**Chairman’s Report: March 2021**

I am writing this report having just watched our GB Athletes on TV compete in the European Indoor Championship and seeing these events, I still get the same thrill of being involved in this fantastic sport as I did when I first starting training, competing, winning and losing in my chosen middle-distance events as a 10-year-old boy that came to Basingstoke as part of the London overspill project in the 1970’s.

I reflected on the amount of effort and commitment that must go into organising an event like the European Championships for the athletes, coaches, officials and all the other people that fill vital roles to enable the event to run so smoothly and thought, this is what we as Basingstoke & Mid Hants Athletics Club have been doing for many years. However, now is the time not to look back, but to look forward to what we can achieve in the next ten years.

As we do this, we learn from the unbelievable 2020 and previous years, we know we have a very strong brand and loyalty as we continue to align people to our purpose of ‘To support and encourage every athlete, coach and official in achieving their personal goals whilst contributing to the reputation and development of the club.’

This is evidenced by how we transitioned and still are, through the three Covid lock downs in providing guidance to our members on the constraints we had as a club, however, we were fast to taking advantage of opportunities to getting back to competition by holding a club cross country event at Popham and junior races in December at Down Grange, how cool it that! We also now have a smart new kit, and I would encourage all of us to invest, ‘if you look the part, you feel the part!’

We need to get better at communication aligned to our purpose and this starts with coaches who are the heart of the club. Coaching is an art and science and we have spent a lot of time consulting and producing our Coaching Strategy which will be implementing during 2021 and beyond. We know having a quality coach increases engagement by 180% and discretionary effort by individuals, who would not want that improvement in our athletes!

We are in a strong financial position which gives us an opportunity to invest whether that is in new equipment, support for athletics, coaches, officials or on a larger investment scale. We are working very closely with our partners at Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council and are edging closer to one of our goals of having a new stand and club house. I do not want us to stop there and would encourage people to come forward with ideas to improve our infrastructure so we can develop and encourage the best to Basingstoke. 2021 will continue to be challenging as we move out of lock down, manage the disruption of the track being upgraded bang in the middle of summer. However, we will get through this, and I want us all to use this situation as an opportunity to navigate around the storm, be off the pace and ready to kick in the home straight when we get back normal. You can read my bias to middle distance running again! But seriously, however you are involved in the club, let us keep moving forward and thank you to my fellow committee members for their help and all connected with our club.

Paul Sandford - Chairman