

## **Statement by the MCAA Chairman: Indoor Track and Field Indoor Events 2016**

Due to the decision taken by British Athletics to move the Indoor Grand Prix from Birmingham to the Emirates Stadium in Glasgow in 2016, no track will be laid at the Barclaycard Arena for the 2016 indoor season. This decision was made without consultation with the Midlands Area and was not made official until the spring of 2015. Since that time Midland Counties has been trying to find dates at either the EIS in Sheffield or Cardiff in South Wales, the only two permanent indoor facilities with spectator seating. Unfortunately, since we were not informed early enough, no dates were available at the EIS and meetings at Cardiff were not viable. This situation has been raised at local and National level. According to the CEO of UK Athletics, the Arena in Birmingham is contracted to have the indoor track down for 4 weeks in the year, but no such undertaken has been made and the Arena is now fully booked during the indoor season. This despite one of the original purposes of the National Indoor Arena as being a home for Indoor Athletics in the Midlands and opened by Linford Christie to celebrate this. This has resulted in the Midlands Area being left in the position of not being able to hold the Midland Indoor Championships or the popular 'Birmingham Games'. There is also no opportunity for local schools, clubs or counties to participate in a full indoor athletics programme. This issue was raised with the CEO of UK Athletics at a recent meeting of the England Athletics Regional Councillors. He agreed that indicating that the Barclaycard Arena as being a 'permanent' indoor facility was not realistic. However despite numerous attempts to clarify the situation, nothing further has been forthcoming.

Currently, the Strategic Facilities plan for the UK does not include a permanent Indoor facility for the Midland Area. Although we accept that the current economic situation makes it difficult to remedy this situation immediately, if it does not appear in future planning it will never come about. We would ask you to make representations to the relevant governing bodies in support of our request for a permanent indoor facility in the Midland Area.

The Barclaycard Arena should be available in 2017 and 2018 with an indoor track and we will again make use of it for our meetings.

This year, Midland Counties will be promoting three Open Meetings at the Alexander Stadium HPC, with outdoor throws (see prospectus [here](#)).

One other aspect to remember is that if an athlete enters a Championship in another Area during this indoor season it would mean that they would be unable to enter the Midland Championships in the summer of 2016.

Geoff Durbin

(Chairman Midland Counties Athletic Association)