

## Chairman's Report

The club remains steadfast in its objectives of;

1. Serving the community in which it sits
2. Providing a great place to play hockey
3. Producing good people as well as good players

This report provides an overview of the major achievements of the past season and alludes to some of the targets for next year. It has not been possible to list everything here, so my apologies in advance to those who feel I have left something out.

### **Progress on aims from 19/20 and 20/21 seasons**

1. Improve our communication to members

Katie Arnold was appointed at the start of the season to oversee the club's marketing and communications. As a paid role, she is required to complete 5 hours a week on club matters and it is fair to say that the impact has been dramatic. On top of the obvious output increases to social media, Katie has worked on the website, produced a recruitment booklet, and has helped to pull together several job specs for roles within the club.

The adoption of Spond as the club communication platform, which has provided multiple benefits to members and specifically captains. There is continued work to be done on how we use this tool, especially in relation to the collection of fees, but it is a promising start.

In a season where we have largely not seen each other, it has been wonderful to feel more connected than ever. The first step of Katie's remit has been to engage and communicate to our existing members. As the role develops, there will be a greater strategic focus on raising our profile within the local community.

### Increase our sponsorship revenue

We are extremely grateful to White Springs, who have again been the club's principle sponsor. Through their support we have been able to fund two new posts. As mentioned above the Marketing and Communications officer has made a significant impact. The other role is of a Junior Coordinator, who has taken on the large share of the work of the junior committee this year. The impact of this has meant that coaching and team management have become more centralised. As a result we have been able to attract a number of new coaches to the fold, in light of them not being scared off by the multiple other administrative duties that these jobs can carry. The Junior Coordinator is not to replace the Junior Committee and with a normal season ahead, it is crucial that we see some fresh faces join that body.

With our Marketing in a stronger position, it should be now possible to have a more coherent push on the fundraising and sponsorship front and this will remain a target for 2021/22.

2. Continue to develop our facilities and establish a plan for the next 5-10 years

Unfortunately the virus has seen a significant reduction in local authority interest in the provision of sport, as public sector funding continues to be squeezed. We continue to do what we can with CDC and are in the final stage of negotiating a new user agreement, that should offer some savings and great autonomy over our usage. However the restrictions on pitch side catering at NOA and the lack of funds available to develop this site, mean that we must continue to look for alternatives, both from a capacity and quality of experience angle.

## 2020/21 Review

Little Hockey –The disruption to league hockey this year was clearly a frustration for all clubs. The games that were played seemed to suggest that all the teams playing were in the right leagues, with the Ladies First XI beginning to find some much needed momentum. Sadly though by Christmas we were unable to continue with any structured league matches.

There have been a number of positives to come from the enforced restrictions and the popularity of mid-week intra club training games has been encouraging. Since being able to, we have seen a number of competitive local fixtures against traditional oppositions both hosted by us and also via the Oxfordshire Summer League. A return to traditional block fixtures in the pre-season would be a good opportunity to bond the club and should be considered for future seasons.

EHB restructure – The 2020/21 season saw the end of the South League structures, as the entire country is sucked into an EHB centralised programme. Largely we will see little impact, other than more trips down the A34 and less down the M40. For the top end of the Men's section, it is likely that it will feel like a slight demotion, as the majority of their opposition next year will come from sides in the league below them this year. For the Ladies First XI, they will see a step up in both terms of standard and travel, having effectively been promoted. They will need additional support from the committee in order to ensure a worthwhile experience for the players and coaching staff.

For all other sides, there should be less travel, which on the whole is a good thing, but it will invariably mean more trips to places like Bicester.

I am sure Lesley will mention in her report that this also means the end for the SHUA. I suspect there will be a much larger fall out on the officiating side of the game. The various umpire associations are likely to feel the brunt of the centralisations more severally. With little good will towards EHB from anyone I suspect, there will be less loyalty to the administrative body (SCHUA and its successor), than to their club. My suspicion is that the upshot will be a reduction in the numbers of umpires wishing to be appointed to games, other than by their own club.

## Junior Growth

Numbers in the junior section have continued to rise and we are now seeing competitive sides turning out across boys and girls from U12 through to U16. The mini section of the club has seen considerable growth this year and there is scope to increase the number of competitive experiences for the u8 and u10 age groups. The U6's saw a swell in numbers after the lockdown and there should be a strong base from which to build on in September. Whilst the use of Bloxham for the minis on a Sunday has not been popular with all, it has allowed us to access a better standard of facility, more coaching resources and also access the indoor spaces, as a cold and wet weather alternative. When normality returns, it will also mean that NOA is free for U12-U16 matches, thus avoiding late starts on Sunday afternoons for juniors.

The experience of the juniors is something that needs to be carefully monitored and the junior coordinator will be tasked over the next year to conduct a bench marking exercise against our competitors to see how we measure up. The quality of the coaching on offer, experience of playing and our facilities must be under constant review, with the aim of establishing BHC as the leading club in the area.

## Volunteers

As ever the running of the club would simply not happen without a small army of committed volunteers. The recruitment of a number of paid positions in the club, is not a replacement for our volunteers and each members contribution to the wider running of the club is valued.

As our numbers continue to grow, we are going to need a more coherent approach to the recruitment, retention, allocation and recognition of our volunteers. For this reason I am recommending that a new position, of Head of Work Force (draft title), is established on the committee for the coming season. In their first year in post they will be tasked with identifying all the various volunteering positions and then devising a plan to increase levels of engagement amongst the BHC membership. It is likely that this will see a recommendation for a tiered approach to membership from 2022/23, whereby those who commit to volunteering at a certain level will pay less than those who prefer to turn up and play.

We must ensure that the club is run in a sustainable manner and means there is a balance to be had between the cost of being a member, the quality of provision and the ability for some to simply be involved on a level where they can turn up and play. We understand that not everyone has the capacity to volunteer at certain times of their lives and therefore their commitment to the wider club, might come in the form of a higher subscription fee.

The desire to improve the offer, adhere to ever changing compliance requirements and the nations increasingly busy lives mean that the future of community led sport lies in a hybrid mobile between paid and volunteer positions. The intention is that those paid positions, remove obstacles and increase the enjoyment for those volunteers.

#### Aims for 2021/22

- 1 – Review the quality of our offer for junior playing members, with the view to establishing and 3 year plan to create an environment that is recognised as locally as excellent.
- 2- Develop a plan for the engagement of a larger workforce of volunteers. Members need understand the importance of and be encouraged to give back.
3. Increase the sponsorship levels within the club to continue to support our coaching team.
4. Deliver a programme of continuous development for our coaches and umpires.
5. Support all teams to be competitive in their respective league.

#### **Awards**

None awarded

MDB