BFA Outdoor Championship Uttoxeter 2026

Post Event Review and Member Consultation Report

INTRODUCTION

This year marked a significant milestone for the British Flyball Association as the Outdoor Championships moved to our new venue, Uttoxeter Racecourse, for the first time.

Relocating a major championship event brings both exciting opportunities and unique operational challenges. Following the conclusion of the Championships, the Committee and operational management teams undertook a comprehensive post-event review to evaluate all aspects of the event.

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an overview of the key findings from that review, together with our thoughts and proposals for the future. We hope this information will assist you when completing the forthcoming Outdoor Championships Feedback Questionnaire.

This is your Championship event. We want to make it the best experience possible for every competitor, volunteer, supporter and dog in attendance, and we can only achieve that with your feedback and involvement.

The questionnaire will be published in the British Flyball Association Members Only Facebook Group and uploaded to the blog section of the official BFA website. Team Captains will also receive a copy of this report by email and will be asked to encourage their team members to participate in the consultation process.

EVENT SUCCESSES

The move to Uttoxeter Racecourse provided an opportunity to introduce several new initiatives which enhanced the atmosphere of the event, celebrated our canine athletes, and modernised aspects of event delivery.

"The Final Dash" Retirement Ring

For the first time, we introduced a dedicated retirement celebration ring, allowing dogs reaching the end of their competitive careers to enjoy one final run.

Surrounded by fellow competitors and supporters, these emotional moments provided a fitting tribute to the dogs that have contributed so much to our sport and created memories that were beautifully captured by our professional photographers.

Vibrant Shopping Village

The Championships hosted 28 trade, food and beverage stalls, creating a lively shopping village that contributed significantly to the overall festival atmosphere of the event.

In addition to enhancing the visitor experience, the shopping village generated valuable secondary income for the Association.

For the first time, the Committee also contacted all stallholders following the event to thank them for their support and to gather feedback on their experience. To date, **[insert number]** responses have been received, of which **[insert number]** have already confirmed their intention to return next year.

Several exhibitors have also expressed an interest in donating prizes and gift vouchers to support future events.

Flyball Geek Integration

Although Flyball Geek is not currently designed to manage five rings operating over four days in a block racing format, its introduction proved extremely beneficial. The system enabled competitors to monitor race progress and timings from anywhere on site, significantly improving access to real-time information. Feedback regarding its implementation was overwhelmingly positive.

Electronic Judging System (EJS) Monitoring

For the first time, the Electronic Judging System (EJS) was utilised during Speed Trials to monitor actual race performance against expected performance.

This provided judges with additional data to identify significant discrepancies and investigate situations where team performances differed substantially from established expectations, helping to protect the integrity of the competition.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE INVESTMENT

Financially, the 2026 Outdoor Championships was an exceptionally successful event for the Association.

Financial Surplus Allocation

Net Surplus Achieved: **£20,367.04**

The full financial report can be found at Appendix 1.

The surplus is an excellent outcome for the association and placing us in a strong position to reinvest directly into initiatives that benefit our members.

The two investment areas currently under consideration are detailed below.:

1. New Tuffspun Matting

The Committee is considering allocating part of the surplus towards the purchase of additional Tuffspun matting which would directly respond to the feedback received through the recent Indoor Racing Survey.

This investment would allow the Association to continue expanding indoor racing opportunities.

It is important to recognise that the continued growth of indoor flyball is currently constrained by two significant factors: the limited availability of suitable indoor venues and the increasing cost of hiring such facilities. These challenges remain the single greatest obstacle to expanding indoor racing opportunities across the country.

The Committee remains committed to actively identifying and evaluating potential financially valuable indoor venues for use at BFA-organised events. Where suitable facilities are identified, details will also be shared with Tournament Organisers to help support the wider development of indoor racing and encourage the establishment of additional indoor tournaments throughout the United Kingdom.

We would welcome any and all ideas of venues across the country, if you know of somewhere, have a contact etc please forward the information to the Secretary email address and we will look into this.

By combining investment in new matting with a continued search for suitable venues, the Association hopes to create more opportunities for members to enjoy high-quality indoor competition in the years ahead.

2. Digital Administration Infrastructure

The Association clearly needs to invest in new technology projects that will enable us to move away from the slow, legacy paper-based systems that are currently used.

This committee is focused on making good steps forward in this area and has, and will continue to, research options that may be available to us.

Once we are clear as to what we need and what is available a tender based approach will be implemented to identify preferred suppliers.

As soon as a full proposal is available, we will consult with the membership in line with 6.7 of the constitution.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

While many aspects of the Championships were highly successful, our review identified several areas where the event experience can and should be improved.

Facilities and Camping

Site Access
Traffic congestion at the main entrance on arrival day resulted in significant queues and delays for members entering the site.

Improving site access and reducing waiting times will be a key priority for next year..

Site Mapping
Many attendees found the site map difficult to follow, particularly when first arriving at the venue.

The Committee will review the design and layout of event maps to provide a clearer and more user-friendly navigation experience.

Shower Facilities
Whilst the quality of the shower facilities received positive feedback, the overall number of available units was insufficient for the size of the camping community.

Additional shower provision will therefore be explored for future Championships.

Racing Administration Running Orders and Communications
The production and distribution of divisional running orders took longer than anticipated, reducing the preparation time available to teams.

Communication regarding progress and expected publication times was also not as effective as it should have been. We apologise for the inconvenience this caused.

The Committee will investigate software solutions and operational improvements that assist with the efficient production and management of running orders across five competition rings.

Day Length and Presentations
Long racing days resulted in presentations taking place later in the evening than many competitors would have preferred.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2027

Looking ahead, the **committee feels like we're completely bursting at the seams under the current format, and trying to squeeze everything into a 4-day event has become a massive struggle.**

There's just no breathing room, which holds the championship back and directly impacts everyone involved:

- **Struggling to Fit Everything In:** We had **all 5 rings completely tied up for a full day** just to complete the speed trials. In instance, entry levels were so high that we were very close to needing a sixth ring just to get through this part of the event. Because of that, it was incredibly difficult to find the time and ring availability to run our Young Members activities—which are vital to the growth of our sport—and to properly honour our retiring dogs.

- **Missing Out on the Full Experience:** While some thrive on the fast pace, running such a jam-packed schedule means the weekend can start to feel a bit too rushed for others. We want to ensure that *everyone* has the time to catch their breath, socialise, and truly enjoy the championship atmosphere without feeling like they are constantly racing against the clock.

Bottom line: the committee sees this **rigid 4-day limit as a major roadblock**—it creates an unnecessarily frantic pace for our community, and **something clearly needs to change so we can address these issues.**

We need a format that allows our championship to not only grow in terms of the number of racing divisions, but importantly, to offer those other activities that are fundamental to the growth and development of our sport.

The Future of Speed Trials as a Racing Format

While originally introduced to address seeding challenges for teams with limited access to sanctioned competition, given they now take up a full day at the championship event and have a major impact operationally, their ongoing effectiveness now warrants careful review.

Historically, Speed Trials also served as a mechanism to discourage teams from deliberately recording slower qualifying performances in order to obtain a more favourable Championship division placement.

In recent years, rule changes were introduced to allow teams to revert to their original seed time where Speed Trial results did not accurately reflect their expected competitive performance. While introduced with positive intentions, these changes appear to have unintentionally reduced the effectiveness of the Speed Trial system.

Despite enhanced monitoring through the Electronic Judging System and increased scrutiny by judges and race officials, evidence remains that some teams continue to manipulate performances during Speed Trials in pursuit of a perceived competitive advantage.

This is disappointing. Healthy competition is an essential part of our sport and should always be encouraged. However, competition must be balanced with fairness, honesty, and respect for the rules that exist to ensure a level playing field for all participants.

Committee's Proposed Qualification and Racing Model 2027

The Committee believes that any qualification and seeding process should be robust, transparent, and trusted by competitors.

Following extensive discussion, the Committee believes it may be appropriate to return to a previously used Championship qualification model.

Under this proposal:

- Teams would be required to compete at a minimum of three sanctioned tournaments prior to a nominated cut-off date.
- Provision would be made for teams who attempt to enter competitions and oversubscription prevents entry.
- Eligible teams would be seeded using their official website seed time in accordance with existing rules.
- The top 22 seeded teams at the qualification deadline would become eligible for Speed Trials which would continue to run on Thursday. This would then be followed by the start of open racing the remaining divisions.
- Speed Trial results would determine the composition of the top 3 divisions. Division would be a ten-team double elimination.

The Committee believes this approach would, along with EJS, substantially reduce reasons for manipulation whilst maintaining a fair and competitive pathway for identifying the country's leading teams.

Team Seeding Validation

Alongside any potential changes to qualification procedures, the Committee will explore enhanced validation processes to ensure that seed times remain accurate, reliable, and protected from abuse. We will also seek ideas from the membership on how this can best be achieved and encourage their co-operation in promoting a culture that discourages deliberate holding back. Breakout performances should be recognised and celebrated as indicators of success, development, and achievement.

Future Use of Technology

Looking ahead, we hope to make greater use of EJS technology throughout future Championships rather than limiting its primary use to Speed Trials.

Broader adoption has the potential to improve officiating consistency, increase transparency, enhance performance data collection, and strengthen verification processes across the event.

CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Did we get everything right? No.

Moving a national championship to a new venue whilst introducing new technology and new operational processes was always going to present challenges. However, every success and every difficulty have provided valuable lessons that will help us continue to improve the Championships in future years.

We are already working on solutions to the issues identified in this report and look forward to receiving your feedback through the forthcoming questionnaire.

We are pleased to confirm that the Outdoor Championships will return to Uttoxeter Racecourse next year. Armed with the experience gained from our first year at the venue, we are confident that we can deliver an even smoother, more efficient, and more enjoyable Championship experience for everyone involved.

Thank you for your continued support of the British Flyball Association.

The BFA Committee

Appendix 1

The British Flyball Association Financial Report for Outdoor Championships 2026 *To 08-Sep*

INCOME

Teams and Camping	78177.14
Stalls	3729.23
Sponsorship	510.00
Total Income	***£82,416.37***

EXPENDITURE

Uttoxeter	20000.00
Marquee Hire	9055.00
Temporary Fencing & Portable Loo Hire	7570.90
Toilet Rolls	68.80
Skip Hire	3193.20
Fire Extinguishers	2138.00
Water System	4000.00
First Aid - Human	3475.00
Rosettes & Trophies	6713.61
Officials Gifts,Thank you's and Young Member Gifts	1163.88
Van Hire & Fuel	608.31
Mileage	551.71
Admin, Printing & Housekeeping	800.10
Arena Paint & Camping Marking	1161.67
Marquee Décor	60.00
Bouncy Castle & Bull & Live Entertainment	1095.00
Refreshments	394.15
Total Expenditure	***£62,049.33***
Surplus to Date	**£20,367.04**