

Annual General Meeting Report 2021

Officer	Regional Chairman
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Chairman's Report for 2020 Gymnastics Season

At the time of writing last year's report, the COVID-19 pandemic was just starting to hit us and wreaking havoc across our country. What we didn't know then, was just how long it would last, and how badly hit our sport, our clubs and our members would be from this deadly virus.

Throughout 2020, I have tried, together with the LG Board of Directors, and our Joint Technical Committee, to ensure that we provide prompt and transparent communication to clubs, sometimes taking difficult decisions, such as having to cancel the entire competition season.

However, through adversity, comes enterprise and spirit. There is perhaps an even bigger sense of togetherness than before we went into this pandemic.

I have seen first hand how our clubs across different disciplines came together to support one another, whether that was sharing venues, coaches, advice or just someone to speak to – it meant we approached 2020 as one big gymnastics community, and we should be extremely proud.

I was also blown away to see how so many of our clubs had to pivot to fundamentally do things differently, whether that meant changing class sizes, moving online, creating new revenue streams – there was an entrepreneurial spirit. But also, it is not lost on me and the Board that many clubs have suffered financially, many had to close, some perhaps not even able to reopen their doors again. Many staff have been furloughed, and many gymnasts haven't been able to perform the sport they love. Realistically it will be 2022 or later before we understand the true impact on our sport and its members.

London Gymnastics also had to adjust, we had no events program to run, but we did have a responsibility to our clubs, and this came in the form of whatever channels of advice we could provide.

As the world moved online, so did London Gymnastics. We have run several highly successful Zoom forums during the year, allowing our clubs a chance to share concerns, ask questions, and gain invaluable advice, not only from other clubs, but also from our experts.

We immediately set up a few closed Facebook groups, for Clubs, Welfare Officers and Buy/Sell – and these have proved extremely helpful for speedy communication and collaboration with clubs.

I cannot thank William Flint enough for the advice he has offered the organisation and many clubs over the last year. His ability as a Health & Safety expert, as well as a coach and club owner, meant he could quickly interpret ever changing rules and help you to understand and apply them. We redirected affiliation funds to help gain the support of William, but his voluntary hours on this topic were over and above what we could pay.

I am grateful to the clubs who took part in our COVID survey, which enabled William to write a comprehensive report on the safety of clubs during COVID, and the number of cases. It was sent to BG, who were so impressed it was shared with other sporting organisations and ended up being scaled out as a BG survey.

We diverted some of the 2020 affiliation funds to the COVID PPE grants which every club was entitled to, and whilst £100 doesn't go so far, I know judging by the emails received, just how grateful clubs were to receive something back at that time.

London Gymnastics Board also began to reduce its costs, expecting that we would either need to inject further costs to support our clubs, or as was the case, we saved enough from the 2019 Affiliation funds to roll over into 2020/21 financial year to ensure we didn't have to charge an Affiliation fee.

We also used time away from events to review some of our internal processes and in particular our IT systems. As a Board we are now using Google Suite, meaning we are supported by cloud based computing with ease of online meetings, chat functions, messaging, email accounts and central storage of all our files. We are also looking into a new CRM system in 2021 to really revolutionise our contact database and integrations with clubs.

As if the COVID pandemic was not enough, our sport came under scrutiny in other ways during 2020. We all know that gymnast, and coach welfare are there to protect individuals and ourselves. There will undoubtedly be lessons to be learnt once the Whyte Report is published, and London Gymnastics will be ready to support any changes required within the governance of our sport.

As I write this report in March 2021, it's worth a short thought on looking forward. The challenges since December 2020 remain, but now there are signs of light at the end of the tunnel as we look to emerge from lockdown. Whilst 2020 was tough, we fully expect 2021 to be just as difficult. We will stand by our clubs and support wherever we can. It remains to be seen, whether we will return to events during 2021, and we will only do so when we are confident as to the safety of everyone involved.

Technical Committee Reports

This year there are no technical committee reports as no events were run. Please rest assured that the TC Chairs and their committees have been busy in the background, working together to react to the latest Government and Governing Body advice. Some have been using the time wisely to chat with their clubs, review programs and needs, and even look at the possibility of online activities.

Finally.. I would like to thank the members of LG Management Board, the TC Chairs and their Committees for their work throughout the last year. It hasn't been a conventional one, but still they stepped forward in a voluntary capacity to support our affiliated clubs. I thank them on your behalf.

And to you, our clubs, members and gymnasts. I can only hope that soon our beautiful sport will return in all its glory, perhaps it will take time to return to our best, but we will do so better together. You should be very proud of the way you have tackled the challenges, and overcome some of the adversity.

Hope is a renewable option: If you run out of it at the end of one day, you get to start over in the morning. We will beat this, and we will emerge stronger.

Ben Murphy
Chairman, London Gymnastics