Review of Half Marathon event held at Newbridge Demesne on Saturday 23\textsuperscript{rd} September 2017
Foreword

From 2002-2016 the Dublin Race Series Half Marathon race was staged in the Phoenix Park.

This year, however, it was agreed that it would be based in Newbridge House and Demesne, Fingal, in order to accommodate more runners as the 2016 event had 8,000 participants, which is the maximum number allowed in the Phoenix Park by the Office of Public Works. The 2017 event took place on Saturday, 23rd September 2017 and was promoted by Dublin Race Series Ltd. with the support of Fingal County Council.

The event proceeded around the route outlined below:

A number of issues emerged before, during and after the event which impacted on participants, residents of the area and visitors to the area. Accordingly, Dublin Race Series Ltd and Fingal County Council decided to commission an overall review of processes, engagement and organisation of the Half Marathon race.
The review had specific terms of reference covering the following 7 strands:

1. The planning and delivery of the overall event including route planning and execution
2. The engagement process, both statutory and non-statutory, between stakeholders
3. A review of the plan to access/egress participants to and from the event as well as disruption caused to residents
4. Assessment of the communication process and engagement with participants and residents prior to and during the event
5. Assessment of any potential conflicts of roles and responsibilities across stakeholders
6. Assessment of procedures for sign off of event plans, traffic plans, risk assessments etc. between various bodies
7. Informed by these findings, the review should make specific recommendations to improve the future organisation of such events

As part of the exercise, interviews were conducted with stakeholders, participants, local residents and local councillors. In addition, a portal was created on the Fingal County Council website to facilitate public comment with 136 submissions received. For the purposes of this review it should be noted that stakeholders are defined as Dublin Race Series Ltd, Fingal County Council and An Garda Síochána.

In relation to the compilation of this review, I would like to thank everyone who assisted and participated in the review and who gave their time and commitment to it. Their names and organisations are set out in Appendix (1). I would also like to thank those who accessed the portal and commented through that process.

I hope this review will assist in developing an altered and improved approach to future events in Newbridge House and Demesne and other similar events so as to ensure that the level of disruption and dissatisfaction experienced by participants and residents by the holding of the Half Marathon Event will not re-occur, thus leading to an enhanced experience for all concerned with events of this nature.

Charlie Lowe
November 2017
Approach to the task

In order to ensure that the 7 strands of the terms of reference were covered, a series of probes/questions were designed to capture information under these headings. Within that again, a further set of questions specific to certain categories and individuals, were also developed.

The headline list of probes and questions were as follows:

1) Was the communication process adequate between all stakeholders?

2) If not, in what way was it deficient?

3) Was the communication process adequate for participants and residents?

4) If not, in what way was it deficient?

5) How adequate was communication on the day?

6) Was social media utilised extensively in the communication process (Twitter, Facebook etc.)?

7) Were there enough volunteers/stewards for the event?

8) If not how deficient was the number?

9) What went wrong with traffic management?

10) Were traffic management deficiencies experienced at the 2017 Flavours of Fingal event factored in to the Half Marathon event planning?

11) Did everybody understand their role at management level?

12) Were there any conflicts in roles?

13) Was the management structure adequate for the event in the lead up to it?

14) In hindsight, was the management structure capable of dealing with all issues comprehensively?

15) Was everything signed off appropriately by the competent person?

16) What changes would you like to see implemented for future events to improve matters?
17) In your view is Newbridge House and Demesne capable of hosting future Half Marathon events if changes are made to event planning, organisation and route planning?

18) Any other observations?

The secondary line of questions in respect of communication, included reference to the following items:

   a) Date of issuing of flyers

   b) How many and by whom?

   c) Where were flyers delivered to?

   d) Was timing of delivery pre-selected?

   e) Who chose the method of delivery?

   f) How was delivery validated?

   g) Who was directly responsible for information dissemination?

   h) Were local media alerted (radio, freesheets etc.)?

   i) Were residents associations/community groups alerted in advance?

   j) When were posters erected?

   k) Where were they erected and by whom?
Comments and responses

This section of the review summarises the various comments and responses which were obtained during the interview process referred to on page 3 of this document.

In addition, this section is also reflective of the comments made via the web-portal opened by Fingal County Council, post event.

Observations

I have also set out my observations on these summarised comments and responses in this section.

This section is formatted under the 7 strands of the specific terms of reference which are set out on page 3 of this report.

STRAND (1) Planning and delivery of the overall event including route planning and execution.

Comments and responses

- Some of the stakeholders were of the opinion that the planning and delivery of the overall event was generally satisfactory insofar as their input was concerned and was also on a par with similar events organised by them.

- One stakeholder was of the view that the planning and delivery of the overall event was inadequate, left capacity for improvement and deficient in many ways. In future consideration should be given to road closure order applications and the provision of CCTV monitoring.

- Generally speaking participants were positively disposed towards the route planning and execution of the race itself except for lack of fully supplied water stations.

- The number of stewards and volunteers was generally considered adequate and the use of members of local athletic clubs for stewarding was laudable because of their familiarity with the course route.
• A lot of participants were very critical of the pre and post-race organisation and arrangements put in place for access and egress to Newbridge House and Demesne.

• Quite a few participants were particularly critical of the traffic management arrangements, specifically at Lissenhall junction, which caused delays for them accessing the race commencement location on Turvey Avenue.

• Some residents in the Rush and Lusk areas were critical of the choice of route which impacted them on the day of the race. A primary factor for disruption to these residents was the closure of the alternative Lusk to Rush road because of major works being undertaken by Irish Water at that location.

• Most residents of Donabate and Portrane who contributed their views, were very critical of the choice of route primarily because those villages are located on a peninsula, with limited options available to them anyway in terms of egress from these villages.

• Two separate control rooms for An Garda Síochána and Dublin Race Series Ltd/Event Controllers proved to be an issue on the day and created communication problems between each group

**Observations**

There were some deficiencies in the planning and delivery of the overall event including the following:

a) Water not being available at 2 of the 4 water stations on the route
b) Failure to supply energy drinks as a result of a breakdown in communication by the supplier
c) Traffic lights at Lissenhall and adjoining junction not turned off (as indicated in the Traffic Management Plan) as a result of a breakdown in communication
d) Variable Message Signs (VMS) being erected in an uncoordinated manner
e) Insufficient number of VMS signs being utilised
f) Failure to erect VMS signs sufficiently early in the lead-up to the race which could have alerted residents to the upcoming potential disruption
g) Role performed by each stakeholder not being fully understood by all stakeholders
h) Greater cooperation between key stakeholders would have resulted in improved delivery
i) First time running of the event at Newbridge House and Demesne not adequately assessed as an issue
j) Problems encountered at the 2017 Flavours of Fingal event at Newbridge House, which was held earlier this year, not being fully appraised primarily because no traffic management plan (TMP) was done for that event

In addition the ramifications of having An Garda Síochána and Dublin Race Series Ltd and Event Controllers in separate rooms should have been assessed prior to the event. The lack of a contingency plan that would have improved information flow between both groups was established.

STRAND (2) Engagement process both statutory and non-statutory between stakeholders.

Comments and responses

- One stakeholder was of the view that the engagement process was satisfactory and on a par with events of a similar nature that they have been involved with on previous occasions.

- Another stakeholder was of the view that the engagement process, in hindsight, was less than satisfactory.

- A third stakeholder was of the view that the engagement process was insufficient and that assumptions were made in relation to their acceptance of the course route selection and venue selection. This stakeholder also considered that their necessary input into the preparation of the Event Management Plan (EMP) and within that the Traffic Management Plan (TMP) was not as it should have been and that this contributed to problems on the day.

Observations

Having regard to the fact that this was the first time that the Half Marathon event was held at Newbridge House and Demesne, it is considered that the formal engagement process, both statutory and non-statutory, between stakeholders was less than satisfactory.
The management structure in the lead up to and for the event was not inclusive or comprehensive enough to cover all the issues adequately and to nurture relationships between key personnel.

There were deficiencies in the administration process in terms of minute taking, having regard particularly to the matters agreed, and additionally the identification of the individuals responsible for actioning what was agreed.

Only rudimentary notes were kept for the ad hoc site meetings involving various stakeholders held at Newbridge House and elsewhere in the lead-up to the event. This resulted in an information deficit in relation to certain matters.

There was an insufficient number of formal non-statutory meetings and statutory meetings. The dates of the statutory meetings were too close to the date of the event.

More senior personnel from the 3 stakeholders should have been invited to the non-statutory and statutory meetings to achieve full buy-in from their organisations or sections.

Best practice processes, which recommend that doubts about areas of responsibility should be discussed formally at pre-planning meetings, do not appear to have been utilised.

**STRAND (3) Review of the plan to access/egress participants to and from the event and disruption caused to residents prior to and during the event.**

**Comments and responses**

- Many participants were critical of delays encountered trying to gain access to Newbridge House and Demesne by the appointed start time, prior to the event

- Some criticism was made in relation to the organisation of car parking access after entry to Newbridge House and Demesne via the main gates.
• Similarly post event egress was quite slow (90 minutes in some cases), with the perception by some participants that there was a lack of organisation on the part of stakeholders to expedite their egress from Newbridge House and Demesne.

• There was wholesale disruption to residents of Portrane and Donabate who were seeking to use the Hearse Road (based on portal submissions and interviews with residents).

• The post event egress plans in particular did not appear to function adequately and as they should have, in the opinion of some stakeholders.

Observations

The pre-event assumed roles and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders did not function in the manner intended, particularly post event.

The failure to turn off the traffic lights at Lissenhall junction contributed greatly to delays in gaining access to Newbridge House and Demesne. However, even if the lights had been turned off, there is no certainty that access arrangements would have improved sufficiently to allow the race to start on time.

If the traffic lights had been deactivated to assist in post event egress and a fully focused effort made to exit motorists rapidly onto the M1 Southbound only (because of the complexity of the junction), then undoubtedly this would have sped up egress from Newbridge House and Demesne.

There did not appear to be sufficient co-ordination/role fulfilment between and by stakeholders in relation to the Traffic Management Plan (TMP).

The failure to officially notify residents of Portrane and Donabate about the event, in advance of it, created a situation where vehicles from these locations were totally ignorant of the situation they found themselves in, thus resulting in long tail backs.
STRAND (4) Assessment of the communication process and engagement with participants and residents prior to and during the event.

Comments and responses

- Generally speaking, the vast majority of participants felt that the communication process and engagement with them was good.

- Some stakeholders were also of the same view and that communication with participants was on a par with similar events.

- Use of social media was considered adequate.

- There were some complaints about the confusion that arose with delays to the start time of the race brought about because of the slow access to Newbridge House and Demesne.

- Some residents of Lusk and Rush were not notified about the race even though a comprehensive leaflet drop was arranged for those areas.

- Some residents of these areas, who were notified about it by leaflet drop, were unhappy about the inadequate notice given, with some indicating that they only got 24hrs notice of the event.

- One stakeholder was of the view that notifications to these areas should have taken place much sooner.

- Residents of Portrane and Donabate who were interviewed and who made submissions to the portal were critical of the failure to notify them.

Observations

The normal communication process for participants before and during the event and used for similar events, worked well.
There was undoubtedly some confusion among some participants as a result of delays to the start time for the event.

The leaflet drop to the Lusk and Rush areas should have commenced and finished much earlier than the 19th through 22nd September when it actually took place. A full week’s notice would have been preferable.

The race organisers should have instructed the leaflet company to deliver leaflets on specific dates rather than leaving it to their discretion to pick the delivery days.

The delivery locations in Rush and Lusk should have been more comprehensively analysed and assessed to ensure virtual 100% coverage. An assisting tool in this regard would have been the Voters Register.

The failure to do a leaflet drop to Portrane and Donabate was a serious oversight and caused dissatisfaction among the community at those locations.

The failure to erect VMS signage in Donabate and on the road from Portrane to Donabate, in advance of the event, was most unsatisfactory.

The failure to connect with and utilise existing formal linkages with community groups in Portrane and Donabate was regrettable.

**STRAND (5) Assessment of any potential conflicts of roles and responsibilities across stakeholders.**

**Comments and responses**

- One member of a stakeholder group, in hindsight, said he understood how it could be perceived that a conflict in his roles could have arisen. However, he also said that there were benefits and advantages arising from his role(s) particularly in the ability to influence Fingal County Council colleagues in a positive fashion.

- A member of an alternative stakeholder group felt that there were no potential conflicts in his role(s) and that only advantages and benefits accrued.
• A third stakeholder group was of the opinion that there were potentially conflicts in roles and responsibilities on the basis that it would have been difficult to hold others to account were a fundamental issue with differing perspectives to arise.

Observations

The potential for conflicts in roles and responsibilities and the safeguarding of professional independence was overlooked in the lead-up to the event.

No staff member should be involved in the management of an event which could create the potential to undermine the impartiality of that person, because of the possibility of a clash between personal interest on the one hand, and professional and public interest on the other hand.

STRAND (6) Assessment of procedures for sign-off of event plans, traffic plans, risk assessments etc. between various bodies.

Comments and responses

• Procedure for event plans, traffic plans, risk assessment etc. between various bodies was similar to those utilised for other events of this type in the view of one of the stakeholders.

• Another of the stakeholder groups acknowledged that procedures were not wholly satisfactory but were not dissimilar to other events of this type.

• A third stakeholder group was of the view that procedures for sign-off, particularly those relating to the traffic management plan were far too truncated and gave little scope for adequate input by them.

• A contributor to the event planning was of the view that the lead in/run in time to the final version of the traffic management plan was a lot shorter than other events he has been involved with.
Observations

Because of the limited number of formal non-statutory meetings and the delay in convening the two statutory meetings, the ability to achieve full sign off from those officially responsible, was restricted.

Senior managers from all 3 stakeholders should have been invited to the non-statutory and statutory meetings leading up to the event, to facilitate a full airing of issues and agreement on all items in the Event Management Plan (EMP).

The final version of the Event Management Plan (EMP) should have included reference to its main elements having been signed off by the responsible people, if for no other reason than for authorisation/validation purposes. In this regard, a longer lead-in period from conception to finalisation of the Plan could have facilitated this.

Appropriate consultation in the lead up to the event would have facilitated understanding of relevant stakeholder plans.
Recommendations

STRAND (7) Informed by these findings the review should make specific recommendations to improve the future organisation of such events.

Having made observations on Strands 1 - 6 of the terms of reference, which were informed by the comments and responses received, I now set out a series of recommendations designed to generally improve the overall planning and approach to large events:

a) A baseline assessment of Newbridge House and Demesne as a venue for hosting events needs to be carried out, with particular reference to the potential for opening up, on a temporary basis, other points of entry to the overall area.

b) A longer lead-in period, with earlier deadlines set for completion of Traffic Management Plans and Event Management Plans, needs to be implemented for future events.

c) A protocol needs to be established for communication/clarification and sign-off for any changes to traffic management/control plans while in the field and pre event in addition to the event licensing process. These should be documented and approved by the appropriate competent person in the particular Section.

d) Detailed consultation in the lead up to the event would facilitate a greater understanding by all parties of the contents of relevant stakeholder plans.

e) A Stakeholder Group structure, chaired by a Senior Official in Fingal County Council, needs to be established to oversee similar large events going forward.

This group should have representatives from the following sections/organisations:

1) Operations Department Fingal County Council (X 2) to include a senior rep from the Traffic Division

2) Event controller (X 4) including Event Controller, Race Series Director, Race Director and Operations Director (similar number if a different stakeholder)

3) Traffic Management Company rep
4) Event Company Planner

5) HSE-local area rep

6) Dublin Fire Brigade

7) Events Section, Fingal County Council (X 2) including senior rep from Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development Dept.

8) Communications Department Fingal County Council

9) Chief Superintendent (DMR) North nominee

10) A representative from DMR Regional Traffic Division (if required)

11) Stakeholder Group process administrator

This Stakeholder Group should meet on a particular day and time commencing 9 months out from the event as follows: monthly for the first 6 months, fortnightly for the following 2 months and weekly in the immediate lead-up to the event itself. Specific roles should be assigned to each member of the Group and one individual should act as the conduit/responsible person for all communication/information dissemination matters in the lead up to the event. Action point minutes are required to be kept, setting out clearly the names of the individuals responsible for agreed actions emerging from each meeting.

f) Below the level of the Stakeholder Group, all ad hoc groups should be formed by the Stakeholder Group with names, roles and responsibilities assigned. These groups should report back to each meeting of the Stakeholder Group in written form.

g) For events in Newbridge House and Demesne which are likely to attract large crowds, a Community Liaison Committee (CLC) needs to be established, with the following membership:

- Two community reps from each of the following areas – Rush, Lusk, Man O’War and Portrane/Donabate - nominated by local community councils and Local Liaison Groups
- Two reps from An Garda Síochána District level as appropriate
- Two reps from Fingal County Council Events Section
- Two reps from Dublin Race Series Ltd (or other group if different type of event)
- Two councillors drawn from the Area (nominated by Area Committee)
The CLC should be chaired and administered by Fingal County Council.

The creation of the CLC will help to develop and strengthen relationships between all the parties, which in turn will result in a shared knowledge of each participant’s issues and concerns.

  h) A permanent slot on Joint Policing Committee Agendas for major events attracting large crowds’ should be established, as provided for in Section 2.6 of the JPC guidelines, issued jointly by the Ministers for Justice and Equality and Environment, Community and Local Government in August 2014.

  i) A review of the operational performance of each of the stakeholders for the Half Marathon event should be conducted by each of them in order to identify areas where improvements can be made for future events of this type.

  j) A clear delineation is required between the responsibilities assigned to any individual having differing roles, so as to demonstrate that their impartiality is not questioned or capable of being undermined in any way. No dual roles should be performed.

  k) An internal assessment of the Events Section of Fingal County Council's capacity to run large events of this type should be carried out. This should be based on the overall workload of that section and the limited number of staff available to it. It should also be based on the option for outsourcing certain events to competent Event Management companies with a proven track record, with the Events Section retaining a co-ordinating role.
Conclusions

It is unquestionably the case that some of the issues that arose on the day of the Half Marathon event could not have been foreseen. Furthermore the commitment shown by the organisers, both individually and collectively was second to none. Dublin Race Series Ltd have a proven track record in organising race events over a long number of years and their expertise in this area stands on its own merits. The staff of the Events Section of Fingal County Council worked tremendously hard in the lead up to the event and on the day itself. An Garda Síochána for their part are hugely supportive of events of this type and are also fully committed to playing an important role in the organisation of them.

Slightly less than half of those who commented via the Fingal County Council portal were in favour of Newbridge House and Demesne being used for future events.

Notwithstanding the above, it is a fact that the Half Marathon event held on the 23rd September 2017 did not meet the expectations of those who planned and executed it.

The reasons for this are many and varied and are largely captured in the body of this report. What I have attempted to do is identify the problems which arose on the day and from that make recommendations as to how things can be improved for future events consistent with the terms of reference formulated for this review. In that regard I can only hope that my review is taken on its merits and used constructively to inform the debate on the subject of the suitability of Newbridge House and Demesne for the hosting of major events.

Charlie Lowe

November 2017
List of those interviewed as part of review.

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<th>Name</th>
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