

TRUSTEES REPORT 2022-23

Formal Report to the Charities Commission

Welcome to the ninth 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 2022 to 31st March 2023.

This report will be circulated to members with 2022/23 accounts for approval at the Club's AGM in November 2023.

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 2022/23 were Andy Allen, Ann Slator, Mark Bouch, Paul Papworth-Smith, Sue Colby, Juliet Fooks, Lindyanne Ehrnrooth 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 and Charity Commission guidelines. CIO Trustees have six legal responsibilities including delivering purpose, managing conflicts of interest, reporting information, safeguarding people, making decisions, managing finances and oversight of club policy. Club property, including the club's estate, is held by the CIO on behalf of the Club itself and not by any individual. Trustees meet annually and as 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 seven trustees. Any club member is welcome to nominate themselves, at least fourteen days before the AGM, as a CIO Trustee.

At this AGM Ann Slator, Juliet Fooks and Andy Allen will retire. They do not intend to stand for re-election. The following nominations have been received for first-time election as Trustees: Nick Poole, Simon Darling, Trevor Hunter, Dan Colby, Hannah Snowsill, Andrew Park and Nick Prichard.

We intend to make a resolution that all seven nominees be elected as Trustees. This will help us to manage some rotations that must be made in 2024 and give new Trustees adequate time to settle into their roles.

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.

The Chair and Deputy Chair divide their roles with Chair's focus being club strategy, development and governance and the Deputy Chair's focus being club operations.

The committee has invited other members to fill important volunteer roles, including leading paddling groups, managing boat storage, delivering the coaching programme, and providing

bankside support during organised sessions. These appointments do not need to attend committee meetings but are welcome to do so.

All key 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 2024/25. 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 club business.

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

The Club management committee intends to meet monthly, except in August. Meetings take place face-to-face and virtually. Minutes are taken and are published on the club website. Copies of minutes are available on request to any club member without website access.

The proposed 2024/25 management committee are Mark Bouch (Chair), Paul Papworth Smith (Treasurer), Lindyanne Ehrnrooth (Secretary), Sue Colby (Deputy Chair and Volunteer Coordinator), Emma O'Hare (Welfare and Safeguarding Officer), James Papworth-Smith (H&S), Stuart Colby (Facilities), James Mahoney (Coaching Group Lead), Anna Overton (Junior Programme Coordinator), Nigel Chivers (Senior Programme Coordinator and Captain of Boats) and Victoria Cains (PR & Media Officer).

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's guidance on public benefit. We provide identifiable benefits in advancing health and sport, to the public. Our membership criteria and what we offer are 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 2022/23 were established in the 2020-2024 strategy document. This strategy will be due for review in 2024.

Development plans are then developed annually and provide a framework for the management team to implement the strategy. Our annual club development plan was renewed in Q1 2023, identifying detailed annual objectives to deliver the club's six ambitions identified in the 2020 – 2024 Club Strategy.

The main effort (our top priority) for 2022-2023 was to restore club operations to 2019 levels or better across all development activities, including indoor, novice, youth and adult programmes, competition, and recreation.

We prioritised the following activities:

- Growing more coach/paddle group leader capability
- Developing a robust cost structure for external programmes
- Overhauling the Club's website and document management system

Club Accreditation

In the period covered by the last report, the Club achieved accreditation under British Canoeing's Quality Club programme, demonstrating that we met the highest possible standards of governance and safeguarding. In 2022/23 we focused on delivering the Club's Quality Club action plan.

In our development plan we committed to a review and audit process to achieve Champion Club status for Talent Development. We are delighted to confirm that we had achieved all the objectives by Easter 2023 and were duly awarded the accreditation by the President of British Canoeing at our 2023 Awards Evening at Braeside Activity Centre.

Activity Report

This report includes a summary report on our activities and achievements in 2022-23 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.

This year, in addition to our weekly programme of supervised club sessions, we have held monthly time trials, local sprint regattas at Chippenham, Westbury and Lechlade, a Hasler marathon event at Chippenham, in conjunction with Chippenham Sailing and Canoe Club.

We sent strong club teams to SW Region Hasler Marathon events and our efforts in 2021/22 ensured that the club qualified for the Club Hasler Finals held at Runnymede in September 2022 during the period covered by this report. That year we sent a competitive team to the finals, achieved the highest place of the SW Region Clubs and were outright winners of The Geoff Sanders Trophy, a team competition for under 14s. This series is designed to introduce younger paddlers to marathon racing in a positive, supportive environment and prepare them for the transition into the Hasler divisions once they are ready.

The 2022/23 season was half-way through at the end of the reporting year. We were unable to maintain our 2021/22 Hasler Marathon success, eventually finishing sixth in the SW Region and failing to qualify for the Club Hasler Finals in 2023.

The club also sent teams to the national marathon championships at Worcester and the Nottingham sprints. We entered a strong junior team in the National Inter Club Regatta at Nottingham in September 2022. The DCC junior team of ten paddlers included four newly registered paddlers competing for the first time. All paddlers did extremely well in challenging windy conditions with several made A finals in their events. Highlights included:

- Mollie Ball: 1st in Final 1 Girls A/B K2 200m and 1st in Final 1 Girls A/B K2 500m and 2nd in Final 1 Girls A/B K1 500m.
- Philipe Ehrnrooth: 9th in Final 1 Boys B K1 500m and 8th in Final 1 Boys B K1 1000m.

In classic marathon competition, the Waterside Series run by Newbury CC is recognised as being the classic build up for the Devizes to Westminster Race. However, the Waterside Series offers its own challenge, and to complete the series of around 80 miles in total over four races is an achievement. Several DCC paddlers competed in the Waterside Series marathon races with notable achievements in the series by Nicola Davey/Roz Gill who were second in Senior Women's K2 and Beatrix Fooks with her partner, both paddling for Dauntsey's School, who were first in Junior Women's K2

The Devizes to Westminster Race provides our focus for winter distance racing. The development programme for this race starts in September and is designed to progress novices to a standard where they have a realistic prospect of race completion in just six months. The 2023 DW had exceptional challenges after a very wet March with 150% of the average rainfall and waterways close to flood levels with restricted navigation on the River Thames.

Although multiple crews trained for the 2023 race additional screening of competitors was introduced so that only suitably competent and experienced crews could attempt to reach Westminster. This reduced the Senior Doubles field by around half and only one of our crews was able to participate. The conditions resulted in a very fast race and some new DW race records including the DW Senior Doubles record falling after 44 years. DCC's Senior Doubles crew, Pete Clarke and Alex David completed the course in 19 hours and 28 minutes to set a new club record.

Conditions on the River Thames necessitated a decision to finish the Stages race at Wokingham on Day 2, as opposed to the normal four-day event finishing at Westminster. Ten paddlers completed the Stages Race in K2s with first finishes for Ros Gill & Nicola Davey, Georgie Ethelston & Alex Lascelles, Beth Tuke-Hastings and Jules Ward and Beatrix Fooks paddling for Dauntsey's School. In addition Andrew Park, Jeff Mason and Dan Colby completed another edition of the DW race. Some of these crews also made up the mileage over the Easter weekend either paddling, running or cycling so they could complete the distance for their sponsorship efforts!

Our first full Hasler Race at Chippenham CSC in May 2022 attracted considerable support despite some biblical weather. To our team's credit, we won the team competition against some significant opposition, including our local rivals Bradford on Avon and the two big regional clubs Exeter and Gloucester. This race is now firmly established on the SW calendar and increases the opportunities for clubs based in the north of a very large region stretching from Devizes to Lands End and up to the West Midlands.

Individual paddlers achieved phenomenal results this season with promotions across the board. For the first time, at the end of 2022/23, we had eight juniors and three adults promoted in marathon, some with two promotions awarded in the season. Three junior paddlers now compete in Division 3 (marathon) and we have our first junior promoted to Boys A placing them amongst the best in UK sprint. Our success in U14 has generated a strong group of younger paddlers transitioning from Geoff Sanders and mini sprint to full racing divisions.

Overall, our results have been outstanding. They demonstrate hard work and commitment during the year by our paddlers, coaching team, and parents.

Membership

Our membership number recovered fully in 2022/23 with 162 members on the books by year-end. This was a new membership record, though this number masks an influx of new members and quite a significant number (around 15%) who did not renew. We followed up on all 'regretted losses' but no single factor was evident in their decision not to re-join. In most cases the reasons related to other activities/interests and work becoming available once more, and an inability to commit time to the club and a few cases where the paddler's decision to join the Club was motivated by their intention to compete in the Devizes to Westminster Race, rather than a long-term commitment to the sport.

Development

Introductory courses are a primary means of attracting new adult and junior members. Thirty-six people completed our introductory programmes in 2022, and 21 of those went on to join the club. This reflects ongoing high demand for healthy outdoor recreation. We integrated other new members without them needing to complete introductory courses in cases where the new member had previous paddling experience.

We were able to absorb all senior and most junior adventure group membership enquiries and a small number of racing paddlers with prior experience, but once again had to manage a junior waiting list in 2022/23 because the demand to join exceeded our ability to integrate new paddlers into the junior racing group. This reflects a lack of coaching capacity and programme time to absorb more young people due to the high level of coaching supervision required.

When potential members are on a waiting list, there is a high chance that they will switch interest to another sport or activity and will be lost to paddlesport. This is a long-term systemic challenge which requires additional coaches, additional equipment, and facilities, all of which will need to be developed to keep pace with our forecast growth. Our junior racing programme is currently at or near peak capacity, and this situation is unlikely to change soon.

Support to external organisations

In 2022/23 our support to external organisations included:

- **Support to Dauntsey's School.** We ran weekly sessions on both Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the spring and autumn terms for approximately 20 pupils of mixed paddling ability as part of either their school games option or Moonrakers which is for the middle school adventure programme and a lower school outdoor activity programme.
- **Support to Wiltshire College.** We agreed a College/Club Partnership with two of the Wiltshire College Campuses, Salisbury, and Trowbridge. This programme started towards the end of the 2022/23 year running from January to March and provided structured development support to groups of young people on the Public Service course as an integral part of their curriculum. There is interest in further developing this programme, with the possibility of other Wiltshire College campuses getting involved.

These commitments are only possible with the enthusiastic support of our coaching team. In 2022/23 they have, once again, risen to the challenge and delivered high-quality experiences to external organisations.

Although supporting external programmes places considerable demand on our coaching team, they provide a vital income stream for the club. We revised our charging structure this year to take account of the need to pay coach's expenses for their commitment, in line with club policy for payments to volunteers and to ensure a consistent and predictable commercial return on external activities.

However, coaching capacity, paid or otherwise, to deliver mid-week, daytime sessions continue to challenge and stretch the team. This will be the single most limiting factor for future support to external programmes.

All support to external organisations is charged unless specifically approved as a 'charitable purpose' to ensure we meet our costs and make a reasonable surplus for the club. This helps to keep membership fee increases to a minimum. Our Trustees are mindful that loss of income from these

programmes will have budgetary consequences for other discretionary activities including investment in coach development, support for participation in competitive events.

Financials (all figures subject to confirmation in final accounts)

Our financial accounting period runs from 1st April to 31st March 2023, so the accounts presented at this AGM relate to a period ending seven months ago. This report will provide a narrative to support the club's financial statement and a forward-looking view of the club's financial health. 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 £27,157, of which £17,1877 are unrestricted reserves. This represents a decrease of £4,270 on 2021/22. In 2021/22 we reported that we were running on a fine margin. Our deficit reflects increased costs to run the activity programme, invest in coach development, promote participation in competition, and increased utilities costs.
- Income still does not include REME club membership or storage fees which remain outstanding for the period in question. The REME CC must therefore be regarded as a bad debtor, though we have control over their assets in storage, which is sufficient to write-off their debt.
- Most income lines are in a healthy state despite some reductions which may reflect cost of living increases:
 - Membership income is slightly reduced despite pegging membership fees at 2021/22 levels for a year.
 - We made a slightly lower income of £5,622 from coaching and equipment hire.
 - Our event income increased to nearly £3,000 with additional activity.
 - We raised £3,000 from boat storage during the year.
- Expenditure has increased in several areas with significant increases above 2022/22 on:
 - Sundry items – these are the small everyday purchases required to help the club activities run efficiently. In 2022/23 our new financial governance policy delegated financial approval to club officers so they could approve costs for equipment and facilities maintenance.
 - Coaching and expenses decreased from a high in 2021/22 to £4,618. This reflects more consistency in the payment of expenses for programme delivery. In 2022/23 this sum was entirely offset by coaching and hire income. In 2023/24 we will review the margin on this activity to ensure it continues to make a healthy surplus.
 - Expenditure on events increased from 2021/22 which is significantly below the income from these events. This deficit results from a decision by Trustees to pay for crew boat entries and to pay all costs associated with towing the club trailer to events.
 - Utilities costs show a significant increase over 2021/22 which reflects increased use and above inflation increases wholesale electricity and gas prices.

The club maintains around 2 years' operating costs in general reserve. Our restricted reserves included, at the end of the 2022/23 year, a £969 junior fund for the exclusive use of junior projects and bursaries, and a facilities (property) reserve of £9,000.

Our expenses in 2022/23, as last year, include the payment of entry fees for all crew boat entries to incentivise crew boat entries in competitions. We also instituted a 'towing fee' to encourage larger teams to travel to events. Although this policy is expensive, and accounts for some of our excess of expenditure over income, it reduces the cost of competition, and eases the burden on families of participation in regional and national events.

During 2022/23 we applied for a £10,000 Sport England grant to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, but were unsuccessful. This grant would have purchased additional plastic novice K1s, Stand-Up Paddle (SUP) boards and a limited number of sit-on-top boats for less mobile paddlers.

The club received no grant funding in 2022/23. With increased costs putting pressure on club funds, the club must place increased emphasis on securing grant income for all capital purchases. The Trustees have commissioned a thorough fleet and equipment review to identify and prioritise future needs as a basis for grant funding applications.

Investments approved by Club trustees last year in our club facilities were delivered to plan and below the approved budget. We put on hold plans to re-render the building pending development decisions.

A summary of financial recommendations for the AGM

1. The Treasurer will keep the affordability of the competition entry fee and towing policies kept under review and make new recommendations, if required, by year end 2023/24.
2. We intend to tighten controls on event budgets to ensure they deliver an overall surplus, so this policy remains affordable.
3. For 2023/24 the cost of any capital equipment purchases must be 50% met by grant or fundraising activities.
4. The club will maximise income streams from external programmes.
5. Trustees will invite the AGM to approve proportionate increases in 2024/25 member fees and boat storage.

We are pleased to report that, despite an operating deficit of £4,270, the club is in robust financial shape at the end of this year.

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.

Strategic Development

At our last AGM we made a statement to members about plans, now in the public domain, to develop Wadworth & Co's brewery site adjacent to the Club.

In 2022/23 we engaged with the consultation process being undertaken by the brewery site developer and with Wiltshire Council, our property owner.

We published a feasibility paper based on master planning work commissioned by Wiltshire Council and explored the feasibility of three options identified in that work. These options continue to guide the club's approach. In outline they were:

1. Retain the club's current site.
2. Redevelop the club adjacent within the brewery site.
3. Relocate the club elsewhere.

After the period covered by this report the brewery's developer published a full planning application. The outcome of this will be reported in our next annual report, although at the time of writing, that application rules out option 2 above. The developer would like to acquire the club's site but does not intend to redevelop the club within the brewery site or elsewhere.

We continue to have conversations with important stakeholders that are directly involved and privy to confidential information. These include Wiltshire Council, Devizes Town Council Planning Committee, Wadworth & Co and the DACT. It remains vital to build the club's public profile over the next few years to give key stakeholders a much better understanding of our priorities and development needs.

The Club Trustees' position remains that we have no concerns about the long-term viability of the club or the site we occupy. We have a 125-year lease and 25-year leases on the section of Lower Wharf roadway within club boundaries and the launch area. This, with a legally sound right of access over the Lower Wharf roadway, gives us a strong hand in any negotiations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bouch', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Bouch
Chair, on behalf of the Trustees