England Masters Athletics Association

ROAD RUNNING REPORT TO THE EMAA AGM 2025

The question was raised this year concerning our lack of England Masters road running events. Historically my knowledge only goes back as far as 1998 when I joined the veteran athletics ranks. That year there was a late organised masters national and Inter-Area 10k race in Cambridge put on by the Eastern Veterans. I will have some documentation about this event somewhere, but I was not aware of the exact circumstances of it, I have it in my psyche that typically an Inter Area (not sure if this was just an England affair or open to all the masters Area Clubs), would be incorporated into a British Veterans championships, over the 10k. This was certainly the case with my subsequent experience (Brockwell Park in 2001; Magor 2009). I organised Goodrich in 2010 but was sufficiently deterred by the challenge of assembling results on the day for a timely presentation in a pre-tech world, and the discouragement of previous incumbents as to the operational practicalities of achieving this in the heat of the event. My default proposition would be to revive an Inter-Area within the BMAF Championships, this could be easily achieved now we have the capability within OpenTrack to produce results, thereby removing that obstacle. But whether this is the best and most creative opportunity available is open to debate.

The challenges remain, I believe, as to when and where to host any potential stand-alone or incorporated England Masters road running event(s). We would need venues suitably accessible and attractive to as many masters athletes as possible at a time in the calendar that would attract sufficient numbers to make any event viable, bearing in mind their existing team commitments to their UKA clubs. We would want a meaningful competition with both quality and depth of athletes and a strong representation from all regions. We would want to attract athletes from all UKA clubs, as being both inclusive and as a marketplace for recruitment for both England and British Masters, with sufficient and effective marketing to all UK clubs, whether just those registered in England or from all the Home Country federations, we would need to decide these boundaries.

We face a current challenge from other organisations keen to tap into the masters' athletics market, estimated at over 100,000 individuals. England Athletics have been organising their Age Group Masters programme since 2015 (I was initially involved in an advisory capacity when it started out with the marathon), this programme now covers 5k, 10k and Half Marathon as well. This has proven very popular over the years, as it fully includes the England share of that 100,000), with athletes qualifying in one of a series of trial races for national selection for the representative final. They have struggled historically to raise an opposing team but are now reaching fulfilment with an effective Celtic Challenge. I was involved in the England team selection and was present on the day for the Road Running festival in Tenby versus a Welsh team in 2022, and we staged an England/Wales 10k International in 2016. The Masters Age Group programme has caused much confusion down the years between England Athletics and England Masters/British Masters, as the distinction is not defined anywhere and the masters' athletics movement that we administer is pretty much secret from UKA clubs and their members.

So we do need to provide some England Masters road racing opportunities, but we must discover what English and potentially British masters' athletes want us to provide. Attractive, competitive, and accessible. Meaningful to the athletics running calendar, offering a purposeful and valuable racing opportunity to those individuals, and indeed clubs, for a possible UK club challenge as well. Partnership is the key; we need to be able to demonstrate to England Athletics our sense of purpose; to engage their help and support; and potentially link in with their opportunities as we have on occasions in the past and intend to do more so this year and into the future. Our first actions should be exploratory to define our objectives, and then to decide and plan accordingly.

Alex Rowe
Road Running Secretary

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