

A Guide to Our Proposed Move to the Bushy Park Sports Club: 01.09.2021

This guide has been updated to answer questions submitted during the consultation of Straggler members, held to gauge opinion ahead of putting the proposal of adopting Bushy Park Sports Club (BPSC) as the new Stragglers headquarters, to a vote at the September 2021 AGM.

Context

The Stragglers Running Club have used the YMCA Hawker Centre in Ham as our club HQ for around 25 years. During this time it has given us many benefits ranging from access to a variety of running routes to use of the facilities at no cost. However there have also been challenges and these have increased in recent years. At the time of publication it is almost a year and a half since we last met at the Hawker Centre and the Stragglers committee feel this gives us the ideal time to draw a line and look for a new place for the club to call home. The committee appointed a sub-group to investigate our options, and here we are setting out our reasons for recommending the Bushy Park Sports Club and answering questions which have come to us since we announced this proposal.

It's important to stress that any move of base has the potential to change the nature of a running club. The move from pubs to the Hawker Centre will have done this during the late 1990s. We understand this and also that there will inevitably be some challenges ahead should we proceed with this plan.

What was the response to the consultation?

At the end of Sunday August 15 (when the consultation closed) the results were as follows:

- Total votes: 188
- In favour: 174 = 92.5%
- Against: 5 = 2.7%
- Needing more information: 9 = 4.8%
- 188 votes = 35.7% of our current membership
- 174 = 33% in favour.

Whilst we needed to put a closing date, further votes did come in after this point and although we haven't counted them in the totals it's important to reference them here: a further 4 votes, all of which supported the move and did not submit any questions or concerns.

So, does this mean it's a done deal?

Not necessarily. The membership can if it wishes vote against the proposal at the September AGM. However the committee will be recommending the move and feel that the results above show very strong support.

Why did people vote no and what other comments did respondents make?

Disappointingly, not everyone who voted no gave a reason (in fairness they didn't have to). Reasons which were given were to do with location – the Hawker Centre being closer to where they live – or more generally a view that the Stragglers should remain in Kingston.

Themes which emerged included:

- Distance from Richmond Park;
- Poor light around the BPSC site (specifically with winter in mind);
- Parking and bike storage;

- A need for more information on the financial commitment;
- And a desire for the club to maintain a variety of training locations.

None of these points were a surprise to us and we will attempt to address them and others in this updated question and answer document and/or at the AGM on September 23.

What are the reasons for leaving the Hawker Centre?

Numbers of club members attending Thursday nights at the Hawker Centre have reduced over recent years. It is clear to us that as a venue it no longer meets our needs; for example its current closing time makes it difficult for us to use facilities such as lockers and showers and there is no longer a reliable food or bar service. In short, it is our opinion that it is not in our best interest to return as we resume club activity.

What about our public races which use the Hawker Centre as their finish area?

Both the Green Belt and River Relay have been designed with the Hawker as a finish in mind. Whilst we don't feel it is suitable for a weekly training base, it remains well-located for both those events – it allows for a towpath finish, has good carpark space and is easily accessible for visiting teams. We will continue to work with the Hawker Centre with the best interest of both events in mind, however, if the management teams of either race wishes to find a new finish we will support them to do so.

Why the Bushy Park Sports Club (BPSC)?

There are a number of reasons why we are recommending BPSC. Many of us know the club as the NPL Sports Club but the relationship with NPL has recently ended and BPSC is now an independent club and registered charity. The club would welcome a running section to the range of sports it offers and has made us feel incredibly welcome during our recent taster events.

BPSC has excellent well-maintained grounds and good club facilities and is situated in private self-contained grounds adjacent to Bushy Park. There is a separate changing room building with ample showers, a spacious club room and well stocked bar, a reliable catering service with good quality food which can be tailored to our needs and additional rooms and outside spaces that can also be used as needed.

The committee think that this is a moment in both The Stragglers' and BPSC's histories where a partnership would be very positive for both organisations and believe this new club HQ would give The Stragglers a great platform to grow stronger as a club.

The charitable objects of BPSC are as follows:

3.1 THE OBJECTS OF THE CIO ARE, FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT: 3.1.1 THE ADVANCEMENT OF AMATEUR SPORT; AND 3.1.2 THE PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN HEALTHY RECREATION, PRIMARILY BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY BY THE PROVISION OF FACILITIES, INCLUDING LAND, BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT AND THE ORGANISATION OF SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITHIN

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES. "SPORT" MEANS SPORTS OR GAMES WHICH PROMOTE HEALTH BY INVOLVING PHYSICAL OR MENTAL SKILL OR EXERTION.

Which sessions will move there?

This is still to be confirmed but Thursday evenings would definitely relocate. Other groups within the club will have the opportunity to gauge opinion of regular participants. We recognise that while BPSC will be convenient for many, it is inevitable that for some it will not. We are committed to providing training sessions and group runs at a variety of locations. One of the concerns expressed most regularly was the club's continued use of Richmond Park, and we will address this in a separate answer. Specifically with winter in mind, there are many run route options in the winter, using both Bushy Park and roads as we have done in the past when based at the Hawker Centre.

What about light in winter?

Understanding what the venue can do to address this is a priority to us. It's possible there may be limits and at this stage this is something we've not yet resolved.

Where is Bushy Park Sports Club?

Here is a link to the home page of BPSC's website which has a location map at the bottom <https://bushyparksportsclub.org.uk/>

How do I get there?

The club is situated very close (a two minute jog) to the Clapperstile Gate into Bushy Park. By road, it is just off Queen's Road which connects Sandy Lane to Hampton Road in the centre of Teddington. It is a five minute jog or ten minute walk from Teddington Station and has access to multiple bus routes which go through Teddington.

What facilities are available?

As mentioned above, the club offers a spacious club room, a well-stocked bar (drinks are priced lower than pubs), a good catering service, additional rooms and outside spaces and a separate changing and shower building. They plan to install lockers into the changing rooms.

BPSC can cater for our training sessions as needed so for instance, our main club night on a Thursday will have an affordable menu choice and bar service. The same can be offered for other training sessions as needed and the club would be available all week/year round for our members.

We have already discussed installing lockers with BPSC and they are planning to do this. We will raise the feedback of further bike racks.

Can I use BPSC at other times during the week?

Stragglers will be able to use the club all week round and we understand that the club is staffed each evening and at weekends. We will learn more about the weekly schedule at BPSC as we get more familiar with the club. We have not discussed the cost implication of upgrading to other BPSC sports and classes.

The taster events have had a food service which required registration, how will this work for weekly club nights?

We have found the pre-registration for the taster events to be very successful and plan to carry-on using these for our main club training session on a Thursday. Not only will this allow us to pre-plan catering by publishing the menu beforehand, we can also pre-plan run groups and leaders.

What if I changed my plans last minute, can I still eat?

We understand plans do change last minute. We will therefore plan for slightly more attending than have registered.

What will this move cost The Stragglers?

A corporate membership fee arrangement has been agreed with BPSC until March 2025 which will be paid directly by the club.

Will membership fees need to be increased?

The committee will recommend a two-step Stragglers membership fee increase to support the move to BPSC. The first will be a £5 increase to £20 per annum on 1 April 2022 and then a second £5 increase to £25 per annum on 1 April 2023. Whilst this is a noticeable rise, we feel this remains excellent value when compared to other running clubs and will include a year round clubhouse experience. In addition to money from membership fees we are proposing to direct some revenue from the Cabbage Patch 10 towards securing this new home for the club and feel this is an appropriate use of such funds given the commitment The Stragglers and its members have given to the CP10 throughout its history.

Have other venues been considered?

Yes. Before BPSC became our preferred option a number of sites were considered but on balance we felt our current recommendation best suited the needs of the club. Venues we considered included Teddington Cricket Club and Kingston Rowing Club, but neither were interested in developing a partnership with the Stragglers. Additionally, we did also consider if it would be practical to continue with the current Thursday night format where groups meet on Riverside Drive and those who wish to use the Anglers pub and whilst this has worked well, we feel it would limit us as we aim to re-establish a more vibrant club atmosphere.

Why does the Stragglers need a base at all?

An important part of Straggler culture has been its friendly social life. In the past, we used to have perhaps 60-80 Stragglers attending our main club training session on a Thursday with most staying for food and socialising afterwards. These evenings have gradually diminished over the past 10 years as the facilities and service at The Hawker has been reduced. We believe a great club base is important for the culture of the club and gives us a chance to provide a year-round vibrant social side for club members, as well as a great location for running.

The new venue is in Middlesex, does this affect our participation in Surrey League cross country events and Surrey competition?

We understand that we can continue to participate in Surrey League cross country and road racing events.

The proposed new venue is further away from Richmond Park, how will you cater for people who want to run there?

Distance from Richmond Park was the most common concern raised and we agree that this is undoubtedly a downside. So far we have the following ideas:

Using the social mile warm-up as a way of getting the whole group closer to Richmond Park;

Advertising a meet time for those who wish to join us from Teddington Lock;

Or, introducing new sessions at other times of the week.