

ENGLAND ATHLETICS STRATEGY  
FOR ATHLETICS AND RUNNING: 2021-2032

# Athletes and runners at the heart

Creating opportunities, enhancing experiences  
and powering potential



## CONTENTS

# A longer-term vision on the key challenges and opportunities ahead

Foreword	01-02
Executive summary	03-05
Introduction	06
Our purpose	07
Our vision	08
Our values	09

### Insight into athletics

Athletics in 2021: progress and challenges	11-15
A changing landscape and society	16

### Future focus

Guiding principles	18-21
What you should expect from us	22
What we will focus on	23
Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities	24
Competition	25
Coaches and Officials	26
Participation: young people and running	27
Talent	28
Key supporting activities	29-30
How it all works together	31

### Delivering our strategy

Strategy delivery team	33-34
Strategy delivery structure	35
Finances and investment	36-37
Future investment forecast	38

### Final perspective

Closing statement	40
Thank you	41

## FOREWORD

# For many of us, the year 2020 was unlike any other in living memory.

Whilst the coronavirus pandemic presented significant challenges, it also underlined the huge importance of sport and physical activity in building a healthier, happier and stronger society.



For England Athletics, it gave us an opportunity to think differently and creatively, reset our focus on how we resource our sport, engage and support participants, nurture talent and rebuild for the future.

This strategic plan has been produced with a longer-term vision on the key challenges and opportunities ahead, rather than the traditional four-year perspective.

It is going to take sport and wider society time to recover from the impact of COVID-19, but we recognise that to deliver sustainable success we need to give strategies and programmes longer to embed and take root.

There is much we should all be proud of, both in terms of how the sport was evolving prior to 2020, and how it responded.

The number of people involved in athletics and running has been increasing. This is thanks to the substantial contributions from our member clubs, other organisations and individuals – many of whom devote their time voluntarily and for the good of others.

Progress has been made against some of the objectives set out in the strategic plan *Athletics and Running: for everyone, forever (2017-2021)*, specifically:

- increasing our membership and growing the number of licensed road races
- diversifying how England Athletics is resourced
- introducing programmes to engage social runners and converting them to club runners
- providing resources for clubs, schools and community groups to engage young people in our sport
- enhancing our digital capabilities and forging more collaborative relationships with our partners UK Athletics (UKA) and the other Home Country Athletics Federations (HCAFs) of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Yet there is still much more to do.

Despite a growth in participation amongst women, girls and disabled people, there remain stubborn inequalities in our sport that we need to address.

We still have work to do in diversifying our coaching, officials and volunteer base, whilst ensuring our governance structures are inclusive and reflect the wider sport. We also know track and field athletics participation is declining amongst young people. These are shared problems that will only be countered if we define solutions together.

This strategic plan details our ambition to build on the progress made since 2017 and address these challenges so we can play our part in creating opportunities, enhancing experiences and powering potential through to 2032.

It has been devised in direct alignment with the new UK-wide strategy *Athletics Unified (2020-2032)*, developed in partnership with UKA and the HCAFs, and sets out our specific roles and responsibilities as well as our purpose, vision and strategic priorities.

It identifies where we are best-placed to lead and support others in our vibrant athletics and running ecosystem.

Throughout the development of this strategy we have sought the views of our Regional Councils, key stakeholders, volunteers, athletes, runners and staff as they will all direct how we work moving forward. This reflects the collaborative approach which will deliver success alongside the wider athletics and running community.

In closing, I must thank again those volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring our sport back safely and securely when it was possible to do so. Between August and October 2020 there were c.300 licensed track and field competitions with 35,000 performances across England. This, together with more than 300 adapted licensed road races provided by clubs and other organisations with 60,000 performances, meant we were able to return to training and competitions during those times when restrictions were eased.

Without the innovation, passion and commitment of club volunteers this would have been impossible. It is this 'can-do' attitude that will help us to continually evolve and ensure future success.

We are stronger together, as one family, and must remember that putting athletes and runners at the heart of everything we do is always the most important thing.



**Chris Jones**  
CEO, England Athletics



# Strategic plan 2021-2032

This new England Athletics Strategic Plan 2021-2032 has been developed and delivered following extensive consultation with a multitude of stakeholders from across athletics and running at every level of the sport.

What follows is a robust and clearly defined future direction which places athletes and runners at the heart of everything we will do over the next 12 years as the sport's membership and development body in England.



## Our overarching purpose and vision are:

**Purpose:** “To inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport.”

**Vision:** “For athletics to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish.”

Building on our purpose and vision, this strategic plan provides a detailed framework as we enter an exciting period for the sport, including a ‘home’ Commonwealth Games in 2022.

## Guiding principles

We want every participant involved in the sport, whether they are an athlete, runner, coach, official, leader, volunteer, competition provider, facility operator, parent or guardian to see and experience first-hand the guiding principles which continue to drive our work. These are to:

- put the athlete and runner first
- encourage high standards and ethical success across all aspects of our work
- enhance experiences
- work together in partnership not in isolation.

## UK-wide alignment

England Athletics is committed to the successful delivery of the UK-wide strategy for the sport as developed with UKA and all HCAFs.

This strategic plan focuses on the areas we will lead or influence in ensuring the development of a flourishing infrastructure to allow athletes to thrive through supporting sustainable development of key aspects of the sport. Through the development of UK-wide working groups, England Athletics will lead on club support, participation, schools and facilities, the delivery of coach and officials education and development, the delivery of domestic competition through partners and the development of the talent pathway for young athletes.

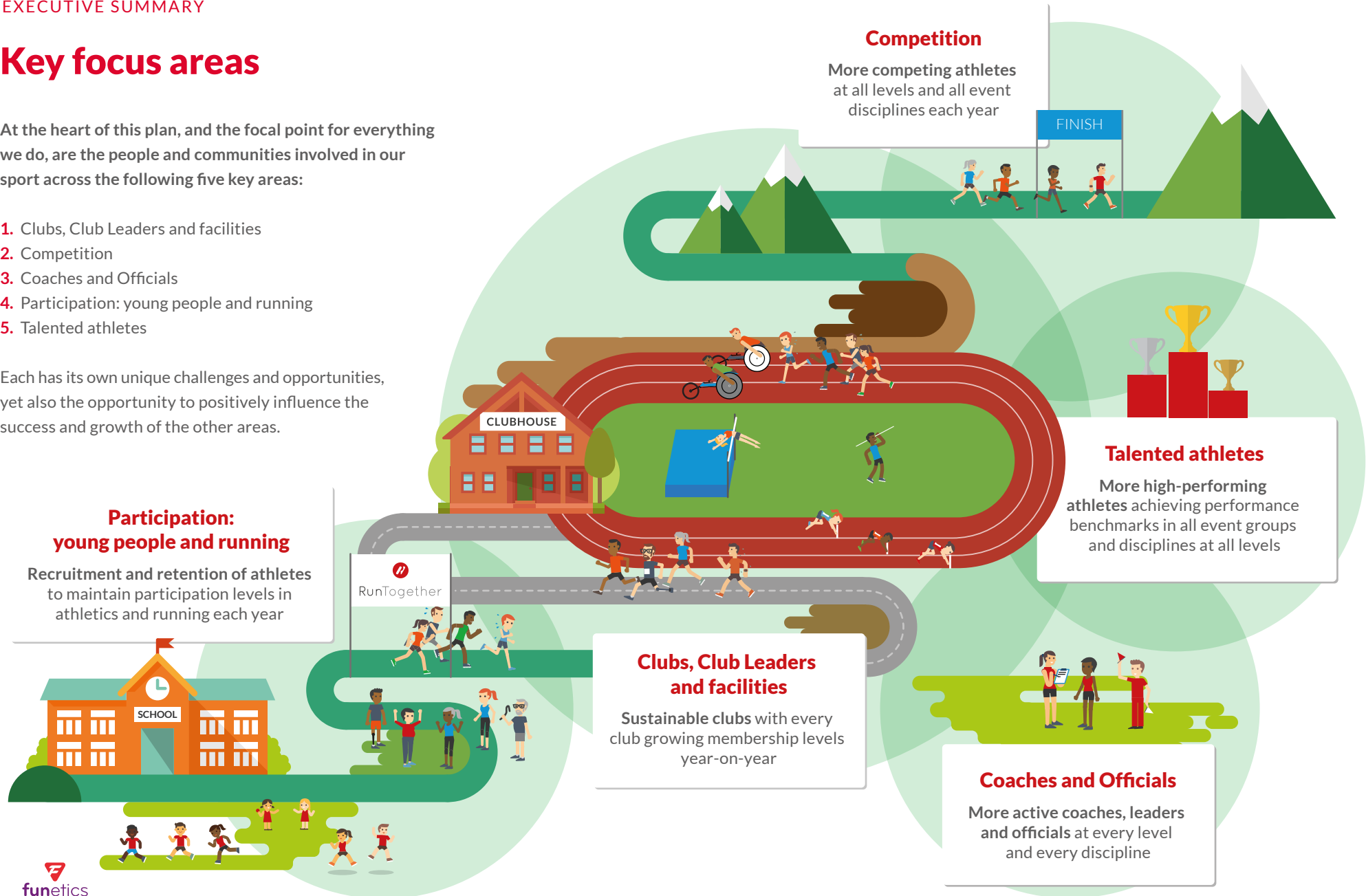
We will also have a strategic influence on performance, coaching, officiating and competition strategy and safeguarding.

# Key focus areas

At the heart of this plan, and the focal point for everything we do, are the people and communities involved in our sport across the following five key areas:

1. Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities
2. Competition
3. Coaches and Officials
4. Participation: young people and running
5. Talented athletes

Each has its own unique challenges and opportunities, yet also the opportunity to positively influence the success and growth of the other areas.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Key supporting activities

There are four key supporting activities that will be essential in enabling us to deliver the strategic priorities and ultimately achieve our goals:

- provide strong **leadership** that builds trust and respect by creating an open and positive culture
- embrace technology by putting **digital first** and encouraging innovation and creativity
- ensure greater **engagement** through sharing of high-quality insight, information and content
- develop **commercial minds** to maximise funding opportunities and diversify income.



## Values

The work we do across these key focus areas will be underpinned by the values we stand for as an organisation and as defined by our purpose.

Values of fun, inspiration, integrity and inclusivity will be evident in our everyday actions and behaviours as England Athletics staff, Councils and Board.

We acknowledge that no sports organisation can truly deliver a successful long-term strategy without a clear **delivery structure** and first-class collaboration with its **key partners**. Indeed, we are proud of our internal and external connectivity and will continue to nurture these relationships as we seek new and exciting opportunities to secure the future success of the sport.

## Finances

As a not-for-profit organisation, we will continue to invest all monies generated back into our athletics and running community. To ensure we continue to add value for all our members, we will build on existing revenue streams whilst also exploring new commercial and non-commercial opportunities during this strategy period.

Our focus is clear – to deliver a funding model which ensures we are well-placed to respond accordingly to changes to the UK's economic climate so that we can meet the future demands of the sport:

- increase annual reinvestment level to £9 million
- self-sustainable with public investment at less than 25%
- more resilient membership income through strategy of engagement and member retention
- increase commercial and other diverse sources of income to 20% of total income
- grow income from high-quality services to the sport.



## INTRODUCTION

# Start, stay, succeed

As the membership and development body for grassroots athletics in England, it is important to have a clear strategic plan for the future that outlines how we will help support and develop clubs, competitions, volunteers, coaches and officials so that athletes and runners of all abilities start, stay and succeed in the sport.

In 2017, England Athletics launched its strategic plan – *Athletics and Running: for everyone, forever*. Building on the learnings of the past four years and the opportunities and challenges that still face the sport, *Athletes and Runners at the heart: creating opportunities, enhancing experiences, powering potential*, provides an evolution of the strategy and clear direction from 2021 onwards.

With a renewed sense of purpose, the plan will aim to positively impact and enrich people's lives by enhancing experiences and improving performance through promoting high standards of delivery and engagement across the sport.

By putting the athlete and runner first, we will sustain and improve opportunities for all participants at all levels to thrive.

To ensure we sustain and increase participation at all levels across the sport and nurture talent, we will prioritise our efforts on developing progressive clubs, club leaders and facilities, innovative competitions and an engaged community of volunteers, coaches and officials. Improving the experiences of everyone involved in the sport is important to us.

The Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham presents a unique opportunity for the sport. This event will be a showcase for our talented athletes and a focal point for inspiring a future generation of athletes.

To enable successful delivery of our strategy and align with and contribute to *Athletics Unified* – the UK-wide strategy for the sport 2020-2032, we believe in working together with partners, embracing technology and using an evidence-based approach to create change.

As a not-for-profit organisation, only by maximising diverse revenue streams to reinvest into the sport will we give ourselves every chance of success. Athletics and running can contribute towards a healthy lifestyle and a sense of achievement, whatever the age, ability or background of the participant.

**We will** promote inclusivity in all our actions.

**We will** instil a sense of fun to ensure all athletics and running participants are engaged, excited to be involved in the sport and enjoying themselves.

**We will** aim to provide inspiration and demonstrate commitment to our athletes in recognition of the important role that we must play.

**We will** demonstrate integrity in all that we do to earn respect and to build effective collaborations.

**As a team of passionate individuals – Board members, councillors and staff – we understand the privilege of being able to influence the sport and having the opportunity to help all athletes and runners reach their full potential, whatever their aspiration.**







**OUR PURPOSE**

**To inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport.**

OUR VISION

**For athletics to become  
an inclusive sport where  
everyone belongs and  
can flourish.**



## OUR VALUES

# What we stand for

In delivering the strategy, we will adopt the values we strive to uphold – fun, inspiration, integrity and inclusivity.



### Fun

We want people to get excited about our sport, in a safe environment, and enjoy it.

### Inspiration

We want people in our sport to be inspired and have the ambition to achieve potential at whatever level.

### Integrity

We want people to be respected and treated fairly in our sport that prides itself on transparency.

### Inclusivity

We want to create opportunities for all so that everyone is made to feel welcome and valued in our sport.



# INSIGHT INTO ATHLETICS

# Athletics in 2021: progress and challenges

Over the past four years the sport has moved forward positively in many areas, yet some significant challenges remain.



## Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities

### PROGRESS

There are 1,800 affiliated clubs and member bodies and the number of registered athletes had increased by 40,000 (30%) to 190,000 in 2019. This has dropped to 142,000 in 2020 due to COVID-19. However, the growth was predominantly owing to an increase in running clubs and off-track athletes. Around 30% of clubs have engaged directly with the programmes and services provided by England Athletics and 200 facility providers are working towards TrackMark to ensure club environments are as safe and supportive as possible. In addition, there are 700 club contacts engaged in our MarketingHub, a resource aimed at helping engagement with clubs.

### CHALLENGE

The reach of our interventions has been limited owing to a bespoke, project-based approach to club support. This results in many clubs questioning the value of support and resources provided by the membership and development body. The accelerated change to a digitally-focused approach owing to COVID-19 has shown how much more can be achieved digitally at scale. There needs to be a consistent approach to ensure we are listening to clubs to help them find practical solutions to the problems they face. Many athletes would like clubs to be more safe, welcoming and supportive environments. As the number of running clubs grows, it is essential that we recognise their needs are different to track and field clubs. We need to effectively tailor our services to ensure all our member clubs feel genuinely supported, part of the England Athletics family and see value in the services they receive from us.



## Competition

### PROGRESS

During 2019, there were over 1,600 licensed track and field and cross country competitions year-on-year, participation in masters athletics has seen growth in recent years and innovations in more localised, event-specific competitions have been well-received during 2020 – a year where we have had to deliver differently. There are also nearly 4,000 licensed road races with a growing number of competitors year-on-year.

### CHALLENGE

The sport is seeing decreasing track and field participation levels – down by 3% in the last four years, with at least 30% of young athletes dropping out of the sport each year. We know that track and field competition formats and schedules in many cases do not currently meet the needs of athletes. Research shows that young athletes want a more engaging, social and fun experience that provides for a broader spectrum of ability levels, events that don't take as long and that are closer to home.



## Coaches and Officials

### PROGRESS

The number of leaders has increased by 7,000 (60%), the number of coaches has increased by 2,000 (16%) and the number of officials by 1,000 (20%). Access to high-quality resources through the Athletics Hub platform has increased and over 20,000 coaches and officials have engaged in our recent online webinar programme.

### CHALLENGE

However, we know that this growth is not enough. Clubs still have waiting lists owing to the lack of coaches at all levels and across many event groups. There is also still an overly cumbersome approach to recruiting, developing and retaining officials.

Despite the athlete development model being central to coach education, and evidence that many coaches create an environment for athletes to prosper, many young athletes involved in the research believe that an environment of support and encouragement provided by their coach, is the most important factor in staying in the sport. We need to ensure that development opportunities for coaches allow for greater consistency and quality of delivery.



## Participation: young people and running

### PROGRESS

The total number of regular runners in England continues to hover around 7 million with many new runners entering the sport during the COVID-19 lockdown. The RunTogether social group running programme has increased by 135,000 registered users and the funetics run, jump, throw programme for four to 11-year-olds will continue to grow in schools, communities and clubs during 2021.

### CHALLENGE

Despite continued growth and an increase in diversity in participation, especially amongst women, there is more we can do to better connect social participants with England Athletics so that the core of the sport can benefit.





## Talented Athletes

### PROGRESS

Athletes achieving top 10, 50 and 100 performance thresholds across all event groups increased by 30% between 2016-2019, an average annual increase of 10% against a target of an average 1% per annum over the strategy period. Forty England Teams compete internationally each year. The Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DISE) will develop c.250 talented athletes and their coaches each year over a five-year period. This is a key element of the joint England Athletics and UKA pathway for talented athletes. The club-focused talent pathway will provide central locations nationwide to base activities to develop talented athletes. We deliver 100 targeted events, national, regional and local coach development opportunities each year, engaging over 1,000 targeted athletes and coaches. Over 80% of athlete and coach pairs are satisfied with the support they receive.

### CHALLENGE

The overall growth is predominately driven by off-track endurance events whilst performance in other event groups and event disciplines at certain age groups and genders are in decline. For example, there is specific concern around under-20 men where the number of athletes achieving performance levels is decreasing. Many of the technical events, such as jumps and throws, are seeing a greater decline. There is concern that whilst our overall performance numbers are growing somewhat, performance levels at world-level are improving at a faster rate. In 2019, 14 (4%) of the world's top 10 under-20 athletes across all event groups were English compared to 25 (7%) in 2018. Using a scoring system developed by England Athletics, based on the IAAF rankings of the top 100 senior athletes across all event groups, England are ranked 4th overall behind USA, Kenya and Germany.



## Leadership

### PROGRESS

England Athletics continues to perform well against the Sports Governance Code criteria. We are working more effectively with an improving National and Regional Council structure and our Board is more diverse and representative of the sport than it ever has been. A new collaborative way of working has started through UK-wide strategy and framework agreement with UKA and the other HCAFs of Athletics Northern Ireland, Scottish Athletics, and Welsh Athletics.

### CHALLENGE

Dame Sue Street's review of UK Athletics identified that the relationships between the HCAFs with UKA was an unclear and complicated structure to the sport that creates confusion, inefficiency and disjointed communication. The review also talks of a negatively pervasive culture caused by a lack of collaboration that has caused distrust and disengagement across the sport.



## Engagement

### PROGRESS

Significant effort has been made to improve the quality of information and communication and the level of service that we provide to our members. The MarketingHub allows clubs to access content and collateral to effectively market their club and investment in our email system allows newsletters to be tailored and more relevant. There has been a significant amount of progress made in engagement between the Board and National Council, and National Council and the Regional Councils. There is more work required to ensure clubs see the Regional Councils as an effective and representative conduit to aid with club engagement. Our social media following is now over 200,000 across all platforms and grew by more than 5% during 2020.



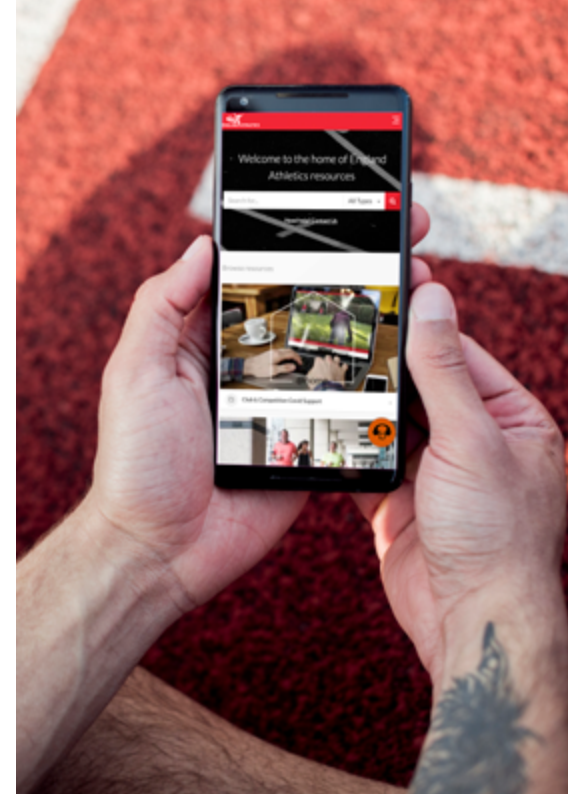
## Digital

### PROGRESS

Since 2017, we have made good progress in digitally transforming our business and the sport. Internal expertise in the form of a Digital Project Manager and Data Analyst champion this area of work and have implemented a digital strategy with the support of expert digital agencies. Our engaging and improved website better shares information with members. New platforms have been developed to help club and athlete management, RunTogether, funetics, education and development opportunities and

### CHALLENGE

However, we are aware that often the level of service that clubs and athletes receive is not effective enough. Therefore, we are aware that the responsiveness and efficiency of our customer service function needs to improve. We can build on our current member rating of less than 6.8 out of 10 for our service.



### CHALLENGE

We know the importance of taking a digital-first approach and have built a track record of delivering. However, we know how much more is possible and these areas need significant digital investment to allow us to respond and adapt further. For example, the area of competition requires significant digital improvements to help athletes find and enter events and receive results, for event providers and officials to better manage an event, and for fans or parents to have a better viewing experience on the day.





## Commercial and investment

### PROGRESS

England Athletics is a not-for-profit organisation with the sole aim of reinvesting what income is generated back into the sport to support the delivery of grassroots athletics and running activity. We have successfully reduced our dependency on Sport England from 55% in 2017 to 33% in 2020. Several commercial partners have been secured providing an additional annual income of c.£500k. In addition, increases in alternative income streams have allowed affiliation and athlete registration fees to remain static for longer periods.

### CHALLENGE

It is important that we do not become overly reliant on one source of income and are always mindful of how much expectation there is on existing members of the England Athletics family. It is important that we have other alternative sources of income to help re-invest back into the sport without placing further financial burden on clubs and athletes. However, there needs to be an understanding across the sport that improvement in standards of competition and facilities will require greater levels of investment than are currently available.



## Equality, diversity and inclusion

### PROGRESS

More than half of all current competitive track and field athletes under the age of 17 are female. Over 50% of Run Leaders are women and over 100,000 women have been engaged in running through the RunTogether programme. Over one third of all athletes and runners are from an area of deprivation, and the 'sport for all' research conducted by Sport England states that Black adults and young people are significantly over-represented in track and field athletics. Since 2017, the number of disabled registered athletes and runners has increased by 20%.

### CHALLENGE

We must not think that the job is done. In fact, in many ways it hasn't even started. There are still significant steps to be taken until athletics is a sport where everyone feels welcome and that they belong, so that they can flourish and achieve their full potential. The governance structure of athletics and running in England still has a way to go until it is fully representative of the sport that it serves. Inclusivity is one of our core values and we need to work towards a more inclusive personnel in all areas of the sport.

## A changing landscape and society

2020 presented unique challenges that fundamentally changed the way people live their lives, spend their time and assess their priorities. As we move forward into a new period for the sport, we need to be mindful of the following trends and adapt how we deliver and design our programmes and services to ensure we meet the needs of our members.



### Activity levels

Whilst running provides an accessible form of exercise and many new occasional runners have entered the sport, there is still a large disparity in activity levels. Less affluent communities, women, disabled people and people from ethnically diverse communities have the lowest activity levels. How can we capitalise on the growth in running and strengthen our sport by making it even more appealing to all communities?

### Health and wellbeing

There is a greater level of awareness regarding the importance of physical and mental health and wellbeing. It is important to ensure that new and existing participants within the sport know how much benefit athletics and running can have on maintaining a healthier lifestyle.

### Online

Online is here to stay and engaging content is key. We need to think about how we keep our content new and relevant. Customer journey and site speed is essential to keep people engaged.

### Environments and communities

Travel habits have changed. People are generally more economical with their time. Keeping provision local and accessible is going to be essential moving forward, which highlights the future importance of safe and welcoming clubs at the heart of communities and engaging local competition.

### Experiences

The experience economy becomes even more important as people are searching for opportunities where they can make memories and tell stories. The outdoors, escapism, health and emotional wellbeing and friends and family are becoming more important.

### Recovery and sustainability

There are long-term economic challenges facing the country and it will be important to maintain delivery of athletics and running as an affordable sport.

However, the stark reality is that many aspects of the sport require significant investment to ensure provision meets the needs of the sport. Alternative income streams and innovative approaches are required to help generate much-needed investment in facilities and competition structures to help sustain and grow the sport, without existing participants having to foot the bill.

**The challenge is adapting, responding, remaining relevant and creating opportunities for the sport to move forward effectively together.**



KLUBBEN  
& STØTTE  
PLATTELUND

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FUTURE  
FOCUS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**To create opportunities  
and an environment where  
the needs of the athlete  
and runner come first.**





**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**To encourage high standards and ethical success across all aspects of our work.**

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To enhance experiences.





GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**To work together  
in partnership.**

## FUTURE FOCUS

# What you should expect from us

To help address the challenges that we will face in the implementation of our purpose and to achieve our vision, our strategic plan will adopt four guiding principles that we believe are essential reference points for everyone in the sport.

### Everything we do will aim to:

- create opportunities and an environment where the needs of the athlete and runner come first
- encourage high standards and ethical success across all aspects of our work
- enhance experiences
- work together in partnership.



## UK-wide goals for the sport

England Athletics is committed to the successful delivery of the UK-wide strategy for the sport as developed with UKA and all HCAFs.

The *Athletics Unified* strategy spanning 12 years from 2020-2032 has three bold and ambitious goals that will move the sport away from a focus on winning medals at all costs, demonstrate our commitment to supporting the core of the sport and prove that putting the needs of athletes and runners first can retain participation levels.

## Participation

Athletics, running and pushing is the nations' choice to stay active – 9 million regular participants by 2032.

## Infrastructure

A world-renowned infrastructure of athletics and running clubs, competitions and coaches that retains over 250,000 registered athletes across the UK by 2032.

## Performance

In 2032, GB & NI will have a representative in every discipline at all senior international events. In 2032, 95% of the Paralympic team will reach their final.

**England Athletics will contribute to this through the delivery of this strategic plan and the following strategic priorities.**





# What we will focus on

All our work will focus on five key strategies. These strategies are clearly in our area of responsibility to influence and improve.



## Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities

**We will:** support and develop clubs to be safe, sustainable and welcoming, be the best they can and create vibrant environments for their athletes.



## Competition

**We will:** support, regulate and work in partnership to influence a modern, safe, inclusive and fun competition structure and pathway across all disciplines that enhance the experience for athletes, coaches, officials and spectators at all levels of the sport.



## Coaches and Officials

**We will:** engage, value and support a respected, expert and athlete-centred coaching workforce to create an inclusive, positive athlete experience.

**We will:** engage, value and support a respected, expert and athlete-centred officiating workforce to support the successful delivery of competitions.



## Participation: young people and running

**We will:** maximise athletics opportunities for young people in schools and communities and enhance their first experiences of the sport to ensure the growth of athletics and running in England is sustained and results in the continued growth of the England Athletics and running family.



## Talent

**We will:** work in partnership to create an inclusive, athlete-centred, integrated, aligned, clear, transparent, connected talent pathway and develop talented athletes and para athletes and their coaches to progress through the pathway to improve performance levels.

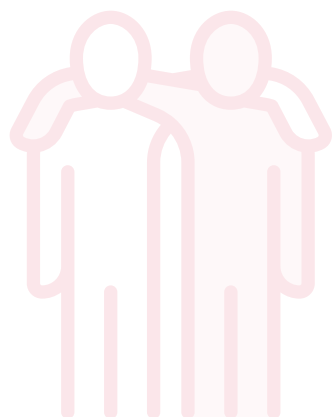
## Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities

### We will:

support and develop clubs to be safe, sustainable and welcoming, be the best they can and create vibrant environments for their athletes.

### Resulting in:

**sustainable clubs** with every club growing membership levels year-on-year.



**It is essential that this strategy and future investment help to develop clubs to be the best they can be and continue to play the integral role in supporting athletes of all abilities.**

**Lorna Boothe MBE, OLY**  
England Athletics Board – Elected Director,  
Coach, Sutton & District AC

Activity	Objective
<b>Club resources, webinars and networking</b>	To develop, manage and refine a portfolio of resources that provide club volunteers and athletes with advice or guidance to help them learn, develop or solve a problem at scale.
<b>Club standards, welfare and inclusion</b>	To ensure all affiliated clubs meet a minimum standards operation and athlete welfare to ensure they are safe, sustainable and inclusive.
<b>Regional and local support</b>	To provide enhanced connection between national support and clubs through an effective Regional Council network and Regional Club support infrastructure.
<b>Facility advice and support service</b>	To collate and share knowledge around facilities such as construction, management, maintenance and innovation to support and influence facility operators to safeguard and/or develop athletics facilities in England.
<b>Celebrate volunteers</b>	Plan and deliver highly-rated, quality annual events to increase engagement with England Athletics' family of member clubs and athletes – Hall of Fame, National Volunteer Awards and Regional Volunteer Awards.

### Indicators of success

- Retain a minimum of 1,800 affiliated clubs and member bodies.
- A minimum of half of all affiliated clubs engaging with England Athletics support service on a regular basis every year.
- A minimum of 80% of affiliated clubs highly valuing the support provided by England Athletics.
- A minimum of 80% of registered athletes rating their clubs as safe and supportive.
- Annual increase in the number of affiliated clubs working towards club standards each year.
- Each affiliated club meeting the minimum standards for safeguarding and welfare.
- All track and field facility providers working towards TrackMark.
- A minimum of half of all affiliated clubs engaging on a regular basis with Regional Councils.

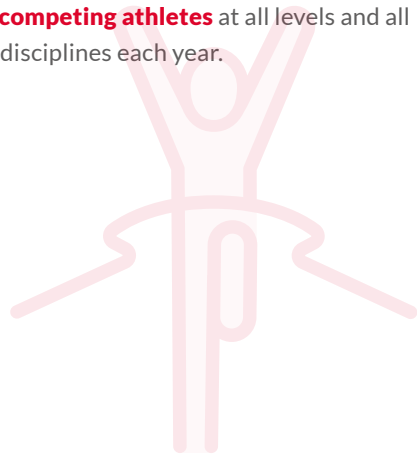
# Competition

## We will:

support, regulate and work in partnership to influence a modern, safe, inclusive and fun competition structure and pathway across all disciplines that enhances the experience for athletes, coaches, officials and spectators at all levels of the sport.

## Resulting in:

**more competing athletes** at all levels and all event disciplines each year.



“

**We know access to high-quality competition is essential in engaging and retaining athletes at all levels. The future of the sport relies on a commitment to improve experiences for everyone involved.**

**Stuart Paul**

England Athletics West Midlands Regional Council Chair, Official, Birchfield Harriers

Activity	Objective
<b>England championships</b>	Deliver a programme of highly-rated English national track and field championships, indoors and outdoors, across age groups from under-15 to senior, providing competitive opportunities to the most talented English athletes.
<b>Road running competition</b>	Work alongside road race organisers to deliver a highly-rated programme of England road running championships and competitions, providing runners and clubs with opportunities to excel at nationwide events.
<b>Competition licensing</b>	Maintain an interface with runbritain and other licensing providers to ensure efficient administrative support to the licensing system across all disciplines*, safeguard licensing income and positively influence competition providers.
<b>Support leagues and competition providers</b>	Maintain strong working relationships with funded and non-funded competition providers and race organisers to ensure high-quality and athlete-focused competitions take place at all levels and disciplines*.
<b>Competition innovation</b>	Position clubs at the heart of delivery – create the tools and templates to promote localised competition formats to grow and sustain track and field participation.

\*Our support will include Track and Field, Cross Country, Road, Hill, Trail, Fell and Race Walking

## Indicators of success

- A minimum of 50,000 competing track and field athletes per annum.
- A minimum of 80% of competing athletes rating their experience as excellent at all licensed competitions.
- A minimum of 80% of parents/spectators rating their experience as excellent at all licensed events.
- Retain number of licensed road races over 4,000.
- A minimum of 80% of member bodies and funded event providers highly valuing the support provided by England Athletics.
- Retain the number of licensed track and field competitions over 1,600.
- An annual increase in the number of clubs that are engaged in new formats of competition.

## Coaches and Officials

### We will:

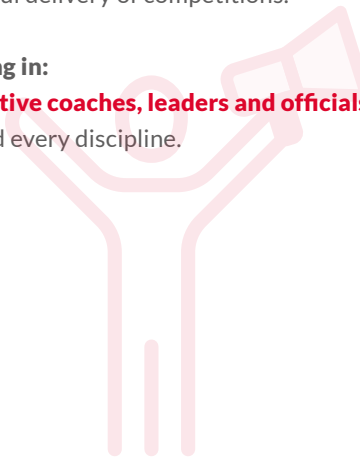
engage, value and support a respected, expert and athlete-centred coaching workforce to create an inclusive, positive athlete experience.

### And...

engage, value and support a respected, expert and athlete-centred officiating workforce to support the successful delivery of competitions.

### Resulting in:

**more active coaches, leaders and officials** at every level and every discipline.



“

**Without the time and commitment from volunteers the sport would not function. We need more coaches and officials, and it is important that we retain a focus on increasing our capacity to support athletes.**

**Janice Kaufman**

England Athletics North East Regional Council  
Chair, Coach, Gateshead Harriers & AC

Activity	Objective
<b>Coach, leader and teacher education</b>	Deliver programme of high-quality physical and online coaching education courses to facilitate recruitment and growth in the numbers of coaches, leaders and teachers.
<b>Coach, leader and teacher development</b>	Deliver a programme of high-quality online development workshops/webinars/conferences to facilitate retention in the numbers of coaches, leaders and teachers.
<b>Officials education</b>	Work with UKA and other HCAFs to influence and deliver a simplified, less bureaucratic programme of officials education courses to meet demand and to drive recruitment of officials.
<b>Officials development</b>	Work with UKA and other HCAFs to deliver a programme of high-quality online development webinars/conferences to facilitate retention in the numbers of officials to ensure capacity to deliver competitions.

### Indicators of success

- Annual increase in the number of active leaders/teachers across all disciplines.
- Annual increase in the number of active coaches across all disciplines.
- Annual increase in the number of active officials across all disciplines.
- Annual reduction in the number of clubs with waiting lists.
- Annual reduction in the number of licensed competitions operating without required officials.
- Minimum of 80% of leaders, teachers, coaches and officials highly valuing the support provided by England Athletics.
- Minimum of 50% of leaders, teachers, coaches and officials accessing development opportunities on a regular basis every year.
- Minimum of 80% of registered athletes rating their coach as supportive and developmental.
- An annual increase in the proportion of women, people from ethnically diverse communities and disabled coaches across all qualification levels.

## Participation: young people and running

### We will:

maximise athletics opportunities for young people in schools and communities and enhance their first experiences of the sport.

### And...

ensure the growth of running in England is sustained and results in the continued growth of the England Athletics and running family.

### Resulting in:

**recruitment and retention of athletes** to maintain participation levels in athletics and running each year.



**Improving the experiences of children as they enter the sport and making sure more people have access to the benefits that athletics and running bring is key to the long-term health of the sport.**

**Julian Starkey**

England Athletics South East Regional Council  
Chair, Coach, Official, Bracknell AC

Activity	Objective
<b>funetics</b>	To deliver the fundamental athletics programme for four to 11-year-old children delivered by a workforce of dynamic providers, aimed at improving the first experience of running, jumping and throwing.
<b>RunTogether</b>	To deliver the RunTogether running participation programme supporting England Athletics to leverage future investment to assist with growth of the programme.
<b>Athlete registration and membership</b>	Effectively administer the club affiliation and athlete registration process, removing barriers and ensuring that member clubs can affiliate and register their athletes easily and quickly. Provide outstanding customer service to the England Athletics family via phone, email and social media, to ensure volunteers and athletes are supported and that England Athletics is perceived as a helpful and supportive member body.
<b>Personal Best Foundation</b>	To establish a charitable foundation to improve access to track and field athletics for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Indicators of success

- 10,000 young people engaged in funetics per year.
- 10,000 new RunTogether users per year.
- 5,000 users of new products and services per year.
- Annual reduction in % churn of registered athletes.
- Minimum of 80% of registered athletes highly-valuing the England Athletics quality of service.
- Annual increase in awareness, familiarity and favourability of England Athletics amongst registered athletes.
- An increase in running participation in England to 8 million by 2032.
- An annual increase in the proportion of women, people from ethnically diverse communities and disabled athletes across all programmes.

## Talent

### We will:

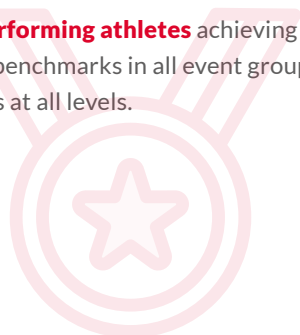
work in partnership to create an inclusive, athlete-centred, integrated, aligned, clear, transparent, connected talent pathway.

### And...

develop talented athletes and para athletes and their coaches to progress through the pathway to improve performance levels.

### Resulting in:

**more high-performing athletes** achieving performance benchmarks in all event groups and disciplines at all levels.



“

**As someone who has gone through the talent system, having a supportive pathway is imperative. Birmingham 2022 provides an opportunity for our athletes to perform at the highest level and for us to showcase what is great about athletics.**

**Kelly Sotherton**

Olympic Medallist

Team England's Track and Field Team Leader

Activity	Objective
Talent pathway	Positioning clubs at the heart of delivery to develop coaches and an infrastructure that will be central to the delivery of the talent strategy and inclusive athlete talent pathway.
England Teams	Deliver a programme of representative teams across road, cross country and track and field to provide developing elite athletes with opportunities to compete at top level domestic and international events.
CWG 2022 and CWYG 2023	Deliver a successful Commonwealth Games (CWG) in Birmingham 2022 and Commonwealth Youth Games (CWYG) in 2023.

### Indicators of success

- A minimum of 80% of all talent pathway athletes achieving a personal best each year.
- A representative across all event groups and disciplines at all age group major events and international teams.
- 29 medallists and a representative in every event at CWG 2022.
- A minimum of 80% of talented athletes highly valuing the quality of service and support provided by England Athletics and coaches on the talent pathway.
- An annual increase in the proportion of athletes from ethnically diverse communities at all tiers of the talent pathway.

## FUTURE FOCUS

# Key supporting activities

There are four key supporting activities that will be essential in enabling us to deliver the strategic priorities and ultimately achieve our goals.



## Leadership

### We will:

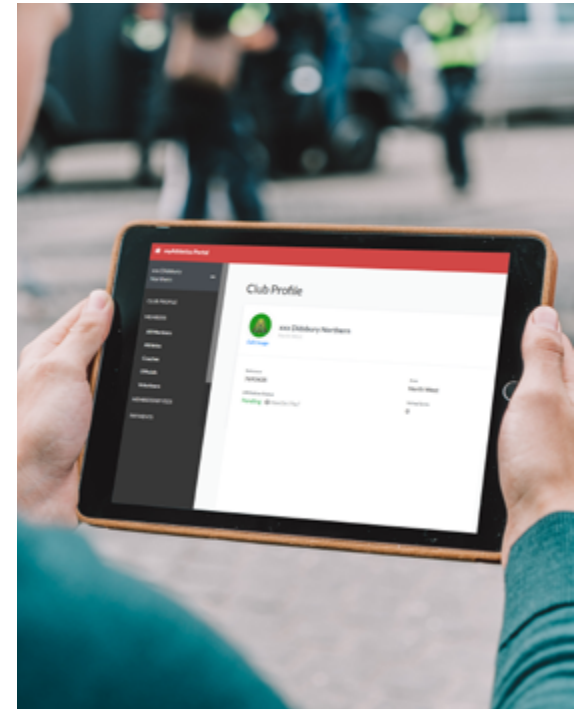
- provide strong leadership and transparent governance representative of the athletics and running family in England
- build the trust and respect of both the England Athletics family of member clubs and partners, and the wider athletics and running community, by listening to their views and providing services that make a difference
- create a positive culture by challenging negative behaviour and encouraging positive interactions
- commit to being transparent and accountable to our membership and the wider athletics and running community and, wherever possible, create open channels for people to engage with us
- work in partnership with clubs, competitions and event providers to deliver activity ourselves and support others who are better placed to deliver
- work hard to be forward-thinking in setting ambitions and goals and openly share progress, challenges and successes.



## Digital-first approach

### We will:

- embrace technology and enhance digital systems to help people in the sport
- improve the way we use technology and information, embracing digital innovation in order to move the sport and the work we deliver forward as a vital part of our strategy
- prioritise the areas where digital transformation will have the biggest impact on improving athlete experiences and making volunteers' lives easier
- improve our digital footprint allowing us to offer activity at scale, increasing our reach and inclusivity.





## Engagement

### We will:

- develop, manage and share high-quality insight, information and engaging content to help delivery and effective communication
- work with and through our own consultative structure of Regional and National Councils, as well as undertake simple annual surveys in which everyone in the athletics and running community can share their views on what we are trying to achieve, and how we are progressing
- create a simple feedback channel so that those who use our programmes and services can offer more timely feedback and offer suggestions on how we can make our processes more user-friendly. We will act upon this feedback
- continue to strive to deliver a representative and fit-for-purpose governance structure and adhere to all codes recommended by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Sport England
- develop our understanding of our customers and use that information to improve and refine the services and processes we provide
- put the experience of those engaged in our sport at the centre of the changes and decisions we make
- commit to do what we say we will do, and thereby build trust and strengthen our relationship with our England Athletics family.



## Commercial minds

### We will:

- develop our assets to maximise funding and diversify income to reinvest back into the sport
- invest in knowledge and skills internally and become self-sufficient in developing commercial and public-sector income. To deliver our purpose and make our vision a reality, we need to become more sustainable and, where appropriate, support and work with our clubs and other organisations
- work with clubs to develop a longer-term view of the cost of affiliation, moving towards a system whereby we can minimise any changes to affiliation fees in the future
- identify and secure more varied sources of income both in the public and private sector
- promote additional benefits to commercial partners and explore alternative fundraising
- support our partners in securing additional income wherever we can and celebrate their successes alongside our own as contributing to the sustainability of the sport. England Athletics knows that income into the wider sport has huge associated benefits for the England Athletics family and wider athletics and running community.





# How it all works together

**Purpose:** “To inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport.”

**Vision:** “For athletics to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish.”

## Guiding principles

Athlete-centred environments

High standards and ethical success

Collaborative working

Enhanced experiences

## Areas of focus, goals & activities



### Participation

Recruitment and retention of athletes

funetics

RunTogether

Athlete registration and membership

Personal Best Foundation



### Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities

Sustainable clubs

Club resources, webinars and networking

Club standards, welfare and inclusion

Regional and local support

Facility advice and support service

Celebrate volunteers



### Coaches and Officials

More active coaches, leaders and officials

Coach, leader and teacher education

Coach, leader and teacher development

Officials education

Officials development



### Competition

More competing athletes

England championships

Road running competition

Competition licensing

Support leagues and competition providers

Competition innovation



### Talent

More high-performing athletes

Talent pathway

England teams

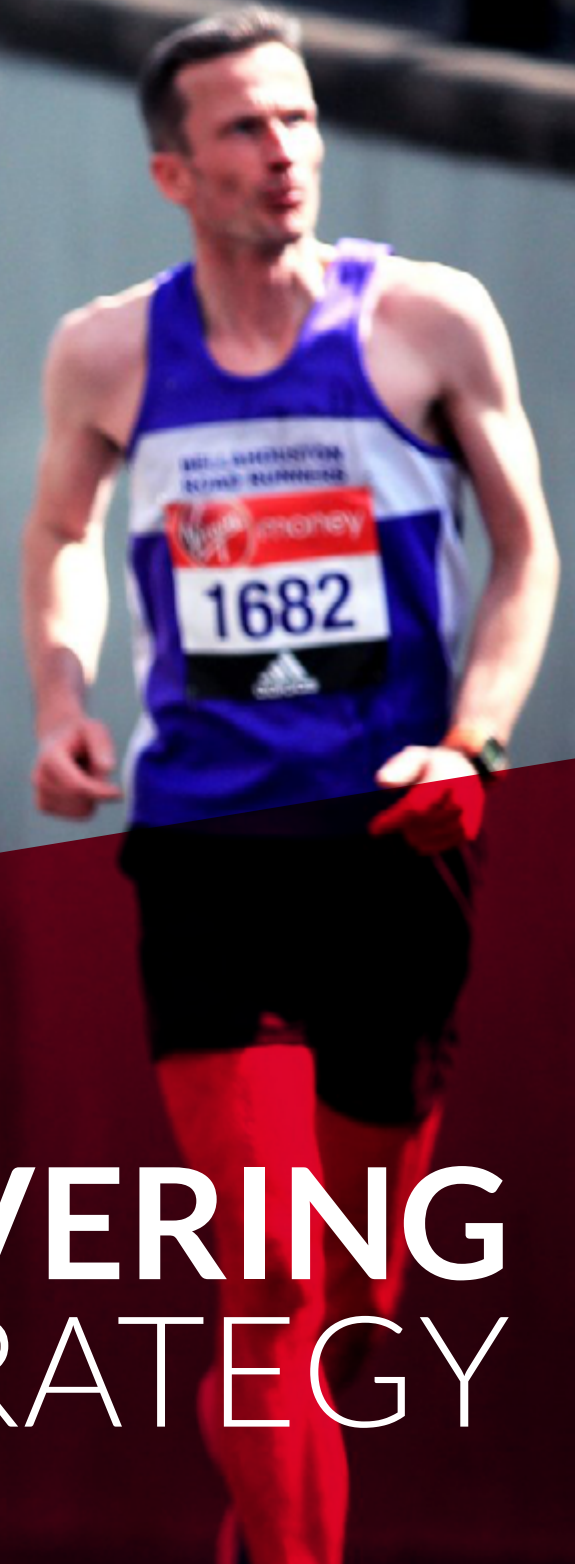
CWG & CWYG

Leadership

Digital-first

Engagement

Commercial minds



**DELIVERING  
OUR STRATEGY**

## Strategy delivery team

### England Athletics Board

The Board of England Athletics, diverse and representative of the sport it serves, will oversee the delivery of the strategy. The Board is made up of two members of National Council, two Directors elected by the membership, one Executive Director and six independent Directors bringing expertise, experience and perspective from other sports.

### England Athletics delivery: core staff, expert consultants and partners

England Athletics has established a staffing structure that will effectively service important areas of work critical to delivering this strategic plan and providing support to our members.



### National and Regional Councils

The nine Regional Councils act as the representative body for member clubs at a local level and will play an essential role in three pivotal areas to aid delivery and maintain member engagement:

- generating feedback and ideas from clubs to develop insight to ensure support provided is solving problems and genuinely making a difference and is valued. This can be generated from networks etc.

- conduit of information to clubs to aid effective communication so clubs feel informed, involved and valued
- providing local knowledge to help support important national processes such as club affiliation, licensing, competition planning and education needs.

Two departments will focus on the delivery of programmes and services:

#### Clubs and participation

Including direct support, club resource production, facility development, club-focused competitions, club participation, inclusion and road running club support.

#### Coaching and athlete development

Including talent development, England Athletics national competitions, coaching and Commonwealth Games.

Two departments will underpin the activity delivery and provide high-quality member engagement:

#### Operations

Including member services, marketing, communications, digital and research.

#### Finance

Including governance structures and business development.



## Regional networking

A network of regional expert consultants will provide an extra layer of local support and development for coaches and clubs.

## Partnerships

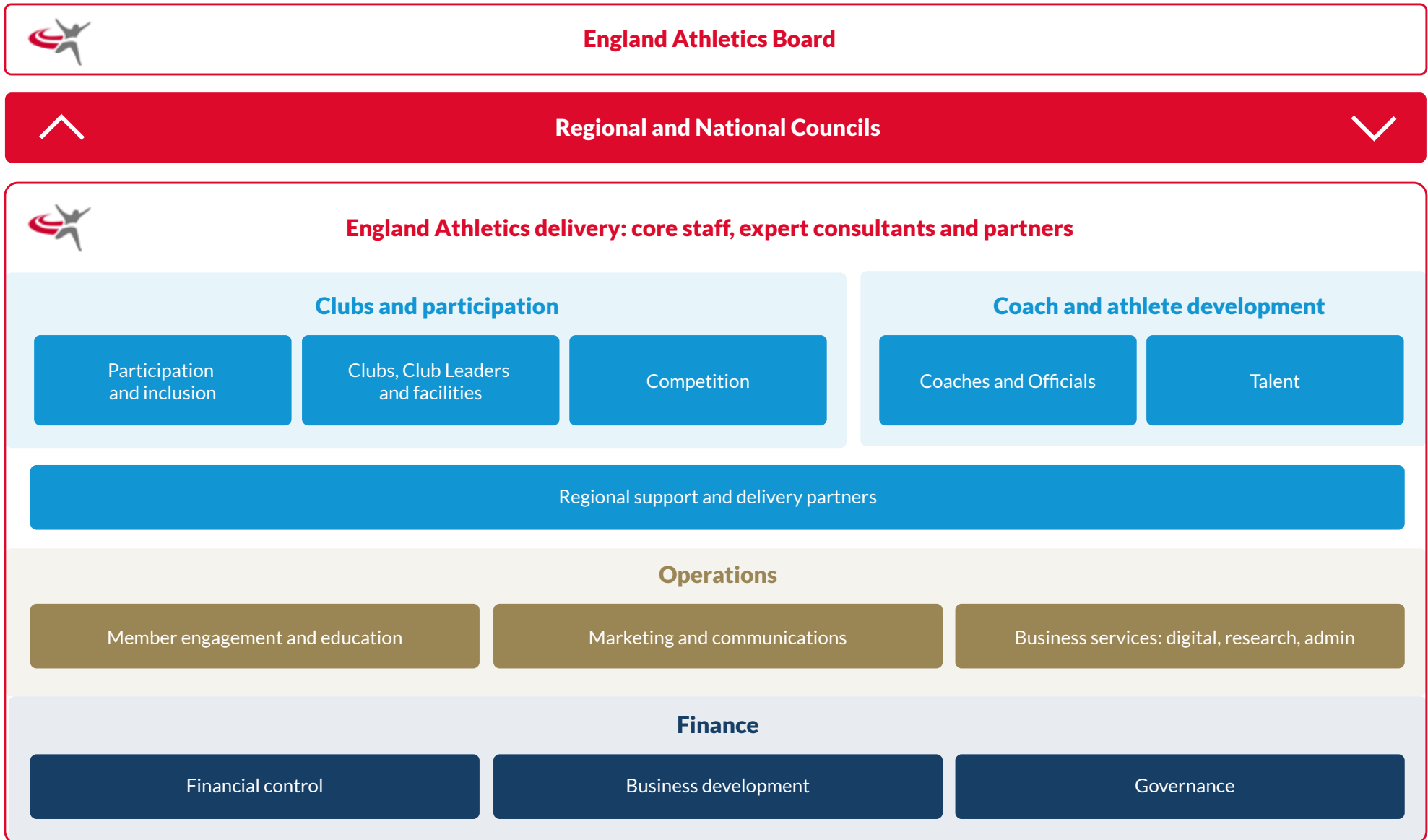
England Athletics will not be able to deliver this strategic plan alone. Effective collaboration and partnership working will be required across all priority areas and disciplines.



This will include UKA, other HCAFs, leagues, competition providers, associations, event providers, commercial partners, specialist agencies, technology providers and many more.

Area of focus	Key partners and stakeholders
Participation: young people and running	Schools, Teachers, Youth Sport Trust (YST), funetics delivery providers, RunTogether groups, running event providers, London Marathon, parkrun, Running All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Active Partnerships
Clubs, Club Leaders and facilities	Clubs, volunteers, member bodies, facility providers
Competition	National Athletics League (NAL), Youth Development League (YDL), leagues, area competition providers, English Schools' Athletic Association (ESAA), English Cross Country Association (ECCA), Fell Runners Association (FRA), Trail Running Association (TRA), Race Walking Association (RWA), British Milers Club (BMC), British Masters Athletic Federation (BMAF), County Associations
Coaches and Officials	Tutors, Coaches, Officials, Leaders
Talent	Coaches, Commonwealth Games England, Athletes Commission

# Strategy delivery structure



## Finances and investment

The economic climate in the UK continues to be subject to change, with the pace of that change increasing in recent years, particularly in the sports sector.

It is important that England Athletics stays attuned to those changes, understands the potential impact to both the sport and the organisation, and ensures that we are well-placed to respond accordingly.



### Not-for-profit

England Athletics is a not-for-profit organisation whereby income generated is reinvested back into the sport to deliver the strategic plan and ultimately benefit our members and stakeholders.

### Membership resilience

As a membership body, the strategy we have established sets out our ambition to increase the resilience of our affiliation and athlete registration income. Primarily, this will be achieved through improved engagement with clubs and ensuring that we continually demonstrate value.

England Athletics recognises the importance of ensuring the additional income generated from membership growth is both invested into the sport and the organisation's priorities, as well as reinvesting in membership and other core services. This will grow the ability of the organisation to support a larger membership base and improve the quality of service to our members.



**England Athletics recognises the importance of maintaining high-quality services at reasonable prices for the athletics and running community and will aim to ensure these services cover their costs.**

The result will be improved retention levels of existing registered athletes and more clubs registering a higher proportion of their members with England Athletics.

The aim is to retain 225,000 registered athletes and 1,800 clubs and member bodies providing an income of £3.75 million per annum that will represent no more than 40% of our annual income.

## Commercial

The commercial sponsorship, rights sales and partnerships sector has undergone considerable change in the last 15 years. Organisations are looking for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) investments or mutually beneficial marketing partnerships rather than traditional rights sales. In addition, an economic downturn has created a particularly challenging climate.

To best secure additional income in this area it is vital that England Athletics develops its own internal insight and commercial capability.

## Other income sources

The delivery of other programmes, outside the core membership, will generate income in addition to their primary objective of driving participation. For example, the delivery of funetics in schools and community settings will generate income, as will retail offerings to the RunTogether community.

## Public sector

**We are clear that we must be focused on determining our own organisation's strategy and priorities, before seeking to identify compatible and mutually beneficial partnerships with public and third-sector funding organisations.**

**An important aspect of developing long-term commercial partnerships is community engagement.**

The development of an effective commercial plan with UKA and other HCAFs will also be essential in what has become an increasingly challenging marketplace. This will enable us to target partners with compatible ambitions to grow our commercial income, which will be invested into the sport.

**We will identify other opportunities to generate income from outside the core of the sport to reinvest back into activity that benefits the England Athletics family.**

Over the past four years we have become less reliant on investment from Sport England, and whilst the alignment between our new strategy and the emerging strategy of Sport England is encouraging, we also recognise that public funding is increasingly insecure.

Engagement is driven by the perceived value of the target community. Therefore, it is essential that all commercial partnerships provide genuine value to our membership.

Over the past four years our commercial income has increased by 400% to over £500k and, whilst 2020 has been a difficult year, we will look to recover and significantly grow our commercial income over the next 12 years.

We will also explore other methods of fundraising to increase investment in athletics and running. For example, the development of a charitable foundation may attract investment that wouldn't otherwise have been available through more traditional partners. We see this as a significant opportunity to increase investment into the sport at a level of c.£1 million per annum by the end of the strategy period.

Having now established clear priorities and ambitions, we will continue to work in partnership with Sport England to meet mutual goals in the future with the aim of sustaining the current level of investment of c.£2 million per annum over subsequent funding cycles from 2022 onwards.

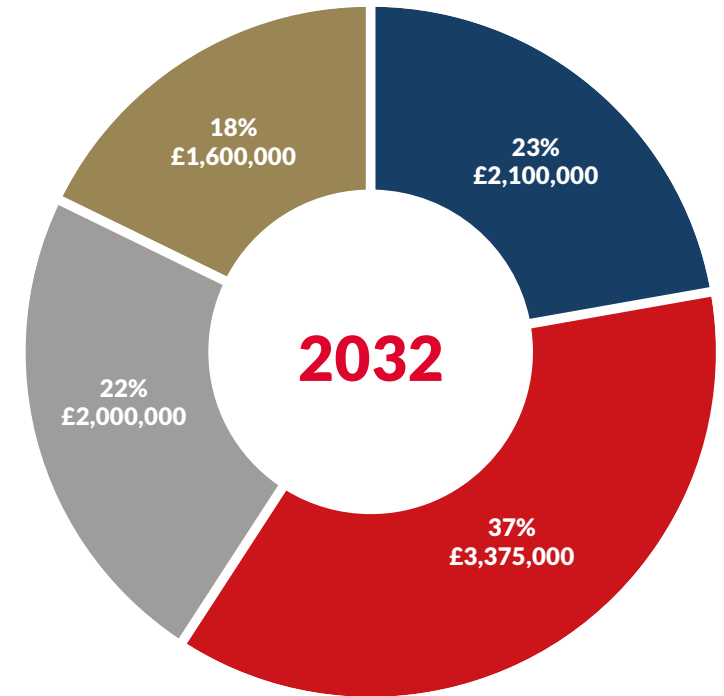
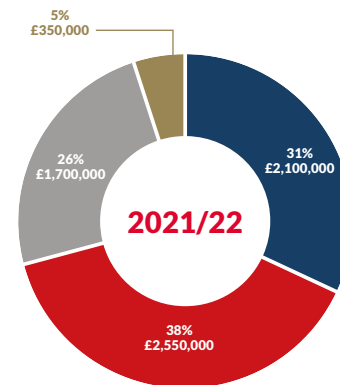
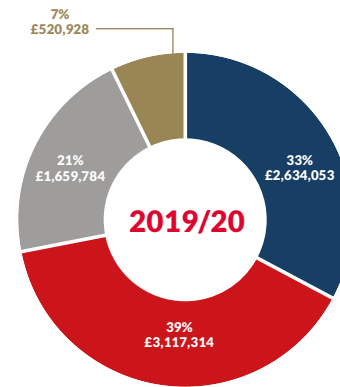
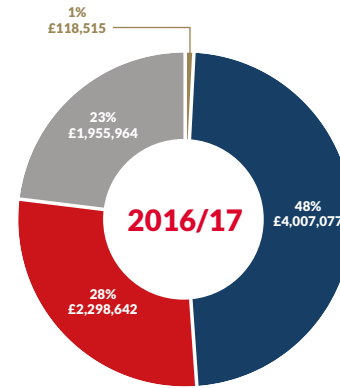
# Future investment forecast

In a constantly changing climate, we need to continue to challenge our dependencies, with the ultimate ambition of reducing the organisation’s reliance on any single funding source. We continue to use different financial scenarios to plan, in light of potential changes to member behaviour, public sector funding and the commercial partnerships sector.

These diagrams show how key funding sources have changed over time. A forecasted funding model for this strategic plan will result in a turnover of £9 million to reinvest back into athletics and running.

## Financial strategy

- Increase annual reinvestment level to £9 million.
- Become self-sustainable with public investment at less than 25%.
- More resilient membership income through strategy of engagement and member retention.
- Increase commercial and other diverse sources of income to 20% of total income.
- Grow income from high-quality services to the sport.



**Key:**  
 | Public  
 | Memberships and affiliation  
 | Core programmes and services  
 | Commercial





# FINAL PERSPECTIVE

## CLOSING STATEMENT

**Athletics is where it all begins. Learning to run, jump and throw is the foundation for a lifetime of activity.**

From playground to podium our sport offers everybody, irrespective of size, shape, cultural background or disability, the opportunity to achieve great things and to live a healthier and happier life.

We want to help athletes of all backgrounds and abilities to flourish and reach their full potential. To develop a successful and inclusive talent pathway we need to create a world-class support system of clubs, coaches, officials and competition.

To make sure this system thrives with a continuous supply of athletes, we need to create opportunities for more people to find the sport and, from there, sustain their participation in the sport.

The key to sustaining participation will be improving experiences for everyone involved and putting the needs of athletes and runners at the heart of everything we do.

## THANK YOU

**We would like to thank those from the athletics and running community, including our members and partners, whose thoughtful and insightful feedback has helped shape the future direction of our sport, as outlined in this strategic plan.**

We also extend our thanks to the Board Task & Finish group, National Council and Regional Council for their vital contributions and for playing a key role in the check and challenge process.

### **Engagement activity & development process**

The tables that follow outline the inclusive engagement stretching back to July 2019, that was put in place to inform and enable the creation of this strategic plan. This excludes a series of webinars, engagement activity and the daily feedback England Athletics staff gather through their conversations with people across the sport, which are other important sources of insight that helped to shape the strategic plan. We are committed to the continuation of this collaborative approach, finding the best ways to engage with individuals and groups throughout the England Athletics family to ensure successful implementation of this strategy for the benefit of the sport and all its participants.

## Stage 1: strategic framework

Activity	2019						2020		
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2019/20 club and athlete engagement – 3,000+ athlete/350+ club responses									
Review of feedback, research, other surveys including in-depth track and field research – c.800 young current/lapsed athletes and volunteer survey – c.1,000 coaches, officials and club volunteers									
SWOT & PEST									
Review alignment with <i>An Athletic Nation</i>									
Establish Task & Finish group and conduct first meeting									
All council conference strategy workshop									
Regional Council online survey									
All staff workshops									
National Council update									
2nd Task & Finish group meeting									
Promote and test emerging themes via England Athletics website feedback form and podcast									
Review alignment with Sport England emerging strategic direction									
Board update and discussion: pre-board									
Develop draft purpose, vision, mission, values, guiding principles, strategic priorities and supporting activities									
National Council meeting presentation									
Final Task & Finish group meeting									
National Council final review									
Final draft purpose, vision, mission, values, guiding principles, strategic priorities and supporting activities									26 <sup>th</sup>

## Stage 2: strategic plan

Activity	2020										2021		
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Delay stage 2 process until 1st July (owing to Covid-19)	■												
Street review – UK-wide strategy process launched – alignment requirement			■										
Stage 2 Task & Finish group approval				■									
UK-wide strategy development (aligned to England Athletics strategic framework and insight)			■	■									
Joint England Athletics/UKA club webinars – test guiding principles and priorities				■	■								
Online survey – testing guiding principles and priorities – 300 responses				■	■								
Stage 2 Task & Finish group meeting – key activities					■								
Ongoing staff updates					■								
Board update, discussion and feedback					■								
Stage 2 Task & Finish group meeting – UK-wide strategy alignment						■							
Board update, discussion and feedback							■						
Stage 2 Task & Finish group meeting – outcomes, investment and delivery structure								■					
All council conference update and workshops (key themes)								■					
Ongoing staff updates								■	■				
Stage 2 Task & Finish group drafting feedback									■				
National Council update									■				
Board update									■				
Finalise strategic plan and creative									■	■			
Board approval											■ <sup>28<sup>th</sup></sup>		
Stakeholder engagement plan – councils, clubs, athletes, leagues, other stakeholders											■	■	■
Operationalise strategy year 1 (2021/22)											■	■	■

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[England Athletics core staff](#)

[England Athletics Board and National, Regional Councils](#)

