

NHUA report to NHA AGM 2016

The first and most important issue is the chronic shortage of umpires available for appointment. This has been an issue for several seasons but is now close to developing into a crisis for NHUA. We have been working very hard with the County Associations in an attempt to develop umpires. Gemma Jones and her RYUAG have also been progressing umpires into the senior game. However as quick as umpires are sent to us we move umpires onwards to the National Programme. The most serious issue facing the NHUA is the recruitment of Umpires to the Women's Panels combined with the lack of Women's Panel umpires in the East. In addition the increasingly wide and uneven distribution of Men's Panel umpires is increasing the costs of appointments.

It has been a constant struggle to appoint to matches and the coming season appears to be developing in the same way. Appointing umpires to Regional Matches is our primary role. NHUA will be looking at the feasibility of diverting some coaching resources to the County HUA's to assist them in progressing umpires to us. To this end the Selection Panel NHUA has been asked to take this initiative forward the best way they see fit. We have to be aware though that every pound we spend comes from a player or our members.

Throughout last season appointments had to be changed because of illness, injury or umpires being called up by the NPUA. The record was Jan 30th with 29 changes made. Annette Badger is to be applauded for all the work she puts into getting umpires onto games week after week.

Additional appointments have been made to the Men's and Women's Play Offs in April, to the Men's and Women's Co Championships in May and to the 3 Masters Tournaments at Wakefield, Bowdon and Sheffield.

The number of EH games on a Sunday continues to grow. There is only a small pool of umpires who have been regularly available to take these appointments but in the early stages or when a number of different competition rounds are on the same Sunday there are insufficient umpires available to appoint to all games and the inevitable withdrawal of umpires at a late stage creates problems. In addition most of the available umpires live in the NW and thus the few in the NE have to travel further. For example Lindum is 2 hours from anyone umpire who is regularly available.

Overall this season NHUA went into the red on appointments. It looks like there will be a loss overall for the current year of between £1,000 and £2,000. Final amount is uncertain now due to outstanding expenses yet to be claimed. The main contributing factors being the match venues and umpire locations, resulting in significant travel. NHUA do keep umpires as close to home as possible in the first half of the season to keep costs down. However, the second half of the season we do have to appoint umpires on the basis of match importance and cost cannot be an issue.

Talking about finance brings me onto the issue of radios. Unfortunately after the significant capital expenditure by NHA and NHUA to purchase the radios, no forward plan was put into place for the maintenance or replacement of the radios. All clubs have remarked that the introduction of the radios has had a significant impact in improving decision making in North Hockey Leagues, with the only complaint being when an umpire forgot theirs one Saturday. We are now in the situation where sets are breaking and an ongoing replacement programme for new sets needs to be developed in tandem with a refurbishment programme. This has to be a major priority for NHUA going forward, especially finding a way to finance it.

Brian Linfield
Chair NHUA