

British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee

Minutes of the Annual Consultative Meeting held on 10 August 2019 at Norwich Canoe Club, Norwich

Present at the meeting:

Graham Warland (Banbury)*
Dyson Pendle (Norwich)
Tim Scott (Norwich)*
Jo Bates (Falcon)*
Margaret Chapman (Kirkcaldy)*
Brian Chapman (Kirkcaldy)
Dan Seaford (Reading)
Evan Shephard (Reading)*
Neil Urquhart (Banbury)
Deborah Wilkes (Chelmsford)*
Ian Wilkes (Chelmsford)
Stuart Fisher (Independent)
Bryn Price (Maidstone)*
Kat Wilson (Reading)

Jim Rossiter (Wey)*
Gary Partridge (Truro)*
Bethany Goodlad (Leighton Buzzard)*
Roland Lawler (Elmbridge)
Mick Nadal (Nottingham)
Norman Mason (Nottingham)*
Arthur Urquhart (Royal)
David Green (Exeter)
Molly Green (Exeter)
Di Lawler (Elmbridge)
David Enoch (Nottingham)
Stan Missen (Bradford on Avon)*
Siobhan Urquhart (Banbury)

*voting representatives of each club are indicated with an asterisk

1. Apologies for absence

Richard Ward (Exeter)
James Smythe (Bishops Stortford)
Alan Laws (Lincoln)
Scott Hynds (Elmbridge)

Christine Laws (Lincoln)
Nettie North (Cambridge)
Tom Sharpe (Richmond)

2. Approval of 2018 ACM Minutes

The minutes of the 2018 Annual Consultative Meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matter Arising from the 2018 Minutes

a. The Chairman confirmed that there was no plan to reintroduce divisional classes to the National Championships. One of the biggest issues is lack of time during the day to include additional races.

b. It was confirmed that the Rankings Officer will continue to implement K2 promotions. Members were reminded that if these are deemed to be unfair, they should discuss the promotion with the Regional Advisor, who in turn can refer it back to the Rankings Officer.

c. The Chairman confirmed that Scott McEleney has been co-opted to the MRC to help develop C boat classes.

4. Report from the Chair, Stan Missen

The Chairman, Stan Missen, delivered the following report:

The purpose of this ACM is to briefly report upon the year, to elect officers, consider the finances but most importantly it is a place to enable club representatives and individuals involved in Marathon racing to voice concerns, suggest changes or highlight improvements.

After the formal part of this meeting I will open up the floor for questions and queries. Any matters raised will be given the same prominence and considered by your incoming committee. They will next meet early on the 8 th September.

Since I last addressed you it has been a busy year both at international level and domestic level. It is pleasing to see some new races coming into the domestic calendar, broadening appeal with some new venues and rivers to compete upon. This move is being followed through by the exciting new venue for the Hasler finals later this year.

We still however struggle to encourage clubs to take on hosting our major events. We do however believe that there is some effort to try and find alternatives and would continue to encourage this, as well as the consideration of joint club, or regionally hosted major events. Tom has provided a short report which we will read later about the possibility of a future international Marathon being hosted in this country.

As always, our international racing exposure allows us to gauge the success of our training and domestic competition... and we fare well.

With the stability of our grant funding from BC once again at a more realistic level, this has helped our budgetary planning, however early season race cancellations and some poor weather had some impact upon our levy income. Shortly after my last report we saw our athletes return from a very successful World Championships in Portugal, with 3 medals and some other great results. The MRC supported the international programme of competition and each event has been reported on the website. The insight provided by these reports is well worth reading.

2019 has seen the introduction of the short course at the Worlds and Europeans which has perhaps increased the appeal of these championships to a wider spread of athletes but the longer periods that these events are run over has placed some further strain on our finances.

With the retirement in the last year of a number of our long serving UK international technical officers (ITO's) we put out a call for those interested in gaining their qualifications for this role, to help at internationals. Some came forward but we would like to encourage more to do so.

We are really pleased that our pool of volunteers that attend internationals has seen a number of new and returning faces. Without your help too much pressure is piled upon too few. Thank you for this assistance.

The late 2018 season saw the MRC entangled in a very difficult situation and faced with no other options we were forced to bid farewell to the HRM race system that had served us so well and for so long. We were painfully aware that change, even at the best of times, can be very unwelcome. But this decision was forced upon us – I am grateful to the MRC IT team as they invested a huge amount of their time, headed by Tom Sharpe, to get this issue resolved. Thankfully this hard work made sure we were up and running in time for the new season. Yes, there were difficulties and some teething issues, but we now believe we have a system that can be developed further; to all our mutual benefits.

The tragic news of a death during the Devizes to Westminster impacted upon us all. It also highlighted, what were in comparison very minor, but potentially serious safety issues that arose early in the season at two regional races. The freedom our sport relies upon us ensuring that we control the risks. It is our responsibility to one another whilst competing that is the very best way to protect us from the inherent risks. You can have as much H & S policy as you wish but sometimes exercising some awareness and care in respect of one another all that is needed. Please do not take your responsibility to your fellow competitors lightly. None of us want unwelcome legislation forced upon our sport.

Congratulations were rightly due to Leighton Buzzard in winning the Geoff Sanders Trophy. As ever, the Hasler final was hard fought once again, with the overall winners, Chelmsford, taking a well-deserved victory.

In the year we strengthened our approach to junior training by introducing development skills day. These will continue this coming season and are designed to introduce young athletes to all the essential facets of successful racing, it's not just about speed!

The success of the MRC/SRC Bursary scheme to encourage the Race Coach Course qualification has been seen as a great success and one which we will continue as its benefits start to filter down into clubs and regions.

Our aim is that we all continue to excel at our highest level possible, at whatever level you compete and enjoy the huge and diverse number of Marathon events that our clubs deliver. Enjoyment must be at the heart of that endeavor.

our, as it encourages all ages and abilities to get out on the water, raising standards and hopefully go on to compete at the highest levels of competition.

5. Election of Committee Posts

a. The MRC elects committee places on a rolling basis, for a period of two years with the election of the Chair taking place annually. Five ordinary places were up for election, with four candidates. It was agreed that the votes would be done by a show of hands, as there were fewer candidates than places, but that each candidate would need votes from at least 50% of the clubs present. Jo Bates (Falcon) was appointed as the independent teller.

b. Stan Missen was re-elected unopposed as Chair of the MRC for the forthcoming year.

c. David Enoch (Nottingham), Dyson Pendle (Norwich), Graham Warland (Banbury) and Nettie North (Cambridge) were all elected as members of the committee for the forthcoming years.

6. Finance

a. David Enoch (MRC Treasurer) presented the committee's income and expenditure for the previous financial year to October 2018, as well as projections for the current year. He reported income for the year of £82,177 and expenditure of £89,805.

As forecast at last year's ACM, this left a loss of for the year of circa £7.600 This brings the reserves down to £49.7k as low as the committee would wish to go. The grant from BC has been maintained at £35k and the turnover is approx. £81k, with £49k being spent on major internationals. It is estimated we will end the year roughly breaking even, with our reserves remaining around £50k. The treasurer took several questions from the floor.

7. Coaching and Development

The Chairman reported that Jim Taylor-Ross has now left the MRC to develop the Ocean Ski discipline, and Scott Hynds (Elmbridge) has been co-opted to replace him, and work with Richard Ward (Exeter) on coaching and development. In his absence, the chairman read Scott's report on coaching. Any questions regarding this to be sent to either the chairman or the secretary of the MRC. Jim Rossiter (Wey) reported that Lee Pooley (British Canoeing) has recognised a need to provide better support for flatwater clubs and coaches, and will be at the MRC Junior Development Squad training day at Wey on 21 September to report on this. All coaches are invited to attend for the day and also hear what Lee has to report.

8. Domestic Racing

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a. First year of new Div 10/U12 racing

Mick Nadal reported that although there were a few teething problems, Division 10 Races have been run throughout the year, and paddlers have been taking part. Kat Wilson reiterated that the aim was to help U12s to progress from Lightnings to the four mile races. As more mini K1s come into clubs, the longer-term aim is to move to those boats and away from Lightnings, which have a role as a good start boat, but do not help develop technique.

Two proposals were put to a vote.

i. It was proposed that there would be no significant change for 2019/20, but that races should be combined for U12 girls and boys, and for U10 girls and boys. Each group would still receive points and prizes for their own categories (ie girls/boys), but it would make for more competitive racing. If numbers are low, it was proposed that all ages should be combined, but again still keeping points and prizes for each age and gender group.

ii. For 2020/21 it was proposed marathon racing move to a system similar to sprint racing, with Lightning A and Lightning B categories. This would reflect the speed-based divisional system that they would move into in Hasler races.

Di Lawler (Elmbridge) said she felt it was prolonging the use of Lightnings, which do not help junior paddlers to develop and progress. Also, by making Lightning races cheaper than U12 races at the Nationals that was also promoting Lightning entries. These concerns were accepted by the Chair who confirmed that there were other limiting factors that required a gradual change to be implemented but that in time the Lightning as a class was destined to be superseded.

There was a majority vote in favour of the proposals, and Kat Wilson asked Di Lawler to contribute to the development of the U12 programme. Jim Rossiter asked that this would all be included in the RACMAN race management system. Kat Wilson and Dan Seaford agreed it would be.

b. Return of Race Results

Graham Warland requested that race organisers return results promptly. He also asked that the latest ranking list was not downloaded for entries, until the latest results have been added. He will propose that the list be taken down on Sunday evenings, and replaced only when the updated list is ready.

Mick Nadal asked that race organisers do not have closing dates too far from the race date, thus allowing for the updated ranking list to be used. Mick Nadal will put that in the letter to race organisers for the coming year.

9. Internationals

a. Changes to the 2019 Selection Policy

Kat Wilson reported on the new assessment and selection structure that had been put in place for 2019. Feedback was invited following the meeting.

Jim Rossiter (Wey) questioned if using the Nationals as an Assessment race balanced well. The Chairman replied that there was a risk that this was not the case, there was however a strong risk that top athletes might chose not to race at the National Championships to concentrate on assessment races; thus weakening the importance of the national event.

b. Formstack

Dyson Pendle reported that any BC athlete racing abroad must have clearance from British Canoeing via the MRC. This is a cross-federation agreement and is primarily for insurance purposes. Without it, athletes will not be permitted to race. Formstack is a method of applying for this permission and is accessed through the MRC website.

Bryn Price reported it worked well for the European Masters event, but that not many people were aware of it. It was agreed there was a need to promote Formstack more widely.

It was reported that there was a recurring problem at Masters events, with paddlers not understanding the course etc, due to a lack of Team Leaders meeting. It was noted that, if there is going to be a Team Leaders meeting, then there will need to be a Team Leader appointed in the future. The matter of Masters competing abroad has been discussed several times at MRC meetings and there are issues that need addressing.

The Chairman invited Bryn to attend the November meeting as he indicated his willingness to act as 'coordinator' of Masters from the UK at internationals.

c. Potential Major International Event in UK

Tom Sharpe is investigating running an international event in the UK. Due to other commitments for British Canoeing, this will not be before 2022/23 and would be a World Cup first, followed a year or two later by a European or World Championship. The main limiting factors are the space required by the ICF both on and off the water, and the cost – which is estimated to be in the range of £400-500,000.

10. Major Championship Update

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- a. The 2019 Hasler Finals will be hosted by Southampton Canoe Club at a new venue on Saturday 28th September.
- b. The 2020 Hasler Finals will be hosted by Richmond Canoe Club, possibly at a new venue.
- c. The 2020 National Championships will be hosted by Reading Canoe Club, the date is yet to be agreed but hopefully will be 11/12th July

The meeting ended at 7.45pm, with the Chairman thanking all those who attended.

The next meetings of the MRC are on Sunday 8 September at Pangbourne, prior to the Marathon taking place that day. The full day meeting will be Saturday 16 November 9.00 to 3pm near Banbury. Clubs are welcome to submit items for discussion to the Secretary James Smythe two weeks in advance of these meetings.

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