

TRUSTEES REPORT 2020-21

Formal Report to the Charities Commission

Welcome to this seventh Trustees report under our constitution as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This report to the Charities Commission was prepared by Mark Bouch, as Chair, on behalf of the Club's Trustees for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

This report will be circulated to members with 2020/21 accounts for approval at the Club's AGM in November 2021.

CIO Trustee Committee

Devizes Canoe Club is a "Charitable Incorporated Organisation". Our Charity number is 1156402. We were registered with the Charities Commission on 27th March 2014. Legal decisions are taken by the CIO trustees, who in 2020/21 were Andy Allen, Ann Slator, Mark Bouch, Paul Papworth-Smith, Sue Colby, Juliet Fooks and Chris Jones.

The CIO Trustees have a legal responsibility to the Charities Commission for effective governance and management of the CIO's assets in line with our CIO constitution. CIO Trustees are responsible for setting policy and approving budgets as part of their governance responsibilities. Club property, including the club's built estate, is held by the CIO on behalf of the Club itself and not by any individual. Trustees meet quarterly and when required.

Trustees are appointed by a decision of members at the Club AGM. At the pending AGM, two trustees must retire, and we have an opportunity to appoint up to three trustees. Any club member is welcome to nominate themselves, at least one week prior to the AGM, as a CIO Trustee.

On this occasion, Mark Bouch and Sue Colby intend to step down. Members will be asked to re-appoint Mark Bouch, Ann Slator, Juliet Fooks, Paul Papworth-Smith, Sue Colby, Andy Allen, and Chris Jones as CIO Trustees.

Club Management Committee

The CIO Trustees delegate power to a management committee which meets monthly, to coordinate the operational management of the Club. The Management Committee are responsible for ensuring club operations comply with policy and best practice.

The CIO Trustees appoint the key management committee roles: Club Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and invite the management committee to fill other key roles necessary for effective management.

From this AGM, the Chair and Deputy Chair will divide their roles with Chair's focus being club strategy, development and governance and the Deputy Chair's focus being club operations.

At this AGM our long-serving Club Secretary, Ann Slator, intends to step down. Ann has served the club with distinction since its formation in 2009 and is one of just two committee members still in place from our founding club committee. She has actively and enthusiastically supported the club's growth from a handful of people at the main wharf in Devizes to our current dedicated facilities and a membership of 150 people. Ann intends to remain a Club Trustee and has offered to manage the club's membership processes to support the new club secretary. We owe her a huge debt of thanks.

The proposed 2020/21 management committee are Mark Bouch (Chair), Paul Papworth Smith (Treasurer), VACANCY (Secretary), Sue Colby (Deputy Chair), Emma O'Hare (Volunteer Coordinator), Katie Scaplehorn (Welfare and Safeguarding), Ian Thackray (H&S), Stuart Colby (Facilities), Bev Hunter (Coaching Group Lead), Anna Overton (PR/Media and Junior Section), Nigel Chivers (Senior Section and Captain of Boats) and Sarah Cook (Junior Competition). The committee has invited several other members to fill important volunteer roles, including leading paddling groups, managing boat storage, and delivering the coaching programme. These appointments do not need to attend committee meetings but are welcome to do so.

All volunteer appointments are recorded on our website within the members' section.

Our AGM provides the formal opportunity to approve members of the management committee for 2021. Committee membership is open to all Club members, though we will only appoint committee members to fill specific roles required to ensure the efficient management of the club.

Members wishing to put their names forward to serve on the management committee or challenge the nominations proposed should submit their name in writing to the Club Secretary at least one week prior to the AGM.

The Club management committee intends to meet monthly. Minutes are taken, will be published on the club website and available on request to those without website access.

Club Purpose

The Club's purpose is **"The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation in particular by the provision of facilities for the sport of canoeing and kayaking"**. We have regard to the Charity Commission guidance on public benefit. We provide identifiable benefits in advancing health and sport, to the public. Our membership criteria and what we offer is inclusive and open to all members of the public without restriction. We make it clear that if anyone finds it difficult to pay our membership and coaching fees we can help, and we regularly do.

Our priorities for 2020/21 were established in the 2020-2024 strategy work and the club's development plan for 2021. With COVID very much influencing the shape of 2020/21 our emphasis this year was restricted to limited objectives to:

- Support club members, so far as possible, to paddle individually and in small groups as permitted by government and NGB regulations.
- To maintain COVID secure operations at the club and maintain access to individual equipment.
- To maintain the club's community spirit and ethos.

After a consultation process with committee members and volunteers, including parents, members and coaches, our club development plan was renewed in Q1 2021 for the period 2021-2024. This process established six ambitions and detailed annual objectives for 2021/22.

The main effort (our top priority) for 2020-2021 was the restoration of club operations and activity levels as lockdown restrictions eased. This started to happen in [late March] 2021 and consequently falls outside the period covered by this report.

Club Accreditation

The club remains accredited through Sport England's Clubmark scheme for community clubs. However, whilst the standards are relevant since August 2019 Sport England is no longer providing general support for Clubmark accreditation.

In Q1 2021 the Club committed to apply for recognition under British Canoeing's new Quality Club programme. This accreditation scheme aims to maintain the highest possible standards of governance and safeguarding. We intend to achieve the Quality Club standard by the end of the 2021/22 reporting year and have a plan in place to achieve Champion Club status for talent development in 2022.

We maintain a fully compliant set of up-to-date policies and plans. These include policies for:

- Club operations and safety
- Facilities management
- Welfare and safeguarding
- Code of Conduct
- Social media

New policies were approved during 2021 including policies for payments to volunteers and a disciplinary, complaints and appeals policy.

These policies are available in the members' section of our website. As part of our overall move to digitise our administration, paper copies will no longer be maintained in the clubhouse. Any club policy is available from the Chair or Club Secretary at any time on request.

Activity Report

This report includes a summary report on our activities and achievements in 2020-21 in pursuit of our paddlesport objectives. By publishing this report on the Charities Commission website we display the benefit to club members and society. More information will be given at the AGM.

The start of formal lockdown coincided with the period of this report and our membership year. As expected, we experienced a significant reduction in income as many members did not renew or renewed late. This situation was mostly recovered by the middle of the year, from July onwards, when limited activity was able to continue within government and NGB guidelines.

During the first period of lockdown we closed the club for organised activity on the water. When the Canal & River Trust suspended use of the navigation in March, they suspended all normal activity but provided opportunities for members to socialise and connect for online quiz evenings. When initial lockdown lifted in June, we were able to reopen on a limited basis and provide COVID safe access to boats and equipment for individual paddles, paddlers in family groups and bubbles. This provided a vital recreational and exercise outlet for many people, including our active junior section.

With a considerable volunteer effort to assess and mitigate risks, we were able to restart organised sessions in July 2021 with considerable success. A full junior programme ran consistently from July and switched to a winter programme in October 2021.

The effort in making some of the club's facilities available has been considerable and we owe thanks to the many volunteers who have made this possible by assessing risk, changing protocols to ensure safe and healthy operations, and adapting facilities.

Whilst our indoor facilities, changing rooms and toilets remained out of use until late 2020, we managed to restore high activity levels for individual club members, young people, and family

groups without any safety compromise. We are proud that no COVID cases occurred because of club activity.

The coronavirus pandemic curtailed all competitive activity from March 2020 to March 2021. This prevented the regional and national competitions including sprint regattas, the SW and national Hasler marathon races, the Devizes to Westminster canoe race and other classic marathons. At club level we participated in a regional 5K virtual time trial throughout the late summer and in Q1 2021 many club members participated in club running challenges in February and March and an individual virtual Devizes to Westminster 125-mile paddle challenge.

Sadly, COVID restrictions prevented us from running courses, so we were unable to offer schools programmes, development groups or integrate new members, other than on an individual basis. Despite this, by the end of the year we had a healthy waiting list and a full activity programme, including two one-week introductory programmes for our local primary schools' network, ready to launch at Easter 2021. This will be covered in the club's next report.

Financials

Our financial accounting period runs from 1st April to 31st March, so the accounts presented at this AGM relate to the period ending seven months ago. This report will also provide a summary of the impacts of coronavirus on the club's finances since April. An informal update covering the more recent period will be reported at the AGM. At the end of the last accounting period:

- The club held an operating surplus of £26,000, of which £9,900 are unrestricted reserves. Comparison to 2019/20.
- Membership income recovered by mid 2020 but remained 20% down on the previous year.
- We attracted a major BC grant and made a modest income from club coaching events.
- We raised over £870 from the sale of Club kit and merchandise.
- The £10,000 Sport England grant we were awarded in 2019 was fully delivered and the grant completed in Q1 2021. This provided nine extra seats per session and a progression route through different craft. The grant made a high impact during COVID as we were able to offer access to club equipment to members without their own boats.
- Expenditure on the built estate was much reduced in 2020/21 although we spent, and continue to spend, additional sums on COVID security measures including disinfection and consumables.
- The club maintains around 2 years' operating costs in general reserve with around £9,000 held as a facilities reserve.
- A surplus from the junior summer camp in 2019 remains available for junior development, bursaries, and subsidising competition entries for club junior crews due to the lack of events in 2020-21.
- In 2020 we started to invest for a return to activity. We replaced more than half of our buoyancy aids, bought new wing paddles, and placed an order for a new boat trailer which was delivered mid-year.

During 2020-21 we secured a £2,500 grant from the Sport England Community Emergency Fund to assist with funding running costs and subsequently, because the CIO is eligible for small business rates relief, successfully applied for a further grant of £10,000 which put us in a very strong financial position to invest for the future.

We are pleased to report that the club is in robust financial shape at the end of this challenging year and able to invest for the future. An extensive facilities investment proposal to improve safety, security and amenities will be made to CIO Trustees in Q3 2021.

A summary of the accounts is sent with this report to the Members before the AGM and full accounts are submitted to the Charity Commission and are available for public scrutiny.

Achievements

Despite the challenges of 2020-21 we continue to thrive as a club, with 120 members at the end of the reporting year. Even during the pandemic we've integrated several new individual paddlers (young and old) to paddlesport, provided regular Club training sessions, ran events at the Club and a youth sprint regatta on the Avon at Chippenham.

We've noticed an upsurge in the number of parents taking safe 'exercise' on the towpath whilst supervising junior paddlers and look forward to building on these social connections as soon as we can.

We also formed a new management committee at the last AGM, held online for the first time.

Chair's Notes

It's been a challenging year for many of us. The coronavirus pandemic forced us to adapt and constrain our social and competitive programme, whilst also impacting our family and working lives. Many of us experienced long periods of working from home and the realities of home-schooling for extended periods. I hope we are on the other side now!

At club level our volunteers rose to the challenge with enthusiasm and ingenuity to keep club members active and meet the challenges of COVID. Thank you to all our volunteers working in view and behind the scenes. We recognise and appreciate your efforts and commitment.

I am thrilled how quickly we bounced back after Easter with schools' programmes restarted, the club development programme in full swing by the summer and introductory courses run throughout the year. Membership levels are back to nearly 150 members and activity levels, judged by participation at the club, regional and national events are as high as they have ever been. The club achieved truly impressive results at GB national sprint and marathon events this year, which will be covered in more detail in the next report.

It would have been easy to close the doors, but your committee was relentless, meeting regularly online, constantly challenging constraints and taking individual initiative to enable safe outdoor activity to take place. As chair I am inspired by your ideas and willingness to make things happen.

At the time of writing we are seven months into 2021-22 year and still living with the challenges of COVID, despite nearly every adult member now being vaccinated. The risk increases as our winter programme is about to start in October, and we are still seeing increased cases in schools. We cannot let our guard drop just yet.

We fully achieved our aim of getting the club up and running again and are moving with confidence towards 2022.

Mark Bouch
Chair, on behalf of the Trustees