

**British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee
Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 4pm on 15th August 2020**

Held via online web conference.

1. Present

Stan Missen (SM) (Chair)
James Smythe (JS)
Dyson Pendle (DP)
David Enoch (DE)
Siobhan Urquhart (SU)
Roland Lawler (RL)
Brian Chapman (BrC)

Scott Hynds (SH)
Dan Seaford (DS)
Jim Rossiter (JR)
Bryn Price (BP)
Mick Nadal (MN)
Graham Warland (GW)
Richard Stacey Chapman (RSC)

These people are referred to by their initials hereafter in the Minutes.

Apologies for absence were received from Kat Wilson and David Sackman.

2. Approval of Minutes of Meeting 9th May 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 29th Feb were approved by the Committee. They will now be published as final.

Action: JS

3. Matters Arising

a) MN and GW to write to Race Organisers outlining how 'on the day' risk mitigation might be best handled where weather or water conditions require it; while ensuring that responsibility for this remains with the organiser. This arose as there had been discussion about events that were cancelled when, for instance, river levels were likely to be high and it was felt that the event could have probably been safely by merely insisting all wore buoyancy aids. Individual race organisers best know their local conditions.

Action: MN/GW

b) MN to write to RMAs reminding them that they are free to request amendments to the Hasler rules to suit local requirements in their regions, and that the MRC would not refuse any reasonable requests.

Action: MN

c) The sale of the old MRC trailer has not progressed, and no further enquiries have been received. It will require a service and MOT this summer. The trailer represents good value and it is hoped a buyer can be found upon resumption of paddling following lock down (C-19)

Action: DE

d) British Canoeing's proposed ending of the current limited 'day ticket' scheme and perhaps most importantly the possible ceasing of the junior 'club' issued membership card and the associated consultation on these and other matters via regional roadshows; has been moved on a year. They were due to have taken place in March 2020. Clubs are urged to keep an eye out for regional BC meeting dates now in 2021, as these provide an opportunity to debate our concerns.

e) SM reported back information from British Canoeing on the support that canoe clubs had received from Sport England COVID support grants. 45 clubs had received money varying between £300 and £10k, totalling £97k, no information was available as to why each club had been successful in applying but it was obvious that lots of clubs were not successful in their bid for help.

f) Plans to be drawn up on small clubs and stimulating participation – taken forward to the November meeting.

Action: NN

g) Plans for how to handle Hasler club points will be finalised once a date for return to normal racing is known: carried forward to the November meeting.

Action: Review options as things become more clear: MN

4. Governance

a) The Committee welcomed Bryn Price and David Sackman (in absentia) following their election at the ACM for two-year terms.

b) The allocation of Committee roles was discussed, and delegated according to the table below.

There was some discussion about whether the MRC should have a COVID officer as well as members responsible for event safety guidance, and safeguarding. It was felt that this was not necessary, as MN had already been distributing British Canoeing's advice to race organisers and RMAs in his event safety and rules role.

The Committee agreed that a COVID safety declaration should be added to the declaration made by race organisers wishing to have a race listed in the Calendar.

Action: GW

MN said that he would be keen to have a second Committee member act as understudy on Rules.

Action: Role to be filled at November meeting

BP outlined his hopes to stimulate Masters racing both domestically and internationally, which will be brought forward for discussion at future meetings.

Tom Sharpe's resignation leaves a vacancy leading our international event planning.

Action: Role to be filled at November meeting

The composition and membership of the Selection Committee was left unchanged for the coming season, as the current group have not had any selections to organise this season.

MRC Committee Roles 2020-21

		Elected												Co-opted	
		Stan	Mick	David E	James	Graham	Kat	Nettie	Siobhan	Bryn	Dyson	David S	Roland	Scott	Dan
ADMIN	Chair	■													
	Vice-Chair		■												
	Secretary				■										
	Treasurer			■											
	Website & Comms				■				■						
	Newsletter							■							
	Safeguarding						■								
	Rules		■												
	Coaching													■	
DOMESTIC	Major Events							■							■
	RO liaison					■									
	RMA liaison		■												
	Club development							■							
	Race Records					■									
	Race Management											■			■
	Calendar					■									
	Rankings												■		
	Event Safety		■												
	Trophies								■						
INTL	Athlete Dev (snr)						■								
	Athlete Dev (jnr)					■		■							
	Intl Logistics			■		■					■	■			
	Intl kit										■				
	Masters									■					
	Event planning					■									
	Selection Cttee			■	■		■				■		■		

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c) As previously discussed, British Canoeing has been conducting a major review of Sprint racing in recent months. MRC had volunteered to help where it can as well as approaching the SRC via Alan Laws to offer our help in setting up a programme of local and regional sprint competition.

MRC were also not opposed to public calls for a single Racing Committee per se, although there were reservations about whether this would achieve more than two committees could.

SM reported that Alan Laws did not respond directly to our offer, although David Joy called a meeting with the three of them to discuss how a closer working relationship could benefit racing generally. In that meeting, Alan Laws stated that he believed the racing calendar to be a problem, and that MRC should reduce the number of Hasler races and it was discussed whether the MRC should limit all clubs to organising no more than one race. SM agreed to take these points to our next meeting for discussion. The Committee were thus asked for their initial responses to helping solve the problem with the following comments made:-

- There are many good reasons why clubs organise Hasler races, and to oppose these would be unreasonable.
- Similarly, paddlers do the races that they want to, and there is plenty of evidence that more prefer Hasler races to current local sprint events.
- If clubs were required to abandon their Hasler race, would they be compensated or incentivised to run a sprint instead?
- If British Canoeing wanted fewer marathon races, what did they want instead? Paddlers attend these races in higher numbers than sprint events because they enjoy them.
- It is too simplistic to argue that there are “no available weekends” for sprint events, as this is not the case at local or regional level.
- Marathon could also benefit from a shorter race format (e.g. the 3.6km international format)
- The MRC all support the development of healthy local and regional sprint racing.

Richard Stacey-Chapman, British Canoeing’s events officer attending the meeting, agreed that simply reducing the number of Hasler races up front would not achieve anything, but that it might be one outcome of the establishment of more local and regional sprint competition.

It was agreed at the meeting with David Joy, to form a group comprising MRC and SRC members to discuss. JS and DP agreed to represent MRC in this discussion.

Action: JS/DP to report back

d) The Committee discussed a paper written by Norwich CC's Jan Alexander, on the subject of gender discrimination in sprint racing. This paper referenced a potential problem, in that women and girls racing in the purely ability-based Hasler system would have fewer chances to win races or get promoted than their male counterparts.

SM pointed out that discrimination can also come about because of different facilities needs at races; women often have less adequate access to toilet or changing facilities for example. And this in turn could have an impact upon girls wanting to do events.

The Committee discussed a number of ideas in general:

- Keeping the divisional system which works very well for female progression, but finding ways to better reflect achievement by gender
- How to support girls at the time when boys of the same age enjoy rapid growth-related gains
- Drop-off rates at each age are comparable between male and female paddlers
- Look to other canoeing events and other sports events for inspiration
- Consider increased race entry fees to pay for better facilities for females in particular (and all participants generally)

It was agreed to compile a list of issues and potential actions at the November meeting. DP agreed to start this list and discuss with Jan at his club.

Action: DP

5. Finance

DE reported that our budget was likely to break even, not make the £3-4k loss originally anticipated, because the flights pre-booked for the German Nationals were eventually refunded and the hoped-for October return to racing event seems unlikely.

We normally put our proposed budget to British Canoeing for the forthcoming year in October, with the aim of demonstrating the need for a minimum grant of £35k. However, the unknown status of internationals in 2021, plus the likely loss of levy from domestic races makes budget planning very difficult.

JS pointed out that new COVID protocols may also mean we have to spend more money on sending teams abroad, e.g. all team members having their own room for example.

With international costs as the main question mark, the Selection Committee agreed to discuss 2021 commitments asap. It was then felt appropriate that DE makes contact with BC to discuss these problems and see what other disciplines are doing about their budgets. It was agreed that in the current climate it was a pointless exercise to simply make up figures!

Action: JS and DE

6. Domestic Racing

a) Most if not all of the upcoming races in England this autumn have been cancelled or postponed following British Canoeing's advice on the resumption of competition. BrC reported that the Scottish Canoe Association's guidelines had been similar, and all ranking races had been cancelled this year. The only events likely to take place will be time trials.

Feedback from race organisers suggested that re-organising races to have a maximum of six paddlers may have been achievable, but a combination of publicly-owned land for hosting the race, and the fear of a public backlash from being seen to hold a race, were greater hurdles at this stage.

Richard Stacey-Chapman reported that other disciplines were facing the same problem, and other sports were being tougher with their guidelines. There is no upper limit on participants as long as the event can be run safely. MN reported that basic, on-the-water safety could not be delivered within current guidelines, and that most races did not have enough river frontage for distanced access by competitors.

MN also reported that there was little appetite among clubs to try a centrally organised interclub competition with a different format, but that clubs and regions were organising their own thing (e.g. the SW region 5k time trials). The Committee felt that the best we could do at this stage would be to help promote any such regional and local initiatives as long as conducted safely.

b) David Sackman will be taking over Tom Sharpe's responsibilities in planning and co-ordinating the MRC's race entry and management software. To start with he has been collating requirements to check where RACMAN and the Race Entry software sit in terms of these.

SM reported that an agreement had been signed with Will Abson to licence his online race entry system.

c) KW reported that the new U14s racing system (Divs A-C below Div 9) was ready to implement as soon as Hasler racing resumes. Race Organisers have provided enough information to Evan Shephard on their Lightning courses, to enable him to calibrate the promotions system.

7. Major Events

a) KW reported that the planned “Return to Racing” event of 4th October that the MRC wanted to support & promote widely, was now very unlikely to happen. The main reason was that the Reading Promenade is owned by the Council. Reading CC would in principle be willing to organise the event elsewhere, but not on public land, and with very limited numbers. DS added that this was not the right time to be promoting a major national event due to the negative publicity risk. Richard Stacey-Chapman agreed, saying that events should be local and regional at this stage.

Action: JS to publish this rather disappointing news via website

b) SU reported that the event at South Cerney on 20th September was still being planned by Kevin Bowerbank, with the format currently being developed. There would be a maximum of 150 entries, and a poster is being distributed. A regatta on 26/27 September was also still being planned at the time of the meeting, but cancelled shortly afterwards.

8. Internationals

a) JS reported that the European Championships were still officially going ahead, although the venue has moved to Győr. A majority of European nations have indicated that they will send teams. BP reported that there would be no Masters races however.

Hungarian COVID restrictions put the UK into a higher risk band than other countries, with BrC reporting that this means a requirement for two clear COVID tests in the days running up to the event.

We had previously decided not to send a team, which in any case would be impractical with the current quarantine requirement and inability to get full cover travel insurance. The event may still not go ahead, not least due to a shortage of ICF officials willing to staff the event.

b) The question of organising a major international in 2026 was deferred to the November meeting, on order to try to find someone to lead this following Tom’s departure.

9. Coaching

SH reported that the SRC have decided to split with the MRC on how they allocate their coaching bursaries, and paying candidates directly (the MRC scheme pays course providers and does not distinguish between coaches who prefer to coach one racing discipline or another). The British Canoeing Coaching department are again considering a split in the Race

Coach qualification to sprint and marathon specialisms, despite having rejected this in the recent past.

Coach assessments are currently not possible due to social distancing rules, and continue to be the main bottleneck with nine candidates waiting. It is unlikely that there will be any more budget requirements for this in the current calendar year.

10. AOB

JR asked whether and how we should consider a fuller incorporation of SUPs into marathon racing. Richard Stacey-Chapman reported that British Canoeing are currently researching opinions among new SUP members. The National Championships this year was hoping to include an SUP demonstration event.

SU mentioned that the German Nationals and Brandenburg sprint regatta would clash in 2021, so asked the Selection Committee to take this into account in their planning. GW added that the World Championships for Sprint and Marathon were on the same weekend in 2021. It was appreciated that all dates for events in 2021 were under question at this stage.

11. Meeting Dates 2020

- a) The all day-meeting will be on 21st November at Cropredy. 9.00am start, finish at 3pm. (or on line depending upon social distancing rules nearer the time)

The meeting closed at 6 pm.