

British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee

Minutes of the Annual Consultative Meeting held on 13th July 2022
at 7.30pm via Zoom online meeting

Present at the meeting. *Names were taken by registering in the online chat function prior to the start of the meeting. As a result, names of those joining later may not have been collected:*

Stan Missen (Bradford on Avon)
Evan Shephard (Reading)
Greg Spencer (Pennine/CRC)
Julia Lawley (Solihull)
Steve Moule (Chelmsford)
Nigel Chivers (Devizes)
Bryn Price (Maidstone)
Clive Williams (Newbury)
Dan Seaford (Reading)
Scott Hynds (Elmbridge)
Nanette North (Independent)
Peter Gorman (Wey)
Simon Eskriett (Gailey)
Jason Toovey (Linlithgow)
Bill Sharpe (Truro)
George Scammell (Windsor)
Graham Simpkin (Glanford and
Scunthorpe)

Jo Bates (Falcon)
Brian Chapman (Kirkcaldy)
Emma Riley (Fowey)
Simon Tilbury Clarke (RAFCA)
Mick Nadal (Nottingham)
Doug Pemble (Addlestone)
Holly Mobbs (Wey)
Siobhan Urquhart (Banbury)
David Enoch (Nottingham)
Kat Wilson (Reading)
David Palfrey (Wokingham)
Paul Thompson (Wey)
Roland Lawler (Elmbridge)
Tim Scott (Norwich)
Chelsea Brookes (Gailey)
Simone Rook (Sutton Bingham)
David Martyn (Wey)

1. Apologies for absence

Graham Warland (Banbury)
Dave Sackman (Reading)

Chris Jones (Devizes)
David Howie (Basingstoke)

2. Approval of 2021 ACM Minutes

The minutes of the 2021 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:

My last report was presented in July 21 after a very successful National Championships had been held at Reading. Our first major event, post Covid. The future of regular events was however still somewhat uncertain but despite the gloom, racing has slowly returned, as our domestic programme was rekindled. The Hasler Club Championship resumed from 1st September and with some considerable enthusiasm from clubs and paddlers alike, despite the approaching dark nights and cooler weather.

The start of 2022 was quickly upon us, and we saw a good entry for the Waterside and associated events but, as our treasurer mentions in his report, a significant reduction in numbers racing compared with pre Covid times. This decline has been apparent at a wide number of races, but thankfully not all. Your committee believed it important to limit any major competition or rule changes in 2022, as event organisers rebuild their races.

During this time we have been lucky, despite our reduced levy income, to maintain our financial position with prudent management and greater support from British Canoeing. This has enabled us to send representation to major events, as international competition restarts.

Domestic racing must however be our immediate focus and the ACM provides an opportunity for clubs and individuals to highlight areas of improvement or concerns; so that your committee can consider and take action where appropriate.

We welcome these comments as we all have the collective interest in improving our sport and our enjoyment derived from competing. Sometimes individual suggestions look interesting on their own but the knock-on effect for the wider region, club or individual can be difficult to deal with and this is when the enormous experience of your committee is then vital, in examining such issues, before making potentially damaging changes.

The committee will meet again in early September and as normal also have a full day looking at the format of our clubs, regions and competition, in November. Necessary rule changes would then be ready to phase in and implement if felt appropriate and realistic.

Your committee welcomes comment and observations *at any time*, not just at this annual ACM.

As always, I would like to thank the committee for all the hard work put in during the year.

And finally, I must mention the hugely successful inaugural National Short Course Championships, that took place early in 2022 - a great success, but tinged with some sadness that James Smythe, a long term and substantial contributor to our sport, and instigator of this new competition, passed away only days before the event.

4. Election of Committee Posts

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

Under its Terms of Reference, the MRC operates a one club, one vote policy for Committee elections. Voting took place online,

a) Election of Chair

Stan Missen (Bradford on Avon) was re-elected unanimously as Chair of the MRC for the forthcoming year.

b) Election of Committee Posts

Mick Nadal (Nottingham), Dave Sackman (Reading), Scott Hynds (Elmbridge), Siobhan Urquhart (Banbury), Kat Wilson (Reading), Roland Lawler (Elmbridge) and Bryn Price (Maidstone) were elected unanimously to stand as members of the MRC for the next two years.

5. Finance Report

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

Our financial year runs to 31st October so the last set of fully audited accounts are up to 31st Oct. 2021. You will see that we carried forward reserves of £59,617.

With the decline of Covid there has been a general return to domestic racing this year although a steady decline of about 20% in race levy income from the last "normal" year. This is probably due to a hangover from Covid and the increased cost of travel. This means our income from race levies is likely to be down to £24k.

There has also been a return to international racing with us sending teams to Prague, USA, Denmark and Portugal as well as development teams to Germany, Spain and France. The cost of these has increased substantially in the last couple of years and now, due to Brexit, we have to purchase a carnet

for each trip with the bus and trailer. Despite this we have managed to keep the athlete contributions to GB team trips at the same level.

We have also been able to invest £5k in supporting race coach courses and to underwrite the new Short Course Nationals by £2k which were a fitting tribute to James Smyth who devised them.

With an increase in our central grant from British Canoeing to £40k I anticipate that we will make an overall "loss" this year of about £7.5k reducing our reserves to £52k.

Bill Sharpe expressed the view that he hoped athletes would not have to bear the brunt of increased costs for international events. David Enoch confirmed that all would be done to make it as affordable as possible. Kat Wilson said we would need to look into sponsorship opportunities.

6. Domestic Racing

The Changes to Rules for Quorate in National Classes was clarified, as below. There were no comments from the membership.

In order to avoid penalising those who take part, the requirement for a class to have a minimum number of starters has been removed. As a result, all classes will take place where there are entries for them, and team points and prizes will be awarded in all classes that take place. If there are low entries in a class, it will be started with other appropriate classes of the same distance where possible, but the results will be separated.

Where there are high entries in a class, the start may be seeded. All decisions about combined starts or seeding will be made by the MRC Major Events Sub-committee in partnership with the organising committee, and will be appropriate to venue/conditions.

7. Issues Raised for Committee consideration at future meetings

- a) *The committee had been asked to consider the issue of distances that some clubs need to travel within their regions to qualify for the Hasler Finals, and the associated burden of fuel costs and the environmental impact.*

Bill Sharpe commented that this was particularly an issue in the south-west region, where there are great distances between clubs and races, and travelling is also impacted during the holiday season.

The committee will consider if there are options that, enable competitors to reduce travelling costs and times, without having a negative impact on those clubs at the edges of regions

b) The committee was asked to consider if the distance gap between Divisions 4 and 3 is too great a challenge for some. With fewer entries in Div 3 races than in Div 4, some paddlers, of different ages, have suggested that the large step up in distance is an issue, and that Division 3 could be shorter, with Divisions 1 and 2 kept at the longer distance.

During the discussion on this, the following points were raised:

- Some masters athletes feel they are on the boundary of Divisions 3 and 4, but when promoted to 3, do not have the time/fitness to race 12 miles on a regular basis.
- It was felt the current system may prevent some Division 3 parents racing K2 with their children, who may not be ready for a 12 mile race.
- It was highlighted that, with so few junior women in Division 3, reducing the distance to 8 miles would give them even fewer opportunities to prepare for international racing. It was suggested that those wanting to race 12 miles could race up in Divisions 2 and 1 - but for junior women in Division 4, this would mean racing up two divisions.
- There was concern that those wanting to avoid a 12 mile race might deliberately slow down the front of a Division 4 race to avoid promotion, thus impacting others in their race and distorting the promotion times.
- Evan Shephard has done some analysis of divisional speeds over the years. His initial view is the gap between Divisions 4 and 3 has increased, possibly with a decrease in Division 4 speed, thus causing some of the problem.
- It was clarified that paddlers can always elect to race up in a higher division. They cannot race down however, without having been demoted through the system.

The committee will consider these views and continue to look for the best solution.

c) The committee was asked to consider a proposal that races for older (masters) paddlers are kept to around an hour in length (eg 8 mile races), and those who want a longer race can enter a higher division.

It was also suggested that requiring older paddlers to take unnecessary portages is not inspiring for younger paddlers or spectators.

- Keeping races to one hour was covered in the discussion above.
- A number of people suggested having portages in a race was an important aspect of the sport that should not be lost.
- It was confirmed that, at the National Championships, portages are not required for the older age categories (O54 and above).

d) *A concern has been raised that marathon racing has become a bit bland and predictable – can the MRC help clubs run some other racing – eg descent races, that will provide more variety and interest, as well as helping develop better paddling and racing skills?*

- Bill Sharpe commented in the South West there were a number of successful time trial races in the winter which add some variety to the programme. Although Newbury CC are not holding a summer Waterside race this year, Clive Williams said there had been some interest in one, and agreed that time trials are proving popular.
- Emma Riley said the Camel race has had to be reduced to smaller laps, due to health and safety pressure from the Harbour Master. Bill Sharpe agreed with the increasing push from Harbour Masters, who do not do anything with regards to safety, but are increasing charges for paddlers to get on the water.

e) *Further Issues Raised*

- Jo Bates asked that the committee review after the National Championships if 4 miles is a sensible distance for the U12s, as most are only racing over 2 miles in the Geoff Sanders series. Kat Wilson said this could be reviewed before the championships, but added there is also an open mini event, which is not a championships race, which would be over a shorter distance. Evan Shephard said there were a number of U12s already racing in the divisional races, including a 9 year old in Division 8.
- Greg Spencer asked if it was worth having standing item to identify who is doing other types of races. Stan Missen said the MRC had recently submitted a report to BC which had included other types of races, and greater awareness of these could be generated.
- Brian Chapman asked the committee to acknowledge the good results from the World Games by the GB team of Sam Rees-Clark (Nottingham) and James Russell (Chelmsford). Despite some equipment issues, they

raced successfully in small but very high quality fields. He also acknowledged the work of Tracy Rees-Clark as team manager, enabling the athletes to get on the water at the event.

- Simone Rooks asked that the committee consider whether the mixed K2 class at the Nationals should now be in age categories due to the high number of entries. Stan Missen said this would be reviewed for 2023. Kat Wilson reported the feedback on the one class was overwhelmingly positive, as it is the only race open to everyone, and the nearest we have to the Sella race. Tim Scott agreed with Kat, as did Evan Shephard who will look at the age profile of those taking part.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm, with the Chairman thanking the Committee for their efforts in the past year, as well as all those who joined.

The next meetings of the MRC are on Sunday 11 September (at Pangoburne, prior to the Hasler race) and Saturday 19 November (all day meeting in Cropredy). Clubs are welcome to submit items for discussion to the Secretary, Siobhan Urquhart, two weeks in advance of these meetings.

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