

## **Restrictions on Hammer Competitions. Association of British Hammer Throwers (“The Hammer Circle”).**

### **A Support Document for athletes, supporters, clubs, and officials. Complaints raised by Members of Hammer Circle July 2021**

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#### **1. Events being withdrawn from League programmes due to Covid constraints**

There have been a number of complaints raised about throwing events being withdrawn from the field programme due to Covid, particularly hammer and discus. These mostly appear to be coming from the Southern Region, although other locations have also been mentioned to us.

The use of Covid to justify removing events is at best dubious and certainly should not justify picking out the same event repeatedly. At one League meeting, a double header event took place (age group/sexes) which lengthened rather than shortened the day. Ironically, the safety zone mandated for hammer and discus out of sector landings was used as the athlete marshalling area.

It seems clear that decisions affecting our event are, in some cases, being taken in advance of the fixture date since Licence Applications have evidenced excluded events.

The Covid reason should hopefully be coming to an end once rational thinking returns towards more considered Risk Management Assessment of any remaining Covid restrictions set by the Government. Here is an EA link with updated Operations Guidance:

<https://england-athletics-prod-assets-bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/2021/05/2021-Operations-Guide-for-Outdoor-T-F-Competition-v4.pdf>

#### **Actions**

*Now Covid restrictions are lifted, Members should lobby their Club Executives to withdraw from League fixtures where excessive Covid restrictions are applied that lead to the removal of throwing events from the programme. Clubs should be made to understand that in a fair sport, other events should also carry their share. In addition, this reason for withdrawal should be clearly defined and communicated to the League Secretary and Ed Hunt at England Athletics.*

#### **2. Hammer/Discus Events being withdrawn due to Cage Facilities.**

There can be a number of one-off reasons why an event may be withdrawn from a fixture at the last minute.

These may include:

- High winds damaging the cage.
- Travellers invading the site.
- Cage vandalised.

These are extreme events that may occur and clearly not predictable. Occurrences like regular invasion of travellers may need the club executives to take action with the police or news agencies to raise the profile of the problem.

Less sudden reasons for hammer/discus being withdrawn may include:

Cages damaged from use but not repaired rendering them unusable.

The status of a cage is subject to regular inspection and if your team are or have been at a venue this year which you feel would not pass an inspection for 2022, you should raise this with your Team Manager to discuss with the League Secretary to provide assurance of compliance before awarding the event the following season. Collect evidence during your event this year. Take photos of damage or non-compliance and find the date of the last Track Mark inspection. This is normally to be found on the cage but should in any event be available at the site office.

### **Actions**

*Collect evidence – photos, inspection dates, inspector’s names, details of company completing the inspection.*

*Raise the issue at your club AGM such that they will ensure that only facilities with suitable cages and which have passed their Track Mark inspection will be supported as venues fit to hold League events for the following season. Concerns over facility maintenance and fitness for use should also be raised and sent with evidence to Ed Hunt from EA. In addition, Members should lobby their Club Executives to withdraw from League fixtures where restrictions are applied that lead to the repeated removal of throwing events from the programme. Clubs should be made to understand that in a fair sport, other events should also carry their share. In addition, the reason for a Club’s withdrawal should be clearly defined and communicated to the League Secretary and Ed Hunt at England Athletics.*

### **3. Cages deemed unfit for Training or Competition from damage.**

There may be a number of reasons a cage has been deemed unfit for use:

Net damaged by impact of hammers/discus.

Rope chafe or rodents.

Structural supports damaged by hammers, vandals or wind.

If the cage has significant holes , repairs are possible: single strand damage can be temporarily repaired using cable ties or a more permanent repair can be completed using a patch using suitable netting to IEC EN1263 or para type cord (example of suitable twine for repair FORZA 4mm Tie Twine – net fixing twine ). **See Appendix 2.** The Hammer Circle are working with the net manufacturers to provide a guidance document more suitable to the event than fall arrest duties.

On the repairs shown within Appendix 2 an alternative method of securing the twine from unwrapping is by applying a small amount of External PVA or Gorilla Glue within the knot. Don’t get it on your fingers it is difficult to get off!!

These types of repair should meet the requirement of Track Mark testing and provide a safe repair if completed carefully. Structural support repairs should only be completed by a SAPCA authorised company

### **4. Cages not meeting the new UK Athletics Safety Standard**

There has been discussion on the Circle Facebook forum challenging the standards set by UKA for the construction, maintenance, and testing of the cages in use in the UK. The changes came out of an incident where a hammer was thrown from a cage located at the 200m start, which cleared the track then bounced on the footpath around the track and hit a person causing minor injury (as I understand). The distance thrown was approximately 60m whereas the standard to which the new regulations aspire is 102m (based on Newton’s Law).

The difficulty we have in placing controls on the distance rating of a cage (eg: 50m max distance) is the ability to control those distances in the real world. If the track is open for training then there would be difficulty stopping an athlete picking up a hammer to do some speed-work and throwing in excess of 70m. Having coached young athletes that could throw in excess of 80m with light hammers, I personally believe that facilities should be available to allow athletes to reach their maximum potential safely without the risk of injuring someone as a result of a substandard facility.

#### **4.1 Funding suggestions.**

It is recognised that we as a sport are going through some pain due to this change, but I have also been motivated enough in the past to resolve the problem of poor facilities raising more than £50,000 to build the throwing area in Hull. We worked over 12 months to raise funding including initiating newspaper reports and Diane sitting in a queue to speak with the local councillor with (the portfolio for sport). We accessed local support, Trust grants, Sport England grants and worked on networking to gain access to a local philanthropist who helped with funding.

There are greater issues when there is general degradation of a full facility which seems to be the case in Lancashire from what has been stated. I suggest getting the local MP involved, or getting Look North West involved. You can drag money in from capital sport project budgets if you can create enough noise.

With the Covid virus causing so much disruption, there are small grants up to £10,000 available from Sport England available right now with a bit of effort which could be used to repair and upgrade cages.

If you are prepared to put in some effort, I have found other parties willing to get involved to complete your objective. But sit on your backside and wait and you will continue to wait!!

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds/return-play-small-grants>  
<http://www.fundingforall.org.uk/funds/sport-england-small-grants-scheme/>  
<https://www.sport.wales/media-centre/latest-news/14m-funding-package-for-wales-sport-and-leisure-sector/>

These are just a few of the funds that are supported by Sport England, and there will be Trusts run by local institutions and businesses that you can seek out and harass to make up the additional funding. If you show willing and have funding in hand you will more likely to get matching funding from other groups.

Don't be put off by some of the restrictions in the documentation; you need to justify and explain that there has been a change of standard which has rendered the equipment unusable. Provide clarity on all the benefits to the local population and also volunteers supporting the officiating etc.

Following supporting our local Stadium Management with justification to the budget holder, the council have recently sanctioned £30,000 for the replacement of the central cage at Hull. The justification was based on the operability of the new cage in high wind and the reduced need and ease of lowering the netting with reduced staff numbers. It can be done. If you don't have the skill to do this speak with your council; they will likely have someone you can speak to help you get started

## 5. Use of Risk Assessment for the use of cage not fully meeting the new UKA regulations.

Cages come in various shapes and/sizes and locations. ***Risk Assessment is an available tool supported by UKA for level 1 licence competitions until 2023 season. Bear in mind that a Risk Assessment is a means to allowing throwing to continue; it is not a tool to allow throwing to be shut down.***

Most of the cages currently installed in a reasonable state of repair **can** be operated with a Risk Assessment. The difficulty comes when you apply the mitigations which may make the training session or competition too difficult to conduct due to the restrictions you have put in place.

The process of Risk Assessment is a balance between risk and probability, using mitigations that are put in place to allow safe operation of the cage. I would say the majority of cages in the UK are currently safe to operate up to 20m with the gates in use correctly. As the distance increases, the risk then begins to increase and there is a need to provide greater mitigation which then begins to impact on other users of the facility.

Any Risk Assessment should be conducted with the support of the stadium Duty Holder. Before considering sitting down to discuss this with the Duty Holder, do your planning and prepare your own Risk Assessment with the perceived risks and what you think is acceptable mitigation of these risks.

See **Appendices 4&5**

Remember the six “P”s (I normally use seven I have kept it clean for those sensitive hammer throwers amongst us!).

## **Poor Prior Planning and Preparation leads to Poor Performance**

I have carried out some examples of Risk Assessments that may be helpful in developing your own. Please feel free to use these to build your own models of Risk Assessments. See **Appendices 3, 4 & 5**

In addition, you can contact me to provide more advice on the matters covered briefly within this document.

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