

IT Manager report for BMAF AGM 2023

General

The devices and platforms used remain the same as at the time of the last AGM. There are plans being formulated to create a new look and feel to BMAF on the web and social media, details of these are outside of this report. The following web and social media sections are only covered as part of oversight of the technology BMAF uses.

Web hosts

The web host is a stable platform with good level of response to technical queries. The host is also providing a stable email service with MS Outlook. The only factor showing concern are the costs via the current host. BMAF services were given updated costing earlier this year for the current host. While this is a stable environment there are plans to move host when the current contract expires in March 2025 with a cost reduction.

Website

WWW.BMAF.org.uk is main source web site in use by BMAF after consolidation work of Adrian Essex and redirection of the MastersAthletics web site, BMAF still retains the legal name. Adrian continues to add content when available. Age group records are still being maintained by Courtney Gunn who makes them available via the website.

Facebook

On Facebook MastersAthleticsUK group has 3,510 members is the current and ongoing place for BMAF and championship, this is maintained by Adrian Essex who continues to be a top contributor.

There is notable dilution of potential members on Facebook. This is because "The BMAF British Masters Athletics Federation" (4400 followers) has somebody cyber squatting on BMAF's official name. A similar Facebook name "BMA British Masters Athletics" (4,100 members) also exists having similar posts to the BMAF web site. In an attempt to rationalise all these, "British Masters Athletics" (25 followers) has been created, which unfortunately again is only diluting content. Additionally, Facebook pages appear specifically for international championships. None of these are under the control of BMAF. On these sites there are frequent questions, e.g. How do I enter? All of these questions could be answered if they used the BMAF website Fixtures page.

What is needed is a new name which does not use the existing words. This would create a new start, however convincing members of those existing Facebook groups to move to the new group might prove difficult because the owners of existing groups would be unlikely to give their members away.

X/Twitter

BMAF has a presence on X/Twitter which is less active in terms of BMAF than Facebook MastersAthletics and contains many mainstream posts not related to athletics. As part of attempting to create a new look for BMAF a new account has been created.

Insta

Again BMAF has a presence but this will also gain a new look as part of marketing.

YouTube

BMAF also has a YouTube presence with a small number of videos. The annual T&F championships are usually accessed via the website.

Storage

After some investigation the intended move of BMAF documents from Dropbox to One drive has been identified as not the route to take. The intended route is now via Sharepoint storage which will be implemented as part of the move of web host move at no additional cost.

Communications

BMAF continues to use GetResponse to communicate with its members/athletes. It has been used for several large email shots including this AGM notice. Our email license limit is 10,000 which is close to the total members details are held on. GetResponse is now also being made available to VAC & EMAC.

OpenTrack

Membership details for members are held via OpenTrack. Constant reviewing of membership details is performed by John Fenton. Ensuring that when athletes enter competitions, their data provides the required detail for the meeting organiser, and also ensures accurate profiling for statistical analysis and reports.

BMAF continues to heavily use OpenTrack for most championship entries. There are no plans for further development features at this point in time.

Payment System

Stripe continues to be the payment system for national and area club championship entries made through OpenTrack. BMAF and OpenTrack have oversight of each area clubs payments should any major problems occur.

IT Hardware

Currently BMAF owns one windows laptop and three ageing iPads (v10). These are not suited nor sufficient to deploy for a T&F championships. The reliance of personal laptops and printers is not acceptable and has caused problem for call room staff at the outdoor championships this year and last. BMAF is currently in the process of purchasing a further laptop, printer and tablet device to deploy initially at the indoor championships and will be looking at further hardware for the outdoor championships. This will bring the hardware level to that prior to Covid. The cost is an expected cost and will be spread either side of the tax year. There is some basic network equipment which while deployed at meetings, has not been actively used.

Others

The international team managers phone has been updated to a smartphone and continues to be used overseas as a way of reaching the team managers. This approach has operated well in Torun and Gothenburg this year. It also assists with accessing the LOC's WhatsApp and Facebook page. A GB Team Whatsapp group and subgroups has been created for Madeira and Gothenburg. General athlete posting was via a non BMAF Facebook pages continues as indicated above.

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