



## WEST OFFICIATING AGM REPORT

7TH JULY 2024

Firstly I'd like to thank a number of people who, in difficult circumstances have continued to keep our appointment and development of neutral pool umpires going, despite a number of challenges. Both David and Graham have been supportive and proactive in their roles this season and between the two of them have delivered week in, week out.

I'd also like to thank Richard Hill for his work on the Technical Officiating side of things and Jan Bowen and Liz Powell who have also invested a huge number of hours. Thanks also to Alison Cook, Pete Hammond and Rod Cook who have all been most helpful and continued with their support and commitment, despite two of the three no longer being committee members.

Most of you will be aware of the work that has been going on both behind the scenes in the West, but also nationally through the Officiating Working Group ("OWG") and England Hockey, with a drive to improve our development of our umpires at club level, an increase in the number of female umpires and improved focus on young umpires all being key national and area themes for next season.

It is our hope over the coming twelve months, to increase the number of coaches, mentors and assessors in the area, allowing swifter and more localized support for new and existing umpires. It is also hoped that following discussions nationally, additional resources for umpires along with guidance documents will be available for the new season, not to mention new kit.

It's been a challenging season but one which I hope we will look back on, where the foundations have been established for a brighter future for officiating, with more umpires, younger umpires and a better balance of the genders.

The West Board are fully supportive of the changes proposed and have committed to support the development of officiating in the area financially, where funds are available.

### **Officiating Committee Membership**

Following the recent Officiating AGM, the Officiating Committee membership is as follows (subject to ratification by the West Board):

Chair	Charles Hallows
Performance Development Lead	David Lillywhite
Appointments	Graham Woolcock
Technical Officiating Lead	Richard Hill
Young Umpires Lead	Vacant
Club Development Lead	Vacant

We will look to co-opt to the vacant positions shortly and welcome any expressions of interest in taking on these roles.

## **Future Strategy**

Building on the forums that were held last year, my first task has been to seek to document a Strategic Plan for Officiating, to ensure that we have a structure and plan fit for the future to develop Officiating in the West.

At this stage our key priorities are:

- Providing better support for Club umpires
- Providing better support for Club Umpire Developers
- Providing dedicated support for umpires based at Universities in the West
- Increasing the number of L2+ umpires in the West
- Encouraging neutral umpiring at all levels
- Identifying and promoting Welsh-based umpires to umpire across the West Area
- Identifying and supporting Young Umpires

As a by-product of these plans, we will also seek to increase the number of neutral female umpires in the Area.

A key enabler for the strategy will be Club Umpire Developers. It will be imperative for all Clubs to have an effective Umpire Developer to support their L1 umpires.

We shall also be looking at how we can communicate better with all umpires across the Area and shall be exploring how we can use videoconferences to engage with umpires at all levels.

At this stage, we are still formulating ideas to discuss with the relevant stakeholders and seeking to identify appropriate resource to support the delivery of our plans. Further details will be presented in due course.

Whilst I'm sure that you will agree that these are all admirable priorities, the acid test will be whether we can build a structure and the people to deliver on them. If you think you can help, please do get in touch.

## **Development Events**

A successful O65 Women's Masters tournament was held in Bristol with Club L1 umpires invited to take part with coaching support provided by the West L2/L3 coaches and assessors.

In all 18 umpires took part, 14 L1's, one L2 who has not taken appointments for several years and 3 L3's. The L1's came from all over the West with umpires from Bodmin, North Devon, Plymouth, Taunton, Lansdown as well as a few more local ones. As well as the umpires that attended, we had to turn down about the same number and had many umpires responding to the email that went out saying that they would have loved to have come but were already committed to other things. In addition, there were 8 umpire support involved in the weekend.

All the L1 umpires have said how much they had enjoyed the experience even though many of them felt they had been well outside their comfort zone. As would have been expected, all confirmed that

they had had no coaching since they had passed their L1 assessment other than if by chance there was anyone more senior involved with their Club.

### **Future Development Events**

Following the success of the O65 Women's Masters Tournament, we are looking to plan similar Development Events over the course of next season, aimed at new L2 umpires along with L1 umpires that have been identified as having potential. We will also look to use some of the Junior competition Finals as potential development opportunities for L1 umpires in the area.

### **Other**

I am pleased to be able to announce that, following the change of England Hockey's kit sponsors, the OWG has agreed new Mizuno shirt colours for the 2024/25 season – Green, orange and light blue. These should be available to purchase through the England Hockey Umpire Shop in advance of the new season.

In closing I would like to thank all those officials, who week in, week out, don the kit in all weathers and allow the game we all love to happen.

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Chair – West Officiating  
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06 June 2024