



North West Hockey Ltd

Minutes of the 5th Annual General Meeting of North West Hockey Limited held on 17th July 2025 by Video Conference

Attendees:

Chris Reece	(CR)	NWH Chair
Shelagh Everett	(SE)	NWH Vice-Chair
Niall Riley	(NR)	NWH Finance Director
Leighan Bleasdale	(LB)	NWH Governance Director
Wendy McDowall	(WM)	NWH Operations Director
Sam Lewis	(SL)	England Hockey Observer and Area Support Manager
Natasha Wilson	(NW)	England Hockey Officiating Manager
Tony Shutt	(TS)	NWH AOC Chair
Peter McNulty	(PM)	NWH ADA
John Dixon	(JD)	NWH Adult Leagues and Competitions Chair
Beth Alvey	(BA)	NWH Junior Leagues and Competitions Chair
Taff Ahmed	(TA)	NWH Social Media Lead
Tony Taig	(TT)	NWH Masters Chair
Charlotte Dunham	(CD)	NWH ED& I Lead

Representatives and members attending (see Annex A).

64 Attendees

41 Clubs were represented.

3 Counties were represented (Cheshire HA, Cumbria HA and Lancashire HA)

1. Welcome and introductions

CR welcomed everyone to the 5th AGM of North West Hockey Ltd (NWH) and introduced Sam Lewis attending as the EH Observer. CR notified everyone that the meeting was being recorded and was happy for attendees to keep their screen off view. The minutes and slides will be sent out and posted on the NW website in due course.

2. Apologies for Absence and confirmation of Quorum

Apologies were received from: Andy Dale (EH), Brian Tenner (Deeside Ramblers), John Graham (St Helens), Eunice Ellison (Lancashire HA).

CR confirmed that the meeting quorum, of 15 voting members attending, had been met with 64 attendees on line at the start of the meeting. This was an excellent turnout and CR thanked everyone attending from Member Club's, Counties, Legacy Members, NWH, non-member Clubs who play in the NW Leagues and England Hockey staff for attending.

CR reported that eight proxy votes had been received in advance of the meeting.

3. Chair's Remarks

CR reflected that year 5 has been completed since bringing the North West Hockey family together. NWH continues to grow with the work of our Clubs and Counties with the support and Guidance from England Hockey.

NWH is one of the 8 Area's working closely with England Hockey to ensure consistency of Regulations, Policies and Guidelines. This year we launched the new NWH Strategy at Clubs Forums. Timperley HC and Vale of Lune Rugby Club in Lancaster.

CR highlighted the review of NWH for the 2024-25 season (which had been circulated previously) featuring 90 clubs in the North West which cover Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and the Isle of Man. CR highlighted all the successes and recognitions of NW Clubs and Volunteers in the EH National Awards and noted the successes of NW Clubs and Schools in Championships.

Thank you to all volunteers who have made hockey happen during the 2024-25 season and all those who have participated and enjoyed all we offer as follows:

- Adult Competitions – Junior Competitions – Masters Hockey – Officiating
- The Governance of NWH including Discipline
- Our Committees and Volunteers delivering all aspects of Hockey in the North West
- Our Clubs and all their Volunteers
- Our Counties and all their Volunteers
- Our North West and Club Officials and Umpires, our Players and Supporters.

4. Minutes of the last AGM held on 4th July 2024

No matters of accuracy were raised.

The Minutes of the 4th AGM of NWH Ltd were duly proposed by the NW Board and seconded by the vote below.

The Minutes were Approved as a true and accurate record of the 4th AGM held on 4th July 2024. 27 attendees voted in favour, 0 votes against, 1 abstention.

There were no matters arising not covered on the Agenda.

5. Announcement of Post Holder election results

Following an open Nomination Process, candidate details and balloting information was shared with members eligible to vote in NWH elections to elect the two Directors to the Board and three Committee Chairs.

Following the conclusion of the election and balloting process the following have been duly elected and appointed as a Director of NWH:

- Shelagh Everett Vice Chair
- Wendy McDowall Operations Director

Shelagh Everett and Wendy McDowall join Niall Riley (Finance Director), Leighan Bleasdale (Governance Director) and Chris Reece (Chair) on the Board of NWH.

Following the conclusion of the election and balloting process the following had been duly elected and appointed as Chairs of NWH Committees:

- John Dixon Chair, Adult Leagues and Competitions
- Tony Taig Chair, Masters
- Tony Shutt Chair, Officiating (*note, there is different process for this role*)
- Vacant Chair, Junior Leagues and Competitions

Special thanks also to Annette Badger, retiring Officiating Chair for her endless work in Officiating and her involvement in the initial forming and running of NW Officiating from inception.

The Board and Committee Chairs make up the NW Management Committee along with the appointed role of Area Discipline Administrator, held by Peter McNulty.

6. Area Structure & Key work of the Board

CR re-affirmed the organisation governance structure for NWH and its committees and Lead Chairs. Alongside delivering against the core responsibilities of NWH: Adult and Junior Leagues and Competitions; Masters; Officiating and Discipline, the Management Committee and Board are continuing work to develop a high level strategic framework for NWH.

7. Annual Review of North West Hockey Ltd 2024-25

7.1 To provide members with more advance information about the work of NWH. A short summary Annual Report for 2024-25 had been produced and circulated in advance of the meeting. The Annual Report shows all the work carried out by the following committees, Officiating, Adult Leagues & Competitions, Junior Leagues & Competitions and Masters. In addition, the new NWH Strategy was promoted and the new NWH Growth Fund and NWH Awards.

The presentation will be circulated by email, following the AGM and added as a news article to the NWH website <https://northwest.englandhockey.co.uk>

- The Annual report was **NOTED** by the meeting.

7.2 Questions: CR asked that any questions be discussed in the relevant Committee report section.

8. North West Hockey Ltd Financial Report 2024-25

Niall Riley (NR) NWH Ltd Finance Director presented the financial report. A copy of the NWH Report to the Directors and Unaudited Financial Statements for the Period 1st May 2024 to 30th April 2025 was provided to members with the calling notice for the meeting.

NR provided a summary of the financial position to the meeting, explaining that NWH has moved to Xero Accounting to manage our book keeping and financial activities, supported by our appointed independent accountants. This has reduced our book keeping costs and improved the control and management of our finances.

The key highlights were reported by NR:

- Operating Income £56,563
- Operating Costs £62,544
- Deficit on the year - £5,981
- Ring-fenced reserves from dissolved associations 30April 2025 £105,118

The funds transferred from dissolved associations were transferred to NWH on the proviso that they were ringfenced and used for specific activities linked in part to their original source. How the funds would be used would be an integral part of developing the NWH Strategy and priorities.

NR confirmed that the Financial Statement had been independently scrutinised and had been approved by the Board and submitted to Companies House. We are exempt from Corporation Tax; however, tax is payable on Interest received on the Reserves (£1,479).

The meeting:

- **NOTED** the Report to Directors and Unaudited Financial Statements for the period 1st May 2024 to 30th April 2025
- **NOTED** the Independent Scrutineer's report on NWH

CR thanks NR for his work managing the NW finances. NR mentioned it is his last year as Finance Director and anyone interested in the role, should contact him on finance@northwesthockey.co.uk

9. Resolutions - Membership Subscriptions and Fees for 2024-25

- Having reviewed our 2024-25 Accounts, for 2025-26 season we are proposing the following:

9.1 Membership Subscription for 2025- 26:

NWH Board and Management Committee proposed:

For full voting Member Clubs that the annual Subscription for 2025-26 to be a member of NWH shall be £22.50 per senior team (an increase of £2.00 on 24/25).

- For Counties (Sub Areas) and other Organisations, the proposal for Subscriptions for 2025-26 shall be set at zero (no change to 2024-25)

The Resolution was put to the meeting and:

- Carried with 26 voted in favour, 1 against, 0 abstention

9.2 Entry Fees for North West Hockey Competitions and Leagues for 2025-26:

NWH Board and Management Committee proposed:

- For Clubs entering the North West Adult Competitions and leagues the annual entry fee of £8.50 per 2025-26 per senior team (increase of £1.00 on 2024-25 Subs).
- That entry fees for all other competitions (including Juniors and Masters) shall be set by the Directors on the recommendation of the relevant Committee and if required informal consultation with member clubs

The Resolution was put to the meeting and:

- Carried with 29 votes in favour and none against

10. Appointed Umpire Fees

The meeting **NOTED**:

- That the NWH Board and Management Committee had approved that the fee paid by Clubs where umpires are appointed by NWH shall be £28.50 per appointment for 2024-25 (an increase of £2.00 from 2024-25 fees).

11. New for 2025-26 - North West Hockey Growth Fund

As part of our Area Strategy, we are delighted to officially announce the NWH Growth Fund. Clubs can apply for funding for/towards specific projects.

- As a pilot the fund has already invested £6k in providing umpire radios to clubs in 2024/25
- We are finalising the details to offer a Grant and Bursary scheme as part of the fund for the 2025/26 season to support specific projects and initiatives that will support delivering our NWH Strategy.

NW Awards:

The Awards will be **launched in Autumn 2025**. Categories are being finalised and will align to our four strategic themes- Hockey Experience, Ways to Play, Support Structures & People and Engagement.

12. Adult Leagues and Competitions - See slide 18 & 19 of Presentation

John Dixon (JD), Adult Leagues and Competitions Chair provided a short update on changes to the Area Adult League Regulations including guidance on poor weather and that the NW league starts on 13 September 2025, earlier than last year.

- Daffyd Jones asked why the league start date has been moved forward for next season. LB explained that the earlier start date has been brought in to allow for more slip dates needed to compensate for lost games due to inclement weather, to tie in with the EH Centralised Calendar and also Easter is early next year.
- Adam Massey asked if there were any more radios which were provided free of charge by NWH – NR will contact AM
- Holly Noble asked why clubs can't play on league slip dates. JD explained that the EH Championships takes priority over League and County Cups fixtures.
- WM highlighted that clubs who have had personnel changes must update GMS or communications with clubs will be lost. If a Club GMS admin role has changed, clubs must contact gms.support@englandhockey.co.uk. In addition, LB stated that all clubs must have details visible in GMS.
- LB is creating a NW calendar of dates.

13. Junior Leagues and Competitions - See slide 17 of Presentation

CR thanked Beth Alvey, Junior Leagues and Competitions Chair and Lou Nash, Junior Competitions Administrator for their endless hard work this season. The Junior League Management Committee is being

restructured with new roles of School Development Lead and Club Development Lead. We welcome any Expressions of Interest for these roles. All junior competition forms are now on the NW website.

- Adam Massey asked why the Junior Competitions aren't mixed. BA replied that EH set the guidelines for junior competitions. CR highlighted that NW has a hardship fund which can be applied for so it should not stop anyone from playing hockey.

14. NW Officiating - See slide 15 & 16 of Presentation

CR highlighted the new AOC structure for 2025-26 and thanked Annette Badger for her endless work, who has retired as AOC Chair. There are now development events for Club Umpires such as the Sedbergh and Manchester Tournaments. The new online Level 1 Umpires course is now free (register via the EH Hockey Hub).

15. Masters - See slide 20 of Presentation

Tony Taig highlighted the Masters presentation

15 age groups from O35 to O60 (women) and O35 to O75 (men)

National 8 Areas tournaments for all ages remain the key competitive focus and this year NW won **Bronze (WO40 and WO60's) and Gold (MO65)** a major milestone.

Our priorities for next season include: Holding more of our informal get-togethers further North to engage more Lancashire and Cumbria players and rethinking our approach to men's sessions with the aim of getting more younger men involved in Masters (O35-o45s).

Peter Youds asked why Men's Masters training doesn't start earlier. Tony Taig recognised that this needs to happen for the Men and it is in hand to try and replicate the Women's sessions.

16. EH Awards 2025

Congratulations to those recognised at this year's England Hockey Awards 2025:

Winners: Neston M1 (Men's Team of the Year)

Coach of the Year: Kevin Heath (Macclesfield)

NW Club Successes/Recognition 2025

EH National League:

Division 1 North Champions – Brooklands M1's, promoted to Premier Division

North Conference Champions – Timperley M1's promoted to Div 1 (N)

EH Clubs Championship (Adult and Masters)

Bowdon M2 – Tier 2 Runners Up

West Derby Women - Tier 4 Winners

Sandbach Men – Tier 4 Plate Runners Up

Timperley Women's O55 – Tier 2 Winners

Alderley Edge Men's O55 – Shield Winners

Cheshire Men's O65 – Plate Winners

Cumbria & NW Revivers O65 – Shield Runners up

NW Club and School Successes 2024-2025

EH Clubs Championships (Junior)

Neston U14 Boys – Tier 1 Plate Winners

Bowdon U16 Girls – Tier 1 Vase Runners Up

Timperley U18 Girls – Tier 2 Cup Winners

EH Schools Championships

Calday Grange School – Tier 1 State School Final Runners Up

17. NW Strategy to 2028

SE thanked everyone who has attended our clubs forums over the last 2 years, as this has helped develop our strategy from those evenings. All 8 areas have different strategies but have common themes such as lack of volunteers.

Our Vision - To promote, develop and grow hockey opportunities in the NW.

Our Mission – Working together to make hockey more visible, relevant and accessible to all areas across the NW.

- Tim Statham asked if there are any resources for junior schools
- Beth Alvey reported there are free Hockey Heroes resources
<https://www.EnglandHockey.co.uk/deliver/teaching-hockey-in-education/primary-school-delivery>

18. AOB: There were 2 matters of AOB raised 14 days before the meeting.

Phil Meachin – Chair, Bolton HC. (Umpiring and conduct)

"While the new directives around respect for umpires from players and coaches are welcome and necessary, can the committee also clarify what expectations and accountability measures are in place for umpire conduct?"

CR responded: Umpires conduct, as for players, coaches and spectators is set out in the EH 'Spirit of Hockey' Code of Conduct, and supporting regulations and processes, that apply to all involved in the sport.

In particular, the 'two home umpire' rule increasingly appears to present an advantage for some clubs, with limited checks or oversight. We are now seeing fixtures break down — including teams walking off the pitch — which undermines the integrity of the competition.

Last season with c.4500 NW league games the instances of breakdown of games is still exceptionally rare. Clubs can bring their own umpire to away games. ~95% of games have club appointed umpires and we believe the spirit of fairness is being upheld in the overwhelming majority of games. We are committed to working with clubs to improve both the standard of club umpiring and helping clubs better develop their umpires and how they are appointed to the right level of match for their competence. Club umpires are also encouraged to attend umpire forums.

Can the league commit to reviewing GMS discipline data more closely to identify discrepancies and take steps to assess and improve the standards of specific umpires where needed? This could go a long way toward restoring trust, fairness, and mutual respect on all sides."

CR responded: Overall data is monitored and reported at an Area and National Level by our ADA and ALMC team (see Annual Review for stats). The ALMC and the NW AOC will be working together to in 25/26 as part of the overall officiating strategy to identify improvements and development needs. Central to this is working with clubs to both grow and develop to club umpires.

AOB raised by Holly Noble – Didsbury Greys HC (Pitches)

Understanding how many pitches we have in the short to medium term in the NW and identifying the most important areas to ensure pitches are maintained or new funding applications are made. Also to enquire about EH's Pitch strategy in the North of England.

CR responded: We have been working with Holly and EH.

EH capture data on pitches as part EH Affiliation.

Key for all clubs is to input to their local authority playing pitch strategy, to ensure that this statutory document sets out the state of pitches, demand and supply.

The Chair thanked members, volunteers and Clubs for their attendance and commitment to hockey at all levels across the North West.

The meeting closed at 20:53 hours

ANNEX A – 2025 AGM ATTENDEES

	Club/Association
Natasha Wilson	EH Officiating Manager
Sam Lewis	EH Area Support Manager/(Observer)
Chris Reece	Chair NWH Board
Leighan Bleasdale	Governance Director NWH Board
Niall Riley	Finance Director NWH Board
Shelagh Everett	Vice Chair NWH Board & Timperley HC
Wendy McDowall	Operations Director NWH Board & Northern HC
Peter McNulty	NWH Discipline ADA & Bebington HC
Tony Shutt	NWH AOC Chair
Taff Ahmed	NWH Social Media Lead & Southport HC
Tony Taig	NWH Masters Chair & Winnington Park HC
John Dixon	NWH Adult Leagues and Competitions Chair
Beth Alvey	NWH Junior Leagues and Competitions Chair & Deeside Ramblers
Jane Evans	NWH Officiating
James Riley	Alderley Edge
Jenna Gallagher & Keith Proudlove	Bangor City
Artie Senior	Bebington/Cheshire HA
Phil Meachin	Bolton
Jez Allen	Bowdon
Julie Kenyon & Michelle Bury	Brookfield
Tariq Sheikh & Charlotte Bates	Bury
Robert Gordon	Carlisle
Dafydd Jones	Chester
Rob Alty	Chorley Phoenix
Mandy Pickersgill	City Of Manchester
Georgina Brown	Crewe Vagrants
Clare Thompson	NW ALMC & Clitheroe Blackburn Northern
Jez Palmer	Clitheroe Blackburn Northern
Holly Noble	Didsbury Greys
Fran Loffler-Thompson	Fylde & Lancashire HA
Charles Jackman	Garstang & Lancashire HA
Anthony Reid	Horwich
Chris Mattear	Kendal
Steve Hornsby	Keswick
Rob Scovell	Knutsford
Rebecca Halliwell	Lancaster & District
Alison Davies & Joanne Banks	Lancaster Nomads
Nicki Wilkinson	Longridge
Jo Skelton	Lymm
Simon Evans	Lytham St Annes
Peter Youds	Macclesfield

Lisa Spencer & Michelle Lanaway	Manchester Moss Park
Robert Cobourne	Mossley Hill
Alex Dawson	Northern
Laurie Boon	Oldham
Ali Mealor & Kerry Graves	Oxton
Mary McAulay & Tom Heather	Preston
Adam Massey & Katie Burrell	Rochdale
Eleanor Roberts	Ruthin
George Sterlini	Sale
Nick Davey	Sedbergh
Tim Statham & Tom Chaddock	Triton
Gemma Booth	Urmston
Inge Bevers	Warrington
Amy Jones	Wrexham