

PaddleUK MRC Annual Consultative Meeting 2024

Appendix B

Chair's Report

I last reported to the ACM, July 2023.

I am pleased to say the year ended as a success for marathon racing, the largest competitive discipline.

Thanks must go to Norwich CC, for hosting a very successful National Championships in July 23. Towards the season end we saw a pick up in domestic race entries culminating in a very successful Hasler finals, hosted on the ever popular Worcester course in September. These major events, together with the frantic but friendly racing and rivalry of the Short Course Nationals in May, were the foundation of our weekly competition around the country. Events continue to thrive in most regions, encouraged by our network of marathon advisors, despite the many financial pressures present in the current economy.

The MRC provides the framework & rules for competition but as ever, it is the dedication and drive from all the volunteers at club level that allows us all to participate, and enjoy, a packed calendar of events that take in many different courses and types of water. Most importantly courses should and can continue to provide a challenge, to build confidence and ability and I again encourage clubs to make sure their event & chosen venue does continue to do just that.

Your committee needs to hear from you and your club. Small rule changes have been introduced by your committee this season that they believe will enhance competitive marathon racing but it is only with your input can they consider any more radical or positive changes.

During the year our endeavours have continued to be supported financially by Paddle UK; formerly British Canoeing. Their support allows us to continue to commit sizable sums to ensure GB team representation at International events around the globe. Non competitive membership of Paddle UK now makes up the majority of membership, driven up by those focusing on SUP's, which some kayakers suggest as negative, however this has to some extent allowed the transformation of Paddle UK and we are now seeing some refocus back towards the importance of the competition side of our sport, despite the competition disciplines being in the minority of overall membership. Our race organisers should continue to embrace SUP's where possible within our established regular competitive programme.

Your committee financially supported the DW committee in 2024 with a sizable contribution and our encouragement saw additional funding following from PaddleUK. It is important that we work with the DW Committee to promote positive change to guarantee the future of what is by far the most well known kayaking and canoeing event in the UK. We were also pleased to work with the DW committee in the organisation of the National Schools Championships.

Challenges for 2024 come in the form of the 17 page draft 'competition review document' which we have been asked to comment upon. Additionally the long awaited 'Standard of Deployment' paper (another 17 pages!) will be testing for some and will need thorough consideration within affiliated clubs and amongst their volunteers as we are required to structure how paddlers and volunteers enter and progress through our clubs and our sport. PaddleUK is understanding of those challenges and will be providing assistance.

Our international performance has been full of high level successes but also with some disappointments. There is no doubt that the experience of international racing assists our athletes at the highest domestic level to perform at the next level needed. It was pleasing to see so many British paddlers, selected as part of our team and as private entries from clubs, competing at the 50th anniversary Waterlands Marathon with some outstanding results, despite the added negative experience of abnormal weather! Weather intervention is something that a number of our domestic events at the tail end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024 suffered from. There were a number of widespread disruptions and cancellations to our events. It is important that paddlers at all levels experience testing weather conditions and practice on higher water levels, as it is only with that experience gained that the ability to paddle and race safely in such conditions is learnt. It is certain that our weather will continue to have effects upon all outdoor sports including our own and we will have to embrace this.

Sadly there have been a number of incidents that your committee have had to deal with of poor behaviour both on and off the water, involving athletes at home and whilst abroad. Such things are totally unacceptable and we will take appropriate action against the individuals involved where necessary. Coaches and a few supporters also need to ensure that they focus their energies positively. The committee and its volunteers and race organisers are doing their utmost to deliver fair competition to all.

Lastly, I would like to thank all those elected and co-opted on to the committee during the 2023/24 season for their hard work and commitment. Particularly a huge thank you to Dave Enoch who has served his last year (of very many!) on the committee, having now completed the handover of treasurership. Scott Hynds' contribution towards coaching and running the race coach programme has also been invaluable.

The MRC is YOUR committee and we welcome new members, either through the formal election process or those willing to be co-opted during the year to work on specific tasks and projects.

Stan Missen
Chair MRC
June 2024