

ENGLISH KARATE FEDERATION AGM 2021

President's Report

It is impossible to write this report without reference to the obvious impact that the COVID pandemic has had upon us all.

COVID

The last 18 months have been incredibly challenging for everyone, and the EKF, like many organisations has had to adapt to meet the demands the pandemic has created. For the most part, our time has been spent keeping the EKF afloat and as operational as possible. It has only been the last 6 months or so that we have begun to be able to have some sense of operational normality.

To this end, the Board took the decision to issue free EKF licence slips to all member groups. In addition, we called for volunteers to assist our online (zoom style) programme. We acknowledge and give enormous thanks to coaches, athletes and referees that gave their time for free, and allowed us to provide free online sessions.

In addition, we had one online (live) Kata competition, which again was free to all members. We were the first organisation to actually offer a live, in time, event.

The EKF played the leading role in seeing karate being allowed to return to training. As President, I have spent significant time reading Government documents, preparing documents and attending various Sport England and DCMS (Dept. of Culture, Media and Sport) meetings. It was through this work that we were allowed to re-open our clubs and dojos. It is worth noting that the DCMS required the 'return to training' guidance to be available to all of English Karate, and not just EKF. As such, the guidance I wrote had to be made available to everyone.

Like wider society, the impact of the COVID pandemic has severely restricted our operations and presented us with issues that we could neither predict nor plan. We still do not know the long-term effects of the pandemic, but the threat it poses is still very much with us. As I write this report, large parts of Europe are again facing lockdowns, so we must continue to guard against complacency and the thinking that 'it is all over'.

At this point, I would like to express deepest condolences to members who have lost loved ones during this time. We can only imagine the pain and suffering it has caused. Our thoughts are with you.

Despite all the challenges, the EKF has endured, and continues to thrive.

Finance

A full financial report has been provided. Gratitude is expressed to Mr Andreas Michealidis (EKF accountant) for his work in preparing these, along with fellow directors Mr Paul Campbell and Mr Mike Davies.

You will see, as requested, we have fully audited accounts, along with an up-to-date report on our current financial position.

Overall, we are in a healthy position, but there are still too many unknowns caused by the pandemic, that it would be wrong to say we are entirely safe.

Registrations

The Board took the decision to issue free licence slips to members to assist with their recovery. We issued around 19,000 licences. These 'red/white' licences will expire in December 2021. After this time, only the new Blue/white licence will be valid.

By issuing a new style licence, we will be able exert greater controls over the licencing protocols. The new licences have clear 'sell by' and 'expiry' dates.

In addition, since 2019 we have had 17 new associations, and 17 new club members join.

We have lost (to our knowledge) four associations, and have removed a number of others due to them not making any licence submissions and not responding to our communications.

The current membership list is on the EKF website.

Licence sales are better than expected, but we estimate around 50% below what might be expected in the pre covid years. We will have a better understanding by summer 2022

Mr Ivor Thomas is the director responsible for registrations, and has been doing excellent work to ensure we have a fully functioning system in place. We cannot under-estimate the amount of time and effort required in completing this work, which is essentially the financial life line of the EKF.

Sport and Performance

The National and regional squads are now fully operational after lockdown. Attendance has been generally very good, but it is clear that the long period of inactivity has taken its toll.

Government law restricted us in sending teams to World and European events, and it is only the recent World Championships where we were able to freely select a squad to attend.

The Performance Department did offer multiple online sessions during lockdown, which helped maintain some continuity, but this cannot replace the face-to-face training which the sport requires.

Changes in the WKF qualification programme will create a need for us to review the performance plan, which will be done shortly. However, it is clear that there is considerable re-building work needed.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Mr Winston Williams in ensuring the department continued through lockdown, and worked to ensure that coaches and athletes remained engaged.

Safe Guarding

I am pleased to announce that we now have a new Safe Guarding team, which has recently been formed, and is independent of the EKF Board.

We will soon announce the dates for the SG training for Association leads. The training will be conducted by the NSPCC/CPSU with each Association being provided with one free space on the course (larger Associations will be offered up to three free spaces depending on their size). It will be a requirement for all Associations to have a clearly identified and named SG lead that will be trained to EKF standards through this course.

In addition, the team will undertake the enormous task of auditing (and assisting) all Associations to ensure their SG protocols are up to date.

SG is vital to the EKF long term strategy for recognition but also vital to ensure that all our members are in safe environments.

Technical Committee

The Board have now agreed the new standards for the EKF to issues Dan grade certificates. Full details will soon be on the EKF website, but the intention is (for the first time) to offer Technical Dan gradings.

Inclusion and Equality

We have been acutely aware of the need to raise the profile of our inclusion agenda.

We now have clear inclusion policies, and will continue to develop these as and when needed.

This body of work has been overseen by Mr Sonny Roberts who continues to develop and lead the EKF in modernising its governance.

Website and social media

We have totally overhauled the EKF website and social media pages. This has led to improved communications and also (we believe) given a refreshed look for the EKF.

Mr Sonny Roberts has led on this work and at the same time saved the EKF around £5K per annum in maintaining the EKF website.

We look forward to further developing the website and our social media.

Commonwealth Karate Championships

This Championships was supposed to have happened in 2020, but has been delayed to autumn 2022. It will be held in Birmingham and will follow the week after the close of the Commonwealth Games.

It will be the first major international Karate event held in England and by the EKF since the 1990's. It promises to be an exciting event with in excess of 25 nations attending, but one that presents huge challenges. It is also now supported by the WKF who are taking a keen interest in the progress of the CKF (Commonwealth Karate Federation).

Mr Mike Davies (director) is the project lead and is doing an enormous amount of work in making these championships a success. Mike has established links with the Commonwealth Game organisers and opened doors that were previously closed to us.

We must also acknowledge the work of Mr Stennett Harvey who is Tournament Organiser, as well as the Organising Committee of Ms Mairi Kirin, Mr Billy Brennan, Mr Dale Gamble, Mr Sonny Roberts and Mr Gregg Peers....as well as a host of other individuals who are working hard to make this event work!!

Going forward, there is considerable work to be done. We are behind in many areas I would have liked us to have progressed, but without wishing to labour the point, COVID has delayed so many things. As ever, we need the help of those with the skill sets to help us deliver what is needed.

Plans for an EKF Coaching Badge are already being developed, but are a long way from implementation. This remains a key objective for the EKF.

Our articles also need a full review and re-write. This will be one of the first tasks for the Board following this AGM. We are very much behind the curve on this one, but Mr Mike Davies (Company Secretary) has assisted in starting this work and plans are in place to deal with the issue.

We must also develop greater services for our grass roots members. The vast majority (circa 90%) of EKF members do not participate in the Sport, and we must work harder to provide for their needs. I believe the initiatives in Safe Guarding, Inclusion programmes, a formal coaching badge, Technical Dan gradings, etc. will go some way to addressing this, but, as always, my door is open to all members who may wish to express their views and ideas.

On a personal level, I have found the last two years have been immensely challenging. When I was elected in 2019, I never envisaged having to deal with the ravages of COVID and lockdown. It has been an incredible learning curve and at times depressing, seeing clubs and dojos close to never re-open. Whilst I am pleased that we are beginning to see a steady recovery, I am acutely aware that so many clubs have closed.

In closing, I would like to offer my formal thanks and gratitude to the EKF Board for the work they have continued to do and for helping to keep the EKF afloat. We have undoubtedly made mistakes, but over all we have endured in circumstances that no other Board has had to face.

Steve Coupland

EKF President