

BRITISH CANOE UNION WILD WATER CANOEING
Annual Consultative Meeting Minutes 2012

Attendees:

Peter Schofield, Chairman
Mrs Bishop
Jon Finch
Neal Underwood
James Wingfield

Apologies:

Kevin Bowerbank
Louise Brown
Jamie Christie
Nigel Jones
Dave Kelly
Vince Postill
Neil Stamps
Simon Wright

Proposed Motions

- 1) ICF Safety & Materiel Rules for helmets, buoyancy aids, footwear and boat weights be adopted. Proposed by Neal Underwood and agreed unanimously. Implementation to be defined by the WWR Exec.
- 2) ICF Sprint Race Format. Agreed to the principle of a single run counts. Implementation to be defined by the WWR Exec. Proposed by Neal Underwood and agreed unanimously.
- 3) Race Fees for 2013 be £10 Seniors, £8 Under 23's & £5 Juniors for National & Regional Races. This was agreed at the 2011 ACM but not fully implemented as no minutes were circulated.

Election of Officers

It was proposed that the following be re-elected in their existing roles:

- Peter Schofield Chairman
- Vince Postill Hon. Secretary
- Simon Wright Treasurer
- Phil Brown Ranking List Compiler
- Jon Finch Buses & Calendar
- Neal Underwood Publicity & Marketing

Matters arising

- The Meeting paused to remember the untimely passing of Debbie Hales, former GB Team athlete and part of the first successful ladies expedition down the Dudh Khosi. Debbie will be sadly missed and our thoughts and prayers remain with her Husband and Family.

The following points were noted to be followed up by the WWR Exec. During the year:

- The assessment weekend in February / March participation should be opened up to any aspiring athletes wishing to join the GB Squads. We will

start using the new BCU 3* awards to provide objective assessment & feedback to athletes

- Fund-raising needs a more systematic approach. PJS will approach Keith Wickham & Stuart Brass for help and advice. Other areas for attention are
 - Access to Olympic Legacy Funds
 - Use of Local Authorities Fund raising officers, the Charities Information Bureau & Lawn Tennis Assoc websites.
 - Club funding for coaches training
 - Environment Agency “splash” funding
 - A grant applications for a mini bus
 - Carrying adverts on the website
 - Strengthening our links with other Extreme Sports

2012 CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

INTRODUCTION

It is good to welcome you back again to our Annual Consultative Meeting at Llangollen. In a change of format we have arranged supper before hand at the Chainbridge Hotel followed by our ACM. The aim is to ensure we can help fill the cold and dark gap after everyone has finished practicing! Please join us and take this opportunity to meet, get together and to celebrate our success at the Olympics, World Championships and Junior Europeans with our athletes.

The situation in terms of volunteers continues to be desperate. The workload continues to be borne by very few people. We have an urgent need for new volunteers to help on development, safety, transport, race organisation, regional committee representation and the calendar – we need to really focus on growing our sport so please get involved. If there is a gap please feel free to go ahead and seize the initiative.

GENERAL

2012 has been a good year. A personal triumph with Jonnie's Olympic Medal, The best ever Olympic results for GB Canoeing, brilliant results at the Senior World Championships in La Plagne and a very creditable performance by our Junior Team at the Europeans in Solkan.

In one sense it is also the end of an era – and by definition the start of another! I regret to report that after something like a decade as Senior Team Manager and Senior Team Coaches Phil Caunt, Jamie Christie, Carl Foody, Alan Tordoff and Neil Stamps have all decided at various times this year to stand down from their posts. They and the whole coaching and management team have delivered a step change in our international performance and the best results we have ever achieved.

It is with sadness that I accepted their resignations. We have been on a great journey over the last decade – it has been a lot of fun and we have all made many friends internationally along the way. I'd like to extend my thanks and best wishes to Jamie, Neil and Alan, wish them all the very best for the future and hope they remain part of the extended family of river racers.

The various different formats for regional and development racing appear to be capturing peoples imagination and Division B participation has stabilised. This is great news and a tribute to the dedication of the network of race organisers and clubs that have kept pushing forward. Participation at Division A level remains worryingly low although we'll see how the new streamlined calendar affects things. One thing I'd really like to get going now is focus on the next June Bala Festival/ Tryweryn race as the British Open and I'm looking for someone to take this on as a one-off event.

The WWR Calendar has stabilised in the new format with the help of Don Christie and we have rationalised into National & Regional events and moved the season back to September – August. We also have a new results spreadsheet in place to help race organisers. A huge thanks to Ross Pearton and Neal Underwood for their hard work in making it happen – and to those who

attended the monthly committee meetings over the year! Also to Jon Finch and Don Christie for checking and ensuring the calendars accuracy. I'd like to thank Don for all his help over the last two years and to thank him as I know he wishes to stand down.

We have continued to work on Wild Water development with Torsten Krebs, Mackon Khela, Martyn Steele, Kevin Bowerbank, John Sherwen and Nicky Cresser covering England very effectively. We have continued to support the development of C2 through the Andy Clough Memorial fund and through the Canoeing Centre of Excellence in Chester. With the focus on participation we will be continuing to work hard on development for athletes and coaches.

I'm pleased to say we had yet another brilliant year in competition. At the World Championships on the River Isere at La Plagne in the French Alps we had Ben Oakley's awesome Bronze Medal in the Sprint and Radkha's well earned & hard fought Bronze in the Classic and Fourth place in the Sprint with Sandra's 5th place in the sprint. We had excellent results across the board and very many congratulations to Neil Stamps, Jamie Christie and the whole team. We had a strong junior team at the Junior Europeans in Solkan, Slovenia where they all put in strong individual and team performances. A big thanks to Jon Finch, Kevin Bowerbank, Phil Brown and Hannah Brown for making this all happen – and achieving the front cover spread in Canoe Focus!

We have been a significant part of the most successful year ever across GB Canoeing with Ed McKeever's Gold & Jonnie's Bronze medal and Hannah Brown's debut in Canoe Sprint. Melvyn Swallow also won the World Masters Marathon Championships in Rome. Another milestone was passed when Ian Tordoff's Record for crossing the channel finally fell to Paul Wycherly!

Neil Stamps and Miranda Churchill have done a tremendous job in updating the website and bringing it bang – up to date. A huge thanks to both and an area I know Neil is continuing to work on and has a range of new ideas.

Once again 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 new Hon. Secretary and to all our national coaches; Phil Caunt, Carl Foody, Jonnie Folland, Carl Foody, Mike Mason, Nigel Jones, Neil Stamps, Alan Tordoff and James Wingfield; for their continuing work on WWR regional development to Kevin Bowerbank, Jon Finch, Mackon Khela, Torsten Krebs, Martyn Steele, John Sherwen, Nicky Cresser Neal Underwood and to Simon Wright for his continuing sterling work as treasurer now into his fourth year abroad having moved from Italy to Abu Dhabi.

Having such an experienced team, with all the support they get from across the sport has been essential to delivering the great international 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! (PS Anyone want to take on the Dee Race?)

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

We have changed and simplified the Division A & Division B races into a National & Regional Series and will integrate the Wavehopper races into this process. We have also returned to a September – August Race calendar. The availability of the website and Facebook sites mean that the limitations of an annual yearbook and alignment with GB Canoeing isn't the issue it once was. We have also pruned the series as we have said we would for a number of years – retaining a number of events as Open Championships (like the Dee) and Open Events – like the Tyne/ Tees & Tour d'Ecosse events. So for those who like river racing we will be continuing to put on the breadth of events whilst there is demand whilst focusing on the specific series.

The aim is to follow the French model with a broader club based regionally-run set of 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. The regional races and British Universities & Colleges (BUCS) races have continued to grow with new initiative to put on new races in the NE and the re-instatement of the Scouts Ribble Race so I suggest we continue to learn from this, capitalise on the wave of enthusiasm after the Olympics and continue to experiment with new formats.

Areas for further attention are:

- Use of the new race results spread-sheet with the simplified rules should make it easier for organisers and ranking list compilers alike. Having a clear list of race participants should also help us to keep in touch with athletes and encourage them to come back to more regional and national series races
- More support for Masters: encourage masters to return to attending races and to introduce a new National Masters category into the existing structure, starting with three designated races and an annual prize .
- Continued focus on Flagship events for the Open Championship Events and in particular the Bala Festival/ British Open Event in July.

This fits, of course, with our two key priorities to increase participation and to win more medals in international competition. I'd like to thank Don Christie for all his help in the last two years. As he now wishes to stand down there is a need for someone to take on the calendar development. We still need someone with deep knowledge of the sport to provide direction, advice and guidance. We also need a national bib coordinator. Both these roles need permanent volunteers to lead them.

2) Paddler Focus - *To make the sport accessible to all who want to participate*

Development work has continued in many different ways with Kevin Bowerbank, Jon Finch, Mackon Khela, Torsten Krebs, Martyn Steele, John Sherwen, Nicky Cresser and Neal Underwood, with their respective clubs all working hard to meet demand. Two years on we are still waiting to use the BCU launch of the Star Awards to align with coaching and long term athlete development across the BCU and all UK sports. This was based on the work Jes Oughton did establishing the Academy, a simple proven approach to enable new individuals and clubs to learn and experience the enjoyment of river racing.

Coach development will try to use the existing resources in place though the BCU. This has been a real challenge and the lack of progress or support for our top coaches is one of the real issues and was a contributory factor to the decisions to stand down this year. I'd like to address if I had more time. It is also really disappointing that none of the PDO's with a Wild Water Canoeing background have anything to do with supporting development in any way or form. We have had a welcome increase in support from Canolfan Tryweryn and the Scottish Canoe Association. East Midlands remains the biggest gap in our coverage at the moment

The BCU's governance council for Canoe-England is now in its third year. This brings together all the regions and all the different canoeing disciplines in one forum. For me it continues to provide a useful communications role – but needs to be empowered to do more. Nigel Jones is our nominee on to the coaching committee; John Sherwen, Mike Mason, Lynn Anderson and Phil Brown cover the English. If anyone is already on a relevant committee or would like to help build up our links in other areas or regions please let Vince Postill or me know.

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. The BCU recognise this and our next development plan and committee structure needs to reflect this.

We continue to have the Perception Wavehopper Challenge, The Bala Festival, The Northern Series, the Wessex Series, the Barrow Series and the Sharks. Canoeing doubles development continues to be focused on Chester as our national centre of excellence. Support from the Andy Clough memorial fund continues to be immensely helpful in supporting our C2 athletes' development. Our initiatives in masters' events in 2007/8 have continued to be on hold but what we have done is continued supporting international masters racing with great results.

We are continuing to focus on university students with continuing great participation at the BUCS championships on the Washburn and we have managed to align with the autumn calendar. Unfortunately although the BCU has contacted the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) about whether we could bid for 2014 Slalom are not able to support this with their other commitments. For me this remains important as it should fill a key gap for aspiring athletes as a stepping-stone to the World Cup and the European Championships – and is great fun.

There is a continuing lack of new boats and although I understand Desperate Measures in Nottingham are supplying cheap introductory WWR boats based on the French KL design and constructed of vacuumed diolin/epoxy I have not had any feedback on how this is going. Please let me know. For C2's please continue to contact Iain Clough who will be delighted to help through the Andy Clough memorial fund.

I'm pleased to say that through the good offices of Jon Finch the Minibus and Trailer situation has been transformed and they are starting to pay their way and reliability has been transformed.

3) International Success - To help paddlers realise their full potential in International competition.

I'm yet again absolutely delighted to see the continuing success at international competition. Ben Oakley and Radkha Felingerova's individual bronze medals and good quality individual performances at senior and junior level and Hannah Brown's inclusion in the Canoe Sprint Squad continue to demonstrate how good our athletes and team management actually are. This has been a very long-term achievement by Jamie, Neil, Alan and our entire coaching and management team. Our performance plan was put together in 1996 and we have been working steadily towards this ever since!

As I've already said in the highlights the Olympics, World Championship and Junior European results were absolutely fantastic.

With the standing down of the management and coaching team after a decade of continuity we will be entering a new era. The aim is to continue our focus on elite performance to deliver our promise of helping our best athletes achieve their full potential. What we will be looking to is a new way of doing this over the next year. I'd also like to give a big thank you to Hannah Brown for her help with the junior team,/ Anyone who would like to help in any way please get in touch.

I personally remain absolutely committed to delivering for 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 enjoyed running the Irwell Regional Race at the Burrs Activity Centre just as much in sharing the excitements and disappointments of World Championship events. Having seen Ben Oakley from his very first training camp in Bath when he was around twelve to now being a Bronze Medallist and fully qualified Doctor, Radhka through her successes at the Tasmania World Cup and disappointments at the Europeans through to her success on the Isere,

Hannah Brown from her swim at her first selection race on Bala Mill through to her World Championship Silver and now inclusion in the Canoe Sprint Squad, Robyn Webb's Paddle-ability Endeavour Award 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 John Handyside continue to provide invaluable links with coaching and competition to ensure we remained aligned with the BCU'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

Llangollen 3rd November 2012

BRITISH CANOE UNION WILD WATER CANOEING 2012 TEAM MANAGER & HEAD COACHES REPORT

This year Great Britain contested the Senior world championships at La Plagne, France and the Junior European Championships in Solkan, Slovenia. The coaches and team management chose not to support the World Cup series this year due to incompatibilities with our focus of the World Championships. Team positions were offered, with only one athlete attended on their own. Great Britain ran two training camps prior to the worlds which were largely successful, and provided a good preparation base for the competition.

Whilst we took a slimmed down team from previous years, we still saw top level performances in all the classes, and historic results in Womens' C1 and Mens Kayak.

We saw our first international Womens' C1 competitor with Radka Felingerova. From a very promising start only one year ago she made huge improvements in a very short space of time, culminating with Bronze medals in the World Cup and World Championships. I do not believe this result would have been achieved without the constant and tireless assistance from David Kelly, who dedicated a significant amount of his time to assisting Radka with her preparations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank David for his work not only with Radka, but with the entire squad and coaching staff over the past years.

Radka was not the only world medalist this year, as Ben Oakley took an historic Bronze medal in the Men's Kayak Sprint. After an admittedly shaky semi final, Ben took the race to the world, putting down a fast and clean time that put the remainder of the field under severe pressure, resulting in many errors and the first men's individual medal since 1989.

This result is a testament to the consistent and balanced preparation that Ben and Alan Tordoff have devised, and shows that it is not only possible to compete on the highest level - but that this can be balanced with academic life. Many congratulations to the newly qualified Doctor Ben Oakley!

The junior team trip this year combined a development team with the national team. It is the intention for a development trip to be run each year for the juniors. Whether this trip will run alongside the team or to a separate venue will be determined by the suitability of the venue for development, and the availability of coaching and support staff.

With the stepping down of Carl Foody, Phil Caunt, Neil Stamps and last year Alan Tordoff our coaching staff is now significantly reduced. We now face a very tough time to be able to support development and competition trips both domestically and internationally.

The coaches will be looking to more small groups of paddlers taking the initiative to attend rivers or C class events to push the standard forward, to supplement the work that national coaches and trips can provide. This is a model that has worked well in the past - and is one the coaches would like to see flourish again.

Without new volunteers to assist the key work our existing team management and coaching staff do, we will find it hard to provide the platform for the next generation of paddlers to flourish. I would encourage anyone who is interested in providing assistance or expertise to come forward. The broader the base of support the less we need to lean on a single person. We know we would like to do more for the sport, but this does need your help.

It is with that in mind that I would like to conclude by thanking all the Management, support and coaching staff who have assisted domestically and internationally - both at club and national level. Without you, there would be no team.

Neil Stamps & Jamie Christie
22nd October 2012