

ISLINGTON SCHOOLS RUNNING LEAGUE

Termination Of The League

This is a statement about the circumstances which have led to the cancellation of the Islington Schools Running League race scheduled to take place around Highbury Fields on Monday 14th March 2016, and possibly the premature termination of the league itself.

Before the first race of the season around Highbury Fields on Monday 21st September 2015, one of the officials asked if there were any toilets close by that could be used.

A request was made to the swimming pool, and permission was given to use their toilets. Sadly this request led to a local government department becoming aware of the Islington Schools Running League.

Representatives from Islington Council asked that the league apply for permission to run the races. I was reluctant to engage with this bureaucracy and asked what legal powers the Council had to insist park users gain advanced permission. The representative said that Highbury Fields is private property, owned by the Council and is gifted to the community for its use. They use private security contractors to enforce their decisions, rather than the police.

During this conversation the question was asked of me "do you have public liability insurance?". I understand the nature of this question, so I will address it in detail:

"Do you have public liability insurance" is the favoured weapon by which bureaucracies claiming ownership of the public space guard their power. It is used to designate parties without such insurance as being irresponsible.

Insurance stands behind the insured party, not in front of them. By this I mean it defends the insured party against claims, after the catastrophe has occurred. Insurance does not prevent the catastrophe from happening. Public liability insurance requires that the negligence of the insured party be proven in a court of law. If any unfortunate accident were to take place, the Public Liability Insurers would defend against a claim by seeking to show that the incident was an unavoidable accident, or the injured party was at fault, thereby avoiding the claim.

Public Liability Insurance includes a requirement that the insured party never admits responsibility, or liability for any damage or harm caused to the public.

In contrast Personal Accident insurance would meet claims and medical expenses without the requirement to establish the negligence of the insured party. A Personal Accident insurance policy could be called upon as soon as an accident has taken place. It is a much more expensive form of insurance. It is unlikely that any local Council would purchase such an insurance policy for the benefit of the public. Instead they prefer to hide behind the pretence of "Public Liability Insurance", which represents self defence against a legal attack by an injured party.

Had I been asked, "Do you have personal accident insurance for the participants", it would have indicated to me that I was dealing with an organisation that cared about the issues that they were claiming to be concerned about.

I am the organiser of the Islington Schools Running League. I am responsible. Nobody cares more about the safety of the participants, officials and marshals than I do. If any circumstances arise which represent a risk to the safety of the participants or officials I will immediately terminate the races, and take the appropriate actions to ensure everyone's safety as far as is humanly possible.

I am always surrounded by others who are equally responsible and able. However, I will not delegate my personal responsibility to any other individual or organisation. I am aware of the insurance coverage afforded to school activities outside of the school premises. It is my responsibility to ensure that these insurance policies are never called upon, and I do not say that lightly. It is my responsibility that all participants and officials are safer during the time span of the Islington Schools Running League event, than they would be travelling too and from the venue, or, too and from school.

That is my responsibility and I have embraced it knowingly.

If Islington Council wished to satisfy themselves that the event was organised in a safe and responsible way, I would have expected them to attend and observe. I would have expected them to tick the boxes in their own forms, to their own satisfaction. They informed me that they were too busy. This is another reason I would never delegate to them any responsibility.

If they are not able to meet their own standards, they will not be able to meet mine.

I do not expect this creeping bureaucracy to reduce, so it is with a touch of sadness, but also with a sense of relief that I am taking this opportunity to step back from the responsibility of organising the Islington Schools Running League.

Thank you to all the schools, officials and marshals who have made the organisation of this league over the last four years such an enjoyable experience.

Finsbury Park Athletics Track is currently being redeveloped. When this work is complete we will look forward to hosting many alternative competition opportunities. In addition I continue to see the Emirates Stadium as a great venue with the potential to offer many different types of running races.

Best Wishes

C.Zacharides

Organiser of the Islington Schools Running League

<http://www.islingtonschoolsrunningleague.org>

10th March 2016