

South East Fencing Regional Priorities Preliminary Analysis

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Section 1: The Numbers

No of fencers 'officially registered' in England as South East Fencers:

(information from BFA lists, January 2013, does not include other Home Countries)

372

No of members of British Fencing who could choose to be 'South East' based on where they live:

(information from BFA lists, January 2013, does not include other Home Countries; people who train in South East)

815

No of respondents to the Needs Assessment Questionnaire so far (19.02.13):

24

Percentage response:

6% / 3%

Of which (could choose more than one category)

Fencers: 44%

Parents: 15%

Coaches: 23%

Helpers: 18%

Commentary on Section 1: The Numbers

- ⤴ A sensible target for the South East Committee would be to convert more of the potential members of the 'South East Region' to actual, registered members.
- ⤴ The percentage response is low, although not out of line with survey response rates. It would be advisable to continue to seek responses to the 'regional priorities' survey and to consider having a copy of it available to complete beneath the published results of this initial survey, as well as ensuring copies are available at South East events and competitions throughout the year.
- ⤴ Most of the responses to the surveys were from Fencers or Coaches.
- ⤴ It might be sensible to include a question early on asking respondents if they are registered as 'South East Region' Fencers for the purposes of future analysis.
- ⤴ Although the percentage response is relatively low, it might reflect more favourably if the number of responses were compared against number of registered South East Clubs. This is information we do not currently have.
- ⤴ Of those who did respond to the survey, several were known 'names' in the region. It can be assumed that those who did reply, especially when they commented in depth, felt strongly and are active South East Region Fencers.
- ⤴ We cannot guarantee that those who responded were members of the South East. Of those that did reply, at least two responses to the 'regional priorities' questionnaire were from fencers living and fencing in Cambridgeshire. The committee and England Fencing needs to decide exactly what 'South East Region Fencer/Club' means in the context of funding – since anyone can choose to register as a South East fencer/club with BFA.

Section 2: Perceived Priorities/Importance

Results of Question 1 (Q1) of the Regional Priorities Questionnaire (RPQ) distributed by email, via social media, and at clubs/competitions in the weeks leading up to 22nd February 2013.

Q1: "1. What priority do you attach to improving or addressing the following for the region? (1 is 'Low Priority' and 5 'High Priority')"

	No Referees	Quality Referees	No Coaches	Quality of Coaches	Performance Course for Fencers	Armourer Courses	First Aid Courses	Safe-guarding Courses	Training for running comps	Communication of events	Other
Score	3.67	3.78	3.88	3.7	4.04	3.13	2.57	2.26	2.91	4.04	3.5
Count	24	23	24	23	24	24	24	23	23	23	2
Total of ratings	88	87	93	85	97	75	59	52	67	93	7
Rank	6	4	3	5	1	8	10	11	9	2	7

Additional Surveys:

Facebook 'Fan Page' Poll: "Which of the following do you think should be addressed most urgently by the region?" Options same as for Q1 of RPQ. 45 facebook users have 'liked' the page (19.02.13). Poll seen by 300+ people, 27 responses. Results as follows:

- 1st Quality of Referees
- 2nd Performance courses for fencers
- 3rd Communication of events
- 4th Number of Referees
- = 5th First Aid Courses
- = 5th Safeguarding courses
- = 7th Number of Coaches
- = 7th Quality of Coaches
- = 7th Armourers Courses
- = 7th Training for running competitions

Notes: at least some respondents to the poll had also completed the questionnaire. Only 1 vote for First Aid/Safeguarding and no votes for the remaining categories.

Q1 Summary Table:

Q1 RPQ	Facebook Poll
Performance courses for fencers	Quality of Referees
Communication of events	Performance courses for fencers
Number of Coaches	Communication of events
Quality of Referees	Number of Referees
Quality of Coaches	First Aid/Safeguarding Courses
Number of Referees	
Other (Website/Referee Courses)	
Armourer Courses	
Training for Competitions	
First Aid Courses	
Safeguarding Courses	

Commentary on Section 2: Perceived Priorities/Importance

- ⤴ The results for both surveys are not identical although they are broadly similar. This could be to the differing demographic of social media users who tend to be younger.
- ⤴ More emphasis should be put on the formal RPQ, although the results of the poll are interesting to note.
- ⤴ 'Performance courses for fencers' and 'Communication of events' are the top priorities of those who responded.
- ⤴ Quality of Referees was the top priority of those who responded to the poll.
- ⤴ First Aid Courses and Safeguarding courses were the least important to respondents to the RPQ. Only 1 person considered them important in the poll. More than one person commented in the notes section of the survey that they would rather see the money being spent elsewhere. One anonymous respondent noted, "such courses are well provided by other bodies and in my [opinion] should not be the major priority for a Fencing organisation to set up"
- ⤴ Although this question establishes some interesting 'perceived needs', the comments made in the following RPQ questions are more illuminating, highlighting what is considered to be currently 'failing' in the region.

Section 3: Responses to questions 2-5 of RPQ

For reference, questions 2-5 were as follows:

"2. What are the critical areas that need to be improved or addressed in the region in your view?"

"3. What ways could these critical areas be tackled?"

"4. What is needed at club level to help improve fencing?"

"5. Are there any other points you would like to raise on this matter?"

In the accompanying table, "SE Needs Assessment 170213.xls" the responses have been categorised according to the shared topics that they allude to (sheet 2), and then sorted into umbrella categories (sheet 3) that allow easier summary.

Umbrella Categories:

1. Communication and Organisation
2. Staff Training
3. Local Competitions and Leagues
4. Training
5. Increasing the Base

Commentary

Communication and Organisation:

- ⤴ Communication, particularly of local competitions, was the most widely criticised aspect of the regions current activities.
- ⤴ Improving communication generally; between clubs; between fencers in the region and BFA were often perceived as the first step in developing the region.
- ⤴ One respondent felt particularly strongly that the website needed to be overhauled.
- ⤴ Many who commented about organisation also commented on the recent (perceived) dwindling of local volunteers. This was at club and at regional level and also included references to a lack of available/willing 'workforce' (ie referees, organisers).
- ⤴ There was criticism of the BFA communication and generally a lack of understanding of the relationship between club->region->EF->BFA with confusion or lack of reference to the BFA/EF

widespread.

- ⤴ Generally, respondents wished to see clubs working more effectively together.

Staff Training:

- ⤴ This could also be considered 'workforce development' and is one of the key areas that the regional hub is meant to target.
- ⤴ The cost of courses was perceived to be a barrier, as was the availability – or distance from the club - of local courses.
- ⤴ Frustration was expressed over the lack of grass root coaches and volunteer coaches. Becoming a coach was seen as being 'expensive'.
- ⤴ The decline of volunteers to assist in clubs was lamented several times.
- ⤴ One respondent suggested that, “[a] data base of teaching material, training ideas/games, videos would be a great resource.”
- ⤴ Despite ranking higher in importance in Q1 and the Facebook poll, little reference was made specifically to refereeing or refereeing courses.
- ⤴ As previously mentioned, First Aid Course and Safeguarding Courses were the only things specifically advocated against.
- ⤴ “obtrusive child-protection rules” and “[lack of] recognition of volunteers” were cited as possible reasons for the decline of volunteers

Local Competitions and Leagues:

- ⤴ The desire to improve communication about local competitions has already been mentioned as an area of particular importance.
- ⤴ Respondents wanted to see more local competitions and for it to be easier for people to start competing. For example, “[a] revival of a cheaper BFA membership to encourage people to try competing” and “more informal meets”.
- ⤴ One of the most interesting common themes to emerge from comments was the suggestion of a 'South East League', which occurred several times amongst disparate respondents.

Training:

- ⤴ Several respondents requested extra training nights, and more opportunities to train.
- ⤴ Interestingly, although some respondents did want 'High Quality sparring' it wasn't just the 'advanced' or 'elite' fencers. One beginner expressed a desire for 'additional opportunities for training and even 'coached duels'.
- ⤴ A facility like the new Leon Paul Salle in North London, which is not 'owned' by a club but where anyone can come and train, might be popular.
- ⤴ More training for Junior fencers of all levels and better communication of training opportunities was desired.

Increasing the base:

- ⤴ A general desire to 'widen the base' was expressed by many. Several wanted to see more training nights or new clubs.
- ⤴ More fencing in schools, and ways to retain beginners and 'social' or 'club' fencers was seen as important and desirable.
- ⤴ Marketing and promotion of fencing in the region was criticised. It would be useful to query with England Fencing whether this is a legitimate way to spend hub funds – and if so, in what ways this could be done.
- ⤴ One respondent felt that there needed to be 'more recognition for fencing achievement'

Section 4: Conclusion

For the South East Committee:

- ⤴ Finding out exactly who is 'South East Region', encouraging people to register as 'South East Region' and increasing the number of fencers affiliated to the 'South East' would all be sensible targets.
- ⤴ Improving communication and ensuring the membership feels 'included' and 'informed' is desirable.
- ⤴ Exploring the possibility of setting up a 'South East League' might be popular. This suggestion has been included in the 'club and coaching' survey.
- ⤴ How can we encourage more recognition of volunteers and progression of fencers?

Questions arising for England Fencing regarding the 'regional hub' funding:

- ⤴ What are the priorities for England Fencing in terms of 'workforce development' - do their priorities concur with the results of Q1?
- ⤴ How much flexibility will we have in terms of making courses affordable? Particularly for grass roots coaches?
- ⤴ Is there scope for regional coaches to be able to access a database of resources as part of co-operation between regions?
- ⤴ Could the funding be used to help set up local leagues?
- ⤴ In what ways could the funding be used to 'market' fencing in the region?
- ⤴ Could the funding be used to help set up new clubs?

More general questions for England Fencing (not specific to hub):

- ⤴ What is the status of proposed changes to the membership structure?
- ⤴ Is there a possibility of establishing a cheaper level of membership for fencers when fencing other clubs or taking part in a regional 'league'?
- ⤴ Is there an explanation of the relationship between club->county->region->EF->BFA->FIE that we could direct people to?
- ⤴ What funding avenues are available for clubs or coaches that wish to 'refresh' existing kit? Or who wish to set up additional training nights?
- ⤴ Will the 'hire-to-buy' scheme be extended to allow clubs or coaches to buy electric kit?
- ⤴ What is the status of rumoured changes to the BFA badge levels?
- ⤴ How can we encourage more recognition of volunteers and progression of fencers?

South East England Fencing Priorities

South East England Fencing

Fencing Priorities in the Region

The South East Fencing region has the opportunity to secure up to £10,000 from British Fencing to help develop fencing in the region. The Regional Committee are developing a Plan to identify and agree the most appropriate way of spending this funding, but we need you views on what the priorities are for the region.

In terms of context, the funding needs to be directed towards 'workforce development' and 'talent development'. In other words, it is about providing training and events to help grow and improve fencing in the region, rather than provision of equipment. (There are other sources for this, such as the Development Grant Programme – contact ray.stafford@englandfencing.org.uk).

To help make sure we create the right plan for the region, we would be grateful if you could spend a few minutes completing and returning the short questionnaire below. However, please do not feel constrained by the focus of the questionnaire (and use more paper if needed). If you have views or ideas that you want to raise, then either send them alongside the questionnaire or pass them on to a member of the Regional Committee.

We would be grateful if you could return the completed questionnaire by Friday 22nd February 2013. Thank you for your help.

1. What priority do you attach to improving or addressing the following for the region? (1 is 'Low Priority' and 5 'High Priority')

Please tick the appropriate number for each question.	Priority				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of referees					
Quality of referees					
Number of coaches					
Quality of coaches					
Performance courses for fencers					
Armourer courses					
First aid courses					
Safeguarding courses					
Training for running competitions					
Communication of events					
Other (please state)					

South East England Fencing Priorities

2. What are the critical areas that need to be improved or addressed in the region in your view?

3. What ways could these critical areas be tackled?

4. What is needed at club level to help improve fencing?

5. Are there any other points you would like to raise on this matter?

6. To help interpret results could you answer the following:

- a) What is your involvement in fencing (please tick as many as relevant)?

Fencer Parent of Fencer Coach Helper

- b) Which club(s) do you fence at?

- c) Your name and contact details (optional)

Many thanks for your assistance.

Please return to Meg Shepherd-Foster at elitesabrecoaching@gmail.com or by post to 20 Raven's Dane Close, Downswood, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8XL, or to your regional committee representative. :