

## Chairman's AGM report

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Good evening all. I sat wondering how I could summarise our many and varied successes. I concluded that it would be nearly impossible – every week you do amazing things. I'd encourage you to read the Captains' report which summarises some of the highlights. The phrase you see on my slide, "Success in every discipline" seems fitting.

Thank you all for your support throughout the year and tonight.

Over this year we've achieved much together – outside of the countless successes just mentioned, we continue to have great fellowship with people encouraged to try new things and to support each other. We've welcomed new members and seen numerous victories, podium places and PBs galore. We enjoyed an awards evening with Tamsin, whose address captivated us. We had the 3<sup>rd</sup> Willow Miner Trail Race – a showcase event for this club, and one which sees much by way of positive feedback from the North East running community. I'm delighted to report that we have been able to enhance the contribution raised from entry donations to donate £250 to each charity (Woodland Trust and the Brain Tumour Charity).

I want to place on record our thanks for members who are retiring from various posts (as outlined in my slide). I think sometimes we don't do enough to celebrate the input and hours of voluntary service these people give. I'm not saying that we get carried away with a sensationalised thanking frenzy but when you get the chance – tell people you appreciate what they do and thank them.

Then I want to welcome the new Committee and Officers for the incoming year – I'm delighted to see some new faces and equally no spaces. Thanks to those stepping forward.

I also want to update you on the decision at the last committee meeting regarding charities for the year. We will continue to support the Woodland Trust – we enjoy so much from their Low Burnhall site and it seems appropriate that we continue with them as an anchor charity. Then, we've also chosen to support Fearless – this is the youth brand of the Crimestoppers charity. Fearless works with young people in our communities to provide non-judgemental advice and support on matters which affect young people including knife crime and bullying. Of course, this does not detract from the charity work that many of you continue to do – and we have many members who support your individual endeavours, which is fantastic.

So, where do we go from here. I think we will continue to achieve great things together, but I want to inform you that I intend this to be my last year as your Chair. We've achieved much together to improve this club and I'm proud of our collective efforts. It's often good for a change, and I'm ready to hand over if someone wants to step forward. I'll offer my support in mentoring and handing over when the time comes.

I've deliberated extensively over sharing this but it is sufficiently serious that I feel obliged to do so. What I disclose may shock some of you and I really don't want to end my report on a negative. As some of you know, I took up the Chair role during troubled times and I really thought we'd turned a corner leaving much unpleasantness behind. This has also informed my decision about seeking a successor.

I'm sorry to say that a minority of people have seen fit to single myself and others out, and indeed we've lost some good folk along the way. It just isn't acceptable that anyone in a voluntary position

suffers this sort of abuse and victimisation, often over email and including vexatious complaints which are withdrawn with no explanation and certainly no apology.

It isn't easy to tell you that my mental wellbeing has been impacted and I'm sad to tell you that at times I've felt disengaged and unwelcome at this club. That feels wrong and it is ironic when we promote mental wellbeing through running by supporting the aims of #RunAndTalk. I'm looking forward to finding a way back and maybe the XC season will help with that.

Although I consider myself to be fairly resilient, because others have suffered and for the good of this club moving forwards, I feel I must speak out. We have codes of conduct and three strike policies, but I'm not prepared to tolerate this any longer. I call upon this meeting to endorse a zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviour, and victimisation. Moving forwards, my early reaction will be to invite the offender to leave rather than see anyone suffer again. It's about being nice to others and treating people fairly and with decency.

Now, let's move forward with a clear air and to achieve many more great things together.

Thank you for your support.