

To: Member Clubs  
Birmingham & District Invitation Cross Country League  
Midland Women's Cross Country League

In June we wrote to you advising that there would be no fixtures before Christmas but it was hoped that we could have a three race series from January to March. This scenario was looking hopeful in early September as restrictions were eased but the recent increase in Covid-19 cases has meant the reintroduction of localised lockdowns around the country including a substantial proportion of the area covered by the leagues. The government has said that these could be in place throughout the winter up to March.

Over the past few weeks, the Executive of the Birmingham League and the Committee of the Midland Women's league have been assessing the situation and have sadly come to the decision that season 2020-21 will have to be abandoned.

As you can imagine this has not been an easy decision and we would like to set out some of the issues that influenced that decision.

England Athletics (EA) published a document that would allow pilot races to be held during October but even if this was successful which is not a given, the maximum length of a race would be 15 minutes and athletes would have to be started in 'waves' of 12 athletes. This is contrary to the ethos of cross country as we know it and the leagues feel they could not put on an event that would be likely to satisfy clubs and athletes that it was a real race in a real league.

Even if this restriction was lifted there were many other considerations to take into account. The EA document sets out many extra requirements for the setup of a course including discouraging spectators, double tapping the course to keep spectators 6 metres from the runners, erection of additional signage to remind everyone about social distancing and continuous cleaning of toilets, to name but a few. It is thought that all these additional mitigation requirements will put a substantial burden on potential host clubs who may not be able to find the equipment or volunteers to run a fixture even if they felt they might try.

We also cannot assume that the landowners, especially local councils, would be willing to let a substantial number of people from a large geographical area congregate on their land. In addition, car parking is already a problem at many venues but this will be exacerbated by the guidelines requiring individuals to travel to events in their own car.

A large proportion of the league's officials are elderly and many are in the age group that the government consider to be vulnerable and it cannot be assumed that even if it was possible to put on races, we could get sufficient officials to run the fixtures safely.

The EA document was issued before the imposition of further restrictions. As mentioned earlier it has been stated by ministers that the current restrictions could be in place until March 2021. Given the experience so far, going forward it is likely that these could change at short notice. There is, therefore, the possibility that a host club could do everything required to put on a COVID secure race and then have to cancel

at the last moment because of new, additional restrictions imposed by the government.

Given all this we feel that both leagues had no option other than to abandon the season.

The Birmingham League AGM due to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> October has been cancelled and will be conducted by email. Full details of how this will work will be circulated shortly. Clubs in the Midland Women's league will be advised shortly on the details of its AGM.

Thank you for the continued support of the leagues. If you wish to discuss this further please feel free to contact either of us.

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