

British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee

Minutes of the Annual Consultative Meeting held on 12th July 2023
at 7.30pm via Zoom online meeting

Present at the meeting. *Names were taken by registering in the online chat function prior to the start of the meeting. As a result, names of those joining later may not have been collected:*

Stan Missen (Bradford on Avon)
Evan Shephard (Reading)
Julia Lawley (Solihull)
Neil Urquhart (Shropshire P Sport)
Colin Chudley (Bristol)
Anoushka Freeman (Richmond)
Joe Fitzpatrick (Bishops Stortford)
Vicky Simmons (Bradford on Avon)
Dan Seaford (Reading)
Mick Nadal (Nottingham)

Jo Bates (Falcon)
Margaret Chapman (Kirkcaldy)
Holly Mobbs (Wey)
Siobhan Urquhart (Shropshire)
David Enoch (Nottingham)
Kat Wilson (Bishops Stortford)
Julian Medina (Kingston)
Julian Anderson (Southampton)
Scott Hynds (Elmbridge)

1. Apologies for absence

Graham Warland (Banbury)
Brian Chapman (Kirkcaldy/SCA)
Emma Riley (FOY)
Alan Laws (Lincoln)

Nettie North (Independent)
Bryn Price (Maidstone)
Roland Lawler (Elmbridge)

2. Approval of 2022 ACM Minutes

The minutes of the 2021 Annual Consultative Meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Report from the Chair, Stan Missen

The Chairman, Stan Missen, had delivered the following report in the papers circulated prior to the meeting:

I last reported in July 2022 at the ACM. We were still in a period of rebuilding our calendar and participant numbers following the previous interruptions caused by Covid. Progress has continued but we are still seeing some drops in entry numbers, at some races. This is possibly due to financial pressures that exist nationally, but might also be merely as a result of less opportunities

during Covid for people to join our sport, but there has probably been some loss to other sports during that period too. However, Marathon is still in a good shape and not suffering from some of the problems of other disciplines, and I am confident that we will see numbers rising as club activity continues to grow, and a new generation of paddlers come through or return to participate.

In the meantime, we have continued to be supported generously by British Canoeing, as our grant application based upon a reasonable budget was approved with the addition of some additional provision to enable Para representation at major internationals.

Our racing calendar is packed and we have encouraged organisers to try and reintroduce and build some of the more 'Classic' challenging courses of old, in an attempt to bring in more variety and help broaden boat skills. We would encourage this to continue, and for paddlers to support clubs that run classic courses. There are a lot of old overstern ruddered boats out there in garages and clubs that need to be hauled out!

Your committee sought to make only minor changes in the racing rules in 2022, but we believe some are now due and the time is right.

The proposal to reduce the number of qualifying Hasler races needed in each region to seven follows from a review of racing in the Midlands but, more importantly, to address the environmental impact of our travel. Something that all sports are now having to consider.

Proposals are being discussed to increase the ability of individuals and clubs to qualify for the Hasler finals, as well as encourage clubs that easily qualify into fielding a strong number in their team attending. These proposals are discussed later in this meeting.

It has been apparent that getting clubs to take on the considerable work of running our major annual events - The National Championships and Hasler Finals - has not been easy, and we particularly struggled this year, until Worcester came forward to host the Hasler Finals. We hope that we have already secured venues for 2024, well in advance. We would, however, like more clubs to consider joining forces in the own regions and find suitable venues to submit for consideration. This would enable smaller clubs to become involved and also benefit from the financial rewards of hosting.

It would not be right if I did not mention the tremendous results from our GB Teams at last year's major events, particularly the World Championships. Congratulations to all those who were selected and a huge thank you to the coaches and MRC staff who make the selection process possible and organise the testing travel arrangements. They are all volunteers, and spend a considerable amount of time on this work.

The Short Course Nationals proved to be a huge success, which we will continue to build upon. Again, your committee members showed their worth in organising a fantastic days racing, all able to be watched at close quarters.

Finally, there are some retirements from the MRC that will see a number of your committee, who have been hugely committed in their work over many years, retiring and not re-standing this year. We would like to thank them all for the commitment and work they have put in over many years. Dave Enoch is standing down from his role as treasurer, which has lasted for well over a decade and kept our modest income balanced with our considerable costs! We are grateful however that he has agreed to stand again for the committee, which will ensure a smooth transition. Of those not re-standing, Siobhan will be missed in her secretarial role and Dyson and Kat for their long-standing contributions and in their many athlete facing roles.

*Stan Missen
June 2023*

4. Election of Committee Posts

The MRC elects committee places on a rolling basis, for a period of two years with the election of the Chair taking place annually. Seven ordinary places were up for election, with six candidates.

Under its Terms of Reference, the MRC operates a one club, one vote policy for Committee elections. Voting took place online with a show of hands.

a) Election of Chair

Stan Missen (Bradford on Avon) was re-elected unanimously as Chair of the MRC for the forthcoming year.

b) Election of Committee Posts

Anoushka Freeman (Richmond), Joe Fitzpatrick (Bishop's Stortford), Graham Warland (Banbury) David Enoch (Nottingham), Holly Mobbs (Wey) and Evan Shephard (Reading) were all elected unanimously to stand as members of the MRC for the next two years.

5. Finance Report

David Enoch (MRC Treasurer) had presented the committee's audited accounts and the following report in the papers circulated prior to the meeting:

Our financial year runs to 31st October so the last set of fully audited accounts are up to 31st October 2022. You will see that we carried forward reserves of £52,020.75, as expected.

Domestic Racing has continued at a similar level to last year but numbers are still down a bit on the pre-Covid attendance. The total levy income is about £28k compared with £30k pre pandemic.

As always, the biggest cost to the MRC is international racing. We are sending GB teams to Bulgaria for the World Cup, Croatia for the Euros and Denmark for the World Champs. In addition we will send development teams to Germany, Spain and France. All the costs of these trips continue to rise substantially and we have been forced to increase the athlete contribution by £100 per trip this year.

We have continued to support the Race Coach courses to the extent of £5k and the Short Course Nationals by £1.5k.

Our central grant from British Canoeing has remained at £40k and I anticipate that we will make an overall "loss" this year of about £4k reducing our reserves to £48k.

At the meeting, the Treasurer clarified that the central grant from British Canoeing had actually increased to £45,000, with the additional funding specifically to cover the costs of sending para athletes to the World Championships. However, it was still estimated that there would be a loss of around £4,000 for this year.

The Treasurer explained that, whilst the preferred choice would be to not charge athletes anything to compete for their country, that would dramatically reduce the size of the team if the MRC was to do so. There had not been an increase in athlete contribution for a number of years however, with the increase in all costs for internationals this year, the committee had agreed to increase the contribution required to £250 for development trips and £300 for the major internationals. The difference between the two being the lower costs for development trips, which are usually shorter in duration and often the team can all travel by minibus. It was noted that athletes on the major event teams might do more than one in a season, unlike those on development trips.

Stan Missen confirmed that the committee had been reluctant to put up the fees, but that it was still considerably cheaper than the other disciplines and, while funding international trips is a major cost, the committee also has to represent the grass roots of the sport, so not all the funding could go to the teams.

Stan Missen thanked David Enoch for his excellent work over many years as Treasurer, and was grateful that he was staying on the committee even though he was standing down from that post.

6. Domestic Racing

A change regional qualification, due to the financial/environmental costs from September 2023 was set out as below:

*The MRC was asked at the 2022 ACM to review the regional racing structure, in order to reduce the environmental and financial cost. After considerable analysis on race distances within regions, and the potential ramifications, from 1 Sept 2023, the MRC will be implementing a rule change, whereby clubs can count their best 7 results in their region during a season for qualification to the Hasler Final. **In regions where there are 7 or less races, all results count.** When implemented in the Midlands region, this meant that clubs could reduce the distance travelled by half in most cases including Lincoln - although they still had a total of around 900 miles for their closest 7, including one 100 mile/2 hour journey. However, this was a significant reduction from 1700 miles to cover all their regional races, or 1150 miles for 8 races.*

While it is appreciated that there is no guarantee the distances would be the same in other regions, work done has shown a potential drop from 2500 miles to around 900 miles for Truro in the SW Region, with only one race at a distance of 348 miles, and this would be broadly similar for other Cornish clubs. The savings for the Southern region would not be as significant. The MRC appreciates there is a risk of a lower attendance at some of the outlying races, and particularly at the final races of the season if a club is already qualified (this is already possible), although this has not found to be the case in the Midlands.

There was some discussion on this topic, including concerns raised from those clubs on the edges of regions that this will have a detrimental effect on participation, in particular the south west, potentially rendering the races unworkable. It was agreed that the MRC will monitor participation over the next year, and will review again.

Stan Missen hoped that the Cornish races would still be attended, as they had their own unique characteristics that attracts paddlers to them. However, British Canoeing are reviewing the environmental impact of all the disciplines, and marathon is taking a lead on this.

Mick Nadal explained that whilst going to 8 races made a minimal difference on the distances travelled, reducing it to 7 had the greatest impact on savings. There had been concern in the Midlands when it was introduced, but there was not a significant change in participation numbers, and paddlers are obviously still free to race as much as they like.

It was noted that other reasons for lower participation at races include:

- Some early starts at races dependent on tide times
- Races held at the end of season races, when clubs and paddlers are already qualified, equally those races can be popular with people needing their final qualifying races.

7. Issues Raised for Committee consideration at future meetings

During the next year, the MRC will be looking into:

Attendance at the Hasler Finals

Issues raised and to be considered include:

- how to encourage qualified clubs to send a team of a significant size, when currently some clubs send a small team to the Finals and those clubs who have missed out on qualification might have sent more. Proposals to consider include setting a minimum number of paddlers to race at the Finals.
- how to support smaller clubs which cannot qualify – for example, offering clubs who host a Hasler race but do not qualify a fixed number of spaces at the Finals (individual paddlers would still have to have done 3 races to qualify themselves).
- how to include/allow for independent paddlers.

Joe Fitzpatrick will be leading a working party on this, and the Chair asked for any suggestions to be sent to Joe via the MRC. Margaret Chapman advised there used to be qualification for regional champions, which particularly helped the Scottish paddlers.

Short Course Racing

The committee was asked if there were plans to include more short-course racing, possibly alongside or in addition to Hasler racing. Mick Nadal advised that there are already discussions for one to be held by a Midlands club on a separate day to their Hasler race. It was recognised that it can be difficult for some clubs to run one Hasler race a year as it is, and that all disciplines are struggling with an increasing lack of volunteers.

K2 Ranking

The committee was asked to reconsider allowing an average ranking for a K2 at the Hasler finals, as is done at qualifying races. This is particularly an issue for smaller clubs, who often do not have sufficient numbers in each division.

The Chair advised the committee would also be looking at the promotion of K2 paddlers. This has been raised as an issue as it is done days after a race,

and therefore after points have been awarded, thus occasionally affecting the overall team positions. The Committee has done some initial research, and it appears to affect very few results, but will be reviewed.

Div 3 Paddlers

The MRC was asked to consider Div 3 paddlers be allowed to race over 8 miles in a mixed division K2. It was suggested that this would encourage those Div 3 paddlers who are reluctant to race 12 miles, and would also offer a training opportunity for those in Divisions 5 or 6 to race with a Div 3 paddler, but in an 8 mile race.

ACM Attendance

The Chair noted the low numbers attending the ACM, which had been better attended last year when it was also online. This may have been due to the change of date, but it would be reviewed to encourage more clubs and paddlers to attend.

The meeting ended at 8.26pm, with the Chairman thanking the Committee for their efforts in the past year, and particularly noted those were standing down – Siobhan Urquhart, who had been covering the role of secretary after the death of James Smythe, Kat Wilson for her long-standing work on the selection committee and other athlete-facing roles, and Dyson Pendle – again for his long-standing athlete facing work on the committee.

The next meetings of the MRC are on

- 10 September - 8.30 – 11.00 am ahead of the Pangbourne Hasler. At The Dolphin Centre, Pangbourne.
- 18 November - 9.00 – 3.00 pm. All day meeting at Cropredy Village Hall.

Clubs are welcome to submit items for discussion to the Secretary, two weeks in advance of these meetings.

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