**Cycling Ulster Technical Officer Report, 2022**

**Aaron Wallace**

**Road Race Calendar**

The 2022 Road Race Calendar for Ulster was drafted in consultation with the Cycling Ireland Events Officer and Events promoters/clubs. As per previous years, prioritisation was given to the Cycling Ireland flagship and UCI accredited events; National Championships, National Series, Stage Races, etc.

Participation numbers across the majority of road events were significantly lower than previous years, pre-covid, and events which typically would have attracted higher demand were also experienced a drop in participation from the outset. Many events are reliant on the revenue generated from a minimum number of entries and require a level of participation to be suitably competitive. Unfortunately, this seen the cancellation of a number of Ulster road events including our two highest ranking stage races – Tour of the North and Tour of Ulster.

Following a review of the 2022 road season, led by the CU Road Commission and attended by Ulster event promoters and the recently appointed CI Events Coordinator, it was recommended that the 2023 Ulster road calendar bee drafted with more consideration for the neighbouring provinces calendar and events. The drop in participation is seen as a national issue and challenge and should be addressed as such.

To date no movement has been made on the 2023 road calendar – typically the permit application window opens in early October by CI for clubs to submit events for 2023. If we are to address the challenges faced in 2022 more action is need nationally than is currently apparent or visible.

**Accredited Marshal Scheme & Event Support**

With the change of how we manage cycle road racing in NI and engage with the PSNI for support of Grade ‘A’ and ‘B’ level races, the Accredited Marshal Scheme was a requirement to bridge the gap of the reduced PSNI outrider support and utilise the revised legislation which gives additional to power to our event marshals. An accredited course was delivered via LANTRA qualified trainers, with the support of PSNI and the Dept of Infrastructure, and to date we have approx. 300 trained and accredited marshals across the province.

Event promoters have had to revise the operational running of events, considering how to best use the accredited marshals available to them, with the format of most grade ‘B’ events changing to lapped races on more rural circuits and avoiding roads which are subject to lower speed restrictions.

The Accredited Marshals required the approved legislated signage which is available via Gary Lavery for use at approved events. How practical it will be for all event promoters to utilise the centrally held signage for all events is yet to be seen and it is clear not events, particularly non-open mid-week events, are availing of the signage. It is envisaged that longer tern event promoters will need to procure their own approved signs to be more self-sufficient.

Cycling Ulster radio equipment is now also held centrally by Gary Lavery in Loughgall. This is still available for booking for events by contacting Gary directly. It is noted that many race promoters are starting to purchase and use their own radio equipment for events.

Thanks should be passed to Stephen Burns for the running of the Accredited Marshal training courses, David Lavery for the management of the event support equipment including signage and race radios. I would also like to acknowledge and pass on my thanks to Garry Nugent who stepped down as Cycling Ireland Events Officer in 2022 having supported event promoters and Cycling Ulster over the last 7 years.

**Commissaire Appointments & Activities**

For 2022 the coordination of Ulster road Commissaire appointments was managed by Jim Kelly, taking over from Laura Wilson who has managed the appointments since 2019. In line with the new role as Commissaire Coordinator Jim also joins the CI College of Commissaires. Laura also joined the College in 2022 as a member, joining long serving College member Jack Watson (Treasurer) and Aaron Wallace who also joined in 2022 as Secretary.

With the more volatile road calendar, and with a significant number of events being cancelled during the season, many of our Ulster Commissaires have struggled to officiate at events in 2022. Stage races and ‘place to place’ races provide great training environments for Commissaires, so the non-running of a number of these events in Ulster this year has been a disappointment to the Commissairing community.