

Eastern Region Rowing Council AGM Tuesday 24 November at 7.30pm

Minutes of Meeting

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence

Andrew Blit opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

Those in attendance: Teresa Aslett (Isle of Ely – GOM), Lydia Swift (Bedford Small Boats Head), Jo Cotgrove (Isle of Ely – Ely Head), Keith Paxman (Sudbury), Da Cochrane, Paul Breheny (Broxborne), Hugh Maltby (Bedford Rowing Club), Rosanna Anness, Helen Knowles (St Neots Rowing Club), Chris Callow (Star Club), Alison Brown (St Neots – Regatta), Vicky Parry, Ash Wyatt, Helen Smith, Simon Prior, Richard Maxey (Isle of Ely Rowing Club), Nick Hubble (Peterborough – Peterborough Head), David (NRC), John Canton (Peterborough City Rowing Club), Helen Middleton (Norwich High School), Matt Pooley (Lea RC), Paul Ashmore (St Ives Rowing Club) Seb Walker (City of Cambridge), Rachel Crockford (St Neots – St Neots Head), Emma Stratton (Oundle Town), Amanda Hosking (Broxborne), Helen Sharp, Stella Isaac (Jesus College Boat Club), Tracy Muir (Sudbury – Meeting Host), Andrew Blit (Sudbury – Meeting Chair)

No Apologies received

2. Minutes of 2019 AGM

Last year's minutes are based on notes, the original minutes having been lost due to Sally's illness. They have been circulated. The only amendment is to confirm that Simon White had sent apologies. They were proposed as true and accurate reflection of last year's meet

3. Presentation by Helen Rowbotham, Director of Rowing Community & Strategy

Slides of the presentation will be made available.

In response to questions raised, Helen commented that sustainability and financial resilience are within the new strategy. BR recognise that now is the time to invest in this. Views from the rowing community as to how this can be improved are welcomed. It is a key focus for the next year.

There are tips and tricks to support Inclusion in a document online. Breaking down barriers requires educating ourselves and understanding the issues and challenges. There are some webinars run last month during black history month of coaches in ethnically diverse communities sharing their experiences and there is an inclusive club guide on line.

From experience BR have struggled to get schools involved in the work for state schools that they hope to do. Schools have been co-ordinated through the school games network. BR hope to develop a direct relationship with teachers and are in the process of expanding the database of teachers to work with them.

4. Feedback from Clubs on capacity and sustainability of rowing

A member of each club present was invited to speak about their own club's experience in dealing with the pandemic and the impact that had had on membership and finance. Most clubs spoke of positive experiences in terms of their members being able to get back on the water as lock down ended.

Most clubs reported that though numbers were down in terms of membership, the major cause appeared to be natural turnover, coupled with the lack of ability to run learn to row courses. Peterborough reported that they have been able to run a learn to row course.

There were also reports as to how clubs had dealt with lack of revenue from subs. Some had asked members to continue to pay, some had suspended subs and relied on reserves. Star club had set up a fund to support members who were unable to continue to pay fees.

Most clubs reported a sense of having to make difficult decisions to preserve membership, funds and equipment, but there was a good deal of positivity in the way most clubs hoped to emerge from the lockdown.

5. Chair's report

Those present were invited to observe a few moments of silence to remember those lost to us in the last year. Those present were pointed in the direction of the written reports on the region's website. Mention was made of the special contribution made by Nick Hubble as Chair of Support Committee. It is not possible to overstate his contribution over the last 12 months, not least in coordinating the response to the pressures of those wanting to return to rowing and providing safe guidance swiftly.

Andrew reflected that there are challenges in increasing BR membership. People who are not able to row don't want to pay a membership. Equally we have heard that many members keep supporting their club. There can be a feeling out there of BR membership being a tax and it is hoped that those present will be able to communicate to members that there is a benefit to being a part of rowing as a whole. Those present are encouraged to act as an advocate for the benefits of membership.

As a region, we've tried hard to support clubs. Gratitude was expressed to Lou Revett and Tracey Muir for the work they did putting together the open forums which were well attended and well received. There has been a lot of feedback that the learning shared has been invaluable. Unfortunately, the region has lost Lou as regional rep at the end of the summer owing to the impact of Covid and it is hoped that she will return when times are a bit easier. Andrew's term as regional rep has also now reached its end. Fortunately, there have been two volunteers to take on these roles and Stella Isaac and Seb Walker were introduced and thanked for volunteering for these roles.

The Region was lucky to have our nominations for volunteer awards passed forward to the British Rowing awards. The ceremony itself was one of the earliest victims of Covid. A new ceremony is being planned. Those present are encouraged to look at the information on the website as to those nominated.

Finally, minor amendment to make to the regional constitution to reflect current circumstances.

- 6. To consider and, if thought fit, pass the following resolution which will be proposed as a Special Resolution, that - Article 8.1 of the Regional Constitution should be amended to add the words: *If the Executive so determines, an Annual General Meeting and/or a General meeting may be held by entirely by electronic means, or other communication facility that permits all participants to communicate adequately with each other during the meeting.***

This was proposed as necessary by Andrew Blit, given the current circumstances. It was seconded by Joanna Cotgrove and the motion was universally carried.

Ali Brown of St Neots raised whether this was something that should be observed by all clubs, and it was advised that each club would need to consider this, and much will depend on the circumstances, but it was noted that it is a more practical way of carrying out this task.

7. Annual Accounts

These are available on website. Stephen Wyborn was going to attend but is not with us. The accounts are showing a liability arising from JIRR. We have had our entry fee refunded. The entry fee was not originally paid by the region so we are trying to establish who the liability is to. Small surplus made last year.

Andrew Blit proposes that these are adopted, it was not thought that a seconder was necessary. There were no objections.

Andrew Blit further proposed that Robin De Vere Green retained as auditor, David Bolton seconding. The motion was carried.

8. ER officer reports

Those written reports that have been prepared are available on the website.

8.1 Coaching – Tracey Muir

No courses have been run aside from a rigging course in Jan. Safeguarding course are continuing online. There are new modules for capsizing and recovery online giving information for both coaches and participants. The next project is for a training needs analysis. We want to get going as quickly as possible. We are waiting for go ahead on blended learning approaches, Tracey feels quite strongly that we can do it.

Finally, a reminder that the Eastern Region have been offering support for coaches and it is hoped that this can continue. There was a plea from coaching committee is for this to continue going forward into 2021. It was anticipated by Andrew that this would be possible, looking at the finances so we will continue to do this.

8.2 Competition – Lydia Swift

Only very few competitions have taken place. Will post a link in chat to see the status of calendar for 2021. If you are associated with an event the use of italics is best guess, Lydia having not heard from the club. Lydia is ready to deal with this, as we are able to move forward with planning competitions.

8.3 Events & 2020 Calendar – Lydia Swift

As above

8.4 Umpires – Joanna Cotgrove

The region continues to have around 50 umpires. We have not been able to train any this year, but will be looking to get that started in the new year. Unfortunately, we have had three long standing umpires retire this year. The meeting was asked to recognise the huge contributions made by Roger Croome, Andrew Thompson and Paul Sadler-Dunnnett.

Clubs running BR events are reminded that they should consider encouraging members to train as umpires and should anyone want any further information they should contact Jo.

8.5 Juniors – Helen Knowles

Junior membership has taken a hit. Poor weather and covid have had an impact and there are a number of J15s coming into regatta season with limited experience. Interim plan and possible selection process for the JIRR regatta curtailed last year. Next year will be April 24th in Nottingham.

National Junior Rowing Committee have published guidance on junior athlete recruitment.

They now have three main work streams. Clubs who wish to be linked to state schools to be part of that forum. Ashley Wyatt is involved with this proposal and was present at the meeting,

There is also a working group for competitions and any comments are welcome. Next meeting on 7th December as not seeing each other on river bank.

Final item is the Junior Rowing leader course which can it be reshaped to make it more club based.

8.6 Safety – Mark Goddard

Mark has taken over from Simon White in the early part of the year, prior to the Covid lockdown. He has not provided a report but will be happy to engage with the annual safety audits and is happy to be approached if necessary.

8.7 Masters – Karen Wilson

No report provided and Karen had hoped to be here but did not seem to have been able to make it.

8.8 Recreational and ER league – Teresa Aslett

Did complete the first Charles Stanley league running between IOERC, West Norfolk and St Neots. It was based on a template of skills, heads and side by side racing and we now have the template for a league although no further attempts have been possible yet. It is manageable to get the boats between the clubs. If others want to get together to run a similar league, it works really well and there has been positive feedback from everyone. Plan to email to see if we can get a zoom meeting to do a bit of planning for 2021.

8.9 Coastal –

no report but they are in the same position as us although they cannot get out in single person boats.

8.10 Regional website

Any suggestions for improvement can be made directly to Andrew Blit.

9. Election of Officers

9.1 Regional Representative

Andrew confirmed that there are two vacancies for Regional Representatives. There had been two nominations made and two forms have been completed and are valid. Andrew invited the two proposed representatives to introduce themselves to the meeting.

Stella Isaac started rowing 25 years ago in Cambridge. She rowed for college and town clubs and for the university. She then retired and looked at coaching, qualifying at level 2. She learned more about the sport and enjoy coaching the mens novices. She also coaches at Rob Roy for the juniors. She is now undertaking a PhD at Jesus College and is women's captain there. She is particularly keen to contribute to the masters and juniors scene. She is keen to strategically support whats going on, focusing on participation

Seb Walker learned to row in college and at the Cambridge lightweights. He has also rowed at Thames and Cygnet and then had a break before coming back into rowing. For the last few years he has been with city of Cambridge. He has undertaken a variety of committee roles and has just finished three years of captain at city through the rebuild and first bit of the Covid stuff. He is very aware that the Cambridge bubble is different with a lot of differing views and Seb is keen to get to know other clubs and to help in whatever form that might be. He is keen on an outreach program particularly recognising diversity and getting people through the front door. He has experience of this from London and also has the experience of going through the rebuild. Seb is very keen to give more back and be involved at a regional level.

Andrew confirmed that there were no other nominees and asked for any objections. There were none noted and Stella and Seb were duly elected.

9.2 Officers of the Council

It was noted that those listed, all being eligible were prepared to stand for a further year, and all were duly re-elected with no objection.

Andrew invited anyone wishing to undertake the role of secretary should make themselves known.

10.AOB (to be notified beforehand) NO TES:

It was noted by Keith Paxman that the sharing good practice sessions over the summer have been particularly valuable. He very much hoped that these could be ongoing.

Meeting concluded