

CUMBRIA SQUASH & RACKETBALL

Chairman`s Report

2020/2021 AGM

Hello Members,

Even though Covid lockdown restrictions have been lifted we are still not entirely comfortable in bringing people together from across the county for a formal AGM so, with safety of attendees a main concern, the trustees have agreed that for this AGM we will once again do the same as 2019/2020 AGM and will not hold the normal face to face meeting. An on-line Zoom meeting was considered but was rejected. This prevents us once again meeting all of CIO constitutional requirements for an AGM but we will be meeting most of them by issuing Chairman`s and Treasurer`s Reports to all members, which is our normal practice any way. All member clubs were informed of this by an Executive Committee (Exec) e-mail on 11 August 2021. Our members have supported this realistic and practical approach. If all goes well re Covid in the forthcoming season we plan to hold the normal style AGM in 2022 where we will ensure all constitutional requirements will be fully addressed. The main one we are missing is the `management of trustee` which under current circumstances does not have a significant effect on the way we manage our CIO.

I have written this report on the assumption that you have all read my last season`s report that I am using as a starting point - and you have been issued with the Treasurer`s Report (TR) for financial information that supports it. That report gives a general summary based upon the detailed Management Accounts (MA) that traditionally we don`t issue but will make them available on request to the Treasurer for anyone who may have a concern related to it. We are in a very sound financial situation, as you will see, for reasons given in this report re sponsorship, financial support from the North West Region Forum (NWRf), sound control of our reserves and the fact that no established events have not been held due to Covid 19 lockdown.

We have not held Exec meetings during the season so there have been no minutes available to you to reference to keep you up to date in a timely way with many of the activities in the season. I have prepared this report to compensate somewhat for that by covering most things we have done including liaison with clubs, our thinking generally and plans for `bounce back`.

To remind you, one thing I referenced in my report last season to guide the Exec was an agreement of members of the North West Region Forum (NWRf) that to avoid confusion and miss-information at clubs, County Associations (CA) would not be giving direct instruction to their member clubs on meeting lockdown and bounce-back rules, guidelines, and general Covid requirements - as each club would be working directly with England Squash (ES) on them. The Exec followed that guideline throughout this season.

Our approach has been as follows:

- **NWRf Guideline Communication Process as above**

We have kept direct contact with all club to guide them on ES directives if requested by them, communicate new directives to them when requested to do so by ES, manage our lockdown and bounce back support initiatives. The action we are taking now that we are moving forward includes directly contacting each club again to get some answers we require to determine their current bounce back status and be advised of their plans for the future to get back to full operation again – this includes Exec review and decision making on the financial support requests they have made – see below. We will help where we can.

- **Financial Support**

From NWRf to help Clubs

Money from ES to support CAs in the lockdown periods and in their bounce-back work was allocated at intervals to the NWRF that distributed it equally to each of its CAs - Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside and Cheshire. This has been managed by the Exec during the whole Covid restricted period in a formal structured way where clubs have to make a documented claim for each initiative they wish us to consider for financial support. All such initiatives must meet criteria that for example enhances the club's bounce back activities including encouraging players to get on the court again, improve their play, recreate their interest in the sport generally, develop their coaches etc. Capital expenditure initiatives that for example improve a club's infrastructure are generally not covered by this – but all claims are reviewed by the Exec in a way that will give them appropriate and fair consideration. This work is well underway.

From CSR to help our members (Clubs and Individual members)

We waived this season's club Individual Membership Subscription (IMS) and will be doing the same for next season 2021/2022. In addition, for next season we will also be waiving the County League team fees

Nominal Financial Support for County Coaches from NWRF

Also, as a gesture of support, each CA was requested by NWRF to give its County Coach nominal cash donations to compensate somewhat for their loss of income resulting from the Covid situation. We were pleased to do that three times over the 2019/2020, 2020/2021 seasons to support Gavin our County Coach.

- **ES On-line Coaching, Fitness and other Training Courses**

Also during the lockdown periods ES carried out a series of on-line Zoom courses. From an Exec point of view the only course we were involved with was the **County Programme Managers Course** covering a series of sessions over several weeks – In the absence of Exec members to attend we contracted Gavin's service to be involved in it – our thanks to him for readily agreeing to support us in this way.

Some club members may have attended others but I have not been advised of such.

ACTIVITIES FOR 2021/2022

Mid-season, because of improved Covid data that generally supported the expected easing of restrictions in August, we began to think of bounce back to get us ready for 2021/2022 season. ES had the same intention. So we began planning in a big way and have already worked on, or are currently working on, the organisation and planning for the following main events. We are determined to try to go ahead as normal covering all of our wide range of competitions, administrative activities and requirements etc – and hope we are not restricted by the low number of volunteers on the Exec:

- Senior County Closed Championships – Men & Women
- Junior county Closed Championships – Boys & Girls
- Racketball County closed Championships – Men & Women (this will be an inaugural competition)
- Masters County Closed Championships – Men & Women
- Junior Academy Coaching – Boys & Girls
- County Leagues – Men

And depending on the successes of the above County Closed Championships and junior Academy Coaching

- Inter County championships: Senior Men, Senior Women, Masters – Men & Women and, Juniors (boys and girls) at all age groups

We will also be progressing other work that we could not do because of lockdown

- Issuing County League winners trophies for 2019/2020 – We had data on file that allowed us to determine a clear winner in each division.(The League Cup could not be held so we lost that)
- Presenting **2019/2020 Hazel Award winner** – we had to cancel the presentation event because of lockdown. We consider it very important for us and the selected winner that we honour them at a special occasion so we will not be carrying out the normal selection process to select a new recipient. Presentation will as normal take place at the League Cup Finals evening.
- Financially supporting the County Coach to progress to his Level 3 coaching qualification
- Holding the League Cup Finals event at Windscale Club

Talking of bounce-back, Carlisle club must be congratulated for its innovation in giving us one of the most effective bounce-back events we could wish for to encourage squash players back to the game and their interest in it. It held a **5K Professional Squash Competition** in July 2021. This was a very successful event that had great spectator support – my congratulations and thanks to Ronnie and Victoria for a job well done. This event was nothing to do with the county association but was well appreciated by us. It was supported by local sponsors **Thomas Graham** and **Appletons of Carlisle** – my thanks to them also.

INFRASTRUCTURE There are still a few major problems across the county that affect our infrastructure

- **No squash Clubs in the Workington and District Area**

A short status report on each of the previous local clubs in the area that has created this situation:

Cockermouth – the single court which is an integral part of Cockermouth rugby League Club is now operational but the rugby club refurbish is not complete yet – so no indication as yet on how it intends to use the squash facility and if a club will be formed to return to our organisation.

Whitehaven – At the last AGM `we were sure` that the club would not re-open but that decision has still not been finally made by the owners GLL and the local council. The club has effectively been mothballed for now. So no squash from Whitehaven until that decision has been made. Things don't look good. We thank Windscale Club for allowing Whitehaven players to use its facilities.

Workington

At the last AGM I reported about the possibility of losing Workington Junior Squash Club (WJSC) if we could not increase its membership. Unfortunately that closure has taken place for another reason with the retirement of the manager, Peter Messenger in December 2020. We are very sorry to lose Peter because he has been part of effective management of the club for 24/25 years or so and did a very good and dedicated job that resulted in the development of some very good young players over the years. We are very sorry to lose him – On behalf of the Exec I have formally thanked him for his service.

So, what I said last year may happen, has happened – and at present we don't have a formal club in West Cumbria in the large Workington and district area – the closest to the west is Wigton Club and to the south is Windscale Club, at Egremont. That is a situation that I can't accept without a fight and the Exec. Is working on the following to try and resolve the situation.

We are currently working with Workington Sports Centre to re-establish Workington Junior Squash Club (WJSC). As part of that we are in process of organising an extended introductory and awareness trial with local schools in an attempt to encourage new junior members to join the new club. The plan is that if the trial is successful, new members will join any previous members we can encourage to re-join. If successful and we get the numbers we already have plans to restart WJSC on a permanent basis – Gavin has agreed to manage and run the weekly sessions as he did for Peter.

At the same time, we are working to try to form a Senior Club at the centre – the idea if both initiatives are successful is to integrate them into a single Workington Squash Club – if the work on the Senior Club fails we will just go ahead with WJSC.

- **Dalton Squash Club**

We lost Dalton from our organisation last season with a part commitment that it may re-join our organisation in the coming season – we are following up on that. As you know from last year`s AGM report we also lost Brampton – no change to that as expected.

- **Executive Committee**

I have recently checked with last season`s members to see who wished to continue their services on the committee in 2021/2022 season. Unfortunately as a result of the exercise we have lost Jeff Broadhurst for reasons that we fully understand. We are sorry to lose him and have thanked him for his services.

We have had no new volunteers to join the Exec - this leaves the current members as Tom Armstrong, Chris Lilley, Guy Huxtable, Ian Lowrey, and Damien Whelan. Gavin Stephenson supports us outside of committee in his contracted position as County Coach. He will be supported on the Academy coaching by Mike Lowrey as he considers necessary - as you will see from the above Mike is not a member of the Exec.

Tom, Chris, Guy, Ian & Jonny Irving are Trustees of our CIO. Jonny operating outside of the Exec.

We are currently reviewing our capacity to cope with everything in our wide scope of activities with this small number of Exec members. I have prepared a draft document **CSR Management, Administrative, Development and Operational Structure** which details everything we do, and would like to do, and how we hopefully can manage to do the work in an efficient and effective way with the volunteers we have. I have assigned responsibilities for the members we have and my colleagues are currently reviewing it to see how they feel about my allocation of duties – I am awaiting feedback for this for review by the full committee when that is complete. If we get more volunteers the responsibilities will obviously change and we will make adjustments as appropriate.

This completes my report on what we have been doing in this very difficult Covid 19 lockdown and bounce-back season.

To end my report I have a few standard items that I believe are essential to include in my annual reports.

THANKS TO SPONSORS

As you are all aware, we have a very important and very generous sole local sponsor who I make sure I thank at AGMs and every other opportunity I get. That is of course **Thomas Graham (Roger Smith Managing Director)**. Roger gives £1000 cash each season, dedicated to junior activities, and free squash shirts for all players on our junior, Senior and Masters county teams. He asks very little for this support – he is happy that we promote his firm whenever we can and always on the squash shirts and county league and junior county closed champs literature.

This was the 14th year of the arrangement with Roger that ends in 2021/2022 season.

You must agree with me in saying how lucky we are to have such a generous sponsor- One excellent example of this took place this season when I approached Roger to advise him of an Exec decision to offer him the opportunity to waive this season`s sponsorship money because we had no competitions or activities that allowed us to promote his company. He immediately refused to accept that.

Thank you very much Roger – your support is very important to us and very much appreciated.

SAD NEWS

Every year I have the sad duty to report the deaths of any of our squash colleagues. Unfortunately over the last few seasons I have done this more than ever.

I am sad to report the death of our previous `Mr Junior Squash` - David Henderson on 7 December 2020 after a lengthy illness. David was a lovely man who will be sadly missed by all of his squash colleagues – he did a fantastic job for our organisation on the Executive and specifically the Junior Committee. I prepared a tribute to him that was circulated to all clubs in December 2020, and his family raised an on-line tribute that all of us can access.

On behalf of our organisation I express our sadness and give our condolences to his wife Anne, all of his family, friends and squash colleagues.

It has been agreed in Exec we would like to introduce an ongoing memory of David similar to what we did when Hazel Tait and Matthew Allison passed away and we introduced the Hazel Award and the Memorial Trophy for Matthew. We still need to address this and determine what form that should take.

CONGRATULATIONS

At each AGM I am pleased to acknowledge and congratulate special achievers:

- **Adam Goad** – our young `superstar` to be, for achieving a 4-year sporting scholarship for squash in a USA university. Well done Adam we wish you all the best for this exciting challenge in your life – we look forward to hearing how you are doing.
- **County League** – winning teams in 2019/2020 County League. These teams will be named when we present trophies as I detailed earlier.
- **Carlisle Squash Club-Professional Player Competition** – Ronnie & Victoria for being proactive in organising and holding this successful event at a very uncertain time due to Covid restrictions. This was good thinking and made the perfect bounce-back event for the club and for the county.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

I could not end my report each AGM without saying thank you to a few people.

- John Graham, Accountant of Penrith Club for auditing CSR Management Accounts
- Roger Smith for Thomas Graham sponsorship
- NWRP (Jim Foggitt Chairman) for providing generous financial lockdown and bounce-back support for our members.
- Windscale Squash Club for their generosity in readily opening their facilities to the Whitehaven club players when squash stopped at their club. Also, for the patience and understanding of Ian and Barbara for readily accepting the uncertainty when we had the on-off situation in deciding if we could hold the League Cup Finals event at the club, or not, due to the Covid situation – and finally at the last minute having to cancel it.
- Gavin Stephenson for agreeing to - represent our organisation in the on-line County Programme Managers Course – to manage and operate the weekly WJSC coaching sessions as he did for Peter Messenger – if we get sufficient junior players to run it.
- All club members who have maintained support for their clubs by helping them to survive in lockdown and are currently helping them to bounce-back successfully – your support is essential – please keep it up.
- And as usual, last but not least, my colleagues in the Exec. for their good work and dedicated service to our organisation over these very unusual circumstances

This completes my report – **thank you for reading it**

THE FUTURE

This is very difficult to predict

We are appearing to make a good start in getting back to normal at club and county level but we must keep up the drive to be successful and we must continue to hope that there will be no more Covid setbacks because the experience we have had shows that circumstances can change so quickly.

Anyway, I have a good `half full` feeling for 2021/2022 season so let us be optimistic, get on with it and make it happen, enjoy the challenge and experience and keep smiling in doing so - as I will be doing.

And to risk boring everyone with this subject – please remember that if you want us to run a comprehensive, efficient and effective organisation **we need more volunteers on the Exec.** So please do your duty and give me a call!

Thank you for taking the time to read this report

Best wishes for a good 2021/2022 Season

Please keep safe and well

A VERY BIG THANK-YOU FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN SENDING ME A LOVELY CARD AND PRESENT FOR MY 80TH BIRTHDAY IN MARCH 21. THAT GESTURE AND LOVELY WORDS REALLY TOUCHED ME AND MEANT SO MUCH TO ME AND MY FAMILY. **THANK YOU SO MUCH.**

Sincerely

Tom

18 Sept 2021.