

BRITISH CANOEING WILD WATER RACING 2014 CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

INTRODUCTION

It is good to welcome everyone to our Annual Consultative Meeting by the White Water Course at the National Water Sports Centre.

The situation in terms of volunteers is continuing to improve. There are more people taking the initiative and running successful locally based races as well as getting on with running club-based training. I'm very pleased to say that Scotland has been running WWR development sessions and is now re-starting the SCA's WWR Exec Committee. Canoe Wales is also starting to look at running a series of Welsh Wild Water races. This is continuing to take the pressure off the WWR Executive and for the first time in a while we have an active and more widely representative Exec Committee able to represent all the regions and interests. We now meet bi-weekly by teleconference for an hour, which seems to be working. I'm also delighted that Russell Smith is now going to stand for the WWR Exec in addition to his active role as our British Canoeing professional support. We always need to continue growing our sport and in particular we are looking for safety, funding/ sponsorship and publicity officers so please let me know if you want to get involved.

GENERAL

Making the sport accessible, friendly and welcoming to all is, I think, the key area we need to address. The focus across the UK is rightly on increasing participation and enjoyment of sport at all levels. Our participation plan and committee structure has changed to reflect this.

2014 has overall been another good year as we restart some of our growth plans for the sport. Personally I was delighted with Jonnie's World Championship Team Medal, Hannah Brown's excellent performance at the Canoe Sprint World Championships in Moscow as well as Nicky Cresser's excellent results at the Worlds in Italy and another creditable performance by our Junior Team at the European Championships at Banja Luka in Bosnia Herzegovina. I was also really pleased to get a thank you letter from Canoeing Ireland for the support Kevin Bowerbank and the GB Junior Team gave to our Irish friends out in Bosnia. I was also very proud to see Dee Paterson who was our Team GB Leader & Coach for Canoeing at the Youth Olympics in Nanjing – an opportunity of a lifetime! It would also be remiss of me not to mention Melvin Swallow's fantastic World Championship Gold at the Canoe Marathon World Championships in Oklahoma a few weeks ago!

The various different formats for regional and development racing appear to have continued capturing people's imagination and regional participation has continued to increase. This is great news and a tribute to the dedication of the growing network of race organisers and clubs in England and Scotland that are pushing forward. Many congratulations to Duddon who were again overall club winners and to our runners up, Wiltshire Youth and Oakwood for their continuing contributions to the sport. Participation at National level remains worryingly low despite the new streamlined calendar and I'm hoping to start

changing this with the Llangollen Race we have coming up in early December. We'll have races for National and Regional levels of abilities and also be having the annual prize giving and social in the evening at the Chain Bridge Hotel so please come along and join us.

The WWR Calendar is now in its second year in the new format, tirelessly driven by Jon Finch. We have rationalised into National & Regional events and moved the season back to September – August although it is still early days to see if it makes a real difference. The results spread-sheet is an excellent tool to helping our race organisers' speed up both race entries and results. Huge thanks yet again to Ross Pearton and Neal Underwood for their hard work in keeping it going and to Phil Brown who has continued in the key role of ranking list compiler collating results throughout the season.

We have continued to work on Wild Water participation with Russell Smith running the pilot discipline specific coaching module for Wild Water Racing in the South West. Carl Foody has run a WWR 3 Star training session in the North West and the next coaching module is being run by Russell at Barrow on Soar on 12th October, followed by one ran by John Sherwen and Duddon in the North West on 1st February 2015, which I'm delighted to say is now fully booked. Neal Underwood is the participation director and we have put in place a structure of regional WWR representatives with clear roles & responsibilities to support local clubs and races. Susan Templeton is also updating our information for WWR race organisers.

We continue to be able to support the development of Canoeing through the Andy Clough Memorial fund so if anyone needs help with the art of canoeing please let me know.

Funding has been tight this year and so we have reviewed our Minibus provision and will be reducing to one bus able to support international team trips and national events throughout the year

With the continuing focus on participation we will be continuing to work hard on balancing development and performance for athletes and coaches for the GB Team. We as a committee reviewed the selection policy thoroughly and I'm pleased to say sent a significantly larger team to Senior and Junior World and European Championships. We also gave a number of talented individuals the chance to experience their first taste of international competition during the world cup series. We are reviewing our approach for next year see how we attract new talent into the squads and team for 2015 and ensure British Canoeing can support both the International Canoe Federation and European Canoe Association for the long term health of the sport. .

I'm pleased to say we had a good year in competition. At the World Championships on the River Adda at Valtellina in Italy we had Nicky Cresser's excellent 14th place in the individual sprint event which was won by Quentin Bonnetain of France. This was a brilliant result for Nicky and for the sport in the UK showing that we maintain our ability to take on the very best athletes in the world on some of the most challenging and exciting courses!

We had a developing junior team at the Junior Europeans in Banja Luka, Bosnia Herzegovina where they all put in solid individual performances. Many thanks again to Kevin Bowerbank as Team Manager and Head Coach for his dedication and hard work, and the help he also provided to our friends in the Irish Canoeing team as well as to David Sackman who with Phil Brown and others helped with the minibus driving – a tremendous job much more than half-way across Europe!

Neil Stamps and Miranda Churchill continue to do a tremendous job in keeping the website up to date. The British Canoeing website update planned last year is finally about to see the light of day and so hopefully we'll be able to improve and align with the new British Canoeing branding. The Facebook Site has continued to grow with membership now up 25% from last year at 445 members in the UK and across the world. Again I'd like to express a huge thanks to Miranda and Neil for keeping this essential service going as well as looking fresh and new and performing well on internet searches!

As always I'd like to give a special thank you to all the coaches, team management, parents and other helpers who made this all happen. For me this continues to be one of the great strengths and joys of our sport. Particular thanks goes to Vince Postill our outgoing Hon. Secretary, Julie Lewis as incoming Hon. Secretary, Grant Anderson, Nigel Jones, Kevin Bowerbank and Paul Anderson for their help with the squads and teams, Neal Underwood and Jon Finch for development and the calendar as well as continuing to keep our minibuses going. I'd also like to thank Simon Wright for his continuing work as treasurer, now in his sixth year abroad based in Abu Dhabi and to Ross Pearton for his help and assistance in getting things up and running over the winter.

Having such an experienced team, with all the support they get from across the sport has been essential to delivering the great results we have achieved.

I would also like to again thank all the Race Organisers and in particular those coming forward with new races – without them we would not have a sport!

1) Participation- *To manage and run an enjoyable programme of events that meets the needs of the whole WWR paddling community. Deliver a race programme that attracts and stretches all our paddlers*

We are now in our second year of the new National & Regional Series with a September – August Race calendar. We have also retained a number of events as Open Championships (like the Tryweryn) and Open Events – like the Dee although the Tour d’Ecosse will not be running next year. This means there is an increased focus on Regional Events with the focus on a limited number of National Series races that will move venues each year to ensure variety.

This follows the French model with club based regionally-run races and a small number of national events. The hope is that we can recover participation so that people need to qualify at a couple of regional events. We are not at that situation so anyone with the appropriate skill levels is welcome to take part in the national series races and we’ll review progress at each ACM.

Areas for further attention are:

- Contacting WWR participants as well as all British Canoeing Top Clubs to see what they want from WWR races and how we can improve
- Providing a better service for race organisers.
- Providing stronger alignment with regions and clubs

We now have the coaching pathway, syllabus and course material for the discipline specific module for Wild Water Canoeing. This provides a practical easy to teach course for individuals and clubs to qualify them to take part in Regional Series races. The pilot training course was run in the South West but we didn’t achieve our target of running an additional 3 courses in 2014. John Sherwen is running the next course in the NW in February and I would like to see other regions taking up this course and running it for their local clubs.

I’m delighted to say that for the first time on the WWR Exec we have nominees representing all of the English Regions standing for election. Many thanks to Andy Longstaff for taking over the role in the North West so ably performed by John Sherwen, Susan Templeton representing the Southern Region, Lynn Anderson taking on the Eastern Region, James Wingfield for Wales, Mackon Khela for London and Jon Finch continuing to represent the South West. With Paul Anderson moving to Scotland I think that this gives strong democratic representation across all the regions so we can achieve a fair balance between participation and performance.

British Canoeing’s English council is now in its fifth year. This brings together all the regions and all the different canoeing disciplines in one forum. For me it provides a useful communications role but the matrix of disciplines and regions is simply too complex for those who want to go paddling or racing. The British Canoeing structure review is continuing but has stalled and two other reviews are now taking place which will delay progress.

2) Performance - To help paddlers realise their full potential in International competition.

I'm yet again absolutely delighted to see our performance and participation at international competition as well as Nicky Cresser's 14th place in the World Championships. Fielding a larger GB Team at the World Championships and World Cups with competitors in all canoeing and kayak categories I hope shows our long-term intent to continue supporting International Competition. Many thanks to Grant Anderson for taking on the Senior Team Management role for the Worlds and to Julie Lewis for taking on the Team Management for the World Cup Series. I'm delighted to say that Jamie Christie has volunteered to take on the role of Performance Director and Grant Anderson as Team Manager and both will be standing for election at the ACM. This will I'm sure really help as we start preparing for the Senior European Championships on the River Vrbas in Banja Luka from 4th – 7th June followed by the World Cup Series, which again includes the amazing Vienna artificial Wildwater course.

Our Junior Worlds results demonstrated some strong potential and I was personally delighted that Kevin Bowerbank again was able to take on the role of Team Manager and Head Coach. I'm also delighted that Nicky Cresser has volunteered to take on the role of Junior Team Manager which will I think really help us to both bring through new talent and also prepare for the Junior and Under 23 World Championships at Nantahala Outdoor Center, North Carolina in the USA from 2nd – 7th August 2015.

I personally remain absolutely committed to supporting all our athletes at all levels and aspirations involved in the sport, not only at the elite level. My personal focus has always been more in participation – I continue to enjoy running the Irwell Regional Race at the Burrs Activity Centre just as much in sharing the excitements and disappointments of World Championship events. The successes of all of our athletes and their individual journeys to achieve their hopes and potentials continue to make me very proud indeed.

We have a great sport that appeals to many people at all levels. To make this a reality it is not a question of spreading the existing elite coaching staff more thinly but of bringing in many more people in at club and regional level. This can only be done by reaching out to many of the "friends of WWR" across the country and enlisting their help. Please contact me if I can help in this. We already have our top national coaches and athletes taking youngsters down on the Saturday's before races. Having elite athletes helping our new entrants is one of the things that helps keep me going!

Sue Hornby, Andy Goodsell and Howard Blackman continue to provide invaluable links with coaching and competition to ensure we remained aligned with British Canoeing's overall direction.

So to conclude I would again like to thank everyone for coming to the ACM and again wish you all the very best for the coming season. Happy Paddling!

Peter Schofield

Holme Pierrepont 4th October 2014