

**British Canoeing Marathon Racing Committee
Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 9am**

on Saturday 18th November 2023: Cropredy Village Hall

Present:

Stan Missen (SM) (Chair)	Holly Mobbs (HM)
Evan Shephard (ES)	Dave Enoch (DE)
Joe Fitzpatrick (JF)	Dan Seaford (DMS)
Roland Lawler (RL)	Dave Sackman (DS)
Graham Warland (GW)	Brian Chapman (BC)
Scott Hynds (SH)	Bryn Price (BP)
Mick Nadal (MN)	Anoushka Freeman (AF)

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

If your initials are down for action, please ensure that you follow up the matter concerned and report the outcome back to the Secretary well before our next meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jim Rossiter (JR). Post meeting apologies were received from Ollie Rix.

2. Approval of minutes Sept MRC Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 10 Sept 2023 were approved by the committee.

3. Matters arising from MRC meeting of 10.09.23

- a. *Storage & Administration of medals and trophies for Short Course Nationals, Nationals, Hasler Finals - options/solutions*

It was agreed that AF will take care of the administration (ordering of medals/boxes & arranging engraving of trophies) and RL will take care of storage and transport.

Action: AF & RL

b. Athlete questionnaire - any additional feedback or comments on take up of K2 Div1 races

HM reported that the main outstanding issue is the need for a better support framework for senior & U23 paddlers. Discussions were had regarding appointment of National Team coach (Ivan Lawler?) supported by an MRC Committee Member (DMS). More detail on this discussion below (item 6j).

Action: HM & DMS

c. Safety for younger paddlers at races

GW has updated the handbook to include increased safety recommendations regarding younger paddlers in races.

d. Video for safe loading of trailer

Following the September meeting it was agreed that a YouTube video would be made to help inform on safe loading of the trailer to ensure that boats are safely and securely loaded. This has not yet been completed and will be raised again at the next committee meeting.

Action: SH & DS

e. Ideas to increase online attendance at ACM

A discussion was had regarding how we can increase club and individual members participation at the ACM.

It was decided that the meeting will remain in summer and online.

The date and time will be chosen more carefully to be outside of school holidays, perhaps later in the evening (8:30pm?), and not on a traditional club night (i.e. Friday instead of Wednesday).

Club chairs will be emailed directly to invite them (or a club representative) to attend the meeting. We will continue to publicise the ACM on the website and social media.

Action: SM to contact James to request all affiliated club chair email addresses & AF to email chairs & HM to do social media/website announcements

f. Confirm co-option of KW to the committee, after our last meeting, to be ratified

KW's co-option to the committee was agreed.

Action: HM to update website

4. Finance

a. 2022-2023 Final accounts

The final accounts for 2022-2023 were discussed, with particular reference to the proportion of spending allocated to international racing. It was agreed that the apportionment was appropriate at this time. The MRC is continually looking for more ways to support grassroots/clubs through coaching or supporting the hosting of races. It was noted that not a single club applied recently for MRC support for

additional tent changing/toilet facilities at races, despite this being available.

There was a discussion about whether a sum of money should be set aside within the budget to offer a support fund, particularly in light of potentially increasing athlete contributions on selection. It was concluded that this was not necessary at this time but could be added to the budget at a later date.

It was agreed that the Final Accounts can now be sent into British Canoeing.

Action: JF to share final accounts with BC

b. Grant support for marathon racing

A paper to seek a grant of £45,000 for the 2024 season from British Canoeing was agreed. This is the same grant sum that was received in 2023. It is split into £40,000 for domestic and international racing representation and £5,000 to cover the increased costs of accommodation and travel for marathon Para athletes (following their racing success last season).

Action: JF to send the request to BC

c. Increased athlete contributions

Proposals to raise athlete contributions on internationals to allow for a larger team to be considered for selection were discussed. It was agreed that the selection policy will specify that athlete contributions will be calculated depending upon the event and will be confirmed before athletes register interest in selection for a particular event. The reason for this is so that we can adapt the athlete contribution according to more accurate expected competition costs. The expected athlete contribution is to be c. £300 and c. £500. It was agreed that the BC Athlete Support Scheme must be well publicised to ensure that athletes are not denied racing opportunities due to their personal economic circumstances.

Action: Selection Committee & HM to post about BC Athlete Support Scheme

d. 2024 BC rebranding/renaming

SM raised that BC will be rebranding/naming over the next couple months. They will be offering some support regarding branding disciplines (such as providing a marathon specific logo) and the MRC will be expected to phase out the old kit and phase in new kit in 2024 to early 2025. Anticipated extra kit costs have been added to the 2024 budget. There was a discussion regarding whether the regional racing number boards will need to be changed but it was decided that since the only branded number boards are London Southeast & Southern, these will just be replaced as and when they wear out.

5. Domestic Racing

a. Updating of racing rules to include time penalties & disqualification

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It was agreed that there is a need for penalties or disqualification in cases where racing behaviour is deemed unacceptable or an unfair advantage has been gained. The committee agreed that domestically we do not currently have the capacity to enforce penalty boxes and time penalties will therefore be added to elapsed time after the race. Decisions on penalties/disqualification are to be taken by the race organiser and/or a marshal. We will recommend three tiers of penalty – 15 seconds, 30 seconds, or disqualification. These may cover offences such as repeatedly jumping a start, not stopping to render assistance to someone in need, intentional physical contact at a portage, missing a turn buoy, etc. Conversely, it was agreed that race organisers should be encouraged to suitably adjust times in situations where a racer has stopped to help another racer in difficulty. While times can currently be adjusted on RACMAN, results can't be marked with a comment (e.g. 'Time penalty' or 'Deducted time'). ES to investigate this functionality.

Action: MN & BP & BC to update rulebook, ES to make sure that this can be done on RACMAN (& communicate how)

b. *Updating of racing rules to include suggestion to award separate prizes for C boat paddlers*

Following requests to increase C boat participation, the racing rules have been amended to include suggestion for race organisers to include separate prizes for C boat winners in each division.

c. *Updating of K2 racing divisions - distance*

It was agreed that in a K2 made up of paddlers in different divisions, the K2 must race in the distance band - the highest-ranking paddler needs to stay in their distance band. These changes will come into effect from September 2024.

Action: MN to update racing handbook

d. *Other changes to racing handbook*

Treasurer - It was noted that DE's details need to be changed to JF's. The short course nationals must be added to the list of major events in race levy section.

There should be a recommendation for all marshals to carry a method to record incidents in some very brief capacity (i.e. boat number and type of incident, e.g. boat 243 missed turn buoy). This can be on a mobile phone or using pen & paper!

There should be a recommendation to marshal turn buoys that are (in)distinguishable, but preferably there needs to be clarity on race maps and at briefings, to ensure easy identification (of the course) by paddlers. (i.e. the same colour as other buoys in that area. Red or pinkish is not an acceptable description to allow easy identification).

The section regarding the recommended length of portages will be amended to suggest that 'ideally get in and get out should be 12m long' in appreciation that this portage set-up may not be possible at all races.

Action: MN to update handbook

e. *Nationals feedback – prize giving timings & race distances*

It was agreed that an alternative timetable would be considered to accommodate requests for two prize giving's at the Nationals so that morning racers could leave at midday rather than waiting all day. It was also agreed that race distances would be reconsidered, to better reflect international race distances and respond to many masters' desires for longer races (10km?). It was noted that an investigation has been made into the length of master's races at national championships in other countries and there is limited consistency.

Action: ES to propose an alternative timetable with revised distances

f. *Hasler finals report*

A paper was presented by JF with options to attempt to improve participation at the Hasler Final. A popular option was that the top 4 clubs in each region would qualify as they currently do, and then if a region has 1000 racing seats in the season a 5th club would qualify. A further club would qualify for every subsequent 250 racing seats in that region. A discussion also took place regarding whether we might also allow all Div1s and 2s who have qualified in the year (3 races) to attend regardless of whether their club has qualified. There was also a discussion about whether the same rule could apply to Div 3 women. This would further increase participation in those top divisions where participation has historically been low.

Action: JF, MN, DMS, ES to discuss this concept further before next meeting with the ultimate view of putting a paper forward to clubs for consultation at ACM

g. *Short course Nationals' logistics & venue*

Peterborough has been booked for 12th May.

An ongoing discussion was held about possibilities of getting a headline sponsor. At this time, this has not yet been possible.

The MRC is hoping to break even on this event in 2024 after two loss making years whilst the event has been established.

Action: All to clear diary to volunteer on the day if possible, HM & ES to continue to plan, HM to do social media post with 2024 Event Dates in December

h. *Progress with host clubs for major events in 2024*

The Hasler Final will be held in Richmond. It was noted that Richmond is in the revised and expanded ULEZ vehicle zone, which will need to be communicated ahead of the event.

The MRC is still looking for a host for nationals. Possible options include Wokingham, Reading, or Tewksbury. It was noted that the Reading option will need to be in early July due to Reading Festival. This would mean that marathon nationals would not be able to serve as a selection event. While

the Wokingham option does not need to be in July, if the Nationals were held at Wokingham on the Festival weekend, there would likely be increased river traffic.

Action: DS to ask Wokingham, HM to do social media re host appeal

i. Essex Winter Series

ES and Will Abson's work into revising & coordinating RACMAN for the Essex Winter Series was recognised (thank you both!). The event was a big success with 130 entries. We are seeing Watersides/DW moving to our entry system too.

6. International

a. ICF & ECA ITO Nominations

The MRC received 4 expressions of interest to be nominated for ICF/ECA ITO positions. The MRC agreed that two candidates would be put forward. There was a discussion around whether, if the nominations were accepted, the MRC could send these individuals as team staff to Europeans/Worlds to cover their costs. BC is also investigating whether the ICF might cover their costs (transport & accommodation).

Action: BC to put forward agreed nominees and communicate with all those who expressed interest

b. ICF Board & Committee Nomination Process

The MRC support BC and put forward his nomination to the ICF Board/Committee.

Action: BC to submit form to Charmayne and SM so it can be approved

b. ICF Rule Change & Statute Proposals - any requests?

The opportunity has arisen to feedback any requests to change ICF rules. SH suggested that it would be helpful to be given the opportunity to review the process of being given a penalty, so that the paddlers can learn what they could do differently in future. BC informed that penalties are reviewed subsequently by the ICF but this information is currently not fed back to teams/athletes. This request will be put forward to the ICF.

Action: BC

c. Suggestions to further amend our MRC Athlete Code of Conduct
The code of conduct has been refined to be more specific, in response to recent issues with conduct on international trips. The committee agreed with the changes made, requesting one further change to request that appropriate kit is worn when directed.

Action: AF to share updated Code of Conduct with GW who will circulate to selected athletes/parents. JF to ensure that paddlers have appropriate kit.

d. Selection Policy

KW presented a paper outlining proposed changes to the selection policy

for the upcoming season. The full selection paper will be distributed after it has been approved by BG Governance. This coming years policy been modified after an unprecedented increase in appeals during the 2023 season. British Canoeing are reviewing their own appeals process, and the possible inclusion of a holding fee may form part of this, however, this is not in the scope of the MRC.

The key changes were discussed including sending a team to Waterlands instead of the German Nationals and increasing of team sizes for the Championship events with 14 places (7 women / 7 men) provisionally allocated to kayak and 2 places provisionally allocated Canoe.

It was suggested that in so far as possible paddlers should be selected against the distance that they are going to be selected for and not a shorter distance (which has sometimes been the case when using the National Championships as a selection race).

It was noted that the date for Europeans in the policy was incorrect and must be changed to 25th-28th July.

There was a discussion around whether it would be favourable/un-favourable for nationals to again be an assessment race. It was ultimately decided that this will be an assessment race but only if the dates line up and otherwise it will not be.

The changes were provisionally approved, and KW encouraged MRC members to take part in the full consultation in due course.

e. Suggestions regarding logistics, welfare, and behaviour on trips

SH expressed concerns regarding teams flying back on Sunday evening immediately after racing. These included the fact that such arrangements result in suitcases (incl passports/wallets) needing to be taken to the course in the morning and be left in a tent, potentially liable to theft. Additionally, athletes may well end up doing a tired and unsafe drive across the UK to get home from the airport in the early hours of the morning, after a flight and long weekend of racing. Conversely, the MRC notes that there has historically often been behavioural incidents on the post-race night if the team stays at the competition venue.

It was agreed that a case-by-case approach would be taken depending on venue, distance from airport and flight times. In cases where the team remain at the venue on post race night, a strike system for behaviour can be implemented. Local accommodation, close to the return UK airport could also be offered when late night, long drives would otherwise be involved.

Action: JF & DS will discuss each event case-by-case

f. Better support for masters' teams

It was agreed that marathon nationals race distances will be reviewed (as above). Masters will be able to purchase the same kit as the rest of the marathon team, but BP will organise for this kit to be branded with 'Masters'. BP requested that any spare trailer spaces to international events be communicated to him as early as possible so that they can be opened up to the master's team, who will pay for their boat transport. BP informed the committee of progress he has made in organising coaching seminars

and masters' specific events (e.g. at Canterbury University).

Action: DS to notify BP of trailer spaces ASAP, HM to publicise events organised by BP

g. National Team Coach

There is an understanding that we need more support for our U23 and Senior athletes, who currently have limited support and no advisory figure/head coach. This has been cited as one reason why there had been instances of bad behaviour on some trips. Discussions were had around whether the MRC might get a National Team Coach and conversations with Ivan Lawler have been had. This could involve regular training days or informal assessment races.

Action: DMS to discuss with Ivan Lawler

7. Any other business

a. Minibus

British Canoeing will shortly be reducing the minibus fleet and have therefore asked whether the MRC would like to get rid of the minibus and instead hire minibuses (through British Canoeing) when necessary. It was agreed that we would like to retain our minibus and hire it out to other disciplines as much as possible by BC as we do at present. This is in part because of concerns that BC won't guarantee availability of a minibus for MRC events. Of course, before hiring the minibus out, the main event dates for marathon will be blocked from the hiring calendar. We would re-visit the conversation of selling the current minibus (and replacing it), ahead of March 2025, when the vehicle tax is due. Supply indicates that the conversation would need to be re-visited as early as March 2024 to allow for a year lead-time. The outcome of this conversation will depend largely on our income at that time.

Action: SM to speak to Susan at BC

b. Info regarding taking minibus/trailer abroad

DS has provided a helpful document regarding legislation on taking minibuses and trailers/boats abroad. This guidance may be useful to clubs and individuals planning trips abroad (e.g. to Sella Descent, Ardeche, etc).

Action: HM to share this documentation on website/social media

c. Welfare (particularly on international trips)

Following several welfare incidents in the past year, HM will be setting out a welfare plan by the end of 2023. This plan will be discussed with international logistics team (GW & DS) & will involve briefing of trip team managers.

Action: HM, GW, DS

d. Review on Hasler participation

The MRC is pleased to report that reducing the number of Hasler races contributing to the finals qualification in each region does not appear to have had any significant effect on event entries. The MRC will continue to

monitor these stats.

8. Future Meeting Dates 2023

Future meeting dates remain to be decided! Proposed schedule includes general meeting April/May 2024, ACM in July, September general 'new committee' meeting (possibly at Pangbourne Hasler) and an all-day planning meeting in November. The committee agreed that any major issues that required immediate discussion could be dealt with online.

The meeting closed at 15:00pm.

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