

Rec rowing report AGM on 29 November 2021

In preparation of this report, I decided that given the situation we've all found ourselves in over these past 18 months I would ask for updates from those in our clubs who look after/organise recreational rowing.

As others will have reported, clubs have been opening again to their members albeit with restrictions related to remaining

Covid aware & safe, thereby confining inter-member contact to the minimum.

Here's a summary of what I learned from the feedback I received.

There seems to be no noticeable division within some clubs between performance & recreational rowers. Although some clubs do allocate a fixed number of sessions per week to recreational rowers (tending to be during the day).

Senior Learn To Row courses are run with the participants deciding afterwards their ambitions in the sport. One club reported that their LTR courses for recreational rowers this year resulted in 75 members who are now working their way through to the recreational sessions.

The challenges are, that this brings with it a lot of work and a considerable amount of wear and tear on the boats.

What do rec rowers get out of their outings:

- To keep fit/exercise
- Regular outings
- Being coached to aim to better their rowing technique to get more out of their outings.
- Enjoy being out on the river
- Either go out for a paddle or do some higher rate pieces
- Some enjoy a race or two

Boats used by rec rowers in our region:

In short, all types – I've had feedback of racing, stable & coastal boats all used. Crew boats down to singles.

Competition for recreational rowers

Generally, competition isn't important to our recreational rowers. One club fed back that they have a small competitive number who will enter Brit & Henley Masters, World, European & Brit Coastal, Silver Skiffs in Turin.

However, there is a feeling that fun events to give performance newby rowers experience in rowing techniques, is not recreational rowing – although it may be proposed as such.

There is some confusion as to who can do what.

Fun events for mixed newbies & experienced recreational are as good a way as any to give newbies competition experience & possibly private matches between small groups of clubs aimed at similarly experienced rowers would be a way to encourage greater participation.

Rec rowers are made up of:

- Performance rowers who look to row for exercise purposes & do not wish to commit to a demanding train to race programme.
- Those of retirement age.
- Adult beginners
- U3A – new to rowing, who, at one club, after a taster session go on to do a LTR course and join the recreational sessions.

Events in 2021

June: The ever popular Explore the Broads Tour ran this year under the hard work of Frances Kemp who chairs the Explore the Broads Organising Group. Reduced in size to keep Covid-safe everyone just had a really enjoyable time, great weather, great water and spending time with like-minded rowers – here’s a link to some pics:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1WW9jnertlv9CohDC6WJlsmIb_BfzE1ji

Aug: The Charles Stanley Boats went along to the Holkham Festival of Sport under the care of Helen Middleton – this was a whole weekend offering youngsters the opportunity to try out a wide range of sports. Great work Helen.

Sept: A group of rec rowers, headed up by Julian Haxby undertook a challenge row (80k over 2 days) to raise money for The Globe Community Project. They were hosted at Isle of Ely RC and used the Charles Stanley boats – their efforts raised over £5,000 – Everyone enjoyed the event and representatives from the charity were at the club to welcome them in on their second day. The whole group were a joy to have visit.

Oct/Nov/Jan: Charles Stanley Challenge Cup League, West Norfolk RC, St Neot’s RC & Isle of Ely RC have got this back up and running again this year. The event is open to their club members who are new to rowing this year. It’s great to see this event back – we’re two legs in – the final leg is due to be held at St Neot’s RC in January – the finale is a 1k head race – well done to all three clubs in working together to resurrect this event – I know it’s been full of challenges – excuse the pun!

The Charles Stanley boats generally have been used a few times this year and given that we were unable to travel much I think they did pretty well. However, I would encourage clubs in the region to think about how their clubs could use this valuable resource. The hire cost is just £5 per seat per day on the water – so, £25 per boat. You don’t have to insure them, that’s taken care of, they have a dedicated trailer, so you just need someone to come and collect and then bring them back to Isle of Ely. They really are well worth trying out.

I’d like to end the report with a direct quote from one club:

“In the same way that there is no average person, there is no answer to "what is recreational rowing". Nothing debars an Olympic champion from going for a quiet paddle to watch the evening sky, in the same way that nothing debars an elderly four from putting time aside to row together, measuring their pace occasionally, and racing other crews at home or away. Thus, a discussion without end. A better question might be - how can we, committed and practised members, pass on our skills and experiences to enable people to row, both listening to and suggesting what they might enjoy about it?”

Thanks as always.

Teresa Aslett