

**British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee
Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 3pm on 6th February 2021**

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)

David Sackman (DSa)
Jim Rossiter (JR)
Bryn Price (BP)
Mick Nadal (MN)
Graham Warland (GW)
Kat Wilson (KW)
Nettie North (NN)
Dan Seaford (DSe)

These people are referred to by their initial's hereafter in the Minutes.

Apologies for absence were received from Richard Ward.

2. Approval of Minutes of Meeting 28th November 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 28th November were approved by the Committee. They will now be published as final.

Action: JS

3. Matters Arising

a) No further progress on selling the trailer during lockdown. KW suggested a new online canoe & kayak selling group.

Action: KW to liaise with DE

4. Governance

a) The Committee had hoped to discuss ideas to improve gender equality in marathon racing, following the research presented at the November meeting. This was delegated to a sub-committee to progress before the next meeting, comprising DP, SU, and JS, and hopefully co-opting Jan Alexander from Norwich. Holly Mobbs from Wey was also suggested to be approached.

Action: JS, SU, DP

b) 2020-21 Hasler season: When we suspended the Hasler points competition until the end of 2020, we had been hoping for a return to

competition and completion of the second half of the season. However this looks extremely unlikely, so the MRC decided to suspend the Hasler points competition for the remainder of the season (i.e. to end August 2021). Clubs may still organise Hasler races if restrictions allow, there will simply be no points collected towards the Hasler Final. A Hasler final will not be run in 2021.

In place of a traditional Hasler Final, the MRC hopes to run an inter-club competition, provisionally on 19th September, and open to *all* clubs. There will be no points qualification required.

GW reported that several clubs had requested to move their race dates to August, so some early season races may still go ahead despite the suspension of the Hasler points.

It is anticipated that competition will initially, possibly be, regional, rather than National as travel restrictions between areas may still be in place.

Action: JS to post new information on MRC website etc

5. Finance

DE reported that the 2019-20 accounts had been approved by British Canoeing.

So far in this financial year (since October 2020), there has been no income, and only a small amount of expenditure on coaching courses. SM and DE met Susan Hicks and Anna Gray from British Canoeing regarding the central grant. British Canoeing can and are willing to pay it this year, but will not pay out to discipline committees until it is clear how they will be spending the money. If we have new plans, British Canoeing are likely to support them. DE and SM will meet Susan again in late April to discuss further.

6. Domestic Racing

a) DSa reported back on his progress in sorting out our race entry and race management software situation. Nobody has so far been found who could reliably support the RACMAN Excel race management system. Richard Cawthorn of Wey was approached and had declined due to time pressures but it was also reported that he had been disappointed that the MRC had not considered his race entry system instead of the one chosen. JS recalled a conversation at the time with Tom Sharpe, where it appeared that he'd become aware of Richard's system when discussions with Will Abson were at an advanced stage. Two members of Reading CC had also been approached, and were willing to do the work for £1,500, but were keen on moving the MRC to an online-only system, a position which has been rejected at this stage.

The problem of RACMAN requiring proper support is linked to the amount of work the software needs to do on race day. JS asked what was the minimum we needed it to do *on the riverbank*, without an internet connection. DSe suggested that this could be data capture only (i.e. starts and finishes); DSa thought that it should also include results production in situ. Other pre- and post-race calculations could be done online afterwards. DSe said he believes we are close to this already with Will Abson's system.

KW commented that having to wait for results until the evening of the event is the norm in most professionally-run events these days, in other sports. Why is the design of our system a result of the requirements of events where internet connection at the venue isn't possible? DSa pointed out that another major complication is the desire to allow on-the-day entries, which results in a lot of data entry error and time-consuming problems checking BC membership status. JS agreed, and commented that it is data quality issues which cause problems for GW, RL and JS processing results and producing the new ranking list in time for the following week.

DSa proposed a working group to write a revised specification for RACMAN, and to work out how much of its complexity could be transferred to Will Abson's system, or eliminated through better system controls. Any associated costs need to be submitted to DE by April.

Action: DSa, DSe, GW, JS

b) JS and DP reported back on the proposed Speed Series, being planned in conjunction with the SRC. The working group, comprising JS and DE, and Wendy Dodson and Kevin Hipkins of the SRC, has agreed the scope and aims of the competition, and a first draft of rules has been made by JS.

The main question we have is the extent to which the SRC is fully behind the initiative, or able to focus on it with all their other plans. SH reported that he believed that the SRC's new recruits were very keen on the idea. JR reported the same, Paul Dimmock and Pete Gorman both being supporters of the plan.

DS has discussed the plans with Tim Scott (SRC Chair). Several clubs have been approached for feedback. SU asked if, in light of the discussion on gender equality, the plan was to split racing by gender? DP and JS replied that the plan at this stage is to have mixed-gender, ability-based classes, although genders could be split on the "long" (2k) races.

A test event is planned at Norwich, at the earliest possible opportunity, when travel between regions is permitted. The format works at a much smaller scale than many Hasler races, with around 100 competitors.

Action: All to send any feedback to JS on draft rules that were circulated

c) NN's plan to have a discussion on supporting smaller clubs hasn't been

able to progress, with most clubs currently closed. She reported that Cambridge had lost around 200 members due to lockdown, and its reliance on the University. JS suggested a chat with James Hinves at British Canoeing.

d) The discussion with Gailey CC about paying the racing levy has been resolved amicably. It was pointed out to the club that the levy is not just charged to competitors in exchange for the MRC publicising the race in the Handbook or Calendar; it contributes toward much of the MRC's athlete development and international activity, and also supports the development of the Marathon racing generally, the Hasler competition format and Final.

7. Major Events

a) Richard Stacey-Chapman (RSC) from British Canoeing attended the meeting to discuss their aim of pulling together a domestic events strategy across all disciplines. Current provision, including marathon events, is being studied to find out if BC could offer more support. A survey was carried out among marathon racers, which attracted some 200 responses and some useful comments which are being studied.

JS presented a summary of the results, which were in the most part very positive (see meeting papers). While there were plenty of good ideas for the Nationals in particular, the timetable over that weekend is packed already so these may not necessarily all be possible at the same event/weekend. One innovation that is popular would be a short-course championship event, but this would probably have to be scheduled separately.

RSC suggested that the MRC could potentially be supported with high-value items if these could be shared across more than one discipline. SM asked if this might cover software, and the delivery of results by the MRC (yes, in principle)

b) KW reported that Reading are still willing to organise the Nationals on 19-20 June 2021 if the situation (and the local authority restrictions) allow. The potential clash with school exams is no longer a concern. The Committee requested a fall-back date. JS asked, if there would have to be a limit on the duration or size of the event, could organise a Nationals for *championship classes* only?

Action: KW to discuss fallback date with Reading CC

c) There has been no further news from South Cerney, suggesting that the events provisionally planned there may be in jeopardy. British Canoeing are apparently frustrated that plans to adapt the lake are being backtracked upon, so it will not be suitable for our events.

8. Internationals

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a) Having agreed to aim to host a major international in the coming years, the MRC discussed the suitability of Worcester CC, who have been asking about a World Championships for some years. The co-ordinator of their bid, Julian Gilbert lives in the USA, although a local member, Steve Davies from Worcester, has agreed to deputise for Julian.

BRC believes that the course may struggle to meet the ICF's requirements for a *World Championships* and be more suitable for a World Cup at this stage, mainly due to the portage, start and finish location options.

As mentioned above, South Cerney won't meet requirements unless the suitability of the lake is to be developed.

Bowl Water in Kent has been mentioned, BRC is discussing with JR and BP who live much closer.

The Redgrave-Pinsent lake near Wokingham is also discounted as it is not wide enough, and struggling with politics.

Cardiff Bay, and Grafham Water were also mentioned. NN agreed to have a think about the latter and liaise with BRC.

b) JS discussed the planned international assessment events, starting with a long course race on 25th April at Norwich, and a short course race a week later at South Cerney. Time is running out for these to be feasible, although The Selection Committee would be keen to run a COVID-safe event assuming cross-regional travel was permitted. Numbers may have to be restricted and classes spread across the day, however BC have mentioned that the greatest risk may be from socialising, when paddlers who haven't seen each other for a year are able to come together. DP also commented that the Norwich venue is a popular local country park, so public protection could be a concern.

Action: JS to discuss criteria for the event happening with DP / Norwich CC, and the South Cerney organisers.

c) As previously discussed, BC have switched their GB team kit contract from Errea to Hummel, and expect all GB teams to follow. They have agreed to supply some Hummel kit to committees, but this would be extremely limited. The Committee expressed its frustration at yet another change, only two years after being required to abandon our own Joma deal for the central Errea kit. Most athletes have contributed, along with BC, to a perfectly serviceable and expensive collection of kit. BC have also failed to produce suitable on-the-water kit. We agreed that if BC require us to change our kit, the current stock and kit held by athletes should be replaced for free.

Action: DP to request more Hummel kit than BC originally offered; SM/DE to raise in budget meeting

9. Coaching & Development

a) SH reported that Lee Pooley at BC has agreed to change the current coach assessment rules, which are unsuitable for racing (e.g. the need to practice a rescue of someone trapped upside down in a K1!). Some coaches from the racing disciplines are being qualified to deliver a Core course, which should enable this course to be delivered in racing boats.

b) SU reported that the Junior Development Squad (JDS) will be linked up with the SRC and BC Talent Department in the coming year. This will be better for the kids, with less pressure to choose between disciplines. SU is stepping back, but GW will still be involved from the MRC's side. The Committee thanked SU and GW for the excellent work done on these very popular training events to date.

10. Communications

SU has written the Marathon section for BC's Annual Report

10. AOB

RL thanked everyone on the Committee for working so hard to keep the sport moving despite lockdown.

DP requested a meeting of the Selection Committee in the coming month
(Action: JS)

12. Meeting Dates 2021

- a) Easter meeting tbc **(action JS) expected to be on line again)**
- b) Annual Consultative Meeting and MRC elections, Saturday 20th June, Reading (subject to National Championships dates)
- c) September meeting tbc **(action JS - possibly meeting 'in person')**
- d) All-day meeting 20th November 2021 at Cropredy. 9.00am start, finish at 3pm. **(Expected to be in person)**
- e) All meetings subject to restrictions in place at the time.

The meeting closed at 5 pm.