

## National Council Chair's Blog November 2015

I am pleased to be able to show the results of the survey carried out by EA on behalf of the National Council and the YDL relating to the Northern Premier Divisions of the Upper Age Group. The link to the summarised results is [here](#).

The survey was carried out at the request of the Council as we felt that the views of the athletes should also be taken into account when decisions about the format of the competition are being made.

The issue with this division of the YDL is that it includes a very wide geographic area – North West and North East England, Yorkshire and Scotland. Travel and the overall time commitment during what for many is an important exam period is very long. Travel North and South by English and Scottish teams has been a major issue and even travel East and West in England leads to major time commitment.

In the Council's view, the clear solution to this issue would be to sub regionalise into areas involving less travel – as has already been done in the Midlands, South West and Wales. It has been pointed out that this might have implications for the standard of competition (although, of course, people not prepared to travel might also reduce quality standards).

Anyway, in line with the Council's general approach to asking interested parties, rather than to assume we know the answers, the survey was sent electronically to 952 registered athletes at 11 English clubs who compete either in Premier One or Two of the Northern UAG in 2015 or are due to be there in 2016. We asked U20s, U17s and upper year U15s (who will be competing in it next year).

We had 110 respondents. While this may seem disappointing, it compares well with the overall annual EA consultation where c1800 of 140000 affiliates respond. We are led to believe that member clubs' representatives had been asked by the YDL to encourage athletes to respond.

The overall conclusion is pretty clear – 71% of respondents said they were more likely to compete if the Premiership were to be sub-regionalised into separate divisions for NW England, NE England and Yorkshire together, and Scotland. Respondents to the survey had competed on average in over three YDL matches in 2015 – so they are already dedicated YDL athletes.

The survey also asked for more general comments on what people liked and disliked about the YDL and for their general views. These comments are also reproduced here. The survey was completed on condition of confidentiality, so the comments have been grouped to make it impossible to link them to individual participants/clubs and some (extremely few) have been excluded to achieve the same aim.

I do not intend to comment on these more general comments other than to say that they make interesting reading. I would like to thank the 110 participants for their time. There was an associated prize draw and winners will be informed presently.

At the upcoming AGM, the YDL has proposed to split the division in two - NW England and the rest – i.e. Yorkshire, NE England and all of Scotland, but, given the result of the survey, the National Council would very much have preferred to have seen a proposal for the three-division solution that was outlined in that survey.

The YDL also surveyed Scottish athletes and have published a commentary on its website, analysing the results of the two surveys along with a selection of supportive comments from Scottish athletes. I would argue that this is a very subjective way of presenting the data/conclusions and I disagree with the conclusions drawn. I would invite readers to have a read. (I would also note that the Scottish Survey was organised on a different basis which may have influenced its findings).

For information, the preliminary results of our survey were relayed to the YDL on 16<sup>th</sup> September before its management committee met on the weekend of 19/20<sup>th</sup> September.

The National Council has done its bit now. The two areas where we have been working with the YDL were discussed and voted on at our meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> Sept (outcomes here). The Council decided it would support sub regionalisation of the Northern Premier Divisions of the YDL UAG but not press for separate specialised Field Event meetings to allow some long throws to be taken out of the overall UAG timetable – another area we have worked with the YDL on.

I would call on all English clubs to consider the impact of the current situation on the athletes who compete in the YDL and to vote accordingly at the AGM. I am keen to save an awful lot of wasted travel hours for athletes involved in very important exams in many cases. Just look at it as if they were your children. Any proposed changes would not affect any other areas of the YDL and the numbers of places allocated to each area for the final.

I would like to close by repeating that the Council believes in working in a collaborative way with interested parties on the basis of data rather than guesswork. We are open in noting our meetings and generally disagree with any decision making process that is not transparent and fair.

I will be attending the YDL AGM if anyone requires further information/explanation.