

ERSA Chair Report – 2016
Bernard Wright

2016 has proved to be another good year in the region with so much taking place across all the clubs.

The year kicked off with the Schools race at Ipswich and again this was another massive turnout and just goes to demonstrate just how popular this type of grass roots racing is. It is certainly one of the challenges for the future as to how we can harness that enthusiasm better and continue the development of racers over the coming years.

The summer league continued where it left of last year with Norfolk remaining strong and setting the bar high for the other clubs. Over the Winter we have seen quite a few members leave the region as they moved onto university and it has given many other racers the opportunity to shine in the races. We have also seen the younger age groups continue to grow in strength and this year more racers from outside the region have started attending the races enhancing the level of competition.

Team Evolution and Ski Bartlett's have continued to support the region and that has worked very well and they are happy to continue their support in 2017.

It is amazing just how quickly time goes by and how things change in that time. I've been chair of the Eastern Region since 2009 and involved well before that in the committee, I am not good at sitting around doing nothing and that's how I got started supporting the sport.

Over that time, I have seen a lot of changes take place, people come and go, changes at clubs and other regions. When I took over one of my aims was to ensure that we built up the region into the best in the country that provided exceptional value, an environment that encouraged clubs to participate and bring on new talent and where parents could get involved to support their kids. At the time LSERSA were the best region in the country and set the bar high.

At the time of taking over both my kids were still involved in the sport actively racing throughout the country, they always loved the social side of the sport at the regional level and built up many good lifelong friendships, which also applies to many of the parents who tag along. It's been some years now since my kids were involved but I kept on attending as it was a good distraction from the day job and my way of putting something back into the sport that have given my kids so much enjoyment.

Over the past eight years we have managed to build up a region that is the envy of the country, offer excellent value for money for the racers and one which is prepared to give new things a try without fear of failure. Sometimes new things work, sometime they don't, but we are not afraid to stand up and be counted and admit when something doesn't work or we are wrong and we will adapt. It was also good to bring the club national to Ipswich for the first time all those years ago which has continued to develop over the past few years and with a cake stall which was the envy of many clubs.

There comes a time though when everyone has to move on and let someone else take on the mantle and try other new things, worst thing you can do is outstay your welcome. So this year I decided that 2016 would be my last year as Chair of the region. It's been a very good time and we have achieved

a massive amount in the time, but it is time I went a different direction and give myself a new challenge.

As I said we are quite prepared to try different things, greater choice of races, much better value for money, improved start times, much more efficient running of the races meaning earlier finishes, and the list goes on. It's pleasing to watch a lot of the things we have tried be copied at some point by other regions and national races.

You will notice I say we all the time and that is because running the region is a team effort throughout the Summer and even in the Winter when many things still need doing. I have had excellent support over the years from many people in the region, some who moved on a long time ago. It is impossible to thank everyone individually but I would like to thank just a few who have been there the whole time ensuring that the races continue to develop, Steve Lambert, Ian Mawson, Andrew Upton, Janet Jenkins all have contributed massively in the background to the success of the region.

I would also like to thank Paul Telling, Sally Bartlett and Jon Reidy for their support over the years. It wasn't until recent years that the region took on sponsorship and worked in partnership with someone, I think it has worked extremely well and having the very well respected coaches support the races has been very beneficial for all. Would also like to think Neil McQuoid for his support.

The ERSA AGM takes place on Saturday 24th September and it is a good opportunity to have your say and help the region continue to grow. If you are a parent out there who attends the races please do get involved it is a very good way of putting something back into the sport.

So long, and thanks for all the fish 😊