

## Background

The Eastern Athletics Vision Project draws significant inspiration from England Athletics' publication A New Vision for Track and Field. Click below to hear Gary Laybourne—Co-Founder and CEO of the Coach Core Foundation, and a member of the panel that authored the document—outline the background to this work and the potential impact of our own Vision Project.

## Intro from Gary Laybourne

## Mission statement

Our mission is to unite the organisations delivering athletics in the East, creating a coherent and collaborative network that moves from fragmented, isolated activity to coordinated planning, shared expertise and joined-up delivery across competition and development.

## Core Objectives

- Work collaboratively with key partners to expand training and development opportunities in the East, strengthening education, knowledge sharing and access to expertise for athletes, coaches and officials.
- Deliver high-quality regional-level Track & Field, Road Running and Cross-Country events that attract a consistently high standard of competition and experience.
- Work with regional and national competition providers, and with England Athletics, to strengthen and develop competition pathways that support athlete progression.
- Review the constitution ahead of the 2027 AGM to ensure it reflects and supports the Association's agreed strategic direction and establishes a flexible framework for continued evolution and long-term development.
- Develop a new website that will serve as a single hub for information relating to Track & Field, Road Running and Cross Country in the East.

## Overall Objectives

The Association aims to strengthen Track & Field in the East by raising the profile of the Championships, increasing competitive standards and entries across all age groups, and delivering clear, progressive competition pathways supported by high-quality regional-level events.

Our objectives are to:

- Increase participation and competitive standards across all age groups.
- Prioritize the participant experience at every stage of the event.
- Raise the profile of the Championships and establish them as must-do events within the regional calendar.
- Generate surplus to support representative opportunities such as Area Matches.
- Enhance event profile through the use of high-quality, consistent venues.
- Ensure sustainable delivery and financial resilience across all Track & Field activities.
- Align with England Athletics to strengthen the case for direct funding.
- Pursue long-term recognition of the East as a standalone competition Region.

### 1. Indoor Championships

- Improve event presentation to ensure that medal ceremonies and key moments feel meaningful and memorable for athletes, creating a stronger sense of occasion and enhancing the overall championship experience.

### 2. Outdoor Championships

- Review and evaluate entry and results systems to ensure they are dependable, user-friendly and enhance the competitor experience.
- inter-county matches to raise competitive standards and provide representative opportunities.
- Announce competition dates earlier to support planning across clubs, coaches, and the wider athletics calendar.
- Provide clear information on awards and criteria, including the introduction of age-group PB-based awards.
- Introduce an award per age group measured against the pb awards
- Improve presentations to ensure they create a strong sense of occasion for athletes.

### 3. Combined Events

- A dedicated Working Group will undertake a full review of the Combined Events Championships, assessing their purpose within the wider competition calendar and evaluating options to ensure long-term financial viability and strategic value.

### 4. Competition Pathways

- The Association will collaborate with partners to establish a clear progression route from county championships to regional, area and national competition.

### 5. Finance Model

The Track & Field event will operate on a cost-neutral or surplus-generating basis, ensuring long-term sustainability and reducing financial risk to the Association.

## Overall Objectives

The Association aims to strengthen road running in the East by creating a clearer, more competitive, and sustainable structure. Our objectives are to:

- Raise competitive standards through high-quality regional events.
- Create defined pathways from county to regional and national competition.
- Develop scalable delivery models that avoid significant delivery costs.
- Build partnerships with commercial sector organisations that share our aim of developing high-quality competitive road running events in the East.
- Generate surplus to reinvest in the sport, including supporting representative teams.
- Develop a closer, more aligned relationship between Eastern Athletics and England Athletics, working together on shared priorities to strengthen the region's case for direct funding.
- Pursue a long-term aim for the East region to be recognised of the East as a standalone competition Region.

### 1. Eastern Athletics 10k Road Running Championship and Inter-County Match

- The Association aims to establish an annual 10k championship delivered within an existing, externally organised event. This model removes delivery costs, ensures reliability, and provides a sustainable foundation for developing road running in the East.
- An Inter-County match will be incorporated into the event, with the aim of raising the standard of competition and providing athletes with the opportunity to represent the East at higher-level competition.

### 2. Eastern Athletics Road Relay (All Age Groups)

The Association aims to introduce a regional road relay competition covering all age groups.

- Start-up funding will be sought from the England Athletics Competition Grants Scheme.
- Delivery will be managed by a commercial event provider (estimated cost: £7,500).
- Entry fees will be structured to cover full delivery costs in the long term.

Financial Model: At £14 per athlete, around 535 athletes are required to meet delivery costs. Current participation in the Essex & Suffolk Road Relays (c. 550 athletes) suggests this is achievable on a regional scale.

## 3. Competition Pathways

### 3.1 Inter-Area Road Matches

The Association aims to field representative teams at recognised regional and national events and will seek formal invitations to participate.

### 3.2 Road Relays (Senior Men)

The Association aims to mirror the South of England model, where top-placed senior men's teams qualify for the National Road Relays. Positioning the East Road Relays as a qualification event will attract stronger clubs and raise competitive standards.

### 3.3 Finance

Representative competition requires funding for travel and accommodation. The Association intends that surplus from the East Road Relays will support these costs.

### Overall Objectives

A clear pathway already exists from county level to the CAU Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships, a key national event across all age groups. Given its established status, there is no value in creating a separate East regional representative layer.

Our focus is on strengthening the autumn championships by:

- Increasing participation and competitive standards across all age groups.
- Review the event format, including new age groups, race timings and order, opportunities to combine races, and harmonisation of distances between genders.
- Enhancing the event's profile through a consistent, high-quality venue and host club.
- Ensuring sustainable delivery and financial resilience.
- Introducing an inter-county match to raise standards.
- Improving infrastructure to support growth and weather resilience.
- Generating surplus to support representative opportunities such as Area Matches.
- Aligning with England Athletics to strengthen the case for direct funding.
- Pursuing long-term recognition of the East as a standalone competition Region.

### Venue & Organisation

The Championships will continue at Horseheath Racecourse, an established and popular venue with distinctive features such as the water splash. Delivery will remain with Haverhill Running Club, ensuring consistent organisation, course management, and event quality.

### Inter-County Match

An inter-county match for all age groups will be introduced, mirroring the South of England model and providing counties with a high-quality, local representative opportunity with reduced travel and logistical demands.

### Finance Model

- Growth in participation is central to financial sustainability.
- Parking constraints at Horseheath—caused by water-logged ground and unsafe alternative parking—will be addressed by installing a temporary road surface at an estimated cost of £600. A small advance car-parking fee will cover this cost and may generate surplus as entries increase.
- Haverhill Running Club will receive an annual £500 donation to support long-term delivery and recognise their commitment.
- Profits from the Championships will fund East teams attending the Area Match, covering accommodation and transport. Increased participation directly increases the ability to support representative opportunities.

### Competition Pathways

The East receives an annual invitation to the International and Area Match, part of the Cross Challenge series. Selection is based on results from the Eastern Cross Country Championships.

Because East counties sit within the South of England Area, top athletes are often selected by the South, leaving the East to field a B-team while incurring the same participation costs. Long-term recognition of the East as a separate competition Region remains essential to resolving this issue.

## Overview

We aim to establish the following networks to provide new opportunities for athletes to attend group training sessions with some of our best coaches, signpost appropriate competition opportunities, strengthen and signpost competition pathways, and act as an information hub for resources and support services.

### 1) Competition Network - Track and Field (including Walks and Steeplechase)

- Eastern AA – Indoor & Outdoor Championships, and Combined Events
- County Associations – Indoor/Outdoor Championships
- England Athletics – Funetics athletics programme for 4–11-year-olds
- Eastern Young Athletes League (EYAL) – U14, U16, U18 age groups
- East Anglian T&F League (EAL) – U12 to Senior age groups
- Sportshall Athletics League – U12, U14 and U16 age groups
- Eastern Masters AA – Leagues and Championships
- Education establishments – Potential to increase participation
- Open events – Signposting via website
- Sponsors and grant providers, e.g., commercial companies (sponsors) and England Athletics (grants)

### 2) Competition Network - Road Running and Cross Country

- Eastern AA – Road Running and Cross-Country Championships
- County Associations – Road Running and Cross-Country leagues and Championships
- Areas (South, Midlands, North East and North West) and the English Road Running/Cross Country Associations – Representative opportunities and cohesive competition pathways
- Schools – Selection races for English Schools Cross Country Championships
- Schools, Colleges and Universities – Potential to increase participation in County/Regional leagues and Championships
- Eastern Masters AA – Road Running and Cross-Country Championships
- Commercial event providers – Potential hosts for Road Running Championships
- Sponsors and grant providers, e.g., commercial companies (sponsors) and England Athletics (grants)

### 3) Coaching Network – All disciplines

- County Associations, clubs and coaches – Delivery of group training opportunities for athletes (Throws, Jumps, Sprints, Hurdles, Para, Steeplechase, Walks, Road Running and Cross Country)

### 4) Resources and Support Services

- England Athletics – Support from Club Support Manager and provision of online resources, e.g., Funetics programme
- East Regional Council – Conduit for information sharing between Eastern AA and England Athletics
- County Associations/CofSec – Planning and delivery of coach/officials' education and development
- Education establishments, i.e., schools, colleges and universities
- Facility providers, i.e., indoor and outdoor facilities for T&F and endurance
- Equipment providers, e.g., photofinish, numbers and start systems
- Resources, e.g., specialist stockists
- Sponsors and grant providers, e.g., commercial companies (sponsors) and England Athletics (grants)

### Overview

We aim to establish the following Advisory Panels to review all aspects of athletics competition and development provision in the East Region, and to make recommendations on the future structure, remit and branding of Eastern Athletic Association.

#### **1) Competition Panel - Track and Field (including Walks and Steeplechase)**

A small panel (2–3 members) that will review current competition provision across the East, identify examples of best practice and recommend how a network of providers can be developed for inclusion on the website to support knowledge transfer and shared learning.

#### **2) Competition Panel - Road Running and Cross Country**

The Endurance Advisory Panel will advise on the development of road running events. The panel will identify gaps, evaluate the strongest options and suggest sustainable models that raise standards and strengthen pathways.

#### **3) Coaching Panel**

A discipline-balanced panel including at least one representative from sprints, hurdles, endurance sprint, throws, jumps, pole vault, combined events, para/inclusive events, endurance running, walks and steeplechase. The panel will review coaching needs, map existing provision, and propose the structure and priorities for a regional coaching network.

#### **4) Resources and Support Services Panel**

A cross-discipline panel with representation from schools' pathways, facilities, officials, equipment providers (e.g., photo finish, EDM), and support services (e.g., nutrition, physio, retailers). The panel will assess current resources, identify gaps, and recommend how a regional network of shared resources can be developed.

#### **5) General/Implementation Panel (Jan 2027)**

This panel will be formed from the other advisory panels once their work is complete (ideally one representative from each panel). It will review the Eastern AA constitution, support development of the new website, and assist with the implementation of new aims and objectives.

### Proposed timeline

- May 2026 – Launch of Vision project via webinars and mass mailouts
- June 2026 – Establish Advisory Panels 1-4 (from submitted expressions of interest)
- June – December 2026 – Advisory Panels meet (online) and when ready, provide the Eastern AA committee with a set of recommendations for their approval (subject to final approval at AGM)
- January 2027 – Establish General/Implementation Panel to agree budgets and plan for immediate implementation of changes after the AGM.
- April 2027 – Revised Constitution (if required) presented for approval at AGM.
- April/May 2027 – Formal implementation of changes and possible relaunch of Eastern Athletic Association (name and branding TBC)
- New website goes live providing a hub for everything know what is going on in the eastern area with respect to competition, education, resources for road, track and field and xc.

**Closing comments by Matthew Dalton** (England Council Non-Executive Director, Chair of England Council and Chair of East Regional Council)

**Matthew Dalton closing comments**