

# South of England Athletic Association Limited

Extraordinary General Meeting  
on

**Saturday 2nd December 2006**

Francis House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1DE

(10 minute walk from Victoria Main Line Station)

Below is my view on the best way to vote at the SEAA EGM. Overleaf are the comments that the SEAA Honorary Secretary, Mr Chris Carter has distributed to all clubs in response to my view, together with my further thoughts.

It is important that such transparency be forced onto the SEAA, which although uncomfortable for many long serving and well meaning voluntary administrators, is vital to preserve the athletic club system which I sincerely believe is the best mechanism for delivering the sport in the UK.

**If your club is unable to attend the meeting, I would be pleased to act as your proxy. Please put my name in the appropriate space on your voting paper:**

**Mr C.Zacharides (Zac)**

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[www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster](http://www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster)

## SEAA EGM Resolution - Previously Circulated Comments

The South of England Athletic Association (SEAA) have an EGM on the 2nd December 2006 which resolves to incorporate England Athletics into its Articles of Association.

This means the SEAA will incorporate into its constitution the words "*The SEAA is subject to the jurisdictions of England Athletics and UK Athletics*". The AAA of England takes its membership via the SEAA (clubs do not affiliate directly to the AAA's), and the SEAA EGM represents another step towards the back door closure of the AAA's.

I would therefore ask that clubs vote at the SEAA EGM as follows:

### Resolution 1

**Create a new wholly owned subsidiary Company to handle competition in the South:**

**PLEASE VOTE YES.** This will allow the SEAA to safeguard its assets, and maintain its status as a democratic Association of Clubs, whilst also complying with the UK Athletics requirement that the South create a body with the sole responsibility for organising competition.

### Resolution 2

**A 75% reduction in SEAA Affiliation Fee:**

**PLEASE VOTE NO.** Originally it was intended to transfer the SEAA affiliations to England Athletics, until it was pointed out that this would be illegal under company law, without the approval of an EGM. They had no confidence in clubs agreeing to pass over affiliations to England Athletics, so this is an attempt to do the same thing by the back door. Clubs will never have the luxury of voting on England Athletics affiliation fees! The AAA's prospered without ever levying an affiliation fee onto clubs.

### Resolutions 3 & 4

**Incorporate "England Athletics" into the SEAA Articles of Association:**

**PLEASE VOTE NO.** The England Athletics constitution describes its governance role as being delegated by UK Athletics, to "*deliver athletics in England by working with clubs, schools, colleges, universities and local authorities*". This failure to recognise a collective voice for clubs under a single umbrella, in the form of the SEAA and the County Associations, represents the establishment of an American style collegiate system, and the demise of clubs as an organised collective. These resolutions could be just as effectively introduced in 3 years time, after England Athletics have proven their worth. Clubs must be cautious about jumping into bed with a partner before they have seen the face.

### Resolution 5

**ABAC resolution to return funds to the clubs:**

I have a lot of sympathy with this resolution, and do not accept SEAA published comments that the "SEAA does not have sufficient, available funds". Conservative estimates would still leave the SEAA with over £100,000 in the bank, so it might be necessary to close the office. However until the SEAA implement an open door policy for the clubs, making the office resources available to the membership, I believe the office is a luxury that clubs could do without. The onus is on the Treasurer to come to the EGM with a written statement outlining the costs of closure and clearly showing why £100,000 of funds would not be sufficient to meet the debts of the Association and cause bankruptcy. **If this resolution serves to force the Directors and Officers into honest transparency, I would ask the clubs to vote yes.**

**Mr Chris Carter,  
Honorary Secretary of the SEAA**

1. The South of England Athletic Association is most concerned to see a document that is being circulated by Mr Costos Zacharides (Zac) regarding the resolutions being put forward at the forthcoming Extraordinary Meeting of the Association. It is felt that Mr Zacharides, who sits on the Association's General Committee as the Hertfordshire representative and has done for a number of years, has misrepresented the position that the Association is taking in the changing world of athletics.

It is important to recognise from the outset that since 1st April 2006 England Athletics has been the governing body for athletics and all previous bodies such as the S.E.A.A. and the A.A.A. of England have had to revisit their roles and responsibilities and hence their constitutions.

It is this continual misrepresentation of facts and confusion of roles by people who wish to perpetuate uncertainty within the sport which has hindered the progress of the Association.

**Resolution 1:** This has been understood and so there is no further explanation necessary.

**Mr C.Zacharides (Zac)**  
[www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster](http://www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster)

I have been a representative on the General Committee since 2004, and have become dismayed at how the potential of this Association has been hi-jacked by individuals, such as Mr Carter, whose motivations and actions are far from transparent. The SEAA should not be adopting any firm position until it has asked its membership at an EGM. The views being represented as the Association's views are actually the views of individuals. My own views are expressed to give balance.

It is not helpful that the elected Secretary of the SEAA describes the Association as "Previous". If he considers the SEAA to be so "Previous", I hope he will step down from his post and away from the office which is such a financial burden on clubs. It is a matter for the Club's who own the SEAA to decide when it is to become "previous". A clear EGM resolution which proposes to change the activities of the SEAA, should be put to clubs, if that is what the England Athletics supporters want to happen. Club's do have a choice about which bodies they choose to affiliate to. The current choice is:

1) Historical Associations which are owned by the clubs, and therefore can be influenced and changed by the clubs, and are well capable of organising liability insurance coverage, as ABAC have already done.

or

2) A Quango given £2,717,00 by Sport England to take over the sport, with clear instruction to ensure that the sport pays for itself after three years. This calculates at an average of £3,000 per club. This is unsustainable without the taxing of road runners.

On the contrary, it is the culture for becoming dependent on an annual government grant which will create uncertainty, and which Mr Carter is advocating by placing the sport in the hands of a Quango like England Athletics. England Athletics is an unsustainable governing body for the sport, and Sport England, have proven to be an unreliable partner.

Please vote in favour of Resolution 1.

**Resolution 2:** Mr Zacharides comments are not borne out by any minutes of the Association.

Oh yes they are! The SEAA news sheet, Number 93, was distributed to all affiliated clubs in October 2005, and included the following comment about affiliation fees:

*"When a decision is made as to how the affiliations for the South of England clubs will be made to England Athletics, the Association will pass over the required fee to the new body".*  
This comment written by Chris Carter the Honorary Secretary of the SEAA, as well as being a member of the Foster Project Board, was distributed to clubs without any discussion with, or authority from the SEAA General Committee.

At the next meeting on Wednesday 2nd November 2005, the General Committee expressed dismay at Chris Carter's conduct:

**Item 4.7.6 of the Minutes Reads:**

*"Mr Peter Orpin said that he was concerned that there appeared to be a void within the General Committee as their feelings are countered or overwhelmed by the demands of England Athletics and the Foster report against the best interests of the A.A.A. of England and its purpose. For the sake of transparency if South of England A.A. Management Group members have dual interests that lead directly to positioning themselves to the England Athletics structure, it should be openly declared."*

**Item 4.7.7 of the Minutes Reads:**

*"Mr John Bicourt asked the Officers of the Association to confirm that they represent the views of the General Committee in any material written to the clubs and/or on the website and not just their own, which appeared to be pro Foster when in fact there is considerable disaffection and disquiet over the Foster proposals from the Committee."*

(It is worth pointing out that Mr John Bicourt who was the most effective committee member during 2005, was prevented from remaining a member of the SEAA General Committee when his nomination papers were rejected for technical reasons along with the papers of Mr Mike Winch (Blackheath and Bromley) and Mr Denis Daly (Windsor Slough & Eton). Each of these prominent individuals had expressed disquiet over the roller-coaster nature of the modernisation process, and their exclusion from the ballot paper was a scandal all on its own.)

**Item 4.7.8 to Item 4.7.11 of the Minutes:**

Mr Colin Gostelow referred to the offending document which had been distributed to all clubs and tabled 5 questions directly to Mr Chris Carter:

*Had legal advice been taken?*

*Is transfer of affiliations allowed within the Articles of the Association?*

*Is such a decision within the remit of Directors?*

*Was this formally agreed by the Directors, if so where was it minuted?*

*When was the renewal letter sent out to the clubs?*

**The minutes go on to read:**

*"In response to the answers given Mr Gostelow said that he regarded them as unsatisfactory and noted the S.E.A.A. was a Company limited by guarantee and that the Directors had various duties under Company Law with regard to governance".*

The Association as part of its budget planning recognised that if money was collected to meet responsibilities that they would not fulfil then the affiliation fees collected would need to be passed to the appropriate governing body.

This did not become necessary as England Athletics did not want any affiliation fees from the clubs in the first year (1st April 2006 - 31st March 2007) during which the Association continues with many of its former functions on a transitional basis.

For three months from next January this will not be the case in the South, because in practice there is a period when no affiliation fees are required by England Athletics. Therefore the Association thought that it would not be unreasonable to collect a pro rata affiliation fee to finance the remaining transitional activities, fund the cross country and indoor track and field Championships....

...but also give Clubs the entitlement to participate in the South of England Championships until March 2008.

**Resolutions 3 and 4:** Mr Zacharides speaks of 'hidden agendas' and 'back door methods' but it is a basic recognition of the existence of a new governing body for the sport. It makes the Association's raison d'etre consistent with reality and can be amended in the light of developments on the sport.

It is for those elected onto the SEAA to come up with ideas about how to advance the sport and put affiliation money to this use. Mr Carter, the Honorary Secretary of the SEAA for many years must be reminded that he has been elected to serve the clubs, not to govern the clubs on behalf of UK Athletics and Sport England.

Again Mr Carter refers to "former functions" and "transition". These are long term decisions for the clubs as a whole, not individuals, like Mr Carter elected for just a single year. Mr Carter's work at the SEAA has become that of a trojan horse. It would be more honest if He was working within England Athletics, or his local hub, and assisting them in making the new structure work.

Please pay attention to this "but", because it is intended to sow the seed that after March 2008, membership of the SEAA must be via England Athletics, and therefore clubs not affiliated to England Athletics will not be allowed to compete in Southern Championships. All without a straight question ever being put to the Clubs in the form of a transparent EGM resolution.

I did not use the words "hidden agenda". It is not hidden, it has been open to anyone who has read Sport England's "*Review into Athletics*" by Sir Andrew Foster, and "*Framework for Sport*" by Patrick Carter, and the Government's own "*Game Plan*" Policy Document. The agenda is to use Sport to tackle issues of social inclusion such as obesity, to fight crime and the integration of different nationalities and cultures into British Society. Patrick Carter's Framework for Sport document talks about changing the culture of sport to address these issues, and Sir Andrew Foster's review seeks to implement these changes.

However, "back door methods" are my words, and represent how I view the tactics of those seeking to take high performance athletics out of the club system, and replace it with social responsibilities. Athletic Clubs contribute a huge amount towards integration and other social issues, so to force this agenda onto the grass roots of the sport will be counter productive. Athletics clubs exist to facilitate Running, Jumping and Throwing. These activities must not be obscured by other objectives, however worthy those other objectives might be.

Clubs will also have to make similar changes to their constitutions should they wish to be consistent with change.

I expect most clubs will sit back and wait for a few years to see how the new quango system unfolds, and will catch up with changing their constitution after all the dust has settled. The SEAA would have been well advised to do the same thing.

Whilst considering the rush to close down the AAA's and the SEAA, clubs might also like to dwell on the £6.8 million paid by the BBC to cover the AAA's Championships, indoors and outdoors during the 2004 Athens Olympic Year, and reflect on why TV contracts are never signed, (all done by gentlemen's agreements). The reason for the gentlemen's agreements, rather than contracts, is that clubs own the rights to the AAA's Champs and Clubs would have been a party to the contract which would be signed by the elected officer. Much of this modernisation process must be considered in the context of the commercial rights to the sport worth tens of millions of pounds being syphoned out of the sport.

**Resolution 5:** This resolution, claimed to be an ABAC resolution, has come from clubs who have been seduced by ABAC's promise of easy money.

The only people seduced by promises of easy money would appear to be UK Athletics and now England Athletics. Clubs are a little wiser than that, and I suspect they are more concerned about the money being wasted by the SEAA, in the same way that the £2 million pounds held by the AAA's was wasted.

We believe that following legal advice that the resolution is illegal under the existing Constitution of the Association.

Clubs will recall recently receiving a questionnaire from the SEAA relating the EGM. This questionnaire had been intended as a sincere effort by the General Committee to canvass clubs for opinions, but was undermined by Chris Carter who drafted the document full of confusion and conflicting questions. Full details on how this questionnaire was undermined are available on the web at:  
**[http://www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster/seaa\\_confusion.pdf](http://www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster/seaa_confusion.pdf)**.

This questionnaire included the words "*N.B. The legal advice to the S.E.A.A. is that it is unacceptable for the present arrangements to continue*"

I challenged The Honorary Secretary, Chris Carter over this claim to have legal advice, at the General Committee meeting on Wednesday 6th September 2006. The minutes state in paragraph 4.9 "*The Chairman said that it was advice that had been given by the Association's Accountant Mr Les Withers*". The minutes go on to state "*It was acknowledged that the wording would have been better without the word 'legal'*".

Claims by Mr Chris Carter to have legal advice have often been sited, but the legal advice itself has always been clouded in mystery (who gave the advice? how much did it cost? can we see a copy?).

It should be remembered that the income from affiliations is spent in the year in which it is received, in excess of £100,000 is reserved for road running development activities and the Association has commitments which must be honoured.

In an environment where expected standards of support are higher than ever and the amount of time available from volunteers dwindling to say that we should not have a professional office is priceless.

Clubs are reminded that if they do wish to use the services of the Association for athletic matters they should contact the Association's Office Manager, Miss Linda Whitehead.

I hope that this note, read in conjunction with the documentation sent out with the Extraordinary General Meeting notice, will allay any fears that have been put into your minds

The Association will continue to promote Championships at Territorial level and support clubs who continue to be members of the Association in future.

**Mr. Chris Carter**  
**Honorary Secretary, SEAA**

Clubs have collectively made a request, and it is now a matter for the Treasurer to produce clear accounts explaining why it maybe illegal to submit to the request. A vague reference to "commitments" is not a satisfactory explanation as to why clubs cannot resolve how to spend their own money. This is not a matter for debate, it is a matter for accounts being submitted in black and white.

Clubs will decide whether we need an office by the way they vote on resolution 5. It is right that clubs consider what benefit they derive from the SEAA having an office and make their own judgement. Don Turner organises the mens track and field Southern League from his home.

Wrong again Chris! The Association's Office Manager should write to all clubs inviting them to take advantage of the Office resources, and develop a strategy how this support can be best delivered efficiently.

If you care about athletics being an open sport available for all, and you believe that clubs are the best way to deliver the sport to the widest catchment, then please be afraid of the proposals which seek to put all the power at the top of the pyramid. Be afraid, because the sport will not rebel, or cause a fuss, it will simply melt away, or evolve into mass participation fun runs, sitting alongside an American style collegiate system. Please be afraid.

And I speculate that Cross Country Championships will become mass participation fun runs with huge entry fees to help pay for all the bureaucracy which is coming our way.

**Mr. C.Zacharides (Zac)**  
**[www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster](http://www.british-athletics.co.uk/foster)**