



LFR

Regular Committee Meeting

Thursday 2nd February 2023

Co-Presidents: Ashley Harwood (AH) and Andrew Corti (AC)

Club Secretary: Christos Bitzis-Politis (CBP)

Club Treasurer: Roger Kennedy (RK)

Membership Secretary: Geoff Hicks (GH)

Races Secretaries: Denis Gorman-Zennaro (DGZ) and Francis O'Callaghan (FC)

Publicity & Communications Officers: Stephen Tomaszewski (ST) and Gareth Fletcher (GF)

Social Secretaries: Eva Kucich (EK) and Charlie Abrines (CA)

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LFR New Club Kit Sub Committee Updates, by Nick Jobbins (NJ)

The New Club Kit Sub Committee (NCKSC) met shortly before Christmas and had a thorough look at different aspects of the kit, taking into consideration for example what other clubs are offering in terms of kit merchandise and what is the wider kit offer in general, they looked at both LGBTQ+ clubs and non, looking into what other clubs do and offer in terms of vest, some clubs are like LFR and offer just a vest, others do lots of different merchandise. Furthermore they looked into different kit designs, from clubs both within the Frontrunners community and non FR clubs, having also a look at suppliers, they have been in touch with few clubs, both LGBTQ+ and non as to get some informed opinions, so, since the last meeting took place, I would say that this has been an intense period of research and preparation. The next step is the consultation form and the focus groups. The NCKSC's next meeting is scheduled for the 19th of February, and during this meeting we are hoping to be in a position to view and review the results from the consultation form. The consultation form for the focus groups went out this week and various NCKSC members will be meeting with those of the Club members who have expressed their interest to participate, but also any members that did not fill in the consultation form but they would still like to be considered and express an opinion on the day these NCKSC members go around. This process is going to start from this Saturday onwards and we hope to be able to catch the opinions of as many members as possible. We want to know what members actually want from the kit in terms of visibility, whether it is important to them to be seen as members and part of an LGBTQ+ running club, we are going to take into consideration different length of sleeves, different types of vest, as in a more simple economic type of vest and the possibility of offering an elite vest, etc. The conversations that are going to be held will be reflecting our identity as an LGBTQ+ running club, our base in London and whether it is important for members to have London represented on their kit, what is the range of prices available, because as you may know there is a great disparity between the basic and the elite vest, not just in terms of quality but a disparity in terms of price. We are very hopeful that this consultation will offer us a general but useful idea, and will allow us to proceed further knowing a bit more on

which way we want to go. One of our questions is also about the existing tri kit, as naturally the opinion of the tri section is very important and we want to incorporate the tri disciplines into the new vest, make them become an essential part of the whole endeavour. There are 22 members who have responded so far to the survey and expressed their interest to be part of the focus group, frankly we were expecting many more, probably the double or much closer to fifty people being interested, this would have been our ideal target, as it would have been around 10% of all members, but we also hope to be able to capture members who have not been able to register in advance, meet them at the runs this Saturday and ask them to be part of this consultation, offer them the opportunity to have their say and ask them whether they want to be involved. AK will also put the form on FB, so hopefully numbers and interest will increase in the following days.

The NCKSC is currently composed of Nick Jobbins, Will Parry, Anastasios Koutsos, Farrah Herbert and Julian Williams.

The consultation is not because we want to specifically ask what members would want from the final design for the vest and how this should be, because we don't, as this could open a massive can of worms. We are trying to capture the opinion of as many members as possible and encompass as many suggestions as possible but we are already conscious that we are not going to make all Club members 100% happy with the final product, so we also think that it is more practical to ask them to make suggestions on what the final design ought to look like.

What if the NCKSC were to come to a type of dual conclusion and present two final designs for a Club vest to the consideration of all Club members and then suggest these two final designs to be considered for a period of time, submit them to the consideration of membership, give members the time and the opportunity to say what they think and which one they would choose, and then choose finally the one which is the vest favoured by the most?

I don't really think we can actually do that, because if we have two vests and we present both of them to members to choose one out of the two, and one will get let's say 55% positive votes, and the other will receive 45% positive votes and we decide to go with the former, then that would still leave 45% of Club members unhappy with the final choice. So it becomes really complicated. (NJ)

It would have been counterproductive and also, just from a practical point of view, we cannot register three vests at the same time and so we are unable to register two new designs to choose one from, together and in coexistence with the current vest design. Each running club is allowed to register two different designs of vest, with both of these designs coexisting at the same time, but the current vest will not disappear immediately, or as fast as we would

have wished for it to go. We are considering going through a period of transitional coexistence between having registered with England Athletics the vest that the Club is currently using and the new design, so as to be able to go through this transitional period smoothly. Existing members will definitely need some time to move from the old vest to the new one, around four months, possibly even more, as to be able to transit smoothly from the current design to the new design, and during this period of transition, both of the above, current and new design, will be officially registered with England Athletics. In consequence and from a practical point of view, having three designs going around at the same time, could create more confusion among members than necessary. (CBP)

Do you think that you can have an open suggestion box, in order to be able to capture the opinion of many more members, or to have as many suggestions as you can in time? As some of the members may have not had the time to read the ebulletin or are unavailable during the runs this consultation will be going on (GK)

I think this is again far too complicated a thing to have, open suggestion boxes are not always as useful nor as practical, and we would like to do things well but also move a bit fast. As I mentioned before, we will try to get some more people on the day, besides those who have not already registered their interest for the focus groups but this cannot become an on-going thing, as we need to start at a certain point.

Being open to receive and elaborate further suggestions from members would be a futile procrastination in my opinion as well. The previous NCKSC held on-going debates amongst them for one year and a half, while none of the Club members was being directly involved, nor had they had the promptness of mind nor the decency to capture anyone's opinion, none was being asked nor considered. They were all, according to their own perceptions of themselves, very much into design and fashion and St Martin's School airs and considered themselves the apex of knowledge, experience and edginess in design and such. It took them one and a half year to come forward with the hideous monstrosity that is the current LFR vest and we all ended up using a vest that was immediately and on first sight viscerally hated by every single Club member in addition to not being consulted in the least. Going from one extreme to the other is counterproductive, I think finding a balance between too much and too little is perfect, and the focus groups reflect and will guarantee that. No wonder none of those previously involved in the creation of the current vest are no longer Club members, since then (CBP)

(Naughty laughter among those present)

The brother of FH is a graphic designer and he could offer LFR some suggestions in regards to the design. We want to present a finished product that everybody is proud of and feels

happy about it as much as this is possible, with a finished product that represents the Club and looks better than the one we currently have, and also does the job better (NJ)

Discussions on the possibility of an elite vest and whether there is an appetite among Club members for specific racing vest of higher quality. As an example Heathside is offering two types of vests, one comes at £24 whereas their elite vest costs £60, which is a significant difference in price.

Although this is extremely premature in time and I hate putting the carriage in front of the horses, the only subject which I would like to ask for the NCKSC to please bear in mind is to consider in advance of a way that the Club's new vest and any other merchandise, when the time comes, will be distributed to members, and how can we, both committees together, may consult, help and support the existing volunteer who has been distributing the current Club vest, in their role. Once the new vest is available there will be a stampede for purchasing one and we should not allow for just one person to handle this immense burden on their own, let alone that there will potentially be other items of merchandise to sell and distribute as well. CD has been loyally supporting the Club as one of its longest-serving volunteers but we should all try and facilitate life for him, not exhaust him. There is also the possibility that CD may want to step down from the role, after so many years of commitment and service, as his role can often become a bit overwhelming, especially before large racing events and the Club is not a club of 250 members anymore, so there should be a timely consideration for an equally efficient and effective alternative in place before we get to the point of any member placing purchasing orders (CBP)

In addition to what Christos mentioned above, we need to keep informed and updated on what the current unsold stock of vests is. CD usually makes bulk purchases and there is one approaching sometime in the not too distant future but for the time being, I think this order can be more or less similar to the previous ones. There needs to be a cutting point of ordering new vests of the current design at some point and we also need to have some thorough discussions with CD, or we will be having a problem further down the road. We should probably start ordering smaller quantities even from now on, or start progressively decreasing our vest orders, as the Club does not need to get stuck with an excess of unsold vests (RK).

The Committee is extremely appreciative of the intervention of NJ and of how much effort and thought has been put by all members of the NCKSC into this endeavour and ask of NJ to kindly pass their sincere thanks to the NCKSC.

Financial Updates (CT)

Discussion on the LFR membership fees and on whether it would be worth it to endorse increasing the 2023/24 membership fees.

If the Club were to increase the 2023/24 membership fees from £54 to £59, then the Club would get £3k in additional revenue. If the Club were to drop the current membership fees by 10%, then the Club would lose £2900 (RK)

Frankly I don't really see any particular reason for increasing the membership fees for the coming Club year. If there is an increase in fees from the part of the changing facilities we are currently using, which we are more or less anticipating that there will be or the Club successfully goes ahead with the plans of having a Thursday run back, not necessarily in Hyde Park, then all these reasons could potentially justify a minor increase to the 2023/24 membership fees. But as the Club is currently in a stable and robust financial situation and there is a financial crisis taking place around us affecting most sectors of the economy and of our daily lives, I don't really think that an increase in membership fees would be justified, at this point, as there is no obvious nor apparent reason for this. (CBP)

The Club has made a profit of about £8k in the last Club year. At the same time the Club has lost more than £8k with the Lisbon fiasco and the legal fees, so we are currently at a loss of £1k, so yes, we have lost more than the profit we made. On the other hand the Club still has the reserves for this, so I would also suggest that we keep the next year's membership fees at the current level (RK)

The Club has reserves and £54 for a year seems to be a very good value, I am questioning what is the purpose of reducing the membership fees if we don't know the increase of costs, we cannot make guesses at this point. I don't want to seem controversial and I completely share what you are saying, but as I have not had the opportunity to see the financial reports yet, for I was not here during the last meeting, I would like to have a look at them first and before we vote (GH)

I think what GH is suggesting makes perfect sense, we should postpone the voting until everyone has received and gone through the financial report from RK (CBP)

Action to be taken: The CT is kindly requested to please share with the Committee a copy of the latest financial reports in an electronic format, including some financial scenarios as previously discussed about the Club's future.

I would have loved to share some positive news in regards to the Drag Taste saga but at this point even the lawyers the Club has hired to chase the case seem to have gone silent as well, I don't know why, we have written to them but they have failed to respond, we need to chase them up and at least have some kind of acknowledgement from their part, but nothing at all,

no communication whatsoever and nothing at all does not seem good, as LFR paid them £500 before Christmas but nothing has since come up.

Action to be taken: the CT is kindly requested to please contact CC and liaise with them in regards to the above

Also some not so positive news from a request for having a Lloyds credit card to be used for large card payments by the Club. I have tried to contact them over the phone but it has proved quite problematic, the fact is that the Club could struggle to actually get a credit card because we don't have a credit line as a club. (RK)

Discussion follows relative to the possibility of a financial increase in the session rates by the LFR venues. In addition the Seymour centre will close at the beginning of 2024 for a refurbishment and that means that their facilities will close for a year, so either the council will try and relocate all community groups or that LFR will have to make its own plans and find a way to provide a venue at least for the Saturday run.

Races Update (RS)

The only new subject which we would like to bring to your attention is that MT contacted Denis myself and CBP with the suggestion of moving the XC awards to the Club Championships event instead of having them been given out at the AGM, which we all thought it was a very good idea, as the XC forms an essential part of the Club Championships so it makes sense having the XC awards on that day, in addition MT said it would capture more people, in terms of visibility, so all three of us have agreed, DGZ, CBP and myself, and we want to share this with you.

Committee receives this positively and additionally approves the request.

Discussion on the XC Championships of last Saturday, when there have been some no-shows but most of these members have already refunded the Club the registration fees, as they have failed to be there and to represent the Club.

CBP sent out a reminder to all those involved regarding the Club awards that need to be returned and hopefully members will have already remembered to have them engraved in time for the Club Championship event.

Just another reminder that I would like to make in person this time and mostly directed to the CT, is that all engravings are historically refunded by the Club, as it does not make any sense awarding members and then asking them to pay out of their own pocket for the honour of having their name engraved on a Club shield (CBP)

Ok, I was not aware of that, so I am going to make a note (RK)

Denis and I will be collating results and based on that we will be deciding on the awards, and we will be keeping you all updated in due course (FC)

Publicity Update (P&C O)

Short and sweet, some positive news is that ST has already filled in on behalf of the Club the 2023 London Pride March application and the Club has already been allocated 80 wristbands, which is ten more than the Club had last year, and they have requested no payment.

Social Activities update (SS)

Again an equally short update, as the CT has generously offered £500 to be spent on pizza and some prosecco upon arrival for the LFR Birthday party.

Membership Update (MS)

The Club is currently at 565 members, which is the most people we have had joining since Christmas and I have been processing their WebCollect LFR registration but have not had the time to process their EA registration, and we need to let them know that it will take some time to get this done. Christos and I have met and discussed on finding different ways of approaching this, but regardless of what we will come forward, members need to know that there is going to be a delay, also because the timing is not right for me, as the busiest period in Club registrations happens to coincide with the busiest professional period for me.

Gareth and Stephen have updated the list of people for who were receiving the e-bulletin without being members and since the mailing list has been updated, I do not expect that there will be any people on the International Trip who are not paid members, like it happened with one person during the International Trip of last year.

Roger and I need to meet and together create a message that will go out about about auto renewal, this should go out at the beginning of April and it will be send via WebCollect, and also there will be a relative communication on the e-bulletin, as naturally having this coming out on both platforms will be the best, in particular as we know how things sometimes work with WebCollect, when communications for some people may go directly to their junk folder, and informing members that they may opt out of auto renewal if they need to and that there is definitely going to be a delay in the EA registrations, in my opinion and based on estimates of last year, it will take take about three months at least. We will ask members to contact us separately and proactively, if they happen to have an event or a specific reason that they may wish to have their EA registration in advance but there is going to be a delay, exactly like there was last year, it is sadly unavoidable given the bulk and the numbers of registrations that need to be processed.

Club Secretary

LFR and LLHM

The Committee makes a final and positive decision, endorsing the proposal of launching and embracing a collaboration between LFR and LLHM in short terms for 2023 and in long terms for 2024.

Action to be taken: CBP is kindly requested to please write as a priority all relative communications and share them with membership through the e-bulletin

Further discussions and a more concrete plan on the 2024 collaboration will be discussed further with the 2023/24 Committee

Non Binary Awards rationale presentation

It is important for the Club to be open to issues of gender diversity and also to try and make analogous provisions for any NB members. On the other hand it becomes trickier for LFR to wish to import a NB category into a series of races where nobody is actually racing as NB.

There could also be an incident of someone being unintentionally singled out as NB, simply because they happen to be the LFR NB award recipient. For some NB members there may be a fine balance between wanting an inclusive and welcoming culture, and having in place an awards system which (because of their few numbers) places a spotlight on their NB identity and this may not always be seen as positive by the NB person itself. However, on the other hand, if somebody wants to be further celebrated through an award that also happens to be recognising their gender identity, they may not see such a recognition as intrusive.

The Club has always defended and adopted more inclusive policies, though we do need to be very conscious of the ways that any movement to gender neutralisation of the LFR awards might impact the female-identified members of the Club. With LFR being a very male-heavy club, it has nevertheless been fantastic to notice in recent years, the amount of conscious effort and work that has been put into developing the running, triathlon and social element of the female-identified section of the Club. If the Club were to move away from gender specific awards, that might negatively impact our capacity to promote and further develop the female-identifying section of LFR. It is important that the Club considers the context in which we all operate and, although this is a by majority male-heavy environment, any attempt to create a sex blind awards system has to recognise that the Club does not necessarily operate a sex blind reality.

As an LGBTI+ running club, there may be more justification for engaging in decisions and in actions which could, in some ways, be seen as being performative or tokenistic, so if this happens, we can rely on the fact that LFR is after all an LGBTQ+ running club.

My suggestion would be for the Club to continue operating as previously, and although somehow unwillingly aligned with EA, while at the same time continue to remain alert and to monitor the Club membership. The Club has very few members who are identifying as NB but this does not necessarily mean that these members are also actively competing in races. Having an award presented on merit, common sense would expect to have at least two people of the same gender identity and of the age group who will be competing in the same running category, otherwise we might end up awarding the same award to the same NB Club member every year.

Action to be taken: the Committee is kindly requested to please consider all the above and come to the suggestion of a potential solution through an extremely brief exchange of emails sent to CBP.

Have had some communications from members in the form of emails and in regards to the day the International trip is going to be announced to all members, it feels that the choice of day it might seem impractical for members having to be on their computer on a working day at such a busy time of the day, do you believe there could be a potential postponement of the announcement date on to a Saturday?

I have checked into this because we also received some emails from members and the international Trip was not announced on a Saturday last year either, so it still going to be announced this coming Wednesday, but not at 11.00 am, at 3pm (AH)

Discussion on candidates for the Committee elections.

As you all know, I have been doing some research in order to be able to procure some sponsors for the Club, especially a sponsor in view of the new Club vest and all the rest of merchandise that might be coming along, and at the moment my research has led me down some paths which have been explored but which did prove as to leading nowhere in the end. Do you think we could put out a call among members that the Club is looking to find some sponsors?

It might be more practical to leave this subject entirely to be discussed at the new Club year (GH)

Discussion on the possibility of not having all the Committee positions filled in over the new Club year.

In case there is still a vacancy for a Committee role even after the AGM and the elections, what happens then, who will be filling in this role?

If this vacancy happens to be relative to a dual role then the one person that has been elected for that role will have to shoulder the burden of the dual responsibility and carry on for the whole year, eventually based on the support of some other Committee members, which would not be ideal and I cannot also see how other Committee roles could prove to be helpful either. It hasn't happened yet, at least nor during my time as a member with LFR, but it could happen, no one could exclude that this is a possibility somewhere in the future and there is no specific provision about such a case, as the Club Constitution is in this case, as in many other of its articles, is obsolete and reflects the reality of what the Club used to be about ten years ago. I am not really sure how would the Committee be able to fill in one of the non-dual roles, as each role has enough to deal with as it is. For example, there hasn't been any member coming forward for the role of the Club Treasurer, this is one of the most important, if not the most important Committee role, in terms of responsibility, their name appears in all the most important official Club documents, I am not sure that I can express a useful suggestion at this very moment and at the top of my head on how would the Committee and in consequence the Club be able to go through for a whole Club year without anyone covering this particular role, for example. If there are not enough officers to cover all available Committee roles, to support each other and the team, then some of the Committee's functions will have to suffer (CBP)

There is a very obvious fact which I believe has been very much overlooked over the years, the Club Constitution presents some reasonable provisions in dealing with the resignation of a Committee officer during their term, as opposed to making no provision whatsoever for members stepping up and filling in any remaining vacant positions should no candidates decide to come forward and to be elected during the forthcoming AGM. There is still about a month until the AGM but we are currently still missing three candidates, one never really knows as you have said, at this point it might not be a danger for this coming year but I think that the Committee ought to make some relative provision and to guard itself against any such eventuality. I would like to suggest that we propose an amendment to the Constitution at this year's AGM to deal with this efficiently and adequately (GH)

Discussion on the nature of the suggested amendment

Action to be taken: GH is kindly requested to please submit a draft of the above suggestion relative to a reform of the Club Constitution as to have it properly formulated and shared with memberships as soon as this is possible.

Co-Presidents

Discussions on the International Trip.

The IT subcommittee will need to liaise with Roger in regards to the costs but most importantly there needs to be paid a 40% deposit in advance to the hotel, amounting to 7000 euros. As mentioned, the sale will go on a 3pm on Wednesday (AH)

Discussions on the updating the membership emailing list as the WebCollect function will also be abundantly used in the next few weeks for the membership auto renewal, and there needs to be checked that the list of emails is updated, as the International Trip subcommittee needs also to cross reference with GH afterwards and to make sure that all those who have registered for the event are members and have renewed their membership.

Action to be taken: ST is kindly requested to please send the updated e-bulletin mailing list to IT subcommittee as soon as this is feasible

It would be wise to have the International Trip on FB, at the same time, for reasons of practicality.

Trans Sport Day on Sunday the 2nd of April