

Minutes of 2021 ACM

British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee

Minutes of the Annual Consultative Meeting held on 14th July 2021
at 7.30pm via Zoom online meeting

Present at the meeting. Names collected by on line attendance.so anyone
joining late their name may not have been collected:

Holly Mobbs
Chloe Dobbs
Graham Simpkin
Bill Lawrenson
Chris Jones
Julian Medina
James Clark
Steve Whieldon
David Enoch
Julia Lawley
Angela Aldam
Bryn Price
Norman Mason

Tim Scott
Deborah Wilkes
Mark Pearce
Evan Shephard
Paul Dimmock
Pete Gorman
Dan Seaford
Tom Sharpe
Dave Moore
James Smythe
Stan Missen

1. Apologies for absence

Graham Warland (Banbury)
Vicky Metcalfe (Pangbourne)

Richard Gilbert-Johns (Southamp-
ton)

2. Approval of 2020 ACM Minutes

The minutes of the 2020 Annual Consultative Meeting were approved and
signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising from the minutes that
are not included in the discussion points below

3. Report from the Chair, Stan Missen

The Chairman, Stan Missen, delivered the following report:

Welcome to all club members and club representatives.

My report in July 2020 was hopeful that the Covid restrictions that had hit us
all, would not dominate for the rest of the season and certainly at that time, I
and many thought we might return to normal competition from Jan 2021. How
wrong we were!

Whilst a few competitions managed to take place during the temporary easing of lockdown later in the year, we were soon back suffering, with new world restrictions as things continued to worsen, lockdown take 2 was upon us. Thankfully however we were not on this occasion, finding our favourite waters closed to paddling, this time around with groups of two allowed to remain training.

The image of our sport is more important now than it has ever been and I thank all those clubs and individuals who took their responsibilities seriously and complied with government advice. Sadly not all did so, and such actions can easily blight our reputation unnecessarily and all too quickly.

The MRC, together with BC have endeavoured to remain flexible throughout the year, as one wave after another took hold and propelled us further into uncertainty.

Your committee had little choice but to suspend the Hasler series points allocation; as some regions could, and other could not, organise competitions. Rightly some chose not to fight against the prohibitive restrictions placed upon our sporting community, whilst others braved on in a much revised and restricted format. Those clubs that did work so hard to meet the rules and provide competition, should be applauded, as it was not an easy route to take.

It was an achievement that Reading volunteered and managed to host our first National Championships since 2019 - despite the shift and changes coming out of Government, after the aborted June ending of lockdown. Everyone who attended will, I am sure, wish to thank Reading for developing their bold plans so early on and not giving up, despite the uncertainties surrounding such events.

During these difficult times, your committee have continued to meet over zoom and try to make some progress for 2021, both considering what international events might be possible to attend and perhaps most importantly, manage how our domestic racing calendar can be recommenced. It has not been easy and when progress has been made, it was sometimes subsequently dashed, as Covid continued to dominate.

The committee finances have of course been severely affected during Covid, as we appreciate have many of our supporting clubs with their events normally generating considerable funds to their club finances. MRC discussions with BC over grants and finances have, however, been pleasing, with the promise of their financial support for those plans that we find ourselves able to deliver through to the end of this year.

Considerable developments have taken place with the introduction of the MRC online entry system and whilst initially the changes to the youth card and BC membership seemed questionable, the new 'club associate membership' for those members of affiliated clubs registered through the BC portal eases the administrative requirements placed upon race organisers checking BC membership numbers and reduces the need for and cost of event tickets for many.

In line with the online entry system we continue to strengthen and improve the RACMAN system with our aim to enhance the offering to race organisers, as a top priority.

So we find ourselves a year on and in what could be considered a horribly similar place, to that which we were in in July 2020 - BUT there has been forward progress behind the scenes and the future does now look brighter!. There is now a glimmer of hope that from 1st September we will see our community coming back together on a regular basis to compete, as the Hasler programme is rekindled.

Some clubs will have missed the opportunity of running their normal events in 2021 and will not be able to reschedule. It is evident that there will probably therefore not be an immediate return to normality and that the racing calendar will have to alter and develop in the coming months. It is important therefore that all clubs notify Graham Warland of planned changes and that club leaders keep abreast of notifications through the MRC website and on social media.

Finally I would like to thank those on the committee for their continued hard work. Especially to our longstanding treasurer David Enoch and our rules and safety officer Mick Nadal, both of whom suffered badly contracting Covid and suffered periods of ill health but both who returned so quickly to dealing with MRC affairs, as soon as they possibly could.

4. Election of Committee Posts

a. The MRC elects committee places on a rolling basis, for a period of two years with the election of the Chair taking place annually. Five ordinary places were up for election, with six candidates.

Under its Terms of Reference, the MRC operates a one club, one vote policy for Committee elections. Voting took place online, with 37 clubs having registered a nominated voter in advance of the meeting. In the event, votes were cast by 30 clubs.

b. Stan Missen was re-elected unanimously as Chair of the MRC for the forthcoming year.

c. David Enoch (Nottingham, 28 votes), Holly Mobbs (Wey, 24 votes), Dyson Pendle (Norwich, 22 votes), Evan Shephard (Reading, 21 votes) and Graham Warland (Banbury, 30 votes) were elected to stand as members of the MRC for the next two years. Missing out by a single vote was Nettie North, who has served as a member of the MRC for the past two years despite working as a doctor during the pandemic. The Chair expressed our thanks and appreciation to Nettie, and our hope that we would be able to keep her support on the Committee in some kind of co-opted role.

5. Finance

a. David Enoch (MRC Treasurer) presented the committee's audited accounts and the following report:-

Our financial year runs from 1st Nov. to 31 Oct. so the last year for which we have a final audited set of accounts is for Oct. 2019 to Oct.2020.

As you can imagine, with Covid, there was substantially less activity than usual. On the income side, the race levies were down by over £25k and virtually nothing from the hire of our minibus and no athlete contributions to internationals, as we attended no internationals in 2020.

We also agreed with BC that there was no need for our full grant of £35k and we settled on 25% anticipating lower levels of expenditure and, with, at the time BC finances in doubt, due to declining membership.

On the expenditure side we still had to maintain and insure our minibus, we continued with the development of our Race Management System and funding club Racing Coach courses.

The result was that our turnover was down from about £85k to £12k but we still managed to make a surplus for the year with reserves up from £56k to £61k.

This year started off very similarly during the winter and we agreed with BC a flexible approach to our grant where we could receive any of it as and when we could show approved expenditure.

More recently, there has been some return to racing and a very successful Nationals hosted by Reading last weekend. This return has produced some income and we are still planning to attend 2 internationals later in the year (The Worlds and French Nationals).

Our current budget suggests we will finish the year with reserves of £45k although I must stress a lot of it is very vague and based on "best guesses".

Paul Dimmock (Wey) asked whether the MRC had a figure in mind for a minimum figure for reserves, below which we would not be able to operate without the British Canoeing grant. David Enoch replied that the current reserve would be sufficient to get by in case this happened, however in the current situation our income from racing levies is very difficult to predict. Broadly speaking, we would not want to drop below £40k of reserves.

Dave Moore asked whether the levy was raised on non-Hasler races. In the SW there are several smaller races which don't collect the levy, and while the Hasler season has not yet re-started following the pandemic, many races are being organised outside the levy system. David Enoch replied that levy revenue is collected from all "Category A" races including major regional and national events. Broadly speaking these are races advertised in the MRC calendar, and where entries may be invited from anyone in the country.

James Smythe also pointed out that other things developed by the MRC, including race management and entry software, should normally only be used by clubs if they are collecting the levy from paddlers.

Chloe Dobbs asked if the levy paid for the race to be insured. David Enoch replied that it is collected from paddlers entering races, not from race organisers. It contributes to the general running of marathon racing, from things like software to helping to fund internationals. As a non-Olympic discipline we could not run the programme we do, helping race organisers, athlete development and international teams, without an additional revenue stream on top of our central grant. Successive ACMs have agreed to maintain or increase the levy at an acceptable level to pay for this work.

6. Domestic Racing

a) Stan Missen outlined the changes to British Canoeing Club Associate memberships, which had been published on the MRC website. These apply to English clubs at the moment and not Scotland, although it may extend to Wales and Northern Ireland. The cost of registering an adult Associate Member is £2.20 and a junior £1.20, there are no plans by British Canoeing to change this figure.

Bill Lawrenson asked that the paper should refer to the generic Canoeing not Kayaking.

Julia Lawley mentioned that she has been struggling to register juniors as Associate members, because the system rejects multiple memberships at the same address. This is a known issue that is being dealt with by British Canoeing.

James Smythe mentioned that James Hives of British Canoeing is the man to contact about registering Associates and using the club portal, he can be reached via the email address clubs@britishcanoeing.org.uk

Stan Missen also pointed out that when we first published details of how these changes would affect Marathon, we were unaware that the new Event Ticket system would not be ready yet. This is now expected by British Canoeing to be ready at the end of 2021.

Evan Shepherd and Deborah Wilkes also reported issues which James Hives had been able to resolve.

b) James Smythe reported that the MRC has invested in an online race entry system, which will make the whole process of entering races, and the process for race organisers much easier. A user guide has been published on the MRC website.

A link to the British Canoeing database and the ranking list means that the system can now check membership status, but also iron out the issues caused by duplicated paddler names that confuse rankings, results and Hasler Final qualifying and take race organisers and MRC volunteers a lot of time to resolve. Paddlers' rankings are known so they cannot enter in the wrong division, and team leaders can spot duplicate entries from paddlers in their club. Race organisers can download entries directly into the RACMAN race day software.

Race organisers have the option to allow payments on the day, via BACS or by using the Stripe online payments system (or a combination of these)

Stan Missen pointed out the intended benefits are not just for paddlers and race organisers, but also those MRC volunteers like Graham Warland who spend hours in a typical race weekend sorting out issues with race results and turning the ranking list around in time for the following weekend's races.

The system is now live at <https://entries.gbcanoemarathon.co.uk/>

Bill Lawrenson asked if the system was like the new WWR race entry system, which requires the WWR Committee to approve races before they go live. James Smythe replied that there were no plans to do so, however the MRC expects race organisers to submit their dates and risk assessments in advance for oversight by the MRC.

Angela Aldam asked how the entry system treats people with lapsed BC memberships. James Smythe answered that live memberships are required, so a paddler must have some kind of live membership (On-the-water, Associate or Event Ticket) to enter a race. If a paddler re-joins British Canoeing, the

live link to the membership database means that they will then immediately be able to enter a race on our system.

7. International Racing

James Smythe outlined our plans for 2021, which are heavily dependent on COVID rules.

The Selection Committee of James Smythe, Roland Lawler, Kat Wilson, Dyson Pendle and David Enoch has been reinforced with the appointment of two non-voting observers, Pete Wilkes and Gemma Wiggs, who are there to ensure that the Committee sets an appropriate policy, and subsequently makes appropriate decisions in line with it.

The intention at the start of the year was to focus our efforts on the World Championships, as the event most likely to take place, and to select a large team. We also planned to send an under 16 development team to the French Nationals. (Note Sept 2021: A team for the latter was selected, however the French federation (FFCK) withdrew our invitation due to changes in their COVID laws coming into effect.)

A new short-course assessment race was run this year at Gloucester CC. While this is only an international distance for seniors, all athletes are encouraged to attend for their experience. This is also in order to assess paddlers who were unable to attend the Nationals, especially those advised to self-isolate, in line with our policy on mitigating circumstances.

The MRC is working hard to ensure that the Worlds team can go to Romania, which will require much more organisation and difficulty than a normal year.

Chloe Dobbs pointed out that young paddlers can request an early second vaccination from their GP, so there should be no difficulty in completing the round of vaccinations for those eligible.

8. Questions for Committee consideration at future meetings

No questions were raised. Stan Missen reminded the meeting that issues may be sent to the Committee via himself or James Smythe in the advance of any meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm, with the Chairman thanking the Committee for their efforts in the past year, as well as all those who joined. He also thanked Reading CC for organising a fine National Championships in difficult circumstances. Entries were around 800, down a little on the typical 1,100, but excellent given the difficulties.

The next meetings of the MRC are on Monday 30^h August, and Saturday 20th November. Clubs are welcome to submit items for discussion to the Secretary James Smythe two weeks in advance of these meetings.



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