

Dear All,

This is my final Chair's report after three years. I'd like to thank all those on the Sprint Racing Committee, the Regatta Committee and all the officials, volunteers and helpers who have given their spare time, energy and expertise to run and develop the sport during that time. And at grass roots too the volunteer coaches, helpers and parents of junior paddlers who's commitment can be considerable. It is a reflection of the love and passion in the community that so many are willing to contribute. I'd also like to thank everyone in British Canoeing who has supported me in my time as Chair. It is hugely appreciated. The Chair role is a voluntary one and demanding on time and energy and after three years, fresh ideas and new energy can be injected from an incoming Chair. I wish the new Chair well.

In my time as Chair of the SRC progress has been slow, painfully slow at times. We have tried hard to listen and reflect Community wishes, and the SRC have introduced *some* new initiatives. Notably:

- a) *Local Sprint Regattas*; nine ran this year under the umbrella of the SRC. This is a huge achievement. If we can increase the number of local sprint events we give more opportunities for side by side racing experience to everyone and grow a love for sprinting, whilst developing skills and friendships. This is a fundamental and I feel proud this initiative is now happening having been talked about for thirty years. Congratulations and thanks to the Clubs involved so far. The SRC are looking for more next year and SRC support is available to all Clubs to get more off the ground.
- b) A jointly run by MRC / SRC / BC Talent Department, *Junior Development Squad*. (Previously sprint and marathon held separate unconnected training days) This has helped junior paddlers who do not have to now choose between sprint or marathon training days. As long as the MRC and SRC have significant input into these days they will flourish as they will reflect the grass roots needs and wants.
- c) A jointly run SRC / Home Nations, *GB Junior Training Squad*. This is in its infancy - but aims to bring together the faster juniors to get to know each other and train together for weekends. The SRC needs to continue to have meaningful input here too or it will lose its connection with the Clubs and its relevance as an entity.
- d) The SRC continues to subsidise athletes selected for GB trips at junior and under 23 level (those not on Performance Department funding). It is a strongly held belief that international selection should be open to all those selected - not just those that can afford it.

e) And there have been other small successes along the way too. The first ever *British Universities and Colleges Sports Sprint Competition* (BUCS), the first stand at the Boat Show in Southampton and a drive to support more K4 and C4 by loaning out the SRC K4s and C4s boats to Clubs.

However, when I become Chair one of the ambitions was to ensure that those who loved the sport and had spent their lives within the sport were the ones who had the power to shape its future. We are still a long way from that.

The current position in elite senior sprint (as opposed to elite para who are flourishing) is that GB have no athletes qualified to the Paris Olympics and the majority of qualifying opportunities have now passed. It is a time for reflection. Many in the Community are looking for an inspirational figure to inspire and lead from within British Canoeing: a person everyone at grass roots level can identify with and believe in. The CEO of British Canoeing can instigate personnel change if he chooses - but racing is such a small part of the BC jigsaw. (Only a thousand people in racing boats at the most, out of a British Canoeing membership of around ninety thousand which includes a majority of stand up paddle boarders). Different people around the CEO are giving differing opinions on the state of GB sprint racing and he faces an almost impossible challenge balancing and weighing up the different viewpoints because his background is in cricket. The Director of Paddlesport cannot help with sport specific advice as he is from squash. The Performance Director has limited insight and understanding as he is from cycling. The Under 23 Pathway Manager is from snowboarding. And the Club Pathway Manager is from golf. This is the management pathway of those running our sport.

No other sporting National Governing Body has a management staff of people entirely from other sports. And while senior results are an indication something is not right - what's more concerning is the sense of cultural gulf between British Canoeing's Performance Department and the Clubs. It seems remarkable UK Sport who fund the Olympic side with funding running into millions over the last twenty years do not question the make up and balance of the management team.

It is even more bizarre that the opinions of the wider community seemingly carry no weight with the top management of British Canoeing. Is it because it's easier, less controversial and more comfortable to maintain the status quo? Intervention perhaps feels risky when the British Canoeing management knowledge base of sport specific knowledge is so thin. Or perhaps it is simply that they hold little passion for the sport? And it is simpler to bide time until the next role comes along in another sport?

In five years time, after the Los Angeles Olympic Games history tells us it's likely many of the current BC management team will have moved on to manage other sports because that's the reality of all sporting National Governing Bodies today - people constantly move from one sport to another. Those with a passion for paddling within the Clubs will not have moved on - they will still be paddling, coaching, volunteering and will live with the consequences and decisions of this current management team.

Co-operation and development between Clubs is therefore a sound policy. It has more opportunity to establish a long term legacy whereas BC initiatives are reliant on staff who may or may not be there in the future. The Sprint Racing Committee can play a significant role in linking up clubs - not least through promoting and developing initiatives such as the local sprint regattas until they are a common feature. There is calendar space in evenings and on Saturdays. Here we can create environments for learning, fun and hard racing. Here we can build long lasting friendships between clubs and between paddlers of all ages that will strengthen the grass roots foundation of the sport for years to come.

Tim Scott
Chair Sprint Racing Committee (2020 - 2023)
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