

# Southampton Athletic Club 10 Year Strategy

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*To provide an environment of excellence where athletes  
of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can thrive*

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## Executive Summary

We believe that Southampton Athletic Club (SAC) is one of the best clubs in the South and potentially the most successful club in England outside London. It has a long history of producing international athletes<sup>1</sup> and it is frequently in the top division of the National Leagues and our junior section reaching the finals of the YDL league on more than one occasion<sup>2</sup>.

It has a strong coaching team and a healthy youth academy, but there is a decline in athletes and a reluctance in volunteers to come forward. If this trend continues SAC will struggle to maintain its position in the senior leagues and may struggle to attract and retain the athletes of the future.

This strategy looks to address the areas within its control and influence those areas that are outside its control but upon which it depends. The change in public expectations and the need to have access to the latest facilities will drive SAC forward to implement this strategy and build a club that is healthy and can continue to grow and develop over the next five to ten years.

SAC looks to build on local expertise and particularly its existing relationship with Solent University.<sup>3</sup> SAC looks to strengthen the links with Solent University for SAC athletes to benefit from the latest information and facilities and to share resources across both organisations<sup>4</sup>.

## Building Southampton as our home

The Athletics Club has always had a base at the Outdoor Sports Centre, a location built within the City of Southampton, a multiple sports hub with the athletics track at its centre within a beautifully landscaped setting. Unfortunately the facilities at the sports centre haven't improved and do not meet the expectations of today's athletes and supporters.

We currently have no club house to gather for club or social reasons. The ability for athletes and coaches to share knowledge or experience and the ability to have our branding and identity displayed is limited. Over the years we have collected trophies and mementos which we are unable to display and we are unable to modernise with on-line and contactless services as we have no secure storage or permanent buildings. A permanent and secure club house will allow us to display our trophies and celebrate our rich heritage of GB athletes to inspire the athletes of the future<sup>5</sup>.

A new clubhouse will form a 'home' for our members, helping to build our sense of community and pride in the club which is essential to our success.

We will modernise to benefit our competing athletes, purchasing a Photo Finish (PF) system with electronic starts and Electronic Distance Measuring (EDM) systems.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.southamptonathleticclub.org.uk/wordpress/our-history/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.southamptonathleticclub.org.uk/wordpress/fixtures/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.englandathletics.org/athletics-and-running/our-programmes/university-charter-mark/>

<sup>4</sup> Solent has already achieved Bronze Charter Mark and delivered during lockdown a series of workshops to SAC members

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.southamptonathleticclub.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/international\\_athletes.pdf](https://www.southamptonathleticclub.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/international_athletes.pdf)

While much of our training can take place at the outdoor Sports Centre many of the technical sessions move away from Southampton in the winter into school halls, many of which are outside Southampton. The coaches provide adapted training to give the athletes the best advantage that we can give them when outdoor training can restart at the sports centre in spring. The consequence of this is that for some of the very technical events such as high jump and pole vault, SAC athletes are unable to practice the event locally for almost half the year. The nearest indoor facility is over an hours drive<sup>6</sup>.

The lack of facilities has a major impact on our growing Academy which is coaching the fundamental skills to young athletes 8 to 12 years in a multi event, multi skilled approach. For half the year the academy cannot train at the sports centre, it moves to Wyvern College in Fair Oak as the closest space that offers access to both indoor and outdoors training. This results in SAC losing athletes both permanently or athletes are unable to train with us over winter as they are unable to make the journey to Wyvern. This is a major factor in attracting inner-city athletes to the sports and to Southampton AC.

The economic climate in the UK continues to be subject to change, with the pace of that change increasing in recent years, particularly in the sports sector. It is important that SAC stays attuned to those changes, understands the potential impact to both the sport and the organisation, and ensures that we are well-placed to respond accordingly. SAC will develop a financial plan that ensures success of this strategy.

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<sup>6</sup> England Athletics Facilities Strategy 2018-2015 states: ' ideally the majority of the population should be within 60 minutes journey time of an indoor athletics facility' Travel times for Southampton athletes are: Thames Valley: 1hr 11min, Brunel: 1hr 12m, Lee Valley the closest 200m track :over 2hr by car and almost 3hr by public transport

## Introduction and Background to the Strategy

In 2019 Southampton Athletic Club (SAC) took part in the England Athletics Club review programme part of which was a member survey in September/October 2019. A report was delivered to SAC with the outcome of the review and member survey. This review highlighted many areas to be addressed, some of which can be delivered in the short term, such as a new website, key policies, improved communication and development of an athlete pathway.

A key outcome of the club review was a vision for the:

- Committee to decide on current and future priorities
- Establish a club vision that is agreed by the committee and shared with members and the wider community

SAC continued to work with England Athletics and a workshop was held March 2020 which was to mark the start of developing a club strategy. Unfortunately this work was never completed and the priorities of the club changed into managing on a day to day basis with the ever changing impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic.

This 10 year strategy aims to address the long term recommendations of the England Athletics Review and ensure that SAC is well placed to provide athletics and athletic related activities to the highest standard for the next 10 years and beyond.

In May 2021 England Athletics published their Strategy for 2021 – 2032<sup>7</sup> with the following purpose and vision:

- **Purpose:** “To inspire more athletes and runners of all abilities and backgrounds to fulfil their potential and to have a lifelong love for the sport.”
- **Vision:** “For athletics to become an inclusive sport where everyone belongs and can flourish.”

England Athletics also published

### “Guiding principles:

We want every participant involved in the sport, whether they are an athlete, runner, coach, official, leader, volunteer, competition provider, facility operator, parent or guardian to see and experience first-hand the guiding principles which continue to drive our work. These are to:

- put the athlete and runner first
- encourage high standards and ethical success across all aspects of our work
- enhance experiences
- work together in partnership not in isolation.”

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.englandathletics.org/about-us/about-us/our-strategy/>

## SAC Mission Statement:

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*“To provide an environment of excellence where athletes of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can thrive”*

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This is underpinned by the following key areas:

### **Athletes**

SAC to be an Athlete centred club. The Athlete will be at the centre of what we do and we provide the environment and support to ensure the athlete develops to the best of their ability and in return contributes to the success of Southampton AC

### **Environment**

To provide the competitions, facilities, coaches, officials and support personnel and services to enable the athlete to thrive.

### **Excellence**

To strive for excellence in everything we do. To exploit our rich history of international athletes and celebrate the foundations of SAC. To provide role models for young and new athletes. To continually develop and enhance our environment.

## Delivering the 10 year Strategy - Athlete Objectives

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*SAC to be an Athlete centred club. The Athlete will be at the centre of what we do and we provide the environment and support to ensure the athlete develops and contributes to the success of Southampton AC*

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### **Objective 0: To grow our Fundamentals academy, to coach athletes giving them the skills to become the athletes of the future.**

#### **Success Measures**

- To increase the size of Fundamentals and Foundation athletes by 50%<sup>8</sup>
- To have no athlete wait more than 3 months for a taster session<sup>9</sup>
- To be able to train at the sports centre all year with access to both indoor and outdoor athletics facilities suitable for the number of athletes training<sup>10</sup>
- To increase the number of coaches, both qualified coaches and coach assistants, to maintain a coach to athlete ratio of no more than 1:10.
- To actively recruit Fundamental athletes by creating links with local schools and inner city organisations.
- To continually review England Athletics programmes for the younger athletes and look to expand training to younger athlete

### **Objective 1: To attract and retain athletes across multiple disciplines in Track and Field, Road Running and Cross Country.**

#### **Success measures:**

- To grow active athlete<sup>11</sup> membership by a minimum of 20% by 2026 and 30% by 2031
- To have active athletes training and competing in Track and Field, Road Running and Cross Country as identified in Loveadmin and Powerof10.

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<sup>8</sup> Baseline figures to be set using the membership system March 2022

<sup>9</sup> The current waiting list (October 2021) has over 100 athletes waiting

<sup>10</sup> Currently the Academy has capacity for 160 athletes with upto 80 training at any one time

<sup>11</sup> Active Athlete as defined by first claim athlete registration on Loveadmin: Baseline figures to be set March 2022

## **Objective 2: To attract and retain athletes across all age groups with specific emphasis on retaining athletes in areas such as the U17 and U20<sup>12</sup> age groups.**

### **Success measures:**

- To increase active athlete membership by a minimum 20% in each age group by 2026
- To increase participation in female athletes specifically in the senior category
- To have programmes that actively recruit athletes from underrepresented groups such as Females, Southampton City residents
- To have a 100% increase in the U17 and U20 age groups and senior females

## **Objective 3: To provide a development pathway for athletes**

### **Success Measures:**

- To have a published athlete pathway detailing the flow of athletes through the club
- To provide a process for athletes to progress or change event groups
- To implement a process for an annual check on the pathway identifying for gaps or overlaps
- To implement a process for annual check on coaching provision and recruit into specific events as required
- To appoint a coaching coordinator to oversee the pathway and provide assistance to athletes and coaches

## **Objective 4: To have active athletes participating in competitions across all disciplines**

### **Success Measures:**

- To provide the most competitive league competitions to our members through participation in appropriate leagues and aiming for the top divisions.
- For athletes to have access to at least one club sponsored events for each discipline<sup>13</sup>
- To host SAC open fixtures targeted at the events not adequately covered by league or race competitions
- To host SAC opens targeted for athletes seeking qualifications in events not adequately covered in the league or local/regional competition calendar
- For participation to be celebrated equally alongside podium success through website, club social media and awards evenings

## **Objective 5: To have top level recognised athletes across all disciplines**

### **Success Measures:**

- To have SAC athletes ranked in the top 10 across all disciplines as defined on the power of 10
- To have SAC athletes competing in British Championships, EA Championships and for the participation and successes to be celebrated by the club.

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<sup>12</sup> Historically these age groups have had the lowest number of active athletes

<sup>13</sup> This to be delivered as a league or race identified on the clubs website

## Delivering the 10 year Strategy - Environment Objectives

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*To provide the competitions, facilities, coaches, officials and support personnel and services to enable the athlete to thrive.*

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### Volunteers

#### **Objective 1: Coaches. to actively encourage young athletes to become coaches**

##### **Success Measures:**

- To deliver a programme to actively recruit young (U23) coaches
- To assign a senior mentor coach to each new coach
- To have young coaches complete the coach assistant and athletics coach qualification
- To have young coaches actively involved with the SAC Academy U11 and U13 training groups.

#### **Objective 2: Coaches, to encourage established coaching team to continue learning**

##### **Success Measures:**

- To deliver a programme to support and promote coach education
- To have coaches enrolled in England Athletics and other relevant training programmes, supported by SAC
- To have coaches progress to the highest attainable EA recognised coaching level
- To have EA regional coaching days at the Southampton Outdoor Sports Centre

#### **Objective 3: Coaches, to have clear lines of communication and formal represented at the committee**

##### **Success Measures:**

- To produce a job description and recruit into the role of coaching coordinator whose primary role is communication between coaches and the committee, between coaching groups and athletes looking for the right training group
- To hold coach meetings as appropriate

## **Objective 4: Officials, to have adequate officials representing SAC at all league and home fixture**

### **Success Measures:**

- Double the number of active officials<sup>14</sup>
- Have level 3 officials qualified in all disciplines
- Have sufficient and suitably graded officials to host higher level competitions
- Develop a mentoring programme for new officials with clear pathway to progress
- Annually audit the officials we have and recruit into areas where more are needed.

## **Objective 5: Team Managers, to have team managers for all SAC team events**

### **Success Measures:**

- To have all team managers appointed and trained before the start of the relevant season
- To have, where practical, succession planning for team managers, this is particularly important for age group team managers
- To have the team managers supported by job descriptions and club policies e.g. expenses policies, team selection policies

## **Objective 6: To have sufficient key volunteers in described club roles**

### **Success Measures:**

- To have volunteers appointed into roles for the club e.g. committee members, kit managers, website support and development
- To have clear lines of communication for volunteers to and from the committee
- To appoint a volunteer coordinator
- To provide training, as appropriate, to volunteers
- To have key volunteers easily identified by club members i.e. through the website and social media
- To have the key volunteers supported by job descriptions and club policies e.g. expenses policies, team selection policies

## **Objective 7: To have sufficient volunteers at all SAC events**

### **Success Measures:**

- To double the number of active volunteers<sup>15</sup>
- Support our volunteers in any reasonable training or equipment requirements
- Make volunteering a part of membership

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<sup>14</sup> the baseline to be set during the Track and Field season 2022

<sup>15</sup> baseline to be set March 2022 using registered volunteers on 'LoveAdmin'

## Facilities

### **Objective 1: To call the sports centre home**

#### **Success measures:**

- To have a clubhouse that is secure and is clearly identified as the 'home' of SAC.
- To have access to outdoor and indoor athletic specific training facilities at the outdoor sports centre.
- To consolidate as far as practical all summer and winter training at the outdoor sports centre
- To have the Academy train at the sports centre all year round
- To have access to suitable indoor facilities including: free weights, sports hall, indoor running track, High Jump, Pole Vault Long Jump and Throwing circle.
- To have our own photo finish system and EDM.

### **Objective 2: To be able to host district and regional events**

#### **Success measures:**

- To have suitable indoor and outdoor facilities to host county and regional competition and training events at the Outdoor Sports centre.
- To have rooms and facilities that can be equipped as training rooms for county and regional volunteer and coaching training courses
- To have facilities suitable to host league fixtures including the National Athletics League

## Delivering the 10 year Strategy - Excellence Objectives

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*To strive for excellence in everything we do. To exploit our rich history of international athletes and celebrate the foundation of SAC. To provide role models for young and new athletes. To continually develop and enhance our environment.*

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### **Objective 1: To celebrate the rich history of SAC and build a culture around excellence**

#### **Success measures:**

- To celebrate SAC international athletes past and present
- To celebrate club and individual success through the awards evenings, website and social media
- To promote SAC as a centre of excellence to local schools and colleges
- To have a positive culture in all our members and supporters generating a sense of community and pride in the club which is essential to our success.

### **Objective 2: To have clear club branding and raised profile**

#### **Success measures**

- For SAC to be easily recognised through club colours, kit, club house or 'home' and athletes
- To continually update club kit and extend products to meet the needs of the athletes and volunteers
- To provide SAC branded kit to volunteers
- To have SAC branding prominent at team competitions
- To have regular articles published on our website and through local media highlighting club success
- To have SAC members and volunteers regularly nominated for local, regional and national awards

### **Objective 3: To provide services on the Health and wellbeing of SAC members**

#### **Success measures:**

- To provide signpost support services and workshops to members
- To fully support the #runandtalk and mental fitness champion programme
- To have a calendar of social events that can be accessed by all members

**Objective 4: To have clear communication lines across SAC ensuring information is disseminated appropriately and timely internally and externally**

**Success measures:**

- To have a member or members responsible for club communications and press relations
- To ensure club members are kept up to date through appropriate use of internal and external communication channels, i.e. internal email, member social media and club website.
- To have regular new posts in local news.
- Stay up to date and current as new communication methods are adopted.
- Regular reviews of communication channels
- To create a directory for members to communicate information about services relevant to athletes and the delivery of athletics e.g. athletes who also provide massage services.

**Objective 5: to have access to the latest technical advances and provide the best possible experience to our athletes**

**Success measures:**

- To have access to the latest technology, Photo Finish, Electronic Starts, Online results for leagues and opens and provide training to our members
- To have in-house Electronic Distance Measuring (EDM) and provide training to our members
- To continually update facilities and services to stay abreast of the latest technology

**Objective 6: To build relationships with organisations outside SAC**

**Success measures:**

- To have a long term relationship with Solent University
- To establish a relationship with Southampton colleges and schools
- To establish and build relationships with neighbouring clubs both athletic and running clubs to share experience and knowledge to explore how we can work together to deliver the best possible experience for athletes.
- To establish a relationship with local inner city organisations such as 5-21 club and YMCA.
- To find a sponsor or regular sponsorships to support club events and specific projects

## **Objective 7: to have a well governed and safe athletics club**

### **Success measures:**

- To annually review club governance documents, constitution and Bylaws, ensure they are current and meet the needs of the club and where appropriate make recommendations for changes to the members at the Annual General Meeting
- Ensure that policies and code of conduct are complete and meet the needs of SAC
- Annually review club policies and code of conduct, updating where appropriate and communicate changes to members
- To continually check for changes in regulations with the governing body, England Athletics and Sport England

## **Next Steps**

Key groups such as Coaches, Team Managers, Officials, Volunteers, Mental Fitness Champions, Finance specialists and Athletes will develop more detailed plans to deliver on this strategy. These plans will have their own success measures and will be monitored regularly (at least yearly) against the club strategy.

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