

British Triathlon

Positioning statement on World Triathlon and Paratriathlon Championships, Abu Dhabi

The 2021 World Paratriathlon Championships and 2021 World Triathlon Championship Series have just taken place and the 2022 World Triathlon and Paratriathlon Championships, including Age Group racing, are scheduled to take place in Abu Dhabi, UAE. In the UAE under local laws and custom, homosexual sex is illegal and same-sex marriages are not recognised.

As individuals, we are proud to live in a country where people can live and love freely, but we know that there are still almost 70 countries around the world where homosexuality is illegal.

British Triathlon believes wholeheartedly in equality of opportunity, irrespective of sexual orientation or any other characteristic and will work with athletes, other federations, Europe Triathlon and World Triathlon to make the sport more accessible globally.

A number of our members have raised concern about the hosting of events in Abu Dhabi and in response British Triathlon engaged in dialogue with World Triathlon and other National Federations. We also engaged openly and privately with individual and groups of athletes, both elite and Age Group. Our position is informed by these engagements.

It is often said that sporting events should not be seen as political instruments. However, British Triathlon does not see this as a political issue but one of human rights.

Whilst some of our members feel otherwise, British Triathlon does not feel it would be in the best interest of its members and the sport for us, as the governing body of the sport in the UK, to boycott events in countries with human right laws at odds with our own. This position is based on a number of considerations, including:

- We wish to engage with World Triathlon and other decision makers in constructive and informed debate on future event-hosting policy. This approach would not be enabled by a boycott;
- We believe that individuals should have the choice about whether to race in such countries;
- We feel that any boycott would need to be applied wholly to all GB athletes, elite or age group and to do otherwise would be hypocritical;
- If we were to boycott the event in Abu Dhabi, we would need to boycott every event staged in a country with human rights laws at odds with our own (currently at least 70, including some European countries).

British Triathlon recognises that this is a very important point of principle and that some athletes will not wish to travel to such countries, irrespective of their own sexual orientation. For 2022, we will support any athlete who feels uncomfortable competing for Great Britain in countries such as the UAE through appropriate measures such as rolling forward age group athlete qualification to the following year for athletes who choose not to compete. We will review this policy again in the Autumn of 2022.

Finally, British Triathlon remains resolutely committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) and strongly refutes those who might say this position is contrary to this resolve. We will be a champion of ED&I domestically and internationally.

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