

RRLG Elections:

Candidates' Questions and Answers

We asked the election candidates a set of questions that were suggested by club secretaries and road race organisers in response to an email announcing the elections. Their responses are presented below:

Mike Neighbour

What ideas do you have for improving the standards of road running performances in Britain?

We need to build on past and present world leaders by conducting a scientific study into the training methods and lifestyle of a world leader. We need a scientific study into the methods adopted in other countries. We need to publish quarterly fixture list of all licensed races, online and possible printed. With the fixture list we need the promoters information and the runners feed back in the same way Amazon on books and Expedia on hotel give the publics comments.

What is your vision for the future of road races in the UK?

I want to see safe races promoted to a high standard catering for all competitors from the elite all the way down the field. In order to achieve this aim we need to provide promoters with the resources and information to provide quality races. Runners need information on races (see above) I would like to see an end to the internal disputes in the sport with talks to draw together ARC with UK Athletics.

What will you do to support the organisers of small road races?

I would like to see better information available to all race directors but of particular importance to small races. Direct access to listings of road race officials (if they are willing to be on such lists) Seminars on race organisation followed up with literature and examples on all aspects of organising road races. Availability of computer software, help and advice on online entries. Provide advice on "chip" timing. Possible negotiating favourable rates chip timing and other equipment for our races.

What ideas do you have for countering the increasing bureaucracy and risk liability on volunteer race organisers, which is threatening to put an end to many long-standing races?

We need to provide access to legal advice specialising in the relevant issues, along with clear guidance on roles and responsibilities. We should publish a range of standard paper work. We need to provide a net-work of experienced advisers free to the race organiser or potential race organiser. We need to reinvigorate our discussions with ACPO and local councils.

Do you believe you can commit the time to keep abreast of the issues involved, consult those you would represent and attend the required number of meetings called around the UK?

In sort yes. I retired last summer and am taking a more active role in my club keeping me in touch with club issues. I have more time to devote to national issues. I am experienced at all levels of the sport and hope to build on my experience.

Hilary Walker

What ideas do you have for improving the standards of road running performances in Britain?

Sustainable improvement in standards can only be achieved by maintaining and developing all tiers of the sport from grass roots mass participation to top level elite competition. We need to really motivate people not only to take up the sport but treat their participation more seriously. Role model inspiration, tiered competitive structure with reward/recognition and wider availability of development aids such as club coaching are key. The RRLG should publish a clear strategy for the financing of development and competitive structure proposals from the road running revenues as they accrue.

What is your vision for the future of road races in the UK?

Primarily to keep the diversity in the types of events that we have in place already from mass events for charities, through the small low key local events which support local communities and runners to the key national events. However we need to improve local and regional collaboration in setting fixtures and to set up motivation schemes for competition using local, regional and national series of events. Running in parallel should be further development of the schemes to improve and enhance the organisation and management of race events such as race grading, officials' development etc.

What will you do to support the organisers of small road races ?

We should continue the work started by members of the Road Running Management Group who will now be reporting to the RRLG. This includes provision of key material on the main issues for Road Races such as grading documentation, health and safety, risk assessment and road race guides on the website for easy access and use. We should develop a central resource of key equipment which could be hired, for free or at a low cost, by small race organisations to keep capital costs at a minimum. We could also provide essential programmes to train officials

What ideas do you have for countering the increasing bureaucracy and risk liability on volunteer race organisers, which is threatening to put an end to many long-standing races.

We need a concerted effort to counter the effects of our ever-increasing risk-averse culture. The RRLG could spearhead discussions with the relevant regulatory organisations for "better regulations" and buy in for national policies. . At a more practical level for race organisations, we should continue the work to get resources available to help race organisers engage with local authorities, the police and the safety advisory groups.

I have one comment on these four questions. Novel ideas to provide answers are not just the responsibility of the RRLG. All members of our road running community should be encouraged to provide new proposals for consideration. Te RRLG should provide the network to facilitate this and to respond to and encourage those with greatest potential.

Do you believe you can commit the time to keep abreast of the issues involved, consult those you would represent and attend the required number of meetings called around the UK.

Looking at my list of activities, that is a very valid question. With a busy job, my own training schedules, other voluntary activities for the sport in both the international and national arenas, can I do more? The answer is yes, there is considerable synergy between the work I do already and the work of this group and the expertise I would bring would ensure efficient use of my time rather than an additional burden. I have always believed in the saying, "If you want a job done, you ask a busy person."

Graham Jessop

What ideas do you have for improving the standards of road running performances in Britain?

An integrated approach which includes:

1. a well planned and integrated squad system which gives runners the opportunity to map their progress.
2. branding races so that athletes know which races to target for their specific level of competition - possibly considering a prize money structure.
3. more opportunities for representation in development teams and those knocking on the door of international recognition.
4. attention in fixture planning to recognised races being a pre-cursor to major events.
5. improved competition at a local/regional level with progress recognised and rewarded to higher level events.

What is your vision for the future of road races in the UK?

One blueprint cannot meet all requirements - location, climate, physical features as well as the variety of runners' needs from first time recreational runners, to club and performance runners means we must maintain a diverse programme of road races. We need a mix of races to accommodate improvement and personal bests, enjoyment as well as meeting the charity and commercial needs. At the same time we must ensure that minimum standards apply to all races and that there is sufficient information on best practice available to race organisers to ensure they move with the times providing professional and quality races.

What will you do to support the organisers of small road races?

Small races must continue to play a key role in the sport. Usually they imply rural, local, a good atmosphere and enjoyment for all. So we do not want them lost from the sport. Support must be available without cramping the style of the local organisers. Measures could include practical support, a framework document, readily available advice, mentoring and financial and other essential resources such as equipment, clocks etc. Answers to question 4 are also especially relevant.

What ideas do you have for countering the increasing bureaucracy and risk liability on volunteer race organisers, which is threatening to put an end to many long-standing races?

- Dissemination of best practice is essential
- A good system of clear and regular communication so race organisers can be kept up to date.
- An 'on-line' help desk.
- Practical advice which prioritises requirements and focuses on the essentials.
- A pro-active team at the centre helping race organisers in both event management and risk assessment
- Good practice notes - use of pro-forma, the web site and computer based training methods

Do you believe you can commit the time to keep abreast of the issues involved, consult those you would represent and attend the required number of meetings called around the UK?

Yes - I have become a "full time athletics volunteer " and so have learned to plan the effective use of time - my CV demonstrates my commitment. My involvement in road running activities includes travelling to many parts of the UK and election to RRLG would be an added dimension to my current activities. It is important to be in a number of organisations associated with road running to be able to listen to issues and concerns and to make an effective contribution, particularly at such a crucial time in our sport. Improvements in technology is a real asset in meeting these commitments.

Nigel Rowe

What ideas do you have for improving the standards of road running performances in Britain?

To put into place a system where talent can be identified and then implement an athlete and coach development programme using recognised endurance development centres

Create a pathway of competition and championships that are standards focus. Encourage race promoters to provide for the needs of elite (club, county and regional) athletes as well as the masses

What is your vision for the future of road races in the UK

To be a market leader in race organisation standards

I think it is important to monitor more road races ensuring that the Licence Standards required are met and that these standards are evaluated, maintained and improved. This means training more road race endurance officials who can support BARR race scrutinisers

What will you do to support the organisers of small road races?

I have already made available some of my road race organising material in the hope that it may assist another road race promoters. By coordinating this through a central road race organiser's portal is going to prove valuable

I am willing to assist local race organisers achieve the delivery of high standard races and help them in any aspect of pre race organising and support them on the day if required

What ideas do you have for countering the increasing bureaucracy and risk liability on volunteer race organisers, which is threatening to put an end to many long-standing races?

Health and Safety and Risk Assessment should not been seen as an ever increasing amount of bureaucracy but as an aid to ensure that procedures and safeguards are in place not only for the organiser but also providing a safe environment for entrants, we have a "Duty of Care".

In creating a support and development structure for race organisers through templates and standardised proformas through a central web portal I believe this can reduce the amount of volunteer time but at the same time raise the standard of race organising across the board

Do you believe you can commit the time to keep abreast of the issues involved, consult those you would represent and attend the required number of meetings called around the UK?

I have already proved that I am committed to attending current RRLG and England Athletics Council meetings to discuss, listen, advise and implement change.

I have attended many road shows around the country to share my/our thoughts on differing aspects of road running and showed a willingness to learn

Paul Sinton-Hewitt

What ideas do you have for improving the standards of road running performances in Britain?

We need to qualify which standards we think are important to improve. Is it the quality of our athletes or the efficiency and professionalism of the events or perhaps even the standard of the volunteers that we need to improve? Will an improvement in one area feed the improvement you are looking for in another? This is a complex question which we must start by defining what the issue is and follow with a decent understanding of all the dynamics that contribute to the answer.

I think that improving the performance in road running lies in the acceptability and excitement of the sport itself by the younger generation. Road running will find it difficult to compete with the "coolness" of other exciting sports like triathlon. I believe that one answer lies with the younger athletes. In Britain we are sometimes too cautious for our own good, taking the risk and adventure out of anything we believe could be harmful to our children. True genius in running

will have to come from discovering the exception amongst the masses at a very early age and then making it exciting for these folks to stay involved.

What is your vision for the future of road races in the UK?

I'd like to see an environment where all the community work together to make these events a reality. Local government, rules and regulations etc sometimes make it highly undesirable for a club or an individual to put on an event. The commercialism this forces detracts from the real business of getting folks running.

What will you do to support the organisers of small road races?

Before I do anything I will want to have a better understanding of the issues small road races face. Then I'd like to work towards making it easier to stage an event. Reduce the risk on event organisers and volunteers and increase the community involvement (especially local government).

What ideas do you have for countering the increasing bureaucracy and risk liability on volunteer race organisers, which is threatening to put an end to many long-standing races?

The governing body must work towards removing the overheads from race organisers and volunteers alike. We must also find a way to make it exciting for people to volunteer providing incentives for volunteering.

Do you believe you can commit the time to keep abreast of the issues involved, consult those you would represent and attend the required number of meetings called around the UK?

Yes

Andrew Taylor

What ideas do you have for improving the standards of road running performances in Britain?

- Providing a pathway for British elite endurance runners through quality races.
- Expanding funding schemes to support British elite athletes.
- Investment of resources in coaching, injury support & training facilities.

What is your vision for the future of road races in the UK?

The sustained long-term development of a healthy and vibrant sport, encompassing the widest possible variety of smaller and larger races, within both the voluntary and commercial sector, serving the needs of unattached recreational runners, club runners and elite development alike.

The development of a constructive partnership between all branches of the sport.

What will you do to support the organisers of small road races?

The challenge for the governing body is to help both small and larger race organisers meet proper standards of safety and accountability within a framework of a healthy and vibrant sport, by providing clear leadership, support and training for organisers and officials, whilst also setting measurable standards and ensuring effective scrutiny.

There is also a role for strategic lobbying for changes in policy and legislation to simplify road closures and encourage closer liaison with local and statutory authorities.

What ideas do you have for countering the increasing bureaucracy and risk liability on volunteer race organisers, which is threatening to put an end to many long-standing races?

No one should try to shield race organisers from their own legal liability to their runners, volunteers or to the general public. Road running cannot exist in a 'bubble', isolated from an increasingly litigious world. The sport needs to effectively self-regulate, otherwise an outside agency will force regulation upon us.

Most of us within the sport are striving for better standards year on year, but many of us are aware of practices which are at best undesirable and at worst downright dangerous.

See reply above

Do you believe you can commit the time to keep abreast of the issues involved, consult those you would represent and attend the required number of meetings called around the UK?

Yes, to the best of my ability