

Notes from SGP Open Forum on 3rd August 2020

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Subjects discussed:

Return to crew rowing:

Approach to the return of crew rowing was on the cautious side. Most were about to start doubles and pairs from mixed households (some had started) but it was recognised that there was an enormous amount of work involved in preparing procedures and risk assessments.

Some clubs are looking to start fours and quads in the coming weeks but the general consensus was that this was a big leap and would not start on 15.8.20 due to needing more time to prepare, and some felt nervous. No one present was planning the return to eights by 29.8.20 and one club actively deciding they would not do so.

Much discussion around rowing 'bubbles' and how these would work:

Juniors in schools would have 'crossover' with year group bubbles, and those of other activities. Difficult to see how this could work. Teachers can't be exclusively in rowing bubbles.

Club rowers would have to make a decision on which 'bubble' they want to be in, and may not want to row exclusively with the other rower/rowers in that bubble. They would have to make a choice.

It should be made clear to rowers entering in to bubbles, that if one person within that group became symptomatic, or had been asked to isolate, everyone in that bubble would need to isolate for 14 days even if they hadn't been rowing with that person.

Also, the risks to be made very clear and everyone 'signing off' that they are aware and have read the policies and procedures. Some clubs had experienced numbers interested in rowing reducing significantly after this. Others had a huge interest in returning.

Most clubs have some kind of booking system which allows them to keep track of who is rowing, and the equipment they are using, but it was recognised that this was a lot of work for volunteers.

Generally, groups of maximum 6 are at clubs together, but some are staggering groups or having another group of 6 in a different area of the club. Some have only one person using equipment per day, and one considering having 3 slots in a day to share equipment, with an hour in between slots.

One club giving priority to those who have not been sculling already.

Return to competition:

Concerns raised about managing expectations of those keen to return to competition. Need to make it clear that may be some time before this returns.

One school has found BR's online erg challenges very motivating. It was felt that there is a need to maintain rowers' competitive spirit and this can be achieved in other ways than on the water. They can still identify being part of a competitive squad with online challenges, with the added advantage that it is more inclusive, as some give everyone the opportunity to contribute rather than just the biggest, strongest rowers.

The focus could move to the joy of being on the water and improving technique rather than training.

Learn to Row:

There seem to be many difficulties in finding a safe way to run LTR. In particular, getting heavy boats on the water, and helping people to boat while maintaining 2m distance.

One club had received several enquiries about LTR but not able to offer them anything.

Another club is running sculling schools for competent sweep rowers.

No clubs present were running LTR.

Indoor Training:

Some clubs and schools finding safe ways to have a small number of ergs inside at a suitable distance apart and in well ventilated rooms, and some were moving ergs outside.

Outdoor circuits can be done with individuals having their own mats/equipment, but only while the weather allows, and concerns raised about the winter months.

General points raised / ideas:

A verbal declaration is in use by one club, for all rowers to confirm they have no symptoms of Covid.

Touch points are marked out on a coaching launch when getting on and off the water, which are cleaned after each use.

One club not ready to use launch as couldn't find a safe way to get on and off the water, and not felt to be safe if rescue required.

Cleaning stations in different part of the club to separate groups.

Enormous workload recognised for volunteers once crew rowing starts, in particular. One club has set up a 'Back to Rowing' sub group and bringing Captains back to run this.

Members could sign a declaration to agree to abide by club SOP, and accept consequences of a Covid incidence requiring 14 day self isolation etc.