



## Tonbridge AC Development Plan - 2019 onwards

### Introduction

In recent weeks the club has effectively completed a period of development that has culminated in a significant number of achievements and now we are in the process of considering the next five to ten years. To do this we would like the ideas and input from any club members for consideration.

We have a provisional development plan that includes plenty of tasks and the purchase of equipment and resources, training of coaches and the like, but we are seeking thoughts on the bigger picture particularly.

What sort of club should Tonbridge AC be in a few years' time?

### Some achievements

Over the past few years the club has seen considerable change, much of which was included within the previous development plan –

Membership numbers have grown to consistently more than 800

The track has been resurfaced

New floodlights were purchased, significantly financed by TAC

A new practice throws cage has been installed, again at TAC's expense

Senior teams have been winning National Championships

We entered the British Athletics League for the first time

The coaching team has been expanded in numbers and undertaken regular training

The Veterans teams have flourished

Finances are stable and so the club is on a secure footing

Perhaps more than anything the best achievement has been that when someone is asked which club do you belong to and the answer is Tonbridge AC, we are not only known but respected.

### So what next?

Our sport is diverse and some of it like elite track and field is maybe not seen in the same light as it was years ago, whilst mass participation events, parkruns and the like are booming.

There is perhaps a reversal in thought in terms of fitness and health in this country, particularly within schools. The demise of playing fields plus the social media and internet culture has had a significant affect, but maybe the signs are that there is a consciousness to try and reverse the 'damage'.

There is still less sport and particularly athletics in schools than there used to be.

TAC covers the range of activities that we always have done, although maybe more successfully. Can and should we diversify in some way?

Sports like Swimming, Golf and even the local Rugby clubs have developed into what can be described as semi-professional. In some cases significant sponsors are involved and the local community plays a part.

In 2019 we aim to introduce the Tonbridge Twilight Invitational meeting, the first offer of a new event, beyond the open and league meetings for some time. In the past we had the Tonbridge 10-mile road race. Are there other areas that we should look at getting involved in?

I have seen organisations profit from what I would consider part of our sport, that as a club we don't get involved in. For example, personal trainers and online coaches make an income; there are fitness groups like Track Life, Real Runners, and many others who use athletics/sports fitness to offer a professional service to schools and individuals.

Today we are facing a potential overcrowding of our facilities, which will no doubt mean some short-term decisions will have to be made. However, longer term what should we be considering? Some of you will have seen what a club in Ireland, Leevale AC, have done. See link here –

[https://www.irishexaminer.com/video/sport/watch-how-leevale-are-building-for-the-future-with-a-new-high-performance-facility-449497.html?fbclid=IwAR2APueNjk1oFmuEA7S7a3qaGBTrBLaZ\\_WUzDafDL5LT966Baf66FueEK7E](https://www.irishexaminer.com/video/sport/watch-how-leevale-are-building-for-the-future-with-a-new-high-performance-facility-449497.html?fbclid=IwAR2APueNjk1oFmuEA7S7a3qaGBTrBLaZ_WUzDafDL5LT966Baf66FueEK7E)

This is just an example of thinking outside the norm.

My own personal overriding thoughts are that between us all we should try and imagine what standing Tonbridge AC will have in the local community and how we will help promote and develop our sport. If track and field is to survive as a major sport in the UK then we can't just rely on the National governing bodies and their initiatives.

On the other hand, I do understand the views of some that they just want things to stay as they are. So between us all we should try and answer the question of what sort of club should we have in a few years' time?

### **Feedback**

I have already received some good feedback and ideas from the likes of Andy Poppleton, James Taylor, Joe Watts, Tony Bennett and Mark Pitcairn-Knowles. Much of these are ambitious and progressive, adding to how I am thinking. However, I think it's important to take on board a range of honest thoughts from others.

It's imperative that we consider the full range of aspects, including Athlete Development, Competition, Financial, Social and Facilities.

So, if you have any ideas please feed them back to either, me [markhookway@icloud.com](mailto:markhookway@icloud.com) or Lewis Church [lewischurch.ljc@gmail.com](mailto:lewischurch.ljc@gmail.com), through a chat, message or email as we will collate them all on behalf of the TAC committee.

Mark Hookway  
For the TAC Committee  
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