

**British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee  
Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 1pm on 28<sup>th</sup> November 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)  
David Sackman (DS)

Jim Rossiter (JR)  
Bryn Price (BP)  
Mick Nadal (MN)  
Graham Warland (GW)  
Kat Wilson (KW)  
Matthew Lodge (ML)  
Nettie North (NN)  
Anna Gray (AG)  
Gemma Wiggs (GW)

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

Apologies for absence were received from Dan Seaford and Richard Ward.

**2. Approval of Minutes of Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

The minutes of the meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> August were approved by the Committee. They will now be published as final.

**Action: JS**

**3. Matters Arising**

a) The old MRC trailer is still not sold, and being stored at NWSC. A service will be required in the spring in order for it to be roadworthy and saleable. DE will continue to keep an eye and respond to any potential purchase enquiries.

**Action: DE**

**4. Governance**

a) JS reminded the Committee that the current Strategic Plan would come to an end at the end of the 2021 season. There had been a number of successful initiatives introduced when this plan was written, notably the coach education programme and junior development activities, so revising the plan is an opportunity to develop new ideas, and retain the ones that are already doing well.

AG informed the Committee that because of COVID, British Canoeing had decided to push back all planning by one year, so our plan would need renewing for the end of 2022. She will be compiling some useful facts and statistics for committees to start planning for the next cycle.

**Action: SM/JS to progress with AG**

b) The list of Committee roles was checked and confirmed for the coming year, with details in the table below.

MN expressed a wish to find an ‘understudy’ on Rules, as this is a detailed and critical role, which he had taken over from Diane Bates over the course of a few seasons. BP agreed to discuss this with MN

*MRC Committee Roles 2020-21*

		Elected													Co-opted			
		Stan	Mick	David E	James	Graham	Kat	Nettie	Siobhan	Bryn	Dyson	David S	Roland	Scott	Dan	Richard	Brian	
ADMIN	Chair	■																
	Vice-Chair		■															
	Secretary			■														
	Treasurer			■														
	Website & Comms				■				■									
	Newsletter							■										
	Safeguarding						■											
	Rules		■							■								
	Coaching													■		■		
DOMESTIC	Major Events						■								■			
	Competition dev.														■			
	RO liaison					■												
	RMA liaison		■															
	SRC 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			■	■		■				■		■					

With Tom Sharpe’s resignation, there was no-one on the Committee to lead planning for hosting a future major international event. BC agreed to lead on

this, as long as support would be available, particularly if we opted for a venue outside Scotland. NN and JR volunteered to support.

c) SM reported the current situation on British Canoeing's overhaul of the event tickets system, providing event day insurance and waterways licence.

There had been concern among clubs that youth memberships still be available, as this helped support participation among younger paddlers in Div 7 and below.

Under the new system, any full member of British Canoeing, or member of a British Canoeing registered club using the "associate membership" scheme would be covered for event day insurance. Once up and running, all members of a BC-affiliated club would have a BC associate membership number.

£5 event tickets would only be available for those outside these categories. Tickets would need to be purchase online only, directly from British Canoeing and not via the event organiser; proof of purchase would need to be shown at the event, e.g. a mobile receipt.

However the main problem with this approach is how an individual or club proves associate club membership. Most clubs would not maintain a live and up to date membership list with BC unless they also use the Azolve membership system. We would also not know if the club had paid its BC affiliation fee, without which the insurance may also be invalid. This puts additional pressure on clubs and race organisers.

AG pointed out that it would be up to Committees to decide how to restrict the use of day tickets in their own discipline, however MN did not think we would necessarily need to change our rules which limit event ticket use frequency.

It was agreed that we might expect anyone racing in Div 6 or higher to be a full BC member anyway, so formalising this rule may reduce the number of event tickets needed or club associate memberships that needed to be proved, but this would not prevent problems for juniors in Div 7 and below.

An additional problem with the coverage of club associate members was that clubs would be limited in the number of club-owned boats covered. JR pointed out that clubs own large fleets of boats used by lower-ranked paddlers, and all of these would need to be covered by the new scheme.

DS also requested that any changes be considered in the context of RACMAN and the race entry system, which may have to check membership status via the British Canoeing membership API. BrC asked if Anna Gray could check if the API has access to membership of all four domestic federations.

#### **Actions:**

**MN to take a lead on deciding the Committee's position, and if any rules**

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**need clarifying. DS will liaise with him on RACMAN and talk to British Canoeing about the API.**

d) The Committee returned to the question of gender equality in marathon, raised at the last meeting. Jessie Urquhart of Banbury CC had conducted a survey as part of her studies, and submitted a report of the results to the Committee.

The amount of feedback was large and covered aspects of racing and clubs, not just marathon. There were a number of positives, including that men generally perceived that there was work to be done, however women were stronger in this perception.

Three main areas were discussed: a feeling that women feel over-powered by men on mixed start lines; opportunities in ranking and promotion; and the perceived primacy of male events at elite level.

KW suggested that mixed starts might not need changing for Hasler competition as ability-based classes are such a fundamental aspect of this, but that Marathon is not just Haslers so there may be opportunities to address this in other events. DP pointed out that masters are also out-sprinted on Hasler starts.

JS suggested that there may be an opportunity to show an equivalence in ranking, so for example a woman in Div 2 might be ranked as a “Div 1 Female”, starting Hasler races with “Div 2 Males”. It may be possible (although difficult) to calculate promotions and demotions independently.

**Action: DP will liaise with Siobhan and Jan (?) to prioritise actions into easy fixes and longer-term issues, and report back to the next meeting.**

## 5. Finance

a) DE reported a slight gain of £5k in the 2019-20 accounts despite the loss of almost all levy and central grant revenue. This was mainly due to the hoped-for season-end event not happening.

b) Planning for 2021-11 involved a lot of educated guess work.

As international teams form the lion’s share of our spending, the Selection Committee made a decision to focus resources on the World Championships in September 2021, as these are the most likely to go ahead. If earlier events materialise that we are able to send teams to, plans will be adjusted accordingly.

With these assumptions and the expectation that racing will not commence early in 2021, the budget plans for a loss of £11.5k, returning us to a level of reserves of £50k as intended in the long-term plan.

British Canoeing have requested a meeting with SM and DE shortly regarding budget planning, so these plans may be amended; in any case we can expect British Canoeing to only release central grant funds when it becomes clear that we will be able to use them.

KW asked about funds for junior development. It was agreed that these mostly cost volunteer time rather than money, so budget was not a major barrier to running a full programme if possible.

DP asked about the small allowance for new international kit. This is normal as we have enough stock of Errea kit to last the season, however British Canoeing have made the decision to change kit supplier to Hummel from 1<sup>st</sup> April, and all GB teams would be expected to use this. AG reported that British Canoeing will therefore supply some kit to us for free – probably a tracksuit, 2 polos, and a jumper to each athlete and staff.

**Action: DP and DE to liaise with AG**

DE pointed out that on-water kit was not supplied by Errea so we had sourced our own excellent kit from Icon; AG reported that Hummel had also not proposed any to the expected standard. Therefore we will continue with our own arrangements, possibly badging the Icon kit with a Hummel logo.

**Action: DP**

BP asked if there had been any plans to make identical kit available for masters. AG responded that this had not been planned but that “some would be available for general purchase in future”.

GW queried that there was no allowance to purchase Racing Handbooks for race organisers; DE replied that he’d thought it unlikely the Handbook would be published or that we’d want to send it out in the same way. The Committee agreed that we would still support the Handbook with key contents such as the Racing Calendar this year but not purchase any this year.

## 6. Domestic Racing

a) GW reported that British Canoeing’s position on events and COVID was unchanged, local events should be OK if possible and permitted under local rules; national events should not be organised. Richard Stacey-Chapman is available to support clubs with any queries.

b) DS reported back on his progress in taking over the race management and entry software systems from Tom Sharpe and Dan Seaford.

DS believes it’s a significant problem that we have a support contract in place for the entry system, which is less important, but not the race management system, which is critical. He has spoken to Will Abson (who manages the entry system), Evan Shepherd and Kat Wilson, but had no support from Tom

or Dan.

It was agreed that the ambition should be to move as much functionality from the RACMAN system and automate it in the race entry system. GW pointed out that the greatest stresses come when race organisers submit their results late, resulting in processes not being complete in time for the following weekend's races. Much of this post-event data processing could be moved into the online "race entry" system.

DS suggested that ideally, race organisers would download a pre-populated RACMAN file produced by the race entry system, reducing their admin requirements and error caused by manual (or on-the-day) entries. MN reminded DS of our concern that smaller clubs, often reliant on on-the-day entries, should not be disadvantaged by a rigid process, so it was agreed that we might *encourage* rather than require pre-entry, allowing for on-the-day entries if circumstances required it (albeit with a cut-off time). A ready-to-go, downloaded RACMAN file would contain the latest ranking list and British Canoeing membership lists, and all agreed that this would work well for race organisers.

**Action: DS to discuss with Will, as well as key Committee users (GW, RL, MN, JS)**

c) JS reported back on discussions with SRC about a new competition format, provisionally titled the Speed Series. This is designed with the main aim of creating a local/regional programme of sprint competition, but also to include shorter and faster tactical/marathon-style races of benefit to developing faster marathon racers.

Discussions had suggested that we could eventually establish this series and balance the number of regional sprints with the number of regional marathons; and that clubs could be supported within regions to organise Speed Series events.

JR expressed concern about forcing clubs to choose a Hasler or a Speed Series race, and that many rivers just wouldn't be suitable. JS and DP reassured him that this is not about forcing any clubs to change, and that the Speed Series programme was deliberately designed to be applicable to most types of water, even those with enough width for two paddlers to race. MN pointed out that the reason more people choose Haslers than regional sprints currently was the attractiveness of the marathon format, so a Speed Series would need to attract paddlers on its own merits rather than expect space to be cleared in the calendar.

DP and JS explained that the plans would incentivise clubs to attend through a regional competition structure, like the Haslers, leading to a national final. This would probably be at a larger club venue, not HPP.

In terms of the event format, there are multiple examples of successful one-day formats in use, including current local sprint regattas and the National Schools Championships. Finding a format which is close to these, so most can be included as Speed Series events from the start, would help get it off the ground. The key aspects of the format are that it should be enjoyable for all ability levels, and adaptable to the water and facilities available.

**Action: DP to talk to RMAs and organisers of current local sprint regattas, with the aim of creating a start-up series of 2 races in each of 4 regions in the coming year.**

d) SM outlined discussions with South Cerney, and David Lawrence from the SRC who is leading these from the British Canoeing side.

The venue is being developed primarily for sprint, but options being explored for how the venue could encompass marathon. The MRC Selection Committee has already agreed with the organisers of next May's South Cerney Regatta to use one morning of the event for 3.6km short-course marathon races, including assessment races for the GB team.

e) NN's proposed discussion on how to support smaller clubs will be moved forward to the February meeting.

## 7. Major Events

a) We are currently awaiting confirmation of the date of the National Championships at Reading, with 19/20 June the most likely date. SU pointed out that with delays to national exams, many juniors will still be in the middle of exams at this point. Reading are limited on dates in case the Reading Festival takes place.

b) Given the likely status of the 2020-21 Hasler series, and the current lack of a venue, it was decided that we shouldn't try to hold a national final in 2021. A replacement inter-club national event could be organised if the health situation improves sufficiently.

SU suggested we book South Cerney provisionally in September or October. GW suggested a provisional date of 19<sup>th</sup> September.

**Action: SU, GW**

## 8. Internationals

a) JS outlined the Selection Committee's plans for 2021. These include prioritising the World Championships with a big team, and separating the

short and long course assessment events in order to enable assessment events to be more spaced out for COVID safety if necessary. The strategy document had been sent to Anna Gray for input. This was approved by the Committee.

**Action: JS to publish**

b) In terms of our desire to host a major international event in future, GW advised that British Canoeing have planned for one Olympic, and one non-Olympic discipline major event per 4-year cycle. They are aiming to host a sprint world championships in 2026 or 2029.

In terms of venues, Strathclyde and Holme Pierrepont are still being reviewed, with Eton Dorney rejected. South Cerney would not be ready for 2026 but is a possible for 2029. British Canoeing would be keen to support an international marathon, in 2026 if the sprints are pushed back to 29. GW asked the Committee to consider *why* we would want to host a major event. Other than international standing, inspiring the marathon community in the UK is a major consideration, which leans us more towards an event in Southern England where the majority of racing is based.

The Committee was reminded of Worcester CC's desire to host such an event. This was rejected in the past due to apparent shortfalls in ICF's expectations of the venue, although the MRC felt this should be reviewed.

**Action: SM to discuss with Worcester and GW**

c) The Committee discussed the nomination of ITOs (International Technical Officials) to serve at ICF/ECA major championships. Brian Chapman, Tom Sharpe, Dan Seaford and Ali Pendle had all indicated their willingness to be considered.

GW advised that only currently qualified ITOs need to be officially nominated at this stage, so the Committee agreed the nomination of Ali and Brian. These may choose the events that they are able to attend and will be chosen by ICF according to need. Tom and Dan may sit the exam in 2021 at the European or World Championships if they are able to commit the time, the deadline for this is later.

**Action: JS to confirm nominations and discuss with Dan and Tom**

BrC asked if it would be useful for the MRC to have a pool of accredited domestic officials, which will be discussed at a forthcoming meeting. BrC is also seeking appointment to the ICF CAM at their forthcoming election.

## 9. Coaching & Development

SU outlined draft plans for the Junior Development Squad in 2021. A significant change will be collaboration with the SRC and Talent Department, via Imogen Collins and Nick Fowler. Training days will be designated as Skills Days in order to better define their purpose and the desire to incorporate as



many young paddlers as practical. Better collaboration is expected to reduce clashes and pressures on young athletes and parents, and also to help the Talent Department have a broader positive impact.

## 10. AOB

a) JS mentioned that he had been approached by John Macleod, who with others has been compiling an archive of competitive canoeing event results. He would like to bring in as many past Marathon results as possible.

The MRC website has good records of the last 11 years of Hasler events, and roughly 25 years of National Championships results. The Committee were asked to consider if they have old paper copies of results, which could be scanned and uploaded to John's archive.

b) DP reported that the Spanish federation had told him that Sanabria K4 is likely to happen in 2021. This will be considered by

c) BrC reported that he had purchased a canoe racing trophy from 1868 on eBay.

d) SH reported that the racing community had formed a committee to discuss and report to British Canoeing on coach qualifications for racing. This is chaired by Dan Golder.

e) SM reported that the DW Committee will soon be publishing details of an amended 2021 event. Hammersmith Bridge is likely to be closed to river traffic, and the finish cannot use the area around St Thomas's Hospital during the COVID crisis. Newbury CC also very much hope to organise the Watersides with some course modifications. SM will offer our help to both of these.

## 11. Meeting Dates 2021

- a) Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021, 4pm (online)
- b) Annual Consultative Meeting, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June, Reading (subject to National Championships dates)
- c) All-day meeting 20<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at Cropredy. 9.00am start, finish at 3pm.
- d) All meetings subject to restrictions in place at the time, and may be moved online.

The meeting closed at 5 pm.