



Secretary's Report March 11th 2019

The first year of the club has been a lot of hard work, but I'm delighted with the progress that we've made so far and there's still a lot to do as we continue to develop the club. The achievements so far have included :-

- **Club Status** - Completion of club application documents and development plans to a standard that was acceptable to England Athletics and to a standard that most are suitable for our application for Clubmark status, which we should work towards in the coming year.
- **Volunteer Recruitment** – we have enjoyed success in recruiting new volunteers for the coaching team and we need to keep working to grow the number of volunteers at the club. We do still need to increase the number of qualified track and field officials as we need to provide officials for our NEYDL fixtures and we do have funding available and the ability to mentor any volunteers. Our recent Game Changers volunteers meeting has given us some good ideas to work through to help to recruit volunteers and make it a great experience.
- **Young Sparks** – we started a dedicated group for younger athletes (aged 5 to 8) last year but we didn't get the take up that we anticipated and the sessions ended in October. We aim to revive these sessions at the end of April (following the Easter holidays) as we think there's demand for these sessions and it's a good way for our CA's and Athletics Leaders to gain experience.
- **North East Youth Development League** – the club has partnered with Jarrow & Hebburn AC to form a composite team in Division 2 North of the NEYDL for the 2019 season. This means that our athletes have the opportunity to compete across a range of track and field events at four competitions across the 2019 season. We'll have one place in each event for each age group and we can add additional athletes if needed or if J&H don't have someone. We're also co-hosting on Saturday 18th May, so we'll be looking for volunteers to help us to stage the event in partnership with J&H as well as us needing to provide a joint team to officiate for each of the four events. In addition, I've agreed to be Divisional Secretary for our division which gives a little extra responsibility but we will get an additional 10 points per fixture. We've seen a great response from our athletes for the Sportshall competitions recently and I'm sure that NEYDL will have a huge impact on the athletes and the parents too.
- **Competitions** – The club has been well represented at local and regional competitions and we've very quickly established a respected reputation amongst the North East athletics community with a recent comment from Daniel N'Jai at Blyth of "Fantastic attitude, showing huge improvement every event and now an integral part of the NE athletics scene." We've had athletes competing in the Tartan Games, Autumn Track Relays, North East Harrier League, Gateshead Indoor Series, CDAN Sportshall & NE Indoor Championships.

- **Game Changers** - We have secured significant funding towards courses for volunteers via the England Athletics Game Changers programme. We have funding for one athletics coach (Michael Keogh), 4 Coaching Assistants (Samantha Keogh, Tracy Matheson-Smith, Kamila Kruk and Natasha Stephenson), 3 Athletics Leaders (Matthew Gill, Amy McLellan and one place in partnership with a Framwellgate School student), plus two Athletics Officials (still to be identified). The aim of the funding is to increase the number of volunteers we have at the club and this allows us to further develop our athletes and give some of our younger members some skills that will be great additions to their CV's. The programme has also built our relationship with England Athletics and put us on the map regionally as one of the three clubs to receive funding. Each of the volunteers will receive rewards from England Athletics based on the number of hours they volunteer at the club.
- **Partnership Working & Fundraising** – We have established an excellent partnership with Framwellgate School both as a training facility and with the PE department. We now have access to the PE departments equipment and one of the students will be joining the Game Changers project. We've also identified a "wish list" for additional equipment and facilities, which we're now working to secure funding for and this includes working with the local County Councillors as well as going for funding bids from a range of providers. We've developed links with Gateshead Harriers with athletes benefitting from specialist training with Gateshead's coaches and as part of this partnership, I now run a long jump group at Gateshead on a Wednesday night with all our athletes welcome. The club has also joined the County Durham Athletics Network which include representation from a number of athletics clubs around the County. The Network is designed to share best practice, identify (and provide) funding as well as provide competitions both indoors and outdoors. The CDAN Sportshall competitions have been a huge success for the club and I'm looking forward to our young athletes representing the County in the Regional Final this coming Saturday.
- **Meetings** – I've represented the club at the NEYDL AGM and am now attending the quarterly meetings with the County Durham Athletics Network. I've also established a good working rapport with Nick Settle, the Club Support Manager for England Athletics in the region.

There has been a lot done so far, but we still have a lot of work to do and any additional help from volunteers is welcome with the coaching for our athletes or on the administration of the club. We have some ideas that we'll be working on as part of the Game Changers process and I'm hugely excited for what we can achieve in the coming year both on and off the track.

May we continue to fly high and burn brightly.

Mark Ellis
Secretary and Coach – Phoenix Flyers AC