

PaddleUK Marathon Racing Committee

2024 Annual Consultative Meeting Minutes

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:*

Committee

Stan Missen (SM) (Chair)	Holly Mobbs (HM)
Evan Shephard (ES)	Joe Fitzpatrick (JF)
Dan Seaford (DMS)	Dave Sackman (DS)
Roland Lawler (RL)	Brian Chapman (BC)
Anoushka Freeman (AF)	Kat Wilson (KW)
Jim Rossiter (JR)	

Club representatives

Julia Lawley (Solihull)	Rob Pretorius (Marathon Dev. Scotland)
Vicky Metcalfe (Pangbourne)	Lee Bennett (Worcester)
Sally Hartland (Banbury)	Siobhan Urqhart (Shropshire)
Bryn Price (Maidstone)	Julian Medina (Kingston)
Evan Shepherd (Reading)	Emma Riley (Fowey)
Margaret Chapman (Kirkcaldy)	Phil Jones (Royal)
Louise Clive (Gailey)	Ian Kershaw (Gloucester)
Stephen Whieldon (Trentham)	Anoushka Freeman (Richmond)
Peter Gorman (Wey)	Greg Spencer (Penine)
Reuben Sweetman (Bishop's Stortford)	Paul Thompson (Wey)

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence

Graham Warland (Banbury)
Scott Hynds (Elmbridge)

2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 Annual Consultative Meeting

The minutes of the 2023 Annual Conservative Meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Report from the Chairman, Stan Missen

The Chairman directed attendees to review his report circulated in the papers prior to the meeting:

I last reported to the ACM, July 2023.

I am pleased to say the year ended as a success for marathon racing, the largest competitive discipline.

Thanks must go to Norwich CC, for hosting a very successful National Championships in July 23. Towards the season end we saw a pick up in domestic race entries culminating in a very successful Hasler finals, hosted on the ever popular Worcester course in September. These major events, together with the frantic but friendly racing and rivalry of the Short Course Nationals in May, were the foundation of our weekly competition around the country. Events continue to thrive in most regions, encouraged by our network of marathon advisors, despite the many financial pressures present in the current economy.

The MRC provides the framework & rules for competition but as ever, it is the dedication and drive from all the volunteers at club level that allows us all to participate, and enjoy, a packed calendar of events that take in many different courses and types of water. Most importantly courses should and can continue to provide a challenge, to build confidence and ability and I again encourage clubs to make sure their event & chosen venue does continue to do just that.

Your committee needs to hear from you and your club. Small rule changes have been introduced by your committee this season that they believe will enhance competitive marathon racing but it is only with your input can they consider any more radical or positive changes.

During the year our endeavours have continued to be supported financially by Paddle UK; formerly British Canoeing. Their support allows us to continue to commit sizable sums to ensure GB team representation at International events around the globe. Non competitive membership of Paddle UK now makes up the majority of membership, driven up by those focusing on SUP's, which some kayakers suggest as negative, however this has to some extent allowed the transformation of Paddle UK and we are now seeing some refocus back towards the importance of the competition side of our sport, despite the competition disciplines being in the minority of overall membership. Our race organisers should continue to embrace SUP's where possible within our established regular competitive programme.

Your committee financially supported the DW committee in 2024 with a sizable contribution and our encouragement saw additional funding following from PaddleUK. It is important that we work with the DW Committee to promote positive change to guarantee the future of what is by far the most well known kayaking and canoeing event in the UK. We were also pleased to work with the DW committee in the organisation of the National Schools Championships.

Challenges for 2024 come in the form of the 17 page draft 'competition review document' which we have been asked to comment upon. Additionally the long awaited 'Standard of Deployment' paper (another 17 pages!) will be testing for some and will need thorough consideration within affiliated clubs and amongst their volunteers as we are required to structure how paddlers and volunteers

enter and progress through our clubs and our sport. PaddleUK is understanding of those challenges and will be providing assistance.

Our international performance has been full of high level successes but also with some disappointments. There is no doubt that the experience of international racing assists our athletes at the highest domestic level to perform at the next level needed. It was pleasing to see so many British paddlers, selected as part of our team and as private entries from clubs, competing at the 50th anniversary Waterlands Marathon with some outstanding results, despite the added negative experience of abnormal weather! Weather intervention is something that a number of our domestic events at the tail end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 suffered from. There were a number of widespread disruptions and cancellations to our events. It is important that paddlers at all levels experience testing weather conditions and practice on higher water levels, as it is only with that experience gained that the ability to paddle and race safely in such conditions is learnt. It is certain that our weather will continue to have effects upon all outdoor sports including our own and we will have to embrace this.

Sadly there have been a number of incidents that your committee have had to deal with of poor behaviour both on and off the water, involving athletes at home and whilst abroad. Such things are totally unacceptable and we will take appropriate action against the individuals involved where necessary. Coaches and a few supporters also need to ensure that they focus their energies positively. The committee and its volunteers and race organisers are doing their utmost to deliver fair competition to all.

Lastly, I would like to thank all those elected and co-opted on to the committee during the 2023/24 season for their hard work and commitment. Particularly a huge thank you to Dave Enoch who has served his last year (of very many!) on the committee, having now completed the handover of treasurership. Scott Hynds' contribution towards coaching and running the race coach programme has also been invaluable.

The MRC is YOUR committee and we welcome new members, either through the formal election process or those willing to be co-opted during the year to work on specific tasks and projects.

4. Election of Committee Posts

The MRC elects places on a rolling basis, for a period of two years with the election of the Chair taking place annually. We had 6 retiring members who had served their 2-year term (Stan Missen, Dave Sackman, Mick Nadal, Bryn Price, Roland Lawler, Scott Hynds). 5 (Stan Missen, Dave Sackman, Mick Nadal, Bryn Price, Roland Lawler) stood for re-election and 1 did not (Scott Hynds).

Under its Terms of Reference, the MRC operates a one club, one vote policy for the Committee elections. Voting took place online and the following were appointed:

a. Chair - Stan Missen (BOA)

b. Committee - Dave Sackman (WOK), Mick Nadal (NOT), Bryn Price (MAI), Roland Lawler (ELM), Sally Hartland (BAN), Lee Bennett (WOR)

4. Finance - report from the Treasurer, Joe Fitzpatrick

The Treasurer gave an overview of his report circulated in the papers prior to the meeting:

Our financial year runs to 31st October so the last set of fully audited accounts are up to 31st Oct. 2023. You will see that we carried forward reserves of £54,673.66.

The number of entries to marathon racing this year has stayed steady, producing about 26k in race levies 2022 to 2023.

There has also been some good international racing with us sending teams to Croatia and Denmark as well as development teams to Germany, Bulgaria, Spain and France. The cost of these has increased substantially in the last couple of years. Unfortunately the increase in costs has resulted in an increase to the amount athletes contribute.

We have also been able to invest £5k in supporting race coach courses and underwriting the Short Course Nationals by £1.4k.

Income

PaddleUK central grant is dedicated to help us achieve the goals of the MRC as per the terms of reference for marathon canoeing within the UK.

We also have a grant from PaddleUK specifically to support athletes to attend the Para Euro and Worlds demo events.

Race Levies are funds collected by race organisers on behalf of the MRC.

Athlete contributions is money received from athletes to help support the expenses of the trip they have been selected for.

Expenditure

Major Internationals are the trips within the sport of marathon racing. This allows British athletes to compete against the best in Europe and the World.

Development Internationals are the trips that allow the up and coming athletes to improve their race skills internationally.

Race Entry system is the software that is used for all marathon races in the UK. This is used to process entries and publish results.

Website is the website hosting and coding.

Tracksuits and Racing Kit cost is due to the gradual rebrand required for international racing kit.

Education Maintenance Allowance is a pot of money to fund qualifications for racing coaches within the club network.

Short Course Nationals is to help run the short course national championships and turn it into a premiership event.

ICF Officials to Major Internationals is an expense for all the Officials at major internationals. This is the share we have to pay.

Bank Charges is the fee the bank charges us to make and receive payments.

National Coach Training is a pot of money there to help team leaders and coaches improve themselves allowing the people that volunteer to upskill, to aid the MRC.

Gender Equality Projects is to help clubs and regions increase the number of women and girls competing in marathons. For example, this has been used to buy changing tents for regions.

Numbers Boards is to replace the MRC number boards used in major events.

Trophy engraving is a pot of money reserved to engrave the Trophies awarded at the nationals and Hasler Finals.

SCN, Nat champs & Hasler Final Medals is a pot of money reserved to buy and engrave the medals for all championship events and hasler finals.

Sinking Fund- this is a new fund this year and it is a fund to support Capital Expenditure of the MRC. We currently have a minibus that is ageing and will need to be replaced soon and this fund will be used to help alleviate the burden of this cost when it comes.

Committee Members Admin is the cost used to run the committee.

In addition to this, the MRC supported the DW this year. Paddle UK also supported this, matching what we were able to put into it. This brought PaddleUK's support for the marathon this year to £52.5K plus all the support from their staff.

With everything going on this year we are likely to be down to £50k in the bank at the end of the year. This is the level that the committee feels it should maintain as the bottom line which has been agreed by Paddle UK as a reserve level.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers at all the clubs that plan and run hasler races and support marathon racing throughout regions in the UK.

5. Standards for Deployment Policy.

Clubs were reassured that the clubs support team (clubs@paddleuk.org.uk) stand ready to assist with any necessary support or clarification needed regarding the Standards for Deployment Policy.

6. Issues raised for the MRC to consider at future meetings

During the next year the MRC will be looking into:

1. Ways to increase participation at the Hasler Finals in 2025. Initial ideas include:
 - a) Whether a system could be introduced whereby if a qualify club doesn't send a 'reasonable sized team' (where 'reasonable' is yet to be quantified!) then they may lose their qualification status to the next club down in the points order.
 - b) Whether paddlers in top divisions could enter regardless of their club qualifying. Historically attendance has always been better in the lower divisions so this would help address that imbalance.
2. Ways to increase participation at the Short Course Nationals in 2025 (while being mindful that the schedule/timetable is already fairly packed!). Initial ideas from the meeting (& the survey sent out before the meeting) include:

- a) Build it into a 2-day event to include K2 racing and/or a relay race.
 - b) Ensure that all categories have heats and finals.
 - c) Introduce more events of this type regionally to build momentum.
 - d) Introduce B races for those who feel intimidated by the high level.
 - e) Changing the location of the venue yearly so that people living further away are more likely to participate.
3. Possibility of removing the boat length restriction for GSC. At the moment some under 10s are forced to race in GSB due to racing a full sized K1. This means they race paddlers up to 3 years older, and a lot stronger!
 4. Possibility of adding a SUP ranking based on the understanding that a paddler may choose to race SUP, Canoe, and/or kayak on different days and be relatively different speeds in all three disciplines.
 5. Possibility of allowing Div3 paddlers to race Div4K2 with a Div5 or lower to support those who are tethering between Div4 and Div3. This is on the understanding that these paddlers often do not have many options for K2, particularly in smaller clubs.

A concern was expressed about promotions often being made in K2s where the paddler is not capable of being promoted in their K1. This concern was discussed and the committee and other club representatives noted that Team Leaders always have the right to request a demotion and that historically demotion requests, with good evidence, have always been accepted.

A discussion was had around the double promotions and resultant lack of points at Hasler Final. The committee explained that this system is necessary so as to ensure that participants do not suppress promotion in the lead up to the Hasler final in order to gain extra points at the final. The expectation is that coaches & Team Leaders assess their paddlers and ensure that they are racing in the correct division. Looking at evidence, there were no double promotions in K1 in 2022 and 2023. The committee therefore feels there is not sufficient evidence to support a rule change for K1s. This rule was however changed for K2s due to the difficulty in assessing which paddlers should be promoted.

There being no other matters to discuss everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting formally closed at 8.50pm.