

British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 2pm on 9th May 2020

Held via online web conference. Since the last meeting in late February – when the prospect of a full lock down due to C-19 was not envisaged – the country has been thrown into crisis with repercussions upon our sport at all levels.

1. Present

Stan Missen (SM) (Chair)	Kat Wilson (KW)
James Smythe (JS)	Tom Sharpe (TS)
Dyson Pendle (DP)	Dan Seaford (DS)
Richard Ward (RW)	Jim Rossiter (JR)
David Enoch (DE)	Mick Nadal (MN)
Siobhan Urquhart (SU)	Graham Warland (GW)
Roland Lawler (RL)	Nettie North (NN)
Brian Chapman (BrC)	Dave Sackman (DSa)
Scott Hynds (SH)	

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

2. Approval of Minutes of Meeting 29th February 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 29th Feb were approved by the Committee with one amendment (the planned date of the Hasler Final is 20th September) and signed by the Chair. They will now be published as final.

Action: JS

3. Matters Arising

a) 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

b) SM reported that he had fed back the Committee's concerns about the proposed ending of the 'day ticket' scheme to BC. This was to have been debated at planned BC regional meetings but this has not happened. It is assumed the planned change from September will be delayed by BC. Clubs are urged to keep an eye out for regional BC meeting dates, as these provide an opportunity to debate our concerns.

c) KW reported that the plans for testing a revised speed-based format for U12s racing were not progressed as the races whose data would be used to test the new ideas were cancelled. Evan Shephard of Reading CC is planning to model the effect instead.

Action: KW to report at next meeting

d) MN and GW were 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. They best know their local conditions. This will now happen once we can communicate news on resumption of the racing season.

Action: MN/GW

e) Similarly, communication to Race Organisers on the latest changes to RACMAN, and the Race Entry system will be made once we are preparing for racing to re-start.

Action: TS

f) TS has planned to adjust RACMAN to allocate 50 points downwards instead of 20 per person for a race win. He has also recruited Richard Cawthorn of Wey KC and John Hemming of Elmbridge CC to help him with future RACMAN development. The points change is another item for forthcoming Race Organiser comms.

Action: TS

g) NN's proposal for a plan to stimulate participation will be carried forward to the November meeting when it is hoped that a face to face meeting will be possible. This may be informed by feedback from the planned clubs' conference outlined below.

Action: NN to prepare agenda item

4. Finance

SM reported that, following the start of the lockdown and cancellation of races, he had approached David Joy at British Canoeing to discuss surrendering some of the annual grant which would not otherwise be spent and merely increase our reserves, something that BC would not welcome. BC has lost a very large amount of money during the lockdown, particularly from members who have not renewed membership until they are able to paddle again. A significant financial loss is expected this year. This approach was well received, and in fact BC already had plans to ask all discipline committees to return unallocated grant funds for 2019-20.

DE presented a revised budget that had been prepared as part of this discussion, showing a total income of £13k for the year comprising just under £9k for a reduced grant, plus £4k in race levies received from the races that ran late 2019, early 2020.

Expenditure this year is now planned at £16k, including unavoidable costs for the minibus, planned investment in software, a possible loss on flights booked to the German Nationals, and a notional £5k to support a late season national 'return to racing' event and some other possible expenditure.

This would leave a small deficit of £3k for the year, and reserves of £52k. The actual figure is heavily dependent on when racing can resume. The budget assumes no further racing will take place so no levies will be received and that there will be no international travel for the Team during 2020.

5. Governance

a) SM reported back on British Canoeing's situation and intentions with regard to supporting resumption of paddling. They are very keen to see competition resume but whilst working within Government guidance and rules. David Joy has been very actively lobbying stakeholders, while being careful to protect relations with Sport England, the Environment Agency and the Canal and Rivers Trust all of whom are critical to both water access and funding.

It was noted that some BC members and individuals had not been complying with BC guidelines and were finding their own reasons why they should be able to ignore what the majority were complying with. This was disappointing.

At this stage it looked likely that return to competition will have be staggered so that numbers gathering could be managed. Competitions of a small, local or regional scale could possibly resume in late summer, but this of course depends on the national situation. We can start to plan a provisional late-season event on 3rd or 4th October, to replace the National Championships and Hasler Final which are very unlikely to be able to take place (see below) .

RL asked if the October event could in effect be the National Championships, even if distances and formats were amended, retaining the Open and age-group racing which makes this event unique. KW responded that Reading CC will be unable to host the Nationals at a later date, due to the current uncertainty and volunteer availability, and would like to host the 2021 Nationals instead.

TS reported that Richmond would still like to organise a major event in late September, even if this cannot be the Hasler Final. As the resumption of full scale racing in September seems unlikely, the weekend of 3rd/4th October was still a possibility.

The Committee agreed that establishing a date for a late-season event now would be wise; the plan would be for an all inclusive event with

appeals across the whole racing community, with short and long distances and possibly K4 racing. This was discussed further at item 7b below.

Any involvement by GB teams in international races during late 2020 would need very careful consideration and be approved as fair, safe and sensible by BC, and this was discussed further in item 8a below.

b) GW reported that Alan Laws, Chair of the SRC, had written to him. The SRC have written to all clubs asking that they organise more local sprint regattas, and also asked if the MRC could find space in the racing calendar to accommodate this.

JS replied with his concerns about the latter request. First, the calendar is always managed to accommodate all events that clubs or the SRC wish to run, and national regatta weekends are always kept clear of other events, so if new local sprint events are planned, these would be accommodated in the same way as other local and regional events.

It was noted that Sunday's have traditionally be the days on which Marathon races are run and this does not preclude clubs running SRC regional or local sprints on Saturdays or during evenings in the summer months.

Another concern is that the calendar dates are dictated by what clubs want to run and attend, not by the MR. If clubs want to run Hasler event, can demonstrate adequate ability and expertise to do so and their risk assessment is acceptable, it would be unreasonable of the MRC to say that such an event may not take place. Races are an important source of club income, goodwill and volunteer engagement. Obviously, the MRC earns a racing levy as part of its necessary funding also. The Committee agreed that the health of racing *overall* is most important, so if clubs wanted to run more sprint events and fewer marathons, we would support this plan. However, despite the SRC's letter there is no central plan from the SRC for helping clubs to follow this path.

DP responded that for local sprint competition to evolve, the SRC must provide proper support and guidance. Racing classes used at national regattas would not work well at local races without adaptation, and clubs would need help to work out how sprint racing formats could be adapted to the water they have access to. Local competition must also lead through to qualification for national competition, in order to stimulate club and paddler support.

KW and RW both suggested that from the MRC's experience, we could help clubs with event packages and experienced volunteers to help them to run such events.

SH pointed out that an excellent cross-discipline event format already existed in the National Schools' Championships, comprising a knock-out sprint event and a middle-distance K2.

Discussion moved on to the issue of whether there should be a single Racing Committee overseeing both disciplines. At the November 2019 meeting, the MRC had agreed to support Wey KC's idea of a flatwater clubs conference; to identify among other things *what clubs wanted from discipline committees in future*. The idea was not rejected by the MRC but it was decided to see what the SRC thought of the concept. The SRC however subsequently at their meeting rejected this idea so it was felt at the time to be not worth pursuing without their support. However, in light of BC's overall review of sprint racing, the Committee agreed to support the Wey KC plan and send MRC representatives to the meeting.

Action: SM to write to the SRC with our thoughts and offer of support in establishing local sprint competition, which might involve our MRA's

c) Plans for the MRC ACM, normally held at the National Championships, will be made once we know if a late-season event can develop. Half of our Committee are up for re-election in the summer 2020. It may be possible to run an ACM using web conference facilities if a meeting is impossible. Consideration will also be made to conducting on line voting by clubs.

Action: JS to progress once situation is clearer

6. Domestic Racing

a) SM reported that clubs are able to apply to BC for Sport England funding if they have lost out financially as a result of the Coronavirus situation. SM reported that this had received a large amount of applications, but that the success of these applications was unknown.

We had considered, among other plans, before BC requested a reduction to the grant, a possible donation from the MRC grant to clubs who had lost their race this year. With the reduced grant and the Sport England route for possible compensation payments this idea was not progressed.

DS recommended that we make sure we let clubs know what our decisions have been over this period, so they understand that we have considered the needs of the sport when making them.

b) The Committee will decide what to do with Hasler Final club qualifying points from the current season once the future is clearer.

Action: MN, brought forward to next meeting

c) In the light of our previous decision not to split the Midlands region, JS presented a recommendation to discuss *how regions could adapt more of*

the racing rules to suit their local needs. As long as the clubs engage with their RMA and work together effectively, there is no reason to refuse a *reasonable request* that a region wishes to implement which could cover several aspects of the current rules. A number of Committee members responded that the MRC must still have a final say, to protect parity between regions and the interests of smaller clubs, but the overall idea was supported.

Action: MN to raise this question with RMAs

d) SM reported that a draft agreement had been worked up with Will Abson, for the MRC to licence his race entry system. This has been reviewed by TS and JS and contains as far as possible appropriate protections for the MRC, clubs and users. The MRC would cover Will's costs and both parties would have the right to withdraw after an initial 18 month term. The long-term use of the system would however be secured for the MRC. The MRC would retain the right to use Will's code in exchange for a licence fee if he no longer wanted to develop it, and because the system uses open-source code it would be relatively straightforward to find someone else to carry it on. The Committee agreed to proceed on this basis.

Action: SM/JS to progress.

ii) Developments to RACMAN were touched on in item 3f above; these will be overseen by TS with support from Richard Cawthorn and John Hemming

SM again, stressed the importance of the MRC, through TS and DS, keeping clubs and race organisers fully informed, well in advance, of changes we are making. Whilst the changes are to improve the usability & simplify entry procedures and production of results, any change can unsettle people unless communication is clear and carried out well in advance. It was noted that events that were to be used as 'test' events for changes planned had, unfortunately due to the current crisis, been cancelled. Others would therefore need to be arranged.

7. Major Events

a) The Committee agreed to officially postpone, rather than cancel the National Championships at this stage as the event may take place under a different guise and/or at a different venue in October. The Hasler Final will be cancelled. Announcement of this news will happen in the coming weeks once we know more about paddling in the lockdown. It is likely that BC will issue a further statement this coming week after the PM's TV statement.

Action: SM, JS

b) GW presented the proposal for the MRC to run an inclusive 'Festival of Racing' on the weekend of 3-4 October, when it is believed more likely that mass participation events will be allowed. This is the provisional date of the rescheduled London Marathon.

This would be an inclusive event, focussed at least as much on the fun of racing as winning, because paddlers have had unequal opportunities to paddle & train this year. It would also be designed to appeal to racers who like all distances from sprint to marathon. The precise content may however be tailored to the venue and as we know more about the lifting of restrictions.

RL requested that it use open and age group classes, not divisional ones. JR proposed that we could tie it in with the clubs' conference to be organised by Wey KC with our involvement.

c) SM reported that the 'London Regatta' tideway canoeing event has been cancelled again this year and it seemed is unlikely to be organised again in future.

8. International

a) SM reported back BC's position on potentially sending GB teams to international events that may still happen in 2020. The European Championships has not yet been cancelled, unlike ICF events, and could happen in October. In line with ICF guidelines, British Canoeing will not send teams unless they are able to travel safely and freely, and have had time to train and be selected appropriately. The Committee agreed that no GB teams would be selected for the European Championships this year.
Action: BrC to inform Gemma at BC and the ICF of our intentions.

b) The idea of investing in new K2s for the GB team was not met with enthusiasm, due to the problem of where to store them, and past issues of who could use them and when, and care for the equipment. DE reported that it is becoming harder to store boats at NWSC.

c) BrC reported on rule changes proposed by the ICF Canoe Marathon Committee. The main one was simply to allow any distances from 3.6km upwards to be incorporated into a recognised marathon event, although there is no plan to change Championship distances. In addition, lapped paddlers will now be allowed to continue racing and will proceed to the finish as soon as the lead paddler has passed the final portage.

ITO examinations will not be scheduled in 2020 due to the cancellation of the World Cup and World Championships, these will be carried forward to 2021.

d) BC have been informed of our desire to organise an international in 2026, the earliest date that BC would potentially support one. Worcester CC had renewed their interest, although BrC reported that ICF are still looking for 'stadium-style' formats for the major championships, with the hub, start/finish and portage in the same area. World Cups would have more flexibility. There was some brief discussion on other locations. Funding was likely to be now an even greater issue but possible locations where local funding may be possible, such as Strathclyde Park in Scotland should not be ruled out.

Action: TS to form a small organising sub-committee to progress

e) BrC's candidacy to the ICF CAM has been supported by the MRC and BC. We wished Brian good luck with the election.

9. Coaching

a) SH reported that the Coach Self-Analysis tool for marathon now better reflects the needs of the discipline with some quality learning materials, even if it is still work in progress.

The SRC now only plan to support training costs for individuals they see as 'sprint' coaches, in a divergence from the MRCs position of supporting racing coaches generally. These will be offered CPD at regattas. SH intends to ask BC if they will offer the same CPD to those coming via the MRC scheme.

Ivan Lawler and SH are collating coaching materials for the use of clubs and volunteers, and are happy for the MRC to make full use of these. The Committee agreed that we should try to create an online resource with these, that is easy to access for the paddling community. Finding the material on the BC website was not considered easy. Ivan is also offering to organise a coaching seminar with the support of top international athletes and coaches for later in the year.

Action: SH/JS/SU to work on creating online repository for coaching materials SH a to encourage the progression of the coaching seminar with Ivan on behalf of the MRC.

b) SU reported that the JDS training day for juniors took place just before lockdown. As soon as the situation is clearer, we will proceed to organising future events.

10. Communications

a) Communication with clubs and paddlers needs to be planned as soon as we know more about how the summer will unfold. JS agreed to collate the next newsletter, NN will send him materials collected so far.

Action: JS/NN

b) JS proposed that we centralise mailing lists to ensure that the whole Committee knows what is being communicated and when, to different stakeholder groups. DS suggested that we do this via Google Groups.

Action: JS

11. Any other business

Given the planned 50% cut to UK Sport funding for sprint, DP asked how we might encourage athletes dropped from the sprint programme to consider marathon. JS suggested that the way to do this would be to see them at Nottingham where most are training under the Performance Department. RL encouraged this approach but had tried and found it difficult in the past.

SU mentioned the sharing of historical racing photos and stories on social media recently, and asked if we could have a role in preserving the history of the sport. SM pointed out that we should look at accessibility electronically to an 'official' archive but that also original photographs and documentation should be centrally preserved, if possible, in addition.

Both items will be carried forward to the November meeting.

12. Meeting Dates 2020

- a) Dates and formats for the ACM and an August/September meeting will be proposed by the Secretary when the situation is clearer.
- b) The all day-meeting will be on 21st November at Cropredy.

The meeting closed down, at 4.30 pm.