Darwen Dashers AGM Meeting

Date: 26th March 2026 8.30pm

Committee attendees: Andy Howarth (Chairman), Sarah Marsden (President), Diane Dudgeon (Welfare Officer), Ian Thomson (Treasurer), Rick Marsden (Road Captain), Gareth Davies (Fell Captain).

Apologies: Heather Turner (Secretary).

Member attendees: Martin Wright, Jenna Fox, Iain Asher, Jim Taylor (JT), Mark Taylor, Bradley Smith, Jamie Simpson (observing), Gareth Taylor, Elaine Turner, Jez Turner (JeT), Josh Turner (JoT), Niall Bancroft, Ali Abbott, Brian Morris, Andrea Clarkson.

Apologies: Chris Cash, Jean Mcdonald, Sam Dickinson.

1. All member apologies received accepted.

2. Introduction

AH opened the meeting and confirmed the agenda and the meeting protocol. Quorum confirmed.

3. Previous AGM meeting minutes

Approved with no objections.

4. Chairman's/Secretary's report

In the secretary's absence, **AH** went through the Chair's report (**Appendix 1**).

Questions?

AA – How do our new people find out about the WhatsApp group?

AH – We will add to AOB if that's ok?

5. Treasurer's report

IT went through the Treasurer's report (**Appendix 2**).

Questions?

GD – Is the Red Rose XC a new cost?

IT – It's a fixed fee for every person who entered the Red Rose cross-country.

GD – It used to be £5 each.

GT – It's per person, per race entry.

JeT - £670 – on the presentation?

IT – Yes, food costs and prize monies for men and women.

JeT – I'd like to add this to AOB as a discussion.

AH – All agreed to adopt the accounts?

Agreed

6. Parkrun report (Appendix 3)

IT – Any suggestions about the running of the parkrun championship for 2027?

JeT – I saw in earlier minutes that there was the thought to introduce volunteering to the championship; 4 or 5 years ago we discussed this and we found people volunteered in other ways. Will we have to volunteer for points on the championship?

SM – I think it's more about giving something back to parkrun as a Dasher.

JeT – The last discussion on this caused a great divide. Club came to a decision not to.

RM – You can volunteer on a Sunday at juniors. We do a takeover 3 times a year at Witton juniors.

GD – I don't do parkrun but we're just at the think stage at the moment.

IT – It's 9 months away before we sort the logistics. How would I know if someone has volunteered? But it is about giving something back.

AA – Not everyone can give something back through work, family; you're saying mandatory volunteering.

NB – We're not forcing volunteering. Parkrun asks for 1 volunteer in 10, if people don't volunteer there's no parkrun championship.

JeT – Out of the 3 championships, it's the hardest to keep track of.

GT – What Ian does is great, no need to over complicate it.

GD – Put forward any suggestions in November when the Road and Fell races are put together, a poll or vote can be done then.

NB – Everyone has a chance to vote then, missing people can't raise objections afterwards then.

November vote agreed.

7. Road Captains report

RM – Last year's championship saw 38 Dashers take part – 23 men and 15 women. Winners were Diane, Jenna and Sarah, and myself, David and John. Well done to everyone. So far this year, we had 22 take part at East Lancs, 22 at the Winter Warmer, 13 at Lostock and 8 at Poynton – this was a really good race. Let's try to get more people involved. The next race is the Lancaster Castle race. Inskip was cancelled so I have replaced it with the Fleetwood 10 miler. As an alternative to the Benidorm Half, I have added the Kings Highway Tough 15K. I'm also working alongside other local clubs on an Inter-Club championship that will start in June. There will be 30 Dashers in total, but you won't get a time as such, points will be by jersey, age gradient, etc.

AC – A question on the championship – is it Morecambe Half or 10K?

RM – Both. People can take part in both.

(Note addendum – It is not a 10k, it is a 5K at Morecambe in addition to the half distance).

8. Fell Captain's report

GD – Last year's championship saw 16 men and 7 women with Paula running away with the women's title, and me, Josh and Simon as winners on the men's. A highlight was the Mid Wales Fell race, it was a great effort for a small club like us to take part against all those other clubs, and to go to Wales to take part. Well done. This year, I added the mini-series, that combines with the main series. 1st race next week is the Liver Hill fell race. Rick and I agreed to have the same number of races this year. We had a podium finish for Josh, our 1st outright winner of Mr Sparkles. Well done Josh. Club night numbers fluctuate, Tuesdays seem busier.

No questions.

9. Elections

GD – Is there anyone who wants to stand for any of the committee positions?

No expressions of interest. Proposed and seconded for committee to stay as.

AH – We have 1 expression of interest for the vacant Secretary post – Bradley Smith. I propose, and seconders?

(show of hands).

AH – Welcome Bradley.

GD – Your social media expertise is great.

SM – He has also been working with Mark on website stuff.

10. Club and membership

AH – No further motions or changes to the constitution. Membership fees have stayed the same but EA have put theirs up by £1. We propose to increase memberships to cover this increase.

IT – There's no profit for us, it'll go straight to EA. But the discounts for affiliated on races means you get the money back over the year.

AC – Seems fair.

AH – I propose.

IT – I second.

Agreed.

11. AOB

i. Presentation arrangements

GD – Back to your point Jez.

JeT – Do we want a Christmas Doo or a Presentation Night – they are 2 different things.

GD – At last year's AGM, it was decided and voted on to do something different this year.

GT – I thought last year's Christmas Party was great. We won the quiz, music was great, food was good.

JeT – I echo that, it hit the right note. I wasn't at the AGM last year, it seems a shame it was knocked back.

AC – It did seem something was missing at the presentation night.

IT – Do we want a Christmas Party and then a presentation night later – or both together?

GD – It's worth having a debate again. It was voted on, did it work? It was free this last time as the club paid for it. Previously we paid to go to the Football club.

AC – It would be nice to celebrate with the beginners on their first year of Dashing.

AA – I voted for a new format last year but I think the Thursday night was bad as people had work the day after.

GD – It was chosen as it was a club night so a club run could happen before it, and the pub couldn't do a weekend night.

AC – Only one group ran club night beforehand though.

RM – Do we want a Doo in November, December, January?

NB – Cricket Club's presentation is in November. It needs to be decided before people plan their Christmas and other commitments.

RM – We need to decide tonight so it can be booked early.

AA – If we revert to the Christmas Presentation night, will the championships be finished?

RM – Road finishes 22nd November.

GD – Fell finishes end November. Shall we vote on 2024 version vs 2025 version?

Vote took place, majority voted 2024 version.

GD – We do need to do something to support the pub. We start from there, use the toilets, we need to put something back in.

JT – Only 3 go in on a Tuesday.

NB – It's disappointing that only the fell group go in. We need a social one night a month to get together.

RM – We welcome any social events, just speak up and arrange it.

GD – We could do the first Tuesday every month for a social thing.

GT – If it fits around life, yes.

RM – We used to do mini races between ourselves. Stuff like this doesn't have to be committee led. Any ideas, put them forward, we will work with you.

AH – Any suggestions are more than welcome. We want to work with you to improve the social side.

ii. Darwen Half Marathon.

NB – I have seen Sarah's call out for volunteers, is the lack of support because its Easter Sunday?

AH – Every year it's been the 1st Sunday in April, unfortunately it fell on Easter Sunday this year.

RM – We try to do it then as its 2 or 3 weeks before the marathons to attract those training.

NB – It's a great event but with a lot of work. Do we attract new members?

RM - We have a new flyer.

IA – I saw that you are looking for titled sponsors? What about a titled charity? East Lancs always has new ideas for raising money but as their race is done, that might be an issue. But they have the organisational ability and PR ability to organise these races with volunteers.

AH – That's a good shout.

IA – Keeps it local and raises money.

GT – Good social media presence.

Committee to explore idea of charity title sponsor.

AC – There used to be a rule that you couldn't run in a race unless you could nominate someone to volunteer.

GT – Blackburn Road Runners can't run in their own races, only as pacers.

SM – I don't want to force volunteering.

GD – This has raised a wider club issue. Be it road or fell, we have a shortage of volunteers. Are we able to keep putting races on with the lack of support? There's an unwritten rule where you race and pitch in. Ian is stepping down from the Aggies Race – some of that stemming from running around looking for support. The same is for Sarah.

GT – Why are we putting another race on if we can't manage now? We need to get all members on board.

IA – You need to publicise what's been discussed. It was a cultural thing in the past where you couldn't run unless you had marshalled.

SM – People think 'Why can they run and I have to marshal?'

AA – I agree. When I first joined, you were with people who set good examples. You got involved as your peers got involved. Do our new members know about this? Jim was my Dasher Dad and told me everything I needed to know.

SM – Some beginners are marshalling.

AA – We all need to have the conversations with them to get them involved.

NB – I thought this was happening, I've always marshalled. It takes time for culture to change, these conversations can be had on club nights.

RM – We can try to get road to help out at fell, and fell to help out at road.

NB – I joined Dashers as it was a small club, there's a small number of young people. Maybe they are scared as they don't know what to do?

IA – Club social nights are a brill time to regenerate.

JoT – Encourage a more formal structure, if you race one, marshal one.

NB – Put it on the website at the start of the year.

Form on website to record volunteers for marshalling racing.

iii. Communication

GD – Going back to Ali's point on communication, I know all forms create inclusivity. But it should be said that one particular way is our way of communication and if you don't have it, that's that. All the platforms are too much.

SM – Thing is, what if you don't have that platform? You need all the platforms to suit everyone.

GD – We can't go across all platforms, we have to collate information from them all and it gets messy. We should be able to dictate how we communicate.

GT – It should be email – everyone has it. Official stuff on email, other stuff on other channels. There's too much on WhatsApp, things get lost.

RM – That was a reason for the return of the Dash.

GT – But there was no social media back then, once the buzz was over it dwindled.

RM – The new Dash would be wider club stuff.

Agreed not to pursue The Dash at the moment.

AA – We need to define what communication is for what and let members know. Official communication from the club.

GD – Brad could send out an email or Mark could put something on the website.

AA – We still have Facebook too. Get photos of people marshalling on there too.

AH – I propose to adopt email as official method of communication.

BS – Seconded.

Agreed.

From now on official club communication to be via email from the EA membership list.

iv.Committee days/times

NB – I have read the constitution looking for information on this. I wouldn't join the committee as your meeting crosses a club night.

RM – We talked about it and decided to change it. It's only one night.

GD – We miss one night too. Maybe we don't need a monthly meeting. I propose a bi-monthly meeting, we have sufficient business to discuss over 2 months.

AH – The constitution says 'no less than 6 meets a year' so bi-monthly fits.

GT – Is this the forum to discuss this?

NB – I've raised it as it might block people wanting to join.

IA – I think this is a committee discussion – either bi-monthly or on a Wednesday.

Committee to discuss.

v. Formalising member feedback

AH – Any feedback is now published in the minutes. Should it minuted 'Anon'?

AC – Why do you think people want 'Anon'? If we have a lot of 'Anon', we have a problem.

SM – The issues are against the club, not people.

AC – A response can still be published without a name? If you don't feel comfortable, raise your concern with no name. Why can't it be raised 'Anon'?

GD – How did this discussion point come about?

AH – A point was raised as to whether feedback should be named or not.

GD – Or minuted or not?

AH – All feedback is being minuted.

JoT – That's for the committee to decide. I read the minutes and I didn't feel comfortable reading them. Should've just minuted the conclusion.

GD – Historically it has been. We were asked to put specific things in the minutes though.

NB – I'm glad you have clarified that. Maybe state you were asked to do so. I wasn't impressed with what was raised.

JoT – It's not for us to debate. Just add to committee meeting 'requested to be named or not named'.

GD – We have had subsequent positive emails in – should we add these in too for balance? This is supposed to be fun. But we needed to sort it out so we could go back to the important things, like running.

JoT – It is about stability. I respect the volunteer time the committee puts in, but to deal with club grievances every month is too much. That's why Heather stepped down.

GD – We have spent a lot of time recently sorting things out.

IA – Maybe reflect on the bi-monthly meetings, a lighter approach?

GD – I agree.

IA – There has to be balance, it got a bit out of hand.

NB – Just mention feedback, not the whole process. More of a summary.

SM – We were asked to put it all in.

NB – It should've been raised elsewhere.

SM – We wanted an informal approach, we wanted to sort it out ourselves as a club.

NB – And you have. You're all too nice for your own good.

GD – Thanks for the lovely email Josh, do you want it to be put in?

JoT – Just to acknowledge it.

GD – We will discuss format for future matters.

11. AAOB

IA – I propose a vote of thanks to the committee.

AH – Thank you. Thank you to everyone for coming tonight.

Meeting closed 10.15pm.

Minutes taken by DD.

Minutes checked by committee 31/03/26.

Appendix 1

Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting March 2026

It's a pleasure to present this Chairman review and reflect on an exciting and productive year for our committee and club. We've faced our fair share of challenges, stayed positive.

An active year for the club and committee.

Some key highlights in no particular order

- Holding 10 monthly committee meetings – we had a couple of months off.
- Keeping members informed with timely distribution of minutes – although acknowledge we can be better at this.
- Strengthening communication channels with our members – again we can be better at this.
- relaunching DHM in April 2025. This was a great day with plenty of positive feedback from all participants in the event. About 150 athletes, small loss of about £400 with stock of about £1000 to carry forward to April 2026. 2026 race is just over a week away – similar number of athletes, looking at a profit of about £1200 but this will vary until final number crunching. We will be making a concerted effort to find a title sponsor for 2027, plus secondary sponsors. If you have connections, please share!
- enhancing our website as our main shop window, linking in Gibsons for our merchandising many thanks for Mark Taylor his engagement and expertise.
- Sustaining our membership numbers— approximately 117 from what I can see, with some 70 being EA affiliated. I hope, once a new secretary is in place, to share a more substantial membership report.
- Maintaining financial stability while carefully managing resources to support all our activities.
- central store of Dasher assets at Blacksnape Pavillion. Including gazebo, fell run resources, brand new timer for our fell (or other) runs, hi-viz jackets, tables. If you have any resources to store, get in touch with me or Sarah.
- what a remarkable beginner's group we had at start of the year. I'd say best-ever – many thanks to Ali and Brian and their helpers. Let's hope the next one is just as good, spread the word!

-The members WhatsApp Group has been very active which must equal well-received and successful.

- a different but successful presentation night
- our flagship races, Aggies, David Staff and the Darkun have been as successful as ever. Thank you, organisers, volunteers and athletes.
- club runs have been well attended on the whole, hopefully enjoyable; many thanks to run leaders improvers, road, fell and trail.
- I'm sure I've missed many highlights and members will reflect on their own experiences of Dashers over the last 12 months.

I acknowledge that there have been a couple of mishaps which have caused some distress for example the private/public Facebook debacle. I hope this is now resolved.

The opportunities and challenges to come over the next 12 months It's a big job for just for the committee and would appeal to our members to be even more proactive in the next 12 months.

Our priorities and aspirations include, but no limited to:

- Continuing to maintain strong governance.
- Raising the club's profile and boosting membership, building stronger links with the wider community, such as Blacksnape, Sunnyhurst, Gibsons and various other partners we've worked with
- Improve our strategy and management of social media communications.
- Delivering an outstanding Darwen Half Marathon on 5th April 2027 and finding a title sponsor
- Exploring the return of the Don Ashton Memorial Fell Race.
- Exploring a Darwen Dashers Tough 10K race
- promote member feedback and respond accordingly to make our club even better.

I'd like to express my heartfelt thanks to our incredible committee members, volunteers, and supporters for their dedication and hard work. This year, we bid farewell to our secretary Heather you have made a positive contribution, we wish you well.

I'm immensely grateful for the ongoing support of our members. It's been a decent year and I'm excited to see all we can achieve in the year ahead. Thank you, everyone.

Appendix 2

AGM 2026 ACCOUNTS SUMMARY				
Opening B alances as at 18 March 2025				
Community Account		£2,370.94		
Savings Account		£1,875.74		
		£4,246.68		
2025/26 Accounts				
Activity	Credit	Debit	Balance	Notes
Membership	£1,202.06	£0.00	£1,202.06	
Aggies Staircase 2025	£650.16	£306.83	£343.33	
Bank Charges	£0.00	£51.12	-£51.12	
EA Affiliation	£0.00	£205.00	-£205.00	
Darwen Half Marathon	£5,914.00	£5,042.51	£871.49	2025 Entry fees, mix of costs
David Staff	£427.30	£427.30	£0.00	Donation to CRY
Web Hosting	£0.00	£122.40	-£122.40	
Xmas Party & Prizes	£0.00	£673.49	-£673.49	
Race Entries (Fell & XC)	£0.00	£273.10	-£273.10	
Red Rose XC	£0.00	£195.00	-£195.00	
Dark Un	£677.74	£54.27	£623.47	Money to be paid out to 2 Charities
Miscellaneous	£30.00	£719.50	-£689.50	AGM Gifts, New feathers and stands, New race timer

TOTAL	£8,901.26	£8,070.52	£830.74	balance will be reduced after charities paid
Closing Balance s as at 24 M arch 2026				
Community Account		£1,201.68		
Savings Account		£3,898.87		
		£5,100.55		NOTE: £2000 transferred from Community to Savings

Appendix 3

parkrun report for AGM March 2026

It has been a pleasure to compile the results for, and report on, the Dashers parkrun Championships over the last year. Each Saturday, Dashers travel far and wide to experience the best of parkrun with USA, Singapore, Netherlands, Italy and even Malaysia among those countries graced by our club members.

Both Championships were hard fought affairs. The Men's league table was topped by Brian Shaw who just held off Martin Oldfield and Jez Turner in what was a high-quality event. The Ladies Championship was even closer with only c. 1.5 percentage points separating the top 3 of Linda Coffey, Jacqui Shaw and Diane Dudgeon. Congratulations to all the winners and indeed all that took part.

Last year we had 35 men and 30 ladies qualifying for the Championship and this year is on course to top that, particularly with the numbers and quality of the excellent beginners' groups. I look forward to taking up even more of my weekends calculating league tables!

Thank you for your continued support and if anyone has any suggestions how the 2027 event can be improved further, please let any Committee member know so that it can be discussed.

Ian Thomson
March 2026