

Darwen Dashers Committee Meeting

Date: 10th March 2026 7.30pm



Attendees: Andy Howarth (Chairman), Sarah Marsden (President), Diane Dudgeon (Welfare Officer), Rick Marsden (Road Captain), Gareth Davies (Fell Captain)

Apologies: Heather Turner (Secretary), Ian Thomson (Treasurer)

1. Current outstanding actions

- All complete from last meeting, exceptions added to AOB.

2. Agenda items

- **Arrangements for AGM** – Invites have been sent out, only one apology so far. Agenda discussed and finalised – this will be sent out to members. Christmas Presentation and Interclub championship included. **AH**

- **Darwen Half Marathon** – Current numbers 115. Thank you to all who have volunteered to help. Still help required, 2 or 3 marshals for the course during the race – contact **SM** if available.

- **Committee member updates** – Good feedback received for recent races. Race Director from Centre Vale parkrun loved the Dark 'Un and said the disco was amazing! Email received from the organiser of the Poynton 10K too:

Subject: Re: Poynton Village 10k - Sunday March 8th - Race Information

Hi Diane,

Yes, we can do that. It was great to meet you and the group from Darwen today. Thanks for coming such a long way to the race, it was great to hear that you all enjoyed it.

Best Regards

Bill Shone, Crazy Legs Events

- **Social Media** - **Bradley** is still doing a fantastic job with the Facebook and Instagram posts. The Beginners page will close after the Beginners Graduation this weekend so Beginners are welcome to join our public group. **AH** to email **Ali and Jim**. All welcome to **Burnley parkrun** 14th March to support/take part.

- Member feedback –

i. Benidorm Half concerns raised by **Don**. His responses have been noted and recorded in these minutes (**Appendix 1**).

ii. This was sent by **Ali** for the meeting. Her response has been noted and recorded in these minutes (**Appendix 2**).

iii. Query from Dasher beginner that was passed to **Ali**:

Hey! I hope your okay! Just a quick one and please feel free to say no if it's not something that takes place. I own sweet vintage in darwen town centre and I'm looking at organising a run club from there, as either a one off social event or a regular one. Do you think this is something darwen dashers would be interested in? Going for a run at the weekend and then coming back for a bru and cake or bacon sandwich?

Any ideas for social invites can be shared on the Member WhatsApp group; recommend posting on there after the graduation to arrange with other members.

iv. EA Training email – This will be looked into by the committee.

3. AOB

- ***Darwen Dashers own race dates*** – Dates need to be confirmed for the website – Aggies, David Staff, Tough 10K.

- ***Newsletter*** – Ideas still welcome, **AH** taking forward.

- ***Partner links*** – Will update when more information available.

- ***Club Secretary vacancy*** - Expressions of interest for vacant role of club secretary to be sent to **AH**.

Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Notes taken by DD.

Next committee meeting Tuesday 14th April 7.30pm.

AGM date Thursday 26th March

Appendix 1

- Hi Dianne,

Usually a Grievance would go to the Secretary, but as we have a vacancy the alternative mentioned in the process is the Welfare Officer.

However, I will leave it to you as to how you deal with it. The process does indicate that a discussion to decide how to proceed should be held.

The attached is fairly explanatory and represents the concerns which a number of Dashers had raised with me. In particular, they have mentioned the apparent lack of "listening to the members", although none have wanted to take these observations further.

Please feel free to call me for a chat. I am considering sending copies of the Grievance to the members who expressed their concerns; but will be guided by you.

Kind regards

Don

- Having previously tried to resolve this issue by phone with the Chairman, I now find it necessary to formally lodge a Grievance with the Committee regarding the recent confirmation of the Benidorm Half Marathon on the Club Road Championships, contrary to the Club Constitution and ethos of being actively inclusive.

I must stress at this point that this is not specifically about the Benidorm Half but about the Committee not following the rules which define how Club Members expect club business to be conducted.

I was hoping that steering the discussion to the Constitution and suggesting that advice would be available via the EA portal would prompt a rethink; but apparently not.

It would seem, therefore, that I need to be more specific about which elements of the rules appear to have been either overlooked or breeched; the first being in the "Ethos" section.

4. Ethos

4.1 The Club is committed to ensuring that, **where possible, equity is incorporated across all aspects of its operations, activities and development.** In doing so,

the Club acknowledges and adopts the following Sport England definition of sports equity:

'Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, **recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them.** It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society.'

4.2 The Club respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and shall treat everyone equally within the context of their sport, regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race (including ethnicity and nationality), religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, maternity or **social/economic status.**

4.4 **All Members** have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour and

promote equality of opportunity.

In addition to this, the Club has also adopted an Inclusion Policy which, amongst many other areas states “ • We will demonstrate that every effort has been made to enable everyone to participate and that inclusion not exclusion has been the priority.”.

At this point I would reiterate that these rules were voted on and adopted by the members because this is how we, the members, want our club to be run.

The Constitution also cites

10. Conditions of Membership

10.1 These Rules, including any bye laws made under rule 25 below, shall form a

binding agreement between each Member and Members shall comply with these Rules and bye laws.

This is reiterated at 10.3 for members and again at 15.5 for the Committee.

The final words of the Constitution are :- 29. Declaration

The Club duly adopted these Rules as its governing document as signed below.

And finally, the confirmation in the minutes that the eligibility criteria apply to everyone does not address the issue.

Clearly, equality of opportunity is not necessarily delivered by treating everyone the same, and in this particular instance, the social/economic status (as referenced in 4.2 of the constitution) is clearly a factor which could prevent a member from participating in this Championship.

We are all charged with recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them.

- Dear Don

Thank you for raising your concerns regarding the inclusion of the Benidorm Half Marathon into the Road Championships.

Whilst the club takes on board your views, it also recognises the views and wishes of all its members. Following the Road Captain's communication requesting suggestions for races to include in the Club Championships, over a dozen people requested the inclusion of an overseas race. The committee therefore decided to support this. Subsequently 11 people have entered this race (with more possibly yet to enter) which we feel merits inclusion in the championship. For reference the last Championship race (Lostock 6) had only 14 participants and cost only £17.00.

Accepting your point that this race may not be inclusive for all (which could be the case for any race based upon availability, race distance, distance from home, cost, severity etc) the Committee has discussed this further and will offer another race on the same date or an alternative date (whereby Benidorm participants cannot race), thus maintaining the inclusivity of the Championships.

The club is concerned that we could essentially end up in a position where all champs races are determined by distance from Darwen, race distance, and cost. While accessibility is important, we must also offer opportunities for members who wish to access races further afield and ensure all viewpoints are heard.

We trust this now alleviates your concerns and that the club can return to providing a fun and friendly running environment for all. The Road Captain will communicate the changes to the Championships in due course.

Many thanks
Darwen Dashers Running Club

- Hi Diane,

Thanks for the response.

I am grateful that the Committee has reconsidered the inclusion of an alternative race alongside the Benidorm Half. Whilst this partly addresses the issue of inclusivity in this instance, I note with concern that the response does not address the main issue; which is that the Rules of the Club are not being followed, and that decisions are being made which are contrary to the Constitution.

The Constitution and Rules of the Club were adopted by the club at the AGM and when members join or re-join they agree to abide by these rules. In making decisions, the Committee is bound by these rules to ensure the club is run in accordance with them. A great deal of time and effort went into ensuring that the Constitution and Club Standards met the needs of the club, and the quality standards of the EA.

Whilst I appreciate that a number of people may have requested an overseas event, any consideration of such an event to be included in the Championship must meet the Rules and Ethos of the club. You accept in your response that the Benidorm Half "may not be inclusive for all" and as such does not meet the standards required to be accepted.

I have twice suggested that the EA could provide guidance on overcoming the perceived issues of inclusivity, but from this response it seems that you have not done so.

I will consider whether to raise the matter directly with them in due course.

Kind regards,
Don

Appendix 2

I wanted to get in touch following reading the above in the minutes from February's meeting.

* Benidorm Half Marathon on Road Championship – A concern was raised regarding the inclusivity of the Benidorm Half. Following extensive discussion, the committee reaffirmed that all club championships are open to all members. Eligibility requirements - such as holding valid membership - are clearly stated in the championship rules. Any perceived exclusion relating to ability, capacity, or availability applies equally to all championship races.

It says a concern was raised about the Benidorm Half being included in the Road Champs - which means it's not just me that doesn't agree with it being in there..

What concerns me more reading the minutes is that there seems to be a misunderstanding of what sports equity is.

In our Club constitution (that I was heavily involved in creating) we agreed and accepted that the following describes our Club ethos:

Ethos

- 1 The Club is committed to ensuring that, where possible, equity is incorporated across all aspects of its operations, activities and development. In doing so, the Club acknowledges and adopts the following Sport England definition of sports equity:

'Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society.'
- 2 The Club respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and shall treat everyone equally within the context of their sport, regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race (including ethnicity and nationality),

Sports equity is about aiming to ensure that everyone has equal access to and participation in sports. This means considering whether everyone has a fair chance at opportunities.

This approach contributes to building a more inclusive and socially responsible sporting community.

It's not about ability or capacityas stated in the minutes.

The Road Captain is aware of my opinion on the Benidorm race being included in the Road Championship - do I think an overseas race can be a fun social opportunity for club members? Yep, absolutely.

But as a championship fixture, absolutely not - because it doesn't meet the ethos of equity which means providing a fair chance for participation.

Not everyone has a passport, has access to enough money to fund an overseas trip etc etc - whereas there'd always be the opportunity to car share or grab a lift to even the furthest race (road/fell) in the championship.

I understand that there will now be an alternative race being added to the championship which I welcome, but would like this recorded officially as a response to the last minutes.

Many thanks

Ali