

**Newhaven Gig Rowing Club Extraordinary Meeting  
Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019  
NGRC Club House, Newhaven**



**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Rachel Beardsworth, Mark Beaumont, Caroline Dean, Tracy Day, Olivia McGuckian, Laura Pullen, Martin Rogers, Andy Siese, Fiona Siese, Lee St Clair, Mark Syrett, Phil Thompson, Nikki Tweedie, Michelle Vardy, Dan Wittenberg.

**Apologies:** Will Boden, Christina Cosgrove

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

1.1 Apologies noted as above

**2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Action Review**

2.2 Outstanding actions were discussed, and the Action Log was updated.

**The purpose of the meeting is:**

To discuss challenges that have arisen around race crew selection and the effects it has already had and effects it could continue to have.

To air and informally report issues that relate to decision making processes within the race committee.

To discuss decision making, decisions are not being made and adhered to in unison. These concerns are being cited as the reason for the recent departure of one of the coxes/coaches of the club. And the concern is that more could follow.

We believe these issues have arisen due to our previously agreed need to open up race crew selection, so every member can have access to racing. Issues arising from this are: that one race crews – Women's B wants to row and stay together and how that fits in with new crews wanting to form and stay together.

Should we revisit the racing selection process? Or are we all quite clear, i.e. the document that was largely formed by Dan.

Do we want to review the racing procedure? We have all agreed 'No', therefore we are airing and voicing concerns and trying to understand the main issues we are dealing with.

**Resignations**

**Dexter Allen**

On the coxing thread which appears to say that the direction of the club doesn't align with his values anymore. There is speculation as to what he actually means by this.

The conclusion from this and other verbal sources is the following:

Agreements are being made in committees then overturned or not adhered to.

Too many decisions are being made by one or two people.

Questioning how the race committee was formed.

Did the main committee decide the members of the race committee?

How did race captains get selected?

He wants the club's emphasis to be on community/social rowing rather than racing.

### **Caroline Dean**

Caroline verbally resigned at the end of the meeting. Saying she didn't like being lied to, but did not elaborate further on this.

### **Race Selection Frequency**

There was a race committee meeting where a selection frequency was agreed upon, there are differing views as to what time period this was, whether it was 12 months or 9 months, with a review at 6 months and then this was changed.

Caroline says this has suddenly been changed to 3 months after a longer period of time had already been agreed at the race committee meeting. Her point is that decisions are being made at the race committee meeting then overturned or changed in the committee meeting. She asks who made the decision that it was now going to be 3-month intervals.

Nikki said that the minutes done by Michelle from the race crew meeting show that an agreement was made to set the interval at 9 months with a 6 months review. Dexter, Caroline and Tracy, on behalf of the Women's B crew asked for that to be changed to 12 months at the last meeting. This generated another conversation in which some people wanted a longer process, some a shorter process, it was only agreed that people would go away and come back with ideas as to how the different options would work.

Caroline insists a decision was made at that meeting which she believes has now been overturned.

Michelle Vardy took minutes of this meeting, so it is suggested that these minutes are looked at to see whether a decision was in fact made

Tracy also thinks that a decision was made on 9 months to be reviewed at 6 months.

It is confirmed that race selection was supposed to be the end of September 2019 but a decision was made at the committee meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September that there needed to be more time, so mid-October was agreed upon. So, the discussion about race selection frequency is about the next selection not this one.

The suggestion has also been put forward to have race seasons, there are 2 situations, 6 to 9, 12,

### **Judging Panel**

Caroline also believes that after the last selection process it was agreed that there would be a panel of people judging the selection process, not just 3 people, and not necessarily the same three people that did it last time. Caroline's thought is that if 2 of the 3 judges were not available then the judging would be left to one single judge to do which she thinks is not the way to do it, and believes others feel the same way. It is also disputed that this panel was agreed, but it has been agreed to discuss this idea further.

### **Transparency**

There is a discussion about transparency of the selection process with criticism being that members don't get to see their results and don't get the scoring or results explained to them. It has already been agreed to improve transparency around the results with the intention of putting things up in the club house, although this hasn't been done yet. This could be members results if they consented and also information on what being in a race crew involves in terms of commitment etc.

### **Race Selection.**

Some members feel that so much upset was caused by the last selection process that the next one needs to be done differently.

Nikki has said that she is happy not to be part of the selection process at all, to step away from it and let other people take this role on.

There is discussion about how race selection whereby ergo (indoor rowing machine) averages are done by boat rather than individual scores, not everyone is happy with this idea. It is suggested that the technique assessment on the water could be videoed and a panel could review the video. Then if anyone had any issue with their score, the footage could be reviewed frame by frame.

Race selection is a really important and having objectivity about who is better than who.

There is a feeling it is a vicious circle whereby, if you don't get selected for a race crew you don't get the technical training and feedback you need to improve and pass the next selection.

After race crew selection give members feedback about what they need to do to improve.

Commitment to turning up every week is part of the criteria which we can use this time in the selection process, it's no good members only turning up once.

How do other clubs do selection?

- Challenging someone for their seat – that being tested in races with this person in the boat and not
- Seat races – where everyone goes through the above process
- Setting minimum ergo times – where people have to achieve cut off times to enter the selection process
- Coach decision – where the club coach selects

### **Squads Instead of Crews**

It was suggested to have squads of 9 instead of crews of 6 and they change around within that, so there are 9 people getting training instead of just 6. A process needs to be made of how we select the 6 from the 9 that are available.

### **How long does a crew row together?**

As well as selection frequency, it also needs to be agreed upon, how long a crew can stay together once it has been selected, there is also the feeling that this was something that was previously decided upon but has now been changed.

### **Concerns**

That we have selection coming up in a few weeks, what do we do about that? and people asking: how long will we be training for? how long coxes agree to train a crew for? How long do you think is fair that you spend in a crew? how many months? or do we decide now?

Three trustees are the minimum that the club can have, if one of them leaves then we have a problem because constitutionally the only purpose trustees can be for is to appoint another trustee, so the club would cease functioning properly as a charity. Dexter is still listed as a trustee which he shouldn't be as he has resigned.

Lack of health and safety training and the lack of communication between coxes. Favouritism going on in the club. The club being run by individual's rather than a committee and individuals making decisions rather than the committee.

An incident was mentioned whereby a cox felt a safety decision they made was undermined and criticized by another cox to the extent they felt harassed, this issue is now being dealt with in a separate process.

Some members are unhappy about decision making at the club citing inconsistencies and feeling that good people are leaving because of this. Also, tension between committee members and coxes which in turn affects the members. They feel there needs to be changes in decision making, organisation, training, coaching and race selection.

Race crews being able to practice enough to make themselves competitive, if you are in a race crew and you are only practicing once a week it is not enough.

There is frustration that the only opportunity some existing crews have had to race is in our own regatta when they really would have liked the opportunity to compete in other things.

### **Suggestions**

Having a formal complaints/concerns procedure. As at the moment we are only able to report issues informally. This would also enable trustees to voice concerns about other trustees.

Having a probationary period for new members before they can become eligible to join a race crew. There is disagreement over this with some feeling that everyone should have the opportunity to race from the beginning if they are good enough.

Having a dedicated captain for each category that wants to race or take part in events or challenges. Selection from a pool of members who decide if they wish to join the pool. 6 coxes and 6 captains. Not all coxes are able to do racing. More captains on the racing side as there is more energy in this area.

Mark reads out Will Boden's suggestions in his email of 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019.

Using challenge events to ensure that people can stay together as crews and represent the club.

Reconsider racing altogether if it is causing this much division.

Maybe we could do an anonymous survey putting agreed questions to members. We did it a couple of years ago and got some really good feedback. Write up your notes in Survey Monkey questions, circulate them, add the questions that people want to go in and come up with a final agreement. Get it down roughly then the committee members will put in their detailed thoughts into it and delete what's irrelevant or not quite the right angle.

### **Reasons for Race Selection**

Some members are only doing race selection so that they get a guaranteed row each week.

Some members are going through selection just to obtain feedback on their technique, maybe we can find an alternative way they can get feedback, like coming to the clubhouse and getting feedback from a cox.

### **Supervets**

Breaking up current crews takes away their desire/right/privilege to represent the club.

Younger members have time to progress, but for the Supervets it might be their last opportunity whilst they are all physically able, to have a go at racing, they have worked extremely hard but they have not been given the opportunity to race anywhere and represent the club. Rowing together so long has allowed them to each hone their position on the boat.

Another supervets crew could be formed but not at the expense of the existing supervets crew, if a new supervets crew was the better crew then of course they would be the ones to compete. They could pitch against each other before a race and the best crew would compete. There may not be enough supervets for 2 crews.

A proposal for the Supervets part of the club to work differently? To have a different time scale applied to it? To continue to race as they are? Put a proposal forward to the race committee, to treat the supervets as a separate entity?

If that is done then provision needs to be made for new supervets so they also feel they have an opportunity to race

They don't have a cox now Dex has resigned.

A separate discussion needs to be had between the supervets as to whether they are putting themselves forward to race.

If you are a supervet crew wanting to stay together, is that for a specific amount of time? Is that what we say to other supervets that are training really hard and would like to know there is the opportunity to make a supervets crew.

### **Inclusivity**

Balancing the needs of new members coming into the club with the needs of existing members. Everyone pays the same amount so should have the same opportunities. Some existing members feel there has been too much emphasis on getting new members into race crews, that new members needs are being prioritised over existing members and existing members are feeling side-lined.

Dan feels so strongly that the process should be fair for everybody regardless of their sex, age, physical ability, that he wouldn't be happy in taking part in racing at this club if the process wasn't accessible to everybody equally.

Inclusivity is written into the club's constitution

There is a feeling that too much time and effort has been spent on trying to make race selection fair and transparent and maybe things should be simplified.

There is a discussion on how other clubs deal with selection and investigating this further.

It's suggested that there is a contradiction in wanting to keep certain crews together because they have previously been crews, and being inclusive, and the feeling that you cannot be/do both. That if you refuse to let other members join existing crews then you are not being inclusive. We need to find a way to be both competitive and inclusive.

There is discussion that we already are, citing the Great River Race as an example of this, where a self-selected group get together and race to represent the club.

### **Resources**

Have we got the capacity to train crews? how many coxes will we have that could actually train the number of race crews we are talking about for the league? Can we get people out once a week? We need to assess what we have got, we don't know how many race crews we have going forwards.