Somerset Schools Athletics Association

Chairman's Annual Report 2025

It gives me great pleasure to present the Chairman's Annual Report for the Somerset Schools Athletics Association for 2025. What a year it has been — one filled with success, growth, pride, and resilience — and a year that once again showcased the remarkable spirit of athletics across our county.

Participation and Development

We are delighted to report continued growth across all disciplines. In cross country, participation numbers have shown a strong post-pandemic recovery, with finishers now matching — and in some age groups exceeding — pre-COVID levels. Track and field entries continue to increase, particularly among junior athletes, reflecting the excellent work being done in schools to promote athletics and nurture young talent. Race walking and multi-events also remain highly competitive, with Somerset athletes breaking records and gaining national-level recognition. This progress highlights an exciting trajectory for future years, particularly as more schools engage with the opportunities the Association provides.

Athletics County Championships

The Somerset Schools Athletics County Championships were delivered superbly, running like clockwork — and finishing almost on time, which is no small achievement in the world of athletics! I had the privilege of attending in person and presenting the awards. Seeing the pride and joy on the faces of athletes as they stepped forward to receive their certificates and badges brought back memories of my own early athletics experiences. I know first-hand how much these moments mean to athletes and their families.

My sincere thanks go to everyone whose hard work made the championships possible. Particular appreciation goes to our outstanding officials for their excellent management of events and for ensuring everything ran so smoothly throughout the day, to Brian for his exceptional administrative work, and to our Area Secretaries for their fantastic contributions in organising and leading their respective area championships and for the vital support they give to their athletes as they progress to county level. Their commitment, organisation, and enthusiasm play a huge role in the ongoing success of our county championships.

English Schools' – 100th Anniversary Year

The year 2025 marked the 100th anniversary of the prestigious English Schools' Championships — a truly special milestone. Remaining true to our philosophy of offering as many athletes as possible the chance to compete on the national stage, a number of Somerset students were selected even before achieving the entry standard. Remarkably, many went on to reach that standard — and in some cases the national standard — during the championships themselves.

Our senior athletes deserve enormous credit for their exceptional performances on the track and in the field, their exemplary leadership throughout the event, and their encouragement of younger athletes both during competition and behind the scenes. They represented Somerset with distinction — not just as competitors but as role models. The celebration parade was another highlight, offering a memorable moment of pride for everyone involved in this historic championship.

Representative Teams and Achievements

Across athletics, cross country, race walking, and multi-events, Somerset athletes once again achieved outstanding results — earning national medals, setting personal bests, and displaying teamwork, determination, and sporting values of the highest order. The future looks bright, with growing junior participation strengthening our representative teams. We are confident that many of these young athletes will continue to develop and excel through the pathways the Association supports.

Gratitude and Acknowledgements

A year of this magnitude would not be possible without the incredible dedication of so many individuals who make athletics in Somerset thrive. Our mission remains firmly rooted in growing participation, supporting athlete development at every stage, maintaining a safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment, and celebrating both excellence and enjoyment.

Special thanks must go to Paul D'Arcy for his tireless and invaluable administrative work, particularly around Merry Field — his commitment is extraordinary and deeply appreciated by us all. Particular thanks also go to our outstanding officials for their expert management of events and professionalism throughout every competition day. Sincere appreciation is extended to our Area Secretaries for their fantastic contributions in organising and leading their area championships and for the continued support they provide to athletes on their journey to county level. Thanks also to Brian and Richard for their vast amounts of administrative work behind the scenes; to Richard for his dedication and vision in shaping the Combined Events Championships into the high-quality competition it is today; and to Katie for her excellent work as Treasurer, managing the Association's finances with care and precision.

We are also very grateful to Richard Llewellyn for bringing his expertise and enthusiasm to the team, and to Jo for her vital work as Safeguarding Lead, ensuring the wellbeing of all athletes, officials, and volunteers. Finally, to every other committee member — each of whom contributes a wealth of knowledge, experience, and dedication — thank you for making the Association the strong, respected, and successful organisation it is today.

Looking Ahead

While there remain national uncertainties surrounding potential age group changes, one thing is absolutely clear: whatever the future holds, the Somerset Schools Athletics Association will continue to provide the very best opportunities for our athletes. Our mission remains focused on growing participation, supporting athlete development at every stage, maintaining a safe, inclusive, and inspiring environment, and celebrating both excellence and enjoyment. With the passion and commitment shown across the county, I have no doubt that our success will continue long into the future.

Closing Remarks

I am extremely proud to have served as Chair for the past two years. It has been a privilege be part of such a committed and hardworking Association and to witness first-hand the impact athletics continues to have on young people's lives. I look forward to continuing to contribute — in whatever capacity that may be — as we move into the next exciting chapter for Somerset Schools Athletics.

Thank you once again for everything you do to make Somerset a county of sporting opportunity, pride, and excellence.