**London Wayfarers Hockey Club and Wanderers Juniors Integration – Q&A -Agreed by both parties**

**1.**     **Whose idea was the merger?**

Wanderers Junior section approached London Wayfarers to discuss various options including a full merger.

**2.**     **What is the rationale for Wanderers Juniors to merge with London Wayfarers, why can they not continue as they are?**

Wanderers have grown quickly and built a strong Junior section, mainly U11 and below, and have three strategic options from 2018 / 2019 and beyond:

1) effectively become a feeder club from U11 and above,

2) pursue a growth strategy to build out both their Boys section (currently small) and their U11 and above groups; this has a number of challenges and requires a significant investment of time and resource;

3) seek a partner Junior section for a friendly equal-basis merger.

Option 3 was felt to be most attractive, offering Wanderers girls & boys a ready made junior hockey pathway within a Junior section which is part of a larger hockey club and has strong links to its Senior section, and to a club which shares the ethos of Wanderers Juniors, with a focus on fun and friends as well as offering an opportunity for all girls & boys to play hockey with no limit to their level of achievement.

**3.**     **What is the rationale for London Wayfarers to merge with Wanderers Juniors, does it not just make the organisation more complicated and unwieldy?**

A bigger “new” London Wayfarers Junior section will benefit from both scale and synergies. More Juniors will make it easier to attract, maintain and sustain a very strong coaching community, which both Wanderers & Wayfarers are fortunate to have already, but will be supplemented by taking on additional high level coaches. This will be to the benefit of all players. Larger year groups give more playing options and opportunities for players to learn and be stretched. Strategically, it will make it easier for London Wayfarers to deliver on key strategic goals for our Junior section. The proposed merger has strong support from the club wide London Wayfarers leadership team and within the Junior section also Group Captains etc.

**4.**     **How big will the combined Junior section be?**

The pro-forma London Wayfarers Junior section will be c780 players, comprising the c580 current Wayfarers and the c200 current Wanderers, excluding any growth from wait lists.

**5.**     **How does the Senior section at Wanderers feel about this?**

They are fine and have been informed appropriately at every stage of discussions. Wanderers Juniors discussed the merger with their Chair/Seniors. The London Wayfarers Chair has also discussed the matter with them subsequently. London Wayfarers has strong relations with Wanderers Seniors and we would very much like to keep it that way. Wanderers Seniors and Juniors have operated independently over the last 3-4 years.

**6.**     **What happens to players on the Wayfarers wait list? Will they now not get in to London Wayfarers as all the places are being taken by Wanderers players?**

Wait list players will continue to join the club due to both natural churn (eg boarding school, leaving postcode/town etc) as well as ongoing growth plans. The London Wayfarers wait list numbers over 300, and we all feel that we should try as hard as possible to create capacity and give these players the chance to play hockey.

**7.**     **What happens to players on the Wanderers wait list?  Will they have to wait until there is no wait list at London Wayfarers?**

We will integrate both wait lists on a “first applied” basis and continue to run our wait list policy as previously. Players who are currently only on the Wanderers wait list will not be disadvantaged.

**8.**     **How will Wanderers players be treated in the merged Junior section? Will they get a fair opportunity?**

We are proposing a merger of equals with the same opportunities and the same rights to all players. From the start, we will treat all players equally. All players will get the same opportunities to train, play festivals/matches, attend camps etc. We will continue to develop mid-week opportunities alongside this; these are focused on higher-level players. A bigger Junior section is likely to mean more mid-week opportunities if demand is higher across the section; again, more hockey opportunities for more players.

**9.**     **Do Wanderers players need to buy new kit?**

This is under discussion with both Junior leadership teams; we will continue with London Wayfarers as the name of the “new” group, as part of London Wayfarers Hockey Club, and LW kit will be available to everyone; we are discussing options relating to this currently and will revert. We expect that all players would transition to the Wayfarers kit.

**10.**  **Will subs change for both clubs?**

Membership fees in 2017 / 2018 for both Wanderers & London Wayfarers were £120 for one player (with discount for subsequent players in the same family). These are amongst the lowest junior membership fees subs across local hockey clubs. Prior to merger discussions, London Wayfarers were planning to raise junior fees by £10/player to allow for investment into additional coaching services. We intend to run this new level of subs across the merged group for 2018 / 2019.

**11.**  **How will all the different age groups be merged?**

Still under discussion, with options of a full merger starting in September, a 2-year merger with no mixing of groups ahead of 2019/20 or a 2-year integration plan with U8s remaining separate with phased or straight integration amongst older groups.

**12.**  **Will Wanderers players all be playing on the same pitches and times as last year?**

As above, it depends on final integration plan. We are currently working on pitch allocations for 2018 / 2019, and will try to come up with the best solution in terms of pitches and coaching for everyone involved. Wayfarers Juniors play across a range of locations.

**13.**  **Are parent volunteers at Wanderers welcome to get involved at London Wayfarers?**

100% yes. Both leadership groups will actively encourage full involvement from Wanderers parents. We would very much like some Wanderers parents to take up leadership positions within London Wayfarers at a very early stage, to very much bring the clubs together. There are currently a small number of vacant positions which we would be delighted for Wanderers parents to apply for.

London Wayfarers have already extended an invitation to ALL Wanderers parent coaches and all parents to attend one or both of our upcoming “Coach the Coaches” courses at Battersea Park on 25 June & 2 July (pls email J/Jonathan if you’d like to join jjstubbs73@gmail.com). London Wayfarers has also extended an invitation to ALL Wanderers Juniors parents to join our remaining BacktoHockey sessions of the season, also on Monday evenings at Battersea Park.

Overall, we are a volunteer sports club and we expect to extend volunteering as a condition of membership across the whole merged group, ie every junior player’s membership is conditional on bringing at least one parent volunteer. This does not mean that we need everyone to do a club committee role (although they are very important and we do need you to stick your hand up here too!), but we do ask and expect all parents to be happy, willing and keen to help out in some way to help support their own sons and daughters and the ongoing running of the junior section, eg first aid, umpiring courses, social, comms, team managers, welfare, coach, camp admin, finance, kit, marketing, fixtures etc. There is a lot of work that needs doing to run a successful hockey club and to provide the best environment for our children to learn about sport and life the right way. Please do email us on lwhc.volunteering@gmail.com with any offers or queries in regard to volunteering. Many hands make light work...

**14.**  **Will the overall quality of the coaching suffer as there are so many players?**

Quite the opposite, we believe that we will be able to provide even better coaching to all players. Both clubs had a very strong coaching community in 2017 / 2018. London Wayfarers has already brought in Tim Davenport as Director of Junior Hockey; Tim is also the Hockey Development Officer at Whitgift School and is an exceptional coach and player. The bigger Junior section will make it easier for the club to focus the coaching to the needs of specific groups of players, sustain its existing coaching community and to also invest in additional coaches given a) increased size, b) more back2back pitch slots & c) more demand for camps and additional hockey experiences.

**15.**  **How will the clubs maintain their friendly feel when they are growing so big?**

This is everyone’s responsibility. There will be friendly guidelines from leadership teams, but we would like support from everyone and strongly encourage a culture where players and parents say hello to one another, introduce themselves, offer to help out and generally behave in a friendly and respectful manner. We will have social reps in each group/session responsible for organising some group/session social events eg parent event at start of season and post Xmas. We will continue to run events such as the successful Volunteer Drinks nights and our successful Olympic Day at the end of the season and look to have more representation at the Club Ball. Amongst player groups, we actively discourage cliques and would encourage all groups to run introductory groups mixing Wanderers & Wayfarers to accelerate the integration and to make everyone feel at home.

**16.**  **Are there enough pitches available to cope with all these players?**

Yes. Both Wanderers & London Wayfarers have sufficient pitch capacity and that is still the case post merger. In fact, opportunities rise because we can turn single slot pitches into multi-slot pitches which are EASIER to run in terms of coaching and cross-session synergies, as well as build stronger relationships with key pitch providers, including schools.

**17.**  **How will all the data and systems be merged?**

Very carefully. Both leadership teams will not swap data until the integration is agreed and signed. We will then proceed to one database and place the same high emphasis on data security as we do currently. Access will be limited to appropriate roles within the club, as currently.

**18.**  **What are the main advantages of the merger to everyone?**

We continue to build a hockey club which aims to offer hockey “to the many, not the few” and “without limit”, which means that we can provide all children with the opportunity to play to the level which they want to, whether that is targeting having fun and being with friends or looking for a more competitive level of hockey, including up to elite level, where we intend to offer opportunities as good as any hockey club in the country. This merger provides that opportunity to all players.

A larger hockey club also has a number of distinct advantages with, for example, raising sponsorship and negotiating with councils and other providers of facilities (and facilities development). As part of London Wayfarers current strategy review, the club is considering setting up working groups to look at sponsorship and facilities development –and we welcome interest from any parents in getting involved in these areas.

**19.**  **What happens next?**

Both leadership teams are sitting down to discuss key details of the integration in the coming days. Once agreed, finalised and signed we will then communicate to current members of both Wanderers Juniors & London Wayfarers the details of next steps and move to delivery.

**20.**  **Who do I ask if I have any other questions or queries?**

Feel free to direct any questions about any of this process to either Sharon (Wanderers Junior President) or J/Jonathan (London Wayfarers Junior Section Captain) who are respectively heading up Project WW for Wanderers & London Wayfarers.

Thank you for taking the time to read this (if you have managed to get this far!). It is fair to say that both leadership teams are very excited about the prospect of this merger and what 2018 / 2019 and following seasons bring. It is natural for some people to have some questions about these changes, but we will do our best to make the integration as smooth as possible and to set up structures and processes for next season which help to achieve our joint mission, which is to provide a hockey club where girls and boys can learn the core values of hockey, sport and life.

Last, one ask from us to you. We will remain a volunteer organisation, despite our size, and we would ask you to think about what you would like to do next season to be part of the fun and to help us to help your daughters and sons achieve their hockey dreams; whether that is having fun, hanging out with friends and enjoying a run around or aiming to compete at the highest possible level.

Rgds

Sharon & J/Jonathan