

## Eastern Region Rowing Council Chair's Report 2022/2023

This report is my first, but also sadly to be my last as regional chair. Circumstance has led me to be elected as a Nominated Director on the British Rowing Board. This means that I need to step down as chair once a replacement has been found. There will therefore be an EGM in the new year.

### **In Memoriam**

I should like first to remember those who have been lost to the sport over the last year, notably Andrew Phillips, Baron Phillips of Sudbury and Vice President of Sudbury RC; Owen Patman, Rob Roy Boat Club and former Secretary of the CRA; and Angela Allin also a CRA Vice President.

### **Developments at British Rowing**

It has been a busy year at the national governing body (NGB) with considerable change taking place. Alastair Marks (appointed as CEO in Apr 22) has continued develop the organisational structure and there has been some key personnel moves. Having said that, the overall sense is that there is now much greater engagement with clubs.

At the performance end of the sport, Team GB regained their top ranking in the Worlds' medal table. On issues impacting grassroots rowing there have been a number of policy announcements including:

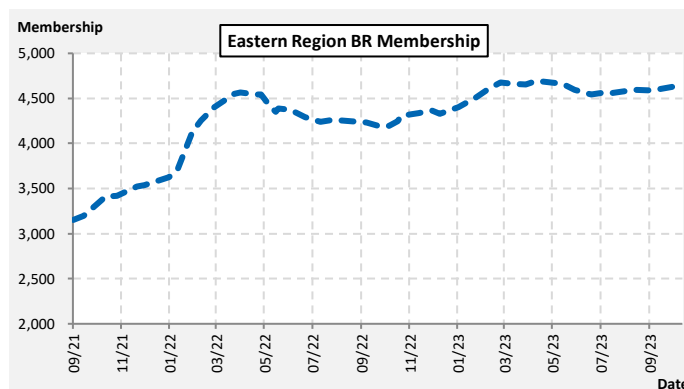
- The Competition Eligibility Policy (which redefined the women's and mixed categories)
- The Recreational Rowing Strategy (which includes raising awareness of the Charles Stanley stable quads - the region has four based at Isle of Ely RC that all clubs can use)
- The Adaptive Rowing Strategy (which includes objectives to: increase the number of clubs offering adaptive rowing from 35 to 70 by the end of 2024 and to 150 by 2028; and to increase the number of adaptive rowers from 85 to 150 by the end of 2024 and to 500 by 2028)
- The selection of a new insurer for BR members and clubs as part of the affiliation and membership offer

British Rowing has also re-introduced day tickets on a trial basis for some events. In our region the Ely Head was the first to participate in this and my sense is that the competition saw increased participation from Cambridge University colleges as a result. After a large consultation, the Senior Championships have been reinstated as a combined event with the Junior Championships. The stated aim is to create something of a festival of rowing that is focused on the club level.

One of the most significant developments in the year was the British Rowing Sport England funding package. Through this, British Rowing aims to develop several regional hubs and networks to grow the sport with a focus on improving access, diversity and local opportunities. This is being backed up with significant funding and the Regional Executive's understanding is that our region will be one of the next in line to agree a plan with the NGB. More on this below.

## The Regional Picture

After a dip in the second half of 2022, membership at clubs seems to be rebounding to pre-pandemic levels and has stabilised. As a region we represent around 15% of total BR membership. However, the situation varies greatly across clubs with some being more challenged, due to the loss of experienced volunteers who have retired from the sport.



Competitions in the region saw varied success with some being oversubscribed and others struggling to get competitors. I think it would be useful for the Region to support better communication between competitions and coaches so that opportunity and demand could be better matched. More events are also being cancelled due to weather/climate change. This year 6 events were cancelled within the region making up 10% of the 59 cancellations across the country. As a comparator, I see that 10 years ago, in 2013, there were only 4 events cancelled in the region and 34 events cancelled across the country. Events on the Thames including the headline head races seem to be particularly vulnerable. This is something that competition organisers will want to think about, and there may be a role for “plan b” options to be created which provide competitors with some form of event at another location or using a virtual format.

Clubs in the region had several successes at national events over the last year. These included the following (a full list is set out at Annex A):

- WeHORR – 10 crews in top 100
- Schools Head – 1 win and 5 high performing crews
- HoRR – 5 crews in top 100 and winners of beginner pennant
- Vets Head – 1 win and 4 crews in top 3 of their category
- BR Masters – 13 wins
- Nat Schools – 1 win and 12 crews in A finals
- HWR – 20 crews racing
- HRR – 17 crews racing
- HMR – 7 wins
- BR Junior Champs – 15 crews in A finals

At the Junior Inter Regional Regatta the region was 5<sup>th</sup> overall, behind Upper Thames, Thames London, North West and West Midlands. While at the Home International Rowing Regatta athletes from the region competed in Open 1x, Open 4x, Women's Lightweight 1x, Women's 4x and Women's PR2 1x. The England Beach Sprint team also included an athlete from the region competing in the Junior Women's Solo.

The Region held an Open Meeting on 4 May at the Goldie Boathouse in Cambridge at which there were useful discussions on the future of the sport, youth rowing, adaptive and coach development. The session was attended by BR CEO, Alastair Marks.

During the mid-September BR Coaching Week, the region was one of only 5 regions across the country to arrange a Coaching Café, which was kindly hosted by Star Club in Bedford. Coaches from across the region met to share ideas and discuss how to build a coaching community in the region.

## **The Regional Plan**

The main focus for the Regional Executive has been to develop some proposals to form the backbone of the regional plan that will be agreed with the NGB. These have yet to be finalised but are developing as follows:

- Youth Rowing – To build on existing work by and interest from clubs and organisations in the region to create a number of non-fee paying school rowing hubs in: 1) Cambridge, 2) the Fenland District/Downham Market, 3) Norfolk, 4) Suffolk, 5) Huntingdonshire 6) Northampton/Milton Keynes and 7) Bedford. Activities to be based on a mixture of indoor rowing (with a regional set of competitions), water rowing and summer camps.
- Beach Sprints and Coastal – To lobby for a Coastal Sculling Academy in the region with a programme of taster days, equipment hire and a regional event. One aim of this also being to foster greater connections between river rowing and coastal fixed and sliding seat clubs.
- Coaching Community – Following on from the Coaching Café event we plan to hold a Regional Coaching Conference in the new year. We also need to: 1) develop a programme of coaching courses across the region using our coach educators, 2) restart coach mentoring and 3) create a coaching network such that people can share ideas on both what to coach and how to coach. Where the region has funds from the BR rebate, we intend to use much of them to support coaching and coach development.

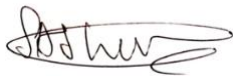
One open item for discussion is how to manage junior talent that could feed the GB team as the region no longer has a START centre. The NGB's vision is that each regional network will have an academy location with possibly one satellite location. At the 4 May Open Meeting clubs presented a strong view that the disparate nature of the region meant that having one or even two locations would mean many athletes were excluded as the travel distance for some would inevitably be too great. The preference expressed was for a BR resource that could work with key junior coaches at clubs to develop talent in situ at their home club perhaps combined with a number of regional training camps which could bring together the BR resource and club junior coaches.

## **The Future**

Communication is key to our success as a sport, as a region and as individual clubs and competitions. I'd very much like to see more collaboration across the region on topics of common interest. This could cover things such as: boathouse development, equipment reviews, L2R course formats or fundraising tips.

Over the course of the last year it has also become very clear to me that the more the region can engage on a two way basis with the NGB, the more we can help shape the direction of the sport and gain concrete benefits for clubs and competitions in our area. Key to this is having a strong regional team. The Executive has had some empty posts over the last year. It would be good to get some more volunteers engaged. Not all of these need be full positions on the Executive. For example, we have already had some people offer to help with the Coaching Community initiative to support next year's regional coaching lead. I know that many will be thinking that getting volunteers for their own club or an event is challenge enough, but if any club has keen individuals who could spare some free time, then I believe it would very much be to the benefit of all. Indeed, I personally very much intend to support the region going forward in any way that I can.

All that remains is for me to wholeheartedly thank my fellow Regional Executive members for all their hard work and their support, and to thank those that have welcomed me to visit their club or competition over the course of the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seb Walker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Seb Walker  
Chair  
Eastern Region Rowing Council

November 2023

## **Annex A: Full list of top performance in the region (apologies for any omissions)**

### WeHoRR crews in the top 100

- CUBC 9<sup>th</sup>
- Cantabrigian RC 24<sup>th</sup>, 85<sup>th</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup>
- Lea 44<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup>
- City of Cambridge RC 58<sup>th</sup>
- Trinity Hall BC 69<sup>th</sup>
- Star Club 81<sup>st</sup>
- Cambridge 99 RC 84<sup>th</sup>

### HoRR crews in the top 100

- Lea RC 36<sup>th</sup>
- City of Cambridge RC 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> and 93<sup>rd</sup> also the winner of the Club Beginner Trophy
- Cambridge 99 RC 58<sup>th</sup>

### Vesta Masters HoRR top three placings

- Lea RC won Women's Masters B 8+, 2<sup>nd</sup> in Open Masters B 8+
- Broxbourne 2<sup>nd</sup> in Open Masters F 8+
- Norwich RC 2<sup>nd</sup> in Open Masters E 4x
- Bedford RC / Star Club 3<sup>rd</sup> in Open Masters F 8+

### Schools Head notable crews

- Bedford School boys won Sch 1<sup>st</sup> 8+
- Bedford Modern Sch boys 11<sup>th</sup> in Sch 1<sup>st</sup> 8+
- Cantabrigian RC boys 12<sup>th</sup> in Sch 1<sup>st</sup> 8+
- Bedford Girls School girls 8<sup>th</sup> in Sch 1<sup>st</sup> 8+
- Cantabrigian RC girls 10<sup>th</sup> in Sch 1<sup>st</sup> 8+

### BR Masters wins

- Bedford RC W D 1x
- Peterborough City RC x C 4x-, W C 2x, Op B/C 2- HC
- City of Cambridge Rob Roy composite Op C 2x, Op C 4x-
- City of Cambridge RC/ Rob Roy BC/ X-Press BC Op D 8+
- Broxbourne RC W D 4x-, W D 8+
- Bedford RC/ Mortlake AA/ Strathclyde Pk/ Upper Thames RC W E 4x-
- Bedford RC/ Star Club Op H/I 4+ HC, Op G 8+
- Cantabrigian W A/C 4+ HC, W A/C 4- HC

### National Schools A finals

- Cambridge 99 winner of O Champ 1x
- Bedford School A finals in J16 1<sup>st</sup> 8+ and O Champ 4+
- Bedford RC A final in O Champ 1x
- Bedford Girls School A final in WJ16 1<sup>st</sup> 8+
- Bedford Modern A final in J15 4+, O Champ 4+
- Norwich School A final in J16 4+ and O Champ 4-
- Peterborough City RC A final in O Champ 2x, W Champ 2x, W Champ 1x
- St Mary's School Cambridge A final in WJ14 4x+

### Henley Women's Regatta competitors

- Redgrave Challenge Vase - Cantabrigian RC and Cambridge 99 RC
- George Innes Cup - CUBC
- Parkside Trophy - CUBC
- Godfrey Rowsports Trophy – Lea RC
- Copas Cup – Cantabrigian RC and Lea RC
- Lester Trophy – Star Cub and Cantabrigian RC
- Rosie Mayglothing Trophy - Norwich RC and Sudbury RC
- Groton School Challenge Cup – Bedford Girls School
- Rayner Cup - Bedford Mod School, King's School Ely, Norwich School and Peterborough City RC
- Di Ellis Trophy - Bedford Mod School and Peterborough City RC

- West End ARA Trophy - Bedford Girls School
- Nina Padwick Trophy – Lea RC

#### Henley Royal Regatta competitors

- Stoner Challenge Trophy – Sudbury RC
- Diamond Challenge Sculls – Cambridge 99 RC
- Visitors Challenge Cup – CUBC
- Prince of Wales Challenge Cup – City of Cambridge RC and Cambridge 99 RC composite
- Thames Challenge Cup - City of Cambridge RC, Cantabrigian RC, Lea RC and Cambridge 99 RC
- Wargrave Challenge Cup – Lea RC, Cantabrigian RC
- Wyfold Challenge Cup - Lea RC, Star Club
- Temple Challenge Cup – CUBC
- Princess Elizabeth Challenge Cup - Bedford Sch
- Prince Albert Challenge Cup – CUBC
- Fawley Challenge Cup – Lea RC
- Diamond Jubilee Challenge Cup – Lea RC

#### Henley Masters Regatta wins

- Bedford RC W Mas D 1x
- Peterborough City RC/Leicester RC composite O Mas C 4x
- Rob Roy, City of Cambridge, X-Press RC composite O Mas D 8+
- Star Club O Mas G 4-
- Peterborough City RC W Mas C 2x
- Norwich RC O Mas F 4x
- Star Bedford RC composite O Mas G 8+

#### BR Junior Champs A finals

- Cambridge 99 RC OJ16 1x, OJ15 1x, OJ16 2x
- Lea RC WJ15 1x, WJ18 4x-, OJ14 2x, WJ15 2x, OJ16 4x, WJ18 2x, WJ16 4x
- Bedford Star WJ18 4x-
- Peterborough City RC OJ18 4x- , WJ16 1x, WJ18 1x
- Cantabrigian RC WJ14 2x

#### Junior Inter Regional Regatta

- 5<sup>th</sup> overall
- Boys 5<sup>th</sup>
- Girls 6<sup>th</sup>

#### England Home International Rowing Regatta Team

- Open 1x and Open 4x– Young, Cambridge 99 RC
- Women's Lightweight 1x and Women's 4x – King, CUBC
- Women's PR2 1x – Brown, Sudbury RC

#### The England Beach Sprint Team

- Junior Women's Solo – Pakule, Lea RC