

BRITISH CANOEING WILD WATER RACING 2016 CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

INTRODUCTION

It is good to welcome everyone back to our Annual Consultative Meeting at the North Tyne in Hexham.

It has been another excellent year with Hannah Brown crowned World Champion at the WWR World Championships in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hannah's win topped off an absolutely brilliant week for the British team including Nicky Cresser's 11th place in the MK1 Classic and world-class performances from all the younger up-and-coming athletes. Jonnie and Liam's Silver Medal and Liam's Gold were the personal highlights of an amazing year for river racing and British canoeing in general.

It has been a year of change in British Canoeing. David Joy has taken on the role of Chief Executive and Professor John Coyne CBE has just taken on the role of chairman. David is at the ICF Congress this weekend in Baku, Azerbaijan otherwise he would have been here. We also have welcomed Anna Gray as the new Sport Development manager and Gemma Wiggs as International Affairs Manager. There have been a number of meetings of the new team with the discipline chairs and we've ensured that WWR has been fully included in all the relevant discussions.

. I've also been nominated to join the ICF Wild Water Committee and hope to be able to continue supporting and growing our great sport.

I'm very pleased to say that Scotland's WWR Exec committee has continued to grow the sport very significantly north of the border, running some of our largest events., We're still in discussion with Canoe Wales and will be running Selection at Bala in June – it will be good to be back.

This year the Exec Committee responsibilities have been shouldered by fewer people and have focused on the massive amount of work needed to achieve excellent results and strong participation at senior and junior international events as well as working with the new British Canoeing team.

Russell Smith has continued as our British Canoeing professional support and as a key member of the WWR Executive. I'd also like to thank Andy Goodsell for all of his hard work and support for WWR and wish him all the best now that he's left British Canoeing. We do need more volunteers to help grow the sport so please let me know if you would like to help out in any way.

GENERAL

Developing performance and participation remain our major aims. Making the sport accessible, family friendly and welcoming to all remains the key area we continue to work on. The focus across the UK is rightly on increasing participation and enjoyment of sport at all levels whilst we are also trying to improve and drive performance. Our participation plan and committee structure continues to reflect this.

2016 has continued to be a highly progressive period as we develop our growth plans for the sport.

We did have the most highly competitive selection race in years. We're also in discussions with British & Welsh Canoeing, Freestyle and Rafting about running a joint summer festival at Bala that would showcase the sport and attract new participants, spectators and the trade. Regional Races in Scotland, the North & South of England, the Midlands and Yorkshire are in good shape. More help is needed in the South West of England and in Wales, both traditional strongholds in the past.

We'll work with British Canoeing and Perception on developing this plan and fully integrating the Wavehopper Series into our regional races.

In 2017 we'll have the first ICF Ranking Event for some time at Grandtully with the Scottish Open. The British Open will be at Bala with selection in June.. With British Canoeing and the Irish Canoe Union we've started to plan for a Junior/U23 and World Cup Series in the UK & Ireland. This would aim to be run during 2018 or 2019 and beyond. We will continue to run more ICF ranking events, have just updated our ICF officials and will be asking for more volunteers to go through the qualification process to refresh our ability to run top-level international events.

We have seen a continuing good range of activity going on throughout the UK, particularly in the Midlands, and considerable development going on in Scotland with the revival of the sport north of the border continuing led by the SCA WWR committee with a full Scottish Series and home Championship. This has continued to help improve participation and performance with better International representation than for many years at Junior, Under 23 and Senior level across all classes.

The WWR Calendar is now in its fourth year in the new format, and British Canoeing have now brought together all the competition calendars for the first time. This will help athletes compete across multiple disciplines. We continue with the National & Regional season from September and have improved accessibility to the calendar on the website and via Facebook. Selection is published and confirmed for next year.

We have continued to work on Wild Water participation with Russell Smith and Paul Anderson. The discipline specific coaching module for Wild Water Racing is integrated into the wider review of coaching that is taking place.

Funding continues to be tight. The existing bus continues to support international team trips and national events but should be more widely used. We're in discussions with British Canoeing about how we can achieve this. We had tremendous support from athletes, clubs and parents fielding good teams for the Worlds senior events and the Junior & Under 23 European Championships which again were massive and very successful exercises in team management and logistics.

We continue to focus on participation and performance and work hard to balance development and performance for athletes and coaches for the GB Team. I'm pleased to say that again we sent significantly larger teams to the Senior, Worlds and Under 23 & Junior European Championships. We will continue to give talented individuals the chance to experience international competition during the world cup series. This approach will continue as a cornerstone of developing the sport.

Murau, Austria played the beautiful host to the biggest Wild Water competition of 2016 for all junior and under 23 athletes. Over the 20th - 24th July, Great Britain was proudly represented by one of the largest teams selected for many years, a total of 21 athletes competed in an outstanding fashion across all the competitive classes, showing the current depth of domestic Wild Water canoeing in Britain. Medals were picked up by the under 23's and many personal best results obtained by our young junior athletes. Outstanding results came from Louise Revell who picked up a fantastic bronze medal in the under 23 K1 woman category and junior Calum Gingell finishing 13th just 6 seconds off the top 10. A great performance from the whole team finishing with U23 Team Bronze for Mike Rees Clarke, Ricky Millar and Rob Jefferies in MK1. Ryan Hunt, Wills Fotheringham and Andrew Houston gained the bronze in the U23 C1 team event, the first time in a long while we have had a C1 team.

Many thanks to everyone who helped out and in particular to Paul Anderson and Nicky Cresser as Senior and Junior Team Managers and all their helpers for their dedication and hard work.

All our races now have classes for just about every age and boat possible, helping us to promote the fun of the sport at all levels and helping those in more stable boats aspire to progress to wild water racing boats. The Matlock series has continued in the Midlands with great success providing excellent progression from the Barrow series as paddlers become more confident. The Barrow, Burrs, and Matlock races continue to attract significant support from people many miles away which is excellent to see.

One of our aims over the next four years is to work with British Canoeing to develop an event format with Freestyle and Rafting that drives up British Canoeing membership and is commercially attractive to the trade. We will continue to get old, unloved and unused WWR boats back into circulation. We have recently helped out Bishops Stortford CC with four Wavehoppers and a C2 donated for the East Midlands. Facebook has become the best forum for

finding and sharing old boats and Julie Lewis has ran a boat amnesty to try to get old boats back into use.

The British Canoeing website and Branding is running– one message for the whole sport. The Facebook Site has continued to grow with membership now up a further 20% from last year at 701 members in the UK and across the world. We've also had really excellent support from Becky Lovatt on helping manage and link our digital messaging with British Canoeing. The next step will be to reinstate the yearbook. Robyn Webb has created the first draft and with British Canoeing help the aim will be to get this out for the 2017/18 Season.

We have had two meetings with David Joy and the discipline chairs as well as continuing participation in the English Council. I've also spoken to Jens Perlwitz about our plans for more ICF Events in the UK to ensure we support both the International Canoe Federation and European Canoe Association for the long term health of the sport.

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 Julie Lewis as Hon. Secretary, Grant Anderson, Paul Anderson, Jamie Christie and Nicky Cresser and for their help with the squads and teams, Russ Smith for development and James Wingfield as Chairman of Selectors. I'd also like to thank Simon Wright for his continuing work as treasurer.

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 – without them we would not have a sport!

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.

Personally I was also delighted with double Junior World Champion Sandra Hyslop claiming her first Adidas Sickline Extreme Kayak World Champion title in Austria's Ötztal Valley and former Wildwater racer Matt Bowley's excellent K2 1000m 6th places at the Canoe Sprint U23 World Championships in Minsk and U23 Europeans in Plovdiv.

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.

Sue Hornby and Howard Blackman continue to provide invaluable links with coaching and competition to ensure we remain 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

Hexham November 2016