

FireSport UK

The home of Fire Service sport



Chair's Report

AGM 2024

Having taken the role of Chair for Fire Sport UK (FSUK) in the latter part of 2023, I want to put on record my thanks to the current Executive and to those who have expressed a willingness to become part of the FSUK Executive to support the further development of all sports and activities endorsed through FSUK. I accepted the honour of becoming FSUK Chair and want to praise the work of the previous Chair, Chris Lowther and those who have previously undertaken this role back to when FSUK was known as the Fire Service Sports and Athletics Association.

The first informal discussions across the Executive gave me the feeling that we had a group of people really intent on making some progress in 2024 and beyond, emerging from a period of relative inactivity across many of the sections, perhaps impacted by the pandemic years. Whilst there are 19 sections listed on the FSUK website, we know some are very active and successful, some lay dormant with the potential to re-emerge and we hope there are new sections to be created. But all of the sports and activities that people can engage in are there for the benefit of those who are eligible to enjoy them. I sense a lack of awareness exists across the whole fire sector about what FSUK is – and we must all work to change that!

The sports and activities offer a range of things that bring people together to enjoy sport or the specific activities on offer, but to also benefit from the social interaction that comes with being involved. There are local service sports and welfare activities and FSUK aims to reflect and support these on a national level. FSUK aims to compliment and not take over the many fantastic local activities on offer.

Some notable achievements across FSUK in the past year include:

- The UK Fire Service football section returned from Montrichard in France as European Champions for the 7th time. They took part in a tournament in April 2024.
- In the squash section, Leonie Holt is a member of the national team and won the British Open O35's Women's title recently.
- Golf has seen the most events organised with great participation of around 1000 members. I won't mention all the winners of events but well done to everyone involved.
- There has been a strong re-emergence of women's teams from many sections including rugby, football and cricket with the hope of a netball team on the cards.

- The sailing section has also held its key event over the dates of 29 April until 2 May in the Solent with various FRS teams in addition to extended invites for Police and Ambulance teams – a true blue light competition.
- The angling section host the coarse angling championships and Redhill Fishery, Monmouth on 27 June and this follows other events (Fly Angling) in Leicestershire and Ireland.
- The Swimming section will host its national competition on 1 September 2024 venue tbc so keep an eye on the FSUK website for more details.
- Finally in table tennis, there has been a UK Tournament hosted in St Neots, Cambridgeshire on 8 June and the national team travel to Dusseldorf, Germany in September for their international tournament against the German Fire Service table tennis team.

Well done to all of the participants, especially the winners of recent events and good luck to all competitors and participants in all upcoming events!

I want to praise the agility and flexibility of FSUK as we consider a new operating model, with a more simple governance structure, adapted to the new ways of working that we can all benefit from. Indeed, our first meeting was virtual. Paul, our Treasurer, sent me some old documents including the minutes of the FSSAA AGM held at the Fire Service College on Wednesday 22 July 1981. Certainly a while ago. Anyone any ideas who was at Number 1 in the UK singles charts? - The Specials with Ghost Town!

The Chair at the time - Mr D.R Burrell praised the amount of voluntary work being done by various people involved in FSSAA and recognised this was the key to its success. It was and remains free from politics and should be seen as a real positive force across the UK FRS.

And back to this year, it did feel like a time to shake some things up. Dare I say that whilst some of the traditions should remain, we have to look at new ways or working? We not only had an Executive, we had an Assembly and some other formalities that feel, well, a tad outdated now. Of course, it is vitally important that we are able to make decisions on funding bids, to collect subscriptions and ensure those subscriptions are spent effectively. But, we plan to simplify the Governance Structure with a new Executive formed from a range of stakeholders from across the sector. I am pleased to invite new members onto the Executive from different services, the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) and the Firefighter's Charity and I look forward to working with you all into the future.

We also recognised the importance of culture and behaviours within the fire and rescue sector being reflected in all activities across FSUK. As such, we drafted a FSUK Code of Conduct, giving advice and guidance around expected behaviours of all members who are taking part in FSUK sports and activities and the code also provides guidance and support to ensure that breaches of these important behaviours can be addressed appropriately. The code references the national core code of ethics for FRSs but we have to also recognise that many individuals who are involved in FSUK activities are not employed by fire and rescue services. So it was important that we introduced this code and it is available on the FSUK website with all individual sections being sent the code to become familiar with.

I was also pleased to take an update report on FSUK to the NFCC meeting in London in November 2023 and part of this was to remind CFOs to raise the profile of FSUK within their respective services but to also extend FSUK membership to all NFCC employees.

Looking forward, I want to see the engagement in all sports and activities increase. I want more people to receive the benefits that are available from being engaged and involved in whatever capacity, in whatever section. I'd like to see active sections get stronger, I'd like to see dormant sections re-emerge and become active again and I would like to see new sections established. You are here because you can help with this endeavour so my final comment on this item is to thank all of you for being involved. I hope you can be inspired to contribute to the overall objectives of FSUK and I look forward to working with you all.

So, I want to challenge everyone involved across all FSUK sections to re-energise themselves and their sections to deliver a more ambitious programme of activities across FSUK. We need to embrace and recognise the physical and mental health benefits of participation and I am confident we will see improvements in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CK', written in a cursive style.

Chris Kirby

FSUK Chair