Chairman's Report for 2020-2021

It has been a huge relief to see a return to some semblance of normality as the Covid vaccine rollout has enabled fell racing to resume. I am grateful to all our hard-working race organisers and in particular to those who have organised the Senior and Junior championship races. The restarted 50@50 race series has been a huge success and it has given me a lot of pleasure to receive glowing feedback from those members who have taken part. I have agreed to stand as FRA Chairman for one more year and I am very much looking forward to hosting a reunion of founder members and honoured guests at Barley in conjunction with the Long Tour of Pendle on Saturday 20th November.

A great sadness and consequence of Covid was the loss of Pete Bland in November 2020 and I felt privileged to be able to pull together and edit the special tribute supplement published with the Summer 2021 *Fellrunner* to celebrate the life and contribution of this remarkable man to our sport throughout his lifetime.

Covid restrictions were challenging to navigate and I will be forever grateful to Jamie McIlvenny and his team who steered us expertly through all the legislation. Our guidance was recognised as excellent and was followed by several sporting bodies in the UK.

Membership of the FRA has continued to grow and at the time of writing, we have a total of 8240 members. We have been able to keep subscriptions at current levels which I believe is remarkable value given the member benefits with three editions of the Fellrunner alone justifying the cost. The 50@50 series and preferential Championship race entry have also contributed.

The FRA accounts continue to record a surplus and we have invested heavily in support for race organisers to facilitate the use of online entries during Covid restrictions. Committee expenses have been greatly reduced due to meetings on Zoom and we have used additional funds to invest in a new website which is close to completion and development of new coaching modules to be rolled out shortly.

Website. As mentioned above, we have invested heavily in the development of a new website which will be unveiled shortly and used in the first instance to register fell races for the 2022 season. Brett Weeden joined the FRA Committee in 1999 as a member rep and then club rep from 2001. In 2004 he was instrumental in the creation of the current website which he has continued to maintain with support from his son Jack. He has now decided that the time has come to step down and I thank him wholeheartedly for his long and distinguished service.

Coaching. The Fell LiRF and CiRF courses have now been discontinued and will be replaced by new FHMT (Fell/Hill/Mountain/Trail) modules to supplement the standard LiRF and CiRF courses offered by England Athletics. These modules are joint-funded by the FRA and UKA, will employ modern materials and presentation including video and online, and are sure to be valuable coaching and training aids for fell runners. My thanks to Sarah Rowell and a team of specialists, including Graeme Woodward, who are still engaged on this important project.

Access. Covid and the inability of the general public to travel abroad have led to increased pressure on the countryside and wild places on which we rely for our sport. This has in turn produced additional challenges to our ability to gain permissions from landowners and it is critical that we maintain a clear distinction between large, commercial events and grass roots fell running and racing.

Committee. I am very lucky to have a keen and dedicated team to support me and I am particularly indebted to Neil Talbott (Secretary) and Andy Watts (Treasurer) who go above and beyond what is required of them. The next year will be my last as FRA Chairman and I am pleased that Stuart Ferguson has agreed to act as Vice-Chairman (in addition to his role as Race Liaison Officer Lead) with a view to standing as Chairman from the next AGM.

Charmian Heaton   24th September 2021
FRA Chairman