



The Fell Runners Association Limited

Minutes of 2021 Annual General Meeting

Chapel Stile, Langdale, Cumbria | 9th October 2021



Preliminary matters

References below to "articles" refer to the FRA's articles of association ("the Articles") which are linked from the 'Documents' page on the FRA website (<https://fellrunner.org.uk/>).

Attendance and apologies

The annual general meeting ("AGM") of The Fell Runners Association Limited ("FRA") for 2021 was held in Chapel Stile Village Hall at 4pm on 9th October 2021 (following the Langdale Horseshoe fell race), chaired by Charmian Heaton, FRA Chairman. The format followed that prescribed by articles 13-21.

The meeting was attended by twenty-three (23) members of the FRA. Apologies had been received from 23 other members; the majority of those had submitted a proxy voting form, of which a total of nineteen (19) had been received and verified. The meeting was therefore quorate under article 13. The FRA Chairman thanked all those in attendance, in particular those not otherwise involved with the FRA Committee.

Minutes of the previous meeting

The previous AGM had been held on 10th October 2020 in Langdale, Cumbria, behind closed doors owing to social restrictions in place at the time. The minutes had been available for inspection on the FRA website since shortly thereafter, with only minor typographical corrections having subsequently being made.

Resolution: The motion to approve the minutes of the 2020 AGM was passed unanimously.

Ordinary resolutions

Chairman's report

The Chairman summarised her annual report on FRA matters, which had been made available in full on the FRA website prior to the AGM. The report celebrated a successful return to fell running following the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Chairman emphasised her gratitude to the FRA's COVID Co-ordinator, Jamie McIlvenny, for his tireless efforts in navigating the ever-changing rules and recommendations and for having provided such clear and timely guidance to runners, Race Organisers, officials and spectators. A sad consequence of the pandemic was the death of Pete Bland, to whom the Chairman paid tribute.

The Chairman briefly covered other areas of her report including the new FRA website, the fell coaching modules being developed in tandem with UK Athletics, the highly successful "50 @ 50" anniversary race series and the healthy state of the FRA's membership and accounts. She also summarised perhaps the most challenging issue currently facing the sport, namely the difficulties experienced by Race Organisers in respect of land access and permissions.

The Chairman concluded by stating that the next year would be her last as Chairman and that Stuart Ferguson (Race Liaison Officer Lead) had agreed to take the role of Vice-Chairman for the next 12 months.

Resolution: The motion to approve the Chairman's report was passed unanimously.

Treasurer's report and 2020 accounts

The FRA's accounts for 2020 had been made available on the FRA's website prior to the AGM. The FRA Treasurer, Andy Watts, had additionally published a summary report in the spring 2021 issue of *The Fellrunner* magazine.

The Treasurer's report explained that the FRA had recorded an unusually high surplus in 2020 owing to reduced outgoings because of the pandemic and the consequent lack of racing. It confirmed that the FRA's reserve remained healthy, with no likelihood of an increase in subscriptions being needed soon.

Significant expenditures for 2021 and 2022 were expected to include major investments in the new FRA website, the new fell coaching modules and various initiatives set up to support (in particular) Race Organisers and FRA Juniors following the restart of racing. The general cost of overheads was also expected to increase during the next accounting period.

Resolution: The motion to approve the accounts for 2020 was passed unanimously.

Appointment of an auditor

The Treasurer had proposed that Mike Welford of Altrincham & District Athletic Club, a former professional accountant and active cross-country official, be reappointed as auditor of the FRA accounts. The Treasurer confirmed that Mr Welford was *not* a member of the FRA (as required for an independent audit).

Resolution: The motion to approve Mike Welford as auditor was passed *nem. con.*, with one vote being withheld.

Establishment of co-opted roles

In accordance with article 24, the Chairman proposed to extend by a further year the co-option of James Lowe as Communications Officer, Jamie McIlvenny as COVID Co-ordinator and Ian Winterburn as First Aid Co-ordinator.

Resolution: The motion to approve the three co-opted appointments was passed unanimously.

Election of officers for 2021-2022

Nominations for Committee positions had been posted on the FRA website along with the meeting agenda, in accordance with articles 22 and 23. The Chairman stated that since all named Committee roles had at most one nominee (or, in the case of Membership Representatives, exactly the maximum of four nominees), all nominees would be elected unopposed. The full FRA Committee for 2021-22 is included at Appendix 1.

No nominations had been received for the roles of Access and Environment Officer or Magazine Co-ordinator; however, the Chairman confirmed that interested individuals for both roles had been identified and that it was expected that the roles would shortly be filled by the Committee in accordance with article 23.

Vote of thanks for outgoing officers

The Chairman paid tribute to all outgoing Committee members: Lesley Malarkey and Helene Whitaker, for having steered (respectively) the FRA Senior and Junior Championships through the most unexpectedly challenging of periods during the pandemic; Dave Littler, who leaves the magazine production process and

finances in an excellent position; and especially Brett Weeden, for his immeasurable contribution to the FRA and its website over the previous two decades. The Chairman also welcomed the new Committee members, Nic Barber (Championships Co-ordinator) and Gareth Hardcastle (Junior Co-ordinator), and thanked all Committee members and other helpers and friends of the FRA for their work and support during the previous year.

Informal discussion

Following the AGM an open discussion about fell running took place between all those present, in accordance with article 16. A record of this discussion is published at Appendix 2.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next AGM will be published in due course on the FRA website and in *The Fellrunner* magazine but is likely to be in or around October 2022.

<original signed>

Neil Talbott
FRA Secretary
9th October 2021

Appendix 1: FRA Committee 2021-22

Following the resolutions passed at the AGM, the FRA Committee for 2021-22 will comprise the following personnel:

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| Chairman | Charmian Heaton (Black Combe Runners) |
| General Secretary | Neil Talbott (Ambleside AC) |
| Treasurer | Andy Watts (Cheshire Hill Racers) |
| Membership Secretary | Patrick McIver (Black Combe Runners) |
| Fixtures Secretary | Andy McMurdo (Pennine FR) |
| Magazine Co-ordinator | <i>Vacant</i> |
| Race Liaison Officer Lead | Stuart Ferguson (Northumberland FR) |
| Website Officer | Andy Watts (Cheshire Hill Racers) |
| Environment and Access Officer | <i>Vacant</i> |
| Junior Co-ordinator | Gareth Hardcastle (Mercia FR) |
| International Selection Committee Chair | Duncan Richards (Helm Hill Runners) |
| Coaching and Education Co-ordinator | Nicky Spinks (Dark Peak FR) |
| Championships Co-ordinator | Nic Barber (Helm Hill Runners) |
| Welfare Officer | Ed Gamble (Cheshire Hill Racers) |
| Liaison Officer to Athletics Bodies | Wendy Dodds (Dallam Running Club) |
| Membership Representatives | Ben Abdelnoor (Ambleside AC) Scout Adkin (Ambleside AC) Ricky Parrish (Todmorden Harriers) Kelli Roberts (Helm Hill Runners) |
| Communications Officer (co-opted) | James Lowe (Dark Peak FR) |
| COVID Co-ordinator (co-opted) | Jamie McIlvenny (Trawden AC) |
| First Aid Co-ordinator (co-opted) | Ian Winterburn (Dark Peak FR) |

Appendix 2: Open discussion about fell running

FRA race assessment matrix

The Secretary explained that the FRA intended to introduce a race assessment matrix for Race Organisers (ROs), colloquially known as the “colour matrix”, in an attempt to better convey to participants the individual nature, requirements and risks of a given race. This initiative had been trialled at several recent races and examples were available for inspection.

In response to a question about feedback from runners and ROs, the Secretary explained that a preliminary trial of the system had taken place at the Great Lakes Run in June, with an accompanying survey (completed by over 100 runners) indicating overwhelming support for both the concept and implementation. He added that ROs had also been very supportive and had found that completing the online form had taken no more than 10-15 minutes.

The Committee was asked about the need for competitors in fell races to have appropriate navigational skills. The Chairman emphasised that the use of GPS for navigation is now prohibited in *all* FRA races, reducing ambiguity and confusion for runners and removing the onus for that decision from Race Organisers. The Secretary confirmed that the standard FRA entry forms include a declaration that the competitor possesses the necessary skills to complete the race and noted that the text of the colour matrix should assist competitors with making that self-assessment. It was accepted that although Race Organisers may “vet” entrants (and many do), a fully objective appraisal of individuals’ suitability to race is not feasible.

The Committee was asked whether thought had been given to summarising the matrix with an “overall” grade as a number, for example AL1 for the most benign AL race and AL5 for the most challenging or hazardous. The Secretary confirmed that this had been discussed and that there had been no clear consensus; he explained that the intention was to review this decision in a year’s time once there was a sizable bank of examples to aid calibration of gradings. To assist with that calibration, the FRA’s Race Liaison Officer (RLO) Lead and RLO team were to review colour matrices used in 2022.

The Secretary confirmed that the matrix would complement, not replace, the present ABC/SML grading system, and that the matrix would be optional for 2022; however, he added that in his view it would benefit all ROs to use it, since to do so would provide proof of an RO’s efforts to convey the nature of the race to competitors. He also stated the Committee’s intention to display the colour matrices more conspicuously on individual race pages on the FRA website.

Access and permissions

A lengthy discussion was held around the problems of land access and permissions currently facing the sport. Key observations included the following:

- The Chairman stressed that the FRA continues to make major efforts to distinguish fell races from other types of racing such as trail races and mountain races, since this is fundamental to the FRA’s efforts to facilitate improved relations with landowners. In response to a question about overlap between disciplines, the Secretary noted that trail and mountain races are almost always fully marked with GPS permitted, whereas all FRA races prohibit the use of GPS for navigation and are expected not to be flagged on the open fell and especially the high mountains.

- A classic FRA race had recently been seriously compromised owing to an intervention on the day before the race by a landowning authority. This seemed completely at odds with the fact that recent large commercial events (e.g. the Helvellyn Triathlon) and charity events had used the embargoed routes.
- In liaising with landowners and major organisations, the Committee was advised to focus on the non-commercial aspect of fell running rather than the more subtle distinctions between disciplines.
- The Secretary explained that the FRA had discussed this subject with England Athletics and was intending to consult other organisations affected by Access difficulties. The Committee was advised to speak to the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) owing to their experience in similar matters.
- Some of those present felt that the FRA should re-adopt the policy of occasionally publishing the accounts for some races in the *Fellrunner* magazine to reinforce the non-commercial nature of fell running and the FRA's Race Licensing Policy which prohibits profit-making races. The Committee agreed to consider this in due course as part of the wider Access topic.

The *Fellrunner* magazine

The Committee was asked whether consideration had been given to making the *Fellrunner* magazine available electronically. The Chairman confirmed that this had been discussed in depth at a Committee meeting during the past year and that the decision had been taken that the magazine would remain in its present hard-copy format. One reason was the difficulty of preventing electronic versions from being shared freely online, severely diluting the benefit of FRA membership; another was the fact that evidence from FRA members is that a high percentage welcome the opportunity to read something in print and not on a screen.

It was confirmed that individual members may, if they wish, opt out of receiving printed copies of the magazine, and that the practice of publishing back issues of the magazine after a few years would continue.

Steve Batley

The Chairman asked to be placed on record her thanks and tribute to Steve Batley, who, with his wife Margaret, had run the FRA's navigation courses at Elterwater and Kettlewell for many years and sadly had recently died from asbestosis.

Reunion of founder members

The Chairman stated that the reunion of founder members of the FRA, originally scheduled for the exact 50th anniversary of the FRA but postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, had been rescheduled for Saturday 20th November in Barley, Pendle, where the FRA had originally been formed.

Thanks

Lesley Malarkey, outgoing Championship Co-ordinator, concluded her term of office by inviting those present to thank the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer for their efforts in administrating the organisation and protecting the sport.

The meeting closed at 5pm.