

PaddleUK Marathon Racing Committee

2025 Annual Consultative Meeting Minutes

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:*

Committee

Stan Missen (SM) (Chair)

Holly Mobbs (HM)

Evan Shephard (ES)

Joe Fitzpatrick (JF)

Sally Hartland (SH)

Roland Lawler (RL)

Roland Lawler (RL)

Brian Chapman (BC)

Anoushka Freeman (AF)

Graham Warland (GW)

Mick Nadal (MN)

Bryn Price (BP)

Lee Barnett (LB)

Club representatives

Graham Simpkin (Glanford and Scunthorpe)

Siobhan Urquhart (Shropshire Paddlesport)

Andrew Leggatt (Shropshire Paddlesport)

Graham Warland (Banbury & District CC)

Caroline Dallimore (Cardiff Bay Kayakers)

Julian Medina (Kingston Kayak Club)

Millie Armitage (Chelmsford Canoe Club)

Evan Shephard (Reading Canoe Club)

Margaret Chapman (Kirkcaldy Canoe Club)

Ed Cooper (Newbury Canoe Club)

Vicky Simmons (Bradford on Avon Canoe Club)

Simon Eskriett (Gailey Canoe Club)

Doug Pemble (Addlestone Canoe Club)

Pete Wilkes (Fowey River Canoe Club)

Jo Bates (Falcon Canoe Club)

Keith Holt (Royal Canoe Club)

Andy Birkett (Richmond Canoe Club)

Lynne Fender (Nottingham Kayak Club)

Bill Sharpe (Truro Canoe Club)

Catherine Shirley (Ealing Canoe Club)

Vicky Metcalfe (Pangbourne Paddlesport)

Joe Fitzpatrick (Bishop Stortford's CC)

Lee Barnett (Worcester Canoe Club)

Matthew Villaruel (Ealing Canoe Club)

Bill Lawrenson (Burton Phoenix Canoe Club)

Paul Lane (Maidstone Canoe Club)

Julia Solihull (Solihull Canoe Club)

Peter Gorman (Wey Kayak Club)

Graham Mobbs (Lord Wandsworth College)

Norman Mason (Nottingham Kayak Club)

Andy Coomes (Poole Harbour Canoe Club)

David Moore (Tamar Valley Nomads)

The Chair reminded attendees of the reason to have an ACM. It is an opportunity for individuals and clubs to express any concerns or discuss ideas that can help improve our sport. However, feedback is able to be made at any time throughout the year – either via the Secretary or through the Chair of the MRC.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence

Emma Riley (Fowey).

2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Consultative Meeting

The minutes of the 2024 Annual Conservative Meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Guest Presentation, Ekaitz Saies

Unfortunately, Ekaitz was unable to attend. It is hoped that the ACM will host other guest speakers in future.

4. Report from the Chairman, Stan Missen

The Chairman directed attendees to review his report circulated in the papers prior to the meeting:

I last reported at the ACM in July 2024.

The 2024, moving into 2025, season has not been without its issues. As always! Happily, however, most have been well within the capabilities of your committee, and those who so helpfully agree to be co-opted in the work that we do. All involved, whether elected or co-opted, spend a considerable amount of their voluntary time helping keep things on an even path and we should all thank them for their individual input.

Perhaps the most challenging problem for event organisers has been the changing weather patterns which have left us with either too little or too much water in our rivers and canals! We, as a committee, rely heavily upon clubs and race organisers, as well as our regional marathon advisors who have close involvement with their waterways, to assess risks and make safety a prime concern.

It is vital that we continue to be risk aware but also promote the skills and experience that in itself provides a higher degree of security, by allowing paddlers to gain experience on

flooded and challenging rivers, rather than cancel too early and destroy any chance of gaining this valuable and lifesaving experience.

Financially, with continued tight fiscal management by our Treasurer, our finances, whilst still under some pressure, have managed to maintain inflows at near previous levels. This is despite our central grant from PUK being a little less than we had hoped for, based upon our budget for the season. Very helpfully, acknowledgement followed that we should support our Para athletes which then saw some additional resources made available.

As always, our international representation has been wide and stronger with some excellent performances and long-awaited medals, at the highest level of international competition. We should all extend our congratulations to the achievements attained by those individuals.

The new look website has been long awaited and all the hard work put in has certainly brought it up to date for news and rules.

For the first time we were able to send a small representative team to the FISU World University Championships hosted by Montemor-o-Velho.

In conjunction with the DW Organisation we were pleased to be able to help host the National Schools Championships at Hawley Lake in November.

We must thank those involved with the organisation of and coaching at the JDS training and skills days, held over the winter period.

A timely cancellation of the Hasler finals at Richmond, whilst disappointing, meant that costs and paddlers travel plans were able to be satisfactorily dealt with in good time but it was a huge disappointment for all those individuals and clubs that had spent so much time during the season to qualify. Weather conditions were again to blame.

January saw the new MRC selection policy launched with various updates to address previous concerns. Clarity being the key. We must thank the selection committee for all their hard work in this respect and throughout the year, studying performances and the data that allows us to select teams and deliver that much needed international experience. This helps enhance our competitive stance on the world stage, as well as give clear expectation to our up and coming athletes as to what is necessary for them to achieve to excel at international level.

We are delighted to be able to send a small contingent to the World Games to be held in China on 10-11th August. Good luck to them.

We have been encouraging paddlers to test their skills and gain experience, that they may not find on normal Hasler courses, by attending some of the non-Hasler events in our calendar.....over 30 at the last count to consider! For a full list see the News item January 2025 on the MRC website.

The National Short Course Nationals proved a huge success in May 2025. The MRC team, assisted by many others, put on a terrific day's racing with some thrills and spills at the portage, resulting in some specular close up portage photographs! This event, master minded by our dear friend James Smythe has been going from strength to strength over the

last four years and entries were higher again this year, no doubt partly attributed to the early bird discount offered!

Major events for the summer '25 are the Long Course Nationals on the 26th -27th July hosted by Norwich CC and the Hasler finals on 5th October hosted by Worcester CC.

With a packed calendar, there are numerous events both domestically and internationally to gain experience and enjoy. Good luck in your competition.

4. Election of Committee Posts

The MRC elects places on a rolling basis, for a period of two years with the election of the Chair taking place annually. We had 6 retiring members who had served their 2-year term (Stan Missen, Evan Shephard, Joe Fitzpatrick, Graham Warland, Holly Mobbs, Anoushka Freeman). 5 (Stan Missen, Evan Shephard, Joe Fitzpatrick, Graham Warland, Holly Mobbs) stood for re-election and 1 did not (Anoushka Freeman).

Since none of the roles were contested, there was no need for a vote but the Chair and Committee positions were proposed and seconded as below:

a. Chair - Stan Missen (BOA). Proposer: Graham Warland, Seconder: Bill Sharpe.

b. Committee - Evan Shephard (RDG), Joe Fitzpatrick (BPS), Graham Warland (BAN), Holly Mobbs (WEY). Proposer: Joe Fitzpatrick, Seconder: Bryn Price.

The MRC can co-opt members at any time to serve on the committee or for the purposes of undertaking specific work or projects. Anyone interested in joining the MRC is welcome to contact the secretary at any stage to discuss options and needs that they may be able to help fulfil.

5. Finance - report from the Treasurer, Joe Fitzpatrick

The Treasurer gave an overview of his report circulated in the papers prior to the meeting, with particular mention/clarification to the reasoning behind the MRC wanting to own a minibus (in that it provides that we always have availability of a minibus for our own needs and it can be partly funded as it is also a source of revenue to the MRC when rented to other disciplines):

Last year we made a loss of £10,583.01 this was due to several factors including some key races getting cancelled due to weather conditions, writing off old medals and kit, and putting funds aside for a new minibus.

Racing numbers and numbers through entering through our online entry system bringing in levy revenue have been maintained this year and the first half of this year the only race cancelled so far has been the Ross Warland. It is positive to have paddlers racing across the country.

Paddle UK has supported us again with funding upwards of £40,000. This is much needed and appreciated. Paddle UK have also supported Marathon Races like the Devizes to Westminster (DW). The MRC has also been able to support the DW and Thames200 by offering our minibus as a support vehicle along the course as required. Further to this PaddleUK are now hosting the MRC website which helps further reduce our overheads in 2025.

The costs of international trips has become an increasing challenge to the MRC, with many events being hosted outside of Europe. Traveling to China bears extra costs and pressure on the international logistics team, who have dealt with the challenges well.

Last year we increased the Athlete Contribution to £500 per paddler to allow a First Past the Post Policy. This year it has been increased to £600 to increase the team size to 24 Paddlers for the European Championship. As a committee we do our best to keep costs for paddlers as low as possible.

Last year we put aside £5000 for a minibus and we will be looking at purchasing a new minibus this year. The committee feels it still needs to own a minibus to make sure one is always available for the trips and to help support our ultra marathon races.

Following the overview above, Andy Birkett (Richmond) requested an income statement and/or balance sheet to be shared via email and the Treasurer agreed that this could be provided.

6. Any other business/issues raised for the MRC to consider at future meetings

1. Information on the changes that have been made to Racman were explained, to include:
 1. *Addition of age category for GS* - The rationale is to enable GS paddlers to see how they compare relative to their own age group. The function was set live but then discovered not to not be backwards compatible with Excel 2013. It is hoped it will be live again by the end of summer.
 2. *SUP category* - The rationale is to enable paddlers to race in SUP as well as kayak/canoe and have different rankings for each. It also enables race organisers to mark a race as suitable/unsuitable for SUPs (e.g. a race with low bridges may not be suitable).
 3. *GUI 'club' to represent 'Guide Paddler'* - The rationale is to enable Guide paddlers to race in any division, irrespective of the division they might normally race in, so that paddlers aren't forced to race in a higher division because of the division of their partner. To use this function, select 'Guide' as the club.
2. The use of the Racman system to host a short course event was discussed, particularly in relation to the experiences of Burton Phoenix Canoe Club. It was noted that this system will be improved to become more user friendly.

3. It was noted that a Banbury Canoe Club member has kindly agreed to create a paper to document race organising roles (thanks go to them & Graham Warland).
4. It was requested that the rule of only the top 7 races counting to the Hasler Final be reviewed, due to concerns that it does affect attendance at races in clubs at the edge of a region (e.g. Gloucester in the South-West). The original rationale for setting this rule (regarding the carbon footprint of attending far away races) was clarified and it was explained that race entries have been monitored and will shortly be reviewed by the committee, as we come to the end of the two-year trial period.
5. A concern relating to Rule 30e (below) was expressed:

“Points will be awarded to each paddler in both singles and doubles - 50 for 1st, 49 for 2nd, 48 for 3rd and so on down to 2 points to all paddlers who finish within 110% of the time of the fastest boat not promoted in a singles race and within 110% of the winners’ time in a doubles race. One point only will be awarded for paddlers who finish outside the 110% limit irrespective of their position.”

The concern is that when a particularly fast pairing wins a race, many other competitors score only one point. The proposal was that the rule be amended to read:

*“Points will be awarded to each paddler in both singles and doubles - 50 for 1st, 49 for 2nd, 48 for 3rd and so on down to 2 points to all paddlers who finish within **110% of the time of the fastest boat not promoted** in a singles race and within **115% ~~110%~~** of the winners’ time in a doubles race. One point only will be awarded for paddlers who finish outside the **110% or 115% ~~110%~~** limit irrespective of their position.*

In a K2, each paddler will receive the points allocation, so 1st boat 100 points, 2nd boat 98 points, 3rd boat 96 points and so on.

This is to apply to all races except divisions 9 singles and 9 doubles which will receive 50 for 1st, 49 for 2nd, 48 for 3rd and so on down to 2 points for all paddlers who finish.”

It was agreed that the committee would consider this, while highlighting that rule changes are made with caution as they often come with complications in other areas that create a greater inequality for more clubs, classes, regions, individuals.

6. The issue of qualification for small clubs at the Hasler Final was raised. Suggestions to overcome this included: a) whether two clubs could join together in their qualification attempt, b) whether a non-qualifying club each year could be invited on rotation, c) whether every club could be invited but those who have not qualified could only send a restricted team size. This has previously been discussed and no solution has been found but it will be discussed again by the committee.

7. It was noted that a spate of club members have been struggling to enter through the entry system as a result of clubs not updating their record on the PaddleUK Club Portals. Clubs are therefore reminded that they must update their club records as if a paddler is not listed on the club portal they will not be able to enter through the marathon system.
8. It was noted that a few rogue entries have slipped through the entry system in recent races (e.g. a Div 3 paddler being entered in Div 1 and then showing up as DNS). It is highly possible that these are as a result of people intentionally being disruptive, which is particularly noticeable in races where payment is not taken on the entry system. Clubs/race organisers who observe such issues are kindly asked to let Evan Shepherd know so that it can be monitored.
9. Clubs were reminded that James Hives is on hand to help with the implementation of the Standards for Deployment. Contact - james.hives@paddleuk.org.uk.
10. Thanks were extended to Evan Shepherd for all his work on the entries system, noting that he is extremely responsive to questions and fixes issues incredibly rapidly.
11. Thanks were extended to Holly Mobbs for all her hard work in reporting on the European Championships on the MRC website and social media.
12. Attendees were reminded that any queries should be addressed to marathon.secretary@vol.paddleuk.org.uk, who will be glad to address them.
13. Finally the Chair thanked one again, the outgoing Secretary for all her input and hard work over the last few years.

There being no other matters to discuss, everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting formally closed at 8:35pm.