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**Chair’s Report to 2023 AGM**

Welcome to this, the 2023 Triathlon England South West Region Annual General Meeting. This is the first time we have held a ‘hybrid’ meeting, offering members the options to attend either in person or virtually, and with an added incentive to those coming here to Odd Down to be able to have used the cycle track before the meeting.

I’d like to open by saying thank you to everyone attending, especially to the many volunteers involved in our sport, in whatever capacity, to the Clubs, the Coaches, the Officials, to the Race Organisers and also to the permanent Triathlon England (TE) staff, who have all helped to restore our sport to something like it was before the pandemic. Although as we all know, things have undoubtedly changed.

I am also deeply indebted to my fellow Regional Committee (RC) volunteers. We have continued to meet virtually this year, again more frequently than pre-pandemic, and we have also held two in-person meetings.Thank you to all the Committee members for your perseverance, commitment and support during the past year. Special thanks go to Russ, our Vice Chair for the last 3 years - he was first elected at the AGM in 2020 and is not standing for re-election this year. We particularly thank Russ for taking the lead on our endeavours to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity in the region.

So, things are not quite the same. The reach of the Committee during 2023 was greater than last year but is not yet as extensive as we would like. This level of activity is reflected in the incomings and outgoings during the year, which James (the Treasurer) will explain in more detail in his report to the AGM.

The Chairs’ Forum this year was all about Inclusivity - fostering more diverse participation in the region. The Regional Committee had previously bid for and secured additional grant funding to be used for this purpose, and clubs have been invited to apply for funding to support local initiatives to promote inclusivity.The outgoing Vice Chair and Diversity Co-ordinator, Russ, will say more about the impact of how this money has been spent in his report.

We had a very constructive Club Chairs’ Forum last year, discussing the future format of the Regional Championships, which have not been held for a while now. The consensus was to hold Relays, with an emphasis on participation, rather than competition. It was therefore with much regret that the Committee announced in June that despite positive engagement with race organisers, it had not been possible to arrange a Regional Relay Championship this year. A lack of volunteer capacity to lead on this initiative on behalf of the Committee forced us to make this difficult decision. We are nevertheless optimistic that we can hold a Regional Championship next year (in 2024). This will be assisted greatly if we can recruit a Senior Race Series Officer to fill the vacancy carried on the Committee. If anybody present knows of anyone who may be interested in this role, please do get in touch with us.

Shortly, we are also going to hear more about both the work of our 61-strong SW Technical Officials team this year, and about what it takes to be a TO, in a report from Jon, the Regional Officials Co-ordinator.

The region has again seen much activity from our Juniors. A SW squad took part in the Inter-Regional Championships (IRCs) at Mallory Park in September. The team enjoyed a good weekend’s racing, culminating with a podium (Silver) finish this year, together with a number of individual medals. Melanie, the Junior Race Series Officer, will tell us more about the activity and success of the SW juniors in her report. And you are all very welcome to stay on after this AGM for the Presentation of awards to our junior athletes.

The Committee remain keen to support our juniors, and have subsidised their kit over the past several years. However, this kind of subsidy lends itself to potential sponsorship. So, if you have a local business in the South West and are interested in promoting your business, whilst also supporting junior athletes in your region, can I invite you to consider sponsorship of the kit for the SW junior triathlon team? The Regional Committee is looking to obtain £1500 per year for 2 to 3 years (2024-2026) to buy tri-suits for the juniors who represent the SW both in the Junior Race Series and at the Inter-Regional Championships annually. Expressions of interest are cordially invited!

Following the launch of Triathlon England’s ‘The Big Active’, which expresses the Triathlon England development strategy, one of its pillars, The Big Intent, that contains five overall objectives, has been interpreted through the creation of Regional Plans, appropriate to specific delivery in each of the ten regions. This through the generation of annual regional objectives to guide the work of both Regional Managers and Regional Committees, aligning with the overall central policy. In the SW we have been busy working alongside Debbie, the Regional Development Manager, on the regional plan for a second year to meet some of these regional objectives, including working towards the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI), developing the Club Chairs’ Forum and similarly supporting Club Coaches, increasing the number of technical officials (TOs) and improving the Regional Championships.

After four years as Regional Manager for the South West, Debbie was successful in her application for one of the three new National Manager posts, and has since June been BT National Events and Programmes Activation Manager. We made an opportunity in August to say goodbye to Debbie and to wish her the very best of luck in her new role. However, having been with us for three-quarters of the year, Debbie has made what will be her last report to this AGM that I will present on her behalf.

The South West (SW) is a very varied region, especially in terms of its geography and population distribution. We cover seven counties, from Cornwall to Gloucestershire. Within this area there are some 60+ clubs affiliated to Triathlon England, together with about 2,000 members.

When I was elected as Chair three years ago, I set out for us to support clubs and members in the region, to secure the financial stability of the Committee, and to raise the profile of the Regional Committee. We have made good progress on these ambitions but there is much still to be done, particularly in procuring continuing resource to sustain swim, bike and run in the region in future.

Therefore, the SW Committee are looking forward to being even more proactive in serving our sports community in 2024.

So, here’s to a successful 2024 everyone!

**Jane Wild**

**SW Chair and TEC Representative**

**October 2023**