator, nor at least one of the candidates to take the role on. Concerns about the senior club's commitment to younger runners may be seen to be compounded by the summary withdrawal of the U23 Women's trophy from the 2022 Club Championships at the award ceremony - despite specific provision for the circumstances that arose.

Thanks

It's important to recognise that a number of people that make the Juniors work. Without the Sunday leaders it would not happen. So its important to recognise the efforts of Mark Whitworth, Alenka Brooks, Jon Coe, Graham Cooper, Mike Griffiths, Jess Lishman, as well as the flying squad, who pitch in to fill gaps in the schedule: Helen Elmore, Glen Borrell, Kris Groom & Tom Saville being chief among them.

Especial thanks go to Gilly Spiers who has put in an immense number of sessions this year for the U11s group.

Anybody else who would like to share their love of the hills with enthusiastic kids is always welcome. We can help, support and accommodate you for a one off, or for repeat visits. The commitment asked for is limited and (almost) endlessly flexible; we have some who just do a session a year. It all helps!

Get out there and enjoy the hills!

Lewis