

The Minutes of the Autumn Delegates Meeting of the Hants & Dorset Amateur Rowing Association, held at the BTC A. R. C. Clubhouse, Southampton on Saturday, 1st November, 2008.

There were 29 delegates in attendance with apologies received from a further 6 delegates (Peter Staddon of Christchurch and Brian Gowman of Westover and Bournemouth a H&D VP, Micky Westmore of Newport, Andy Sothcott of Poole and South Coast Council, Brent Hartland, Southampton and H&D VP, Penny Glazzard of Coalporters) plus all of Westover and Bournemouth Rowing Club and Regatta, when the Chairman, Mark Viner opened the meeting at 10.40am. There were no delegates in attendance from Westover and Worthing Rowing Clubs or Bournemouth Regatta.

The Minutes of the last Delegates Meeting were taken as read, and agreed as a correct record on a proposal from Bob Siver, seconded by Denny Woodford.

The Association Secretary then gave details of the correspondence he had undertaken on the Associations behalf since the Annual General Meeting in March. This included correspondence relating to Club affiliation, Club and individual registration, Points claims, plus correspondence relating to the affiliated events - permit applications and issues, results etc.. He has also communicated on a regular basis with Racing Officials and Club and Regatta Safety advisors with relevant information and administered the Racing Officials ARA membership contributions for Insurance purposes and their availability for events. This has included the thirteen Hants & Dorset Championship Regattas, three Head Races and three Junior events. He was also able to resolve, in consultation with his fellow executive officers some confusion over the status of several female scullers – which were all resolved amicably. Association bulletins were sent to all Executive Officers, Life and Vice Presidents, Clubs and Regatta's in July and October the July bulletin included the minutes of the AGM, Officials Meeting and the Safety Meeting. The October bulletin included the minutes of the Executive meeting of 23rd August and the notice and Agenda for this meeting and a further package of information relating to the Autumn Delegates Meeting was sent out in mid October. Documentation required for the season for Clubs, Regattas and racing Officials were sent out in April and the South Coast Rowing Handbooks which provided the contact lists for all Executive, Officers, Clubs, Regattas and Racing Officials were distributed during May and early June. The Secretary dealt with various correspondences relating to this years South Coast Rowing Championships in Plymouth from the event Chairman Chris Moyse, the South Coast Council and the Association Secretaries of CARA and the West of England ARA. This included entering the Championship Crews - and letters of invitation and congratulation were sent to all H&D Clubs with representative crews but only Itchen and Ryde sent letters of acceptance and thanks to the Association for this honour. As required by South Coast Council Rules he also detailed the Hants & Dorset Regatta results to the South Coast Council, CARA and West of England. The information received back from WEARA and CARA was limited! He also wrote on behalf of the Association to Chris Moyse in his capacity as Chairman of Plymouth Rowing Club to offer the Associations condolences on the tragic death of their Captain and WEARA President and asked for these to be past on to his family. The Secretary advised Hilary Bastone, Secretary of the South Coast Council of our race officials for the 2008 Championships and of our new South Coast Council member – Andy Sothcott, as well as proposing Colin Eales from Southsea as a possible successor to Hilary Bastone as Secretary/Treasurer of the South Coast Council as he is due to step down in late 2008/early 2009 – and on behalf of the Association thanked him for his hard work over many years which he has acknowledged and thanked us for. On behalf of the Association the Secretary has attended, on a regular basis the Wessex Regional Rowing Council Meetings and has also attended two Amateur Rowing Association Water Safety Meetings in his capacity as Water Safety Advisor to the Wessex Region and as a member of the Hants & Dorset Safety Commission. He has provided an element of secretarial and administrative support to the Associations Umpires Commission and the Safety Commission and was invited by the Chairman of the Hampshire County Council to attend a celebration for long standing service to sport but unfortunately was unable to attend. He has written to Clubs regarding late withdrawal from Regatta fines and have coordinated the payment of fines and appeals against them. For the record there were 29 fines imposed and twelve appeals received which were considered by the Associations executive Officers on the morning of the meeting with Clubs advised of the result in due course. He coordinated the nomination process for the Daily Echo Trophy in memory of Arthur Chatfield and have arranged the engraving of the medals in time for the presentation Dinner in November as well as communicating the results of the Coxswain of the Year contest and writing to all Clubs who won Hants & Dorset Championships congratulating them on their success. The Hants & Dorset ARA web site - hdara.co.uk - has been maintained and further enhanced during the year and further significant enhancements and improvements are planned for 2009. From April through to August, 2008 the site has averaged around 300 hits with an average of 1200 pages viewed per month. Unfortunately although all Regatta results and a Championship Table were sent to David Biddulph for publication on his rowing pages for reasons yet to establish this has not yet happened – which is a shame as the Hants & Dorset Web site links to these results. The Secretary also put on record an E mail received from Coalporters and supported by several clubs to John Bailey in particular – but aimed at all H&D Racing Officials

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generally, following Newport Regatta thanking him and them for his and their tireless efforts in getting events back on line after problems and maintaining control – often in difficult circumstances.

The following correspondence had also been received which needed and received consideration by the meeting - South Coast Rowing Handbook. The Association Secretary had once again been advised by WEARA, and on this occasion joined by CARA that they did not intend to continue their support for the South Coast Rowing Handbook. The meeting agreed with the Association Secretary, who had already written to the two Associations to ask them to reconsider that this would be a retrograde step and was a very short-sighted approach on their behalf. It was agreed that our delegates would take the matter up at the South Coast Council meeting in January and Southsea agreed to challenge the CARA decision at their delegates meeting. They would also seek some costing's from a member who had contacts in the printing trade to see if it would be viable for the Association to go it alone. Jimmy Jewell the editor had indicated his willingness to continue if two Associations agreed to contribute and felt that the current cost could be held.

An alleged Incident at a Camp Site at the South Coast Rowing Championships, in Plymouth reputed to involve to Hants & Dorset Clubs - Newport and Worthing had been brought to the attention of the Association. After an exchange of E Mails and apologies, without admission of guilt being offered it was agreed by the meeting that this appeared to have been blown out of all proportion and that no further action was required unless further correspondence was received.

The organisers of the 2009 South Coast Rowing Championships had asked about the availability of Quads for the Junior Races at next years SCC. A quick survey of Clubs was undertaken which would be communicated to them. Clubs indicated some reluctance to loan boats although they would if they could.

The Associations ARA Council Representative was due for re-election and as Mike Green had indicated his willingness to continue it was agreed that the Association Secretary would take the appropriate actions required to re-nominate him.

The 2008 Regatta season was then considered in detail by the meeting. (see attached summary. Appendix 1).

In addition to the detailed discussions on each event a suggestion from Graham Reeve of Ryde that Regattas should publish a draft running order with the invitation to Clubs was discussed as it was thought that this may help Clubs plan their entries better, especially when doubling-up, and therefore make Regatta Secretaries jobs easier - but although some Events agreed to do this the view of the meeting was that it would do little to help. A letter was also read out from BTC Rowing Club complaining about the lack of support from some Clubs for the last Regatta of the season, when Championships may already have been decided. BTC who, by their own choice were often the last Regatta and felt they suffered significantly from this problem. The meeting felt it would be difficult to frame a rule to cover this situation although various ideas were discussed. The meeting eventually accepted that the last Regatta of the season would probably always suffer in this way and the most appropriate solution was for this fixture to be shared more fairly across the Championship Regattas.

The administration and organisation of Swanage Regatta in 2008 was then discussed by the meeting and it was agreed that once again this combined effort had worked well. The Association Secretary put on record his thanks to the following who made a significant contribution to the success of the event - Sue and Andy Sothcott, Denny Woodford, David Smith, Pete Staddon, Tim Bull, John Bailey, Pete Diffey and the H&D Racing Officials. Plus Poole, Christchurch, Lymington, Westover, BTC and Ryde Rowing Clubs.

The meeting then considered and approved the Accounts of the 2007 South Coast Rowing Championships at Dorney Lake on a proposal from Denny Woodford, seconded by Bob Sivier (*See attached for copy of consolidated accounts*).

The Association Secretary then read his report on the 2008 South Coast Championship Regatta held at in Plymouth and hosted by the West of England ARA. He reported on a reasonably successful Regatta and on considerable success for the Hants & Dorset ARA. (*See master copy for full report*).

Denny Woodford then reported, in detail, on the South Coast Council meetings than had taken place since the AGM and matters arising from these. He commented on the state of the Plymouth Clubhouse, the improvements to the Plymouth Course the failure to undertake boat inspections, a challenge with regards to weather some H&D Championship crews qualified for their event and the lack of control at the Regatta. Our delegates also expressed their concern regarding the late change of names of the Coalporters Men's Championship Junior Crew and the Clubs failure to follow the correct procedure for crew alterations that resulted in urgent telephone calls to the Association Secretary that resulted in him having to resolve the issue at the Friday evening reception. The Association Secretary assured the meeting that the crew entered had been that advised by Coalporters and that confirmation of the crew entered and the procedure for any changes had been advised to Coalporters in plenty of time - and other Clubs with selected crews confirmed that they had received this information well before the Regatta. The Association Secretary was requested to

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write to Coalporters regarding their failure to comply with these instructions which could have resulted in them being unable to compete in the event, with no time for the association to select an alternative crew.

Denny went on to give brief details of the 2009 Championships at Folkestone - this would take place on Saturday, 5th September - the same date as the Port of Bidiford Regatta. The event was being organised by a committee drawn from several clubs. The course was 1700m - with an alternative course for all events at Deal and for Championship events only at Herne Bay. The junior Regatta, with four events, would be on the same day, over the same course, starting at 9.00am. The South Coast Council AGM would be at Christchurch Rowing Club on Saturday, 9th January.

The meeting then considered possible changes to the South Coast Rowing Championship Rules. With regards to the changes proposed by CARA/South Coast Council the meeting could see no reason why Rule 36 should be changed and it was agreed on a proposal from Gary Joyce, seconded by Pete Jacobs that our delegates should be instructed to vote against this proposal. The suggested amendment to rule 37 was accepted. In addition it was agreed that the Association should propose the following rule changes/amendments - *see attached*.

The Coastal Events at the National Championships were then considered by the meeting and it was agreed after a short debate that as efforts to encourage more entries had not been successful and no serious support from CARA was forthcoming that the Coastal Events at the National Championships should no longer receive priority on available dates and that the Association Secretary should write to the National Championships Committee accordingly. As it was likely that the Saturday of the National Championships was liable to be a Hants & Dorset Fixture it was noted that if all heats and finals of the Coastal events were scheduled for the Sunday some level of support may still be possible and that this should be pointed out to the National Championships Committee

The Regatta dates for the 2009 season were then discussed and agreed - with BTC taking an earlier date making Itchen the last Regatta of the season and the decision to not keep the date of the national Championships clear freeing up a date that resolved the remaining issues. The agreed dates were as follows -

Saturday, 14th March.

Southampton Eights, River & Small Boats HRR.

Sunday, 29th March.

Head of the Stour, Christchurch.

Saturday, 25th April.

Southampton Coastal Fours HRR.

Saturday, 9th May.

RYDE REGATTA.

Sunday, 10th May.

SHANKLIN REGATTA.

Saturday, 23rd May.

BTC REGATTA.

Saturday, 30th May.

MILFORD (LYMINGTON) REGATTA.

Saturday, 6th June.

NEWPORT REGATTA.

Saturday, 13th June.

POOLE REGATTA.

Saturday, 27th June.

WOOLSTON REGATTA.

Saturday, 11th July.

SOUTHSEA REGATTA.

Sunday, 12th July.

Coalporters Junior Regatta

Saturday, 18th July.

COALPORTERS REGATTA.

(Friday, 17th to Sunday, 19th July National Championships, Nottingham).

Saturday, 25th July.

SWANAGE REGATTA

Saturday, 1st August.

BOURNEMOUTH REGATTA.

Saturday, 8th August

CHRISTCHURCH REGATTA.

Saturday, 15th August.

ITCHEN IMPERIAL REGATTA.

Sunday, 16th August.

Hants & Dorset Championship and South Coast Selection row-offs if required. Dockhead, Southampton. 11.00am.

Saturday, 5th September.

South Coast Junior Regatta and South Coast Championships Regatta, Folkestone.

Friday, 23rd to Sunday
25th October.

FISA Coastal Championships, Plymouth.

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Sunday, 22nd November.

Coalporters Winter Sculls HERR.

BTC Regatta may switch to a new venue in 2010 – and may have a trial Regatta over the new course on either 21st March or 18th April.

Dates still to be advised: .

Itchen Junior Sprint Regatta. Wessex Junior Regatta, Bryanston.
and Southampton Junior Regatta.

Representatives from BTC Rowing Club then made a brief presentation on a proposed change of venue - to a similar course to the Itchen Regatta. Itchen were very uncomfortable with this proposal - as they feared another regatta over the same course would have a significant impact of the approvals and cooperation of local authorities and businesses and were concerned that BTC did not fully appreciate the effort involved in getting permission to stage the event. It was however agreed that BTC should continue to work towards their plan, bearing in mind Itchen's concerns and consulting with them - and that a trial regatta should be held with a view to using the new venue in 2010. The BTC delegates were asked to E mail the presentation to the Association Secretary so it could be circulated for comment.

The venues for the 2011 South Coast Championship Regatta, the next due to be hosted by the Association was then considered by the meeting. The H&D Forum had circulated a matrix comparing the advantages and disadvantages of three venues' that had been considered - Swanage, Sandbanks and Dorney Lake - with a recommendation that Dorney Lake was selected. After some debate including an analysis of the available funding the meeting agreed on a proposal from Steve Bull, seconded by Pete Jacobs that Dorney Lake should be the venue of the 2011 South Coast Rowing Championships and Junior Regatta, that the event should be underwritten by the Association and that a committee to organise the event should be drawn from across all Clubs. The Association Secretary agreed to arrange an early meeting so that a presentation for the South Coast Council Meeting in January could be prepared and a committee formulated.

John Purkess then reported to the meeting on behalf of the Umpires Commission. His report was based on an amalgamation of the officials reports received. He was able to report on a relatively trouble free season with no major incidents. However he expressed his concerns regarding crew's basic boating skills in rough water, especially launching and recovery; buoy alignment - with lots of adjustments needed - and for the Regatta to have someone available to do this; poor manning of Safety Boats - in respect of numbers, age and experience - along with the problems of dual roles - safety and umpires. He was also able to report on an increased number of very competent assistant racing officials which should relieve some of the issues relating to the dwindling number of full racing officials.

The Association Secretary reported on the activities of the Safety Sub Committee since the Annual General Meeting as follows - Since the Associations AGM in March some members of the Hants & Dorset Safety Sub Committee have met, informally, on a number of occasions but no formal meetings have taken place; National Safety Meetings. On behalf of the Hants & Dorset ARA Safety Sub Committee and as Water Safety Advisor to the Wessex Regional Rowing Council I have attended two National Water Safety Meetings at ARA Headquarters in London since the Associations AGM. The main business conducted at these meetings was - the preparation of the new ARA Water Code - called "Row Safe" due to be rolled out over the next few months; a review of and response to the ROSPA report on Rowing Safety; The Club Safety Audits; The roll-out of on-line incident reporting which should be in place early next year along with an on line Regional based Safety Forum via the ARA's "Row How" on-line learning and communications system. Event Safety Audits. All Hants & Dorset events except the Southampton Coastal Fours HERR and Coalporters Junior Regatta submitted self-audits of Safety procedures and plans and most were re-audited by a member of the Safety Sub Committee. This included the Wessex Junior Regatta at Bryanston. Following concerns expressed after an incident at a Wessex training day at Canford the Wessex Training Camp at Bryanston was also audited and guidelines put in place for Safety procedures and plans at regional training camps. Club Safety Audits. Making the Club Safety Audit a pre-requisite of ARA affiliation with non complying clubs named and then banned for racing has proved very effective as a means of ensuring compliance with all Hants & Dorset and Wessex Clubs having submitted their audits well before the deadline. The process is the same for this year, with a slightly amended audit form and Clubs have until 31st December to submit these to me as Regional Safety Advisor. The Club audit now includes a section to summarise incidents which will allow the region and the ARA to build up some meaningful data on the frequency and severity of incidents regionally. Boat Inspections. Boats Inspections were undertaken at three Hants & Dorset Regatta's during the season with an average of two boats per attending Club inspected. A total 47 boats were inspected with 19 faults recorded - rate of 0.4 faults per boat. The single biggest fault found, as always, is with heel restraints which accounts for over 50% of faults logged. One boat was prevented from going afloat during the season due to the severity of the fault found. Further analysis on a club by club basis will be provided at the next safety meeting. Association owned Safety Equipment. The Association owned Safety Equipment remains in reasonable condition helped by the new Waterproof Safety bags - for example all three loud hailers were still functioning when the kits were returned to me at the end of the season. The buckles on two of the bags have broken which may indicate a design weakness but as the third bag

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survived the season intact this may just be a coincidence - repair or replacement will be undertaken. Three life jackets have gone missing - and one new red has appeared. At least one of the missing life jackets is known to be at Christchurch - but one went missing very early in the season - first noticed at Newport Regatta in June - when the Red one appeared. Some Regatta's continue to rely on the air horns provided in the kits to finish races which is not their purpose and some Regatta continue to use the kits for their safety boats - when they are provided for the race officials. Incidents. There were a number of incidents reported during the season of varying degrees of severity which will be examined in more detail at the next formal meeting of the Safety Sub Committee, probably in January - with Coalporters already volunteering to host - and receive a re-audit of their Safety facilities and procedures.

The Chairman of the Wessex Regional Rowing Council, Colin Eales then gave a brief report on the regions activities which included - a report of the activities of the regions CDO; the new ARA five year plan; Sport England's new targets - which were all about participation - 5000 additional rowers participating - once a week; a fleet of fifty new "stable" boats to be made available. The new "stable" boats plan generated some discussion as it was clear the ARA had not selected a design yet and the "standard" Coastal Boat design appeared to fit the bill. The Association Secretary was to write to the ARA to make sure the Coastal boat was given due consideration.

Division 22 ARA Representative Mike Green's then gave a brief report on the activities of the Amateur Rowing Association highlighting - the new Government initiative regarding five hours of activity in and after school that could lead to improved School/Club links; the new anti-doping rules; no changes to ARA fees for 2009 - and the discussion around the cost, format and content of ARA Coaching courses. Following a question from the floor Mike confirmed that the changes to the ARA status rules had been aged by Council. This meant that the H&D would have to reconsider their comparison system yet again. At Mike's request the Association Secretary agreed to add the dates of ARA Council Meetings to the Hants & Dorset ARA Web site.

The arrangements for the Presentation Dinner, being organised for the Association by Gareth Cook, were then confirmed as Saturday, 15th November, at 7.00pm at the Novotel, Southampton with Tickets costing £25.50. The Association Secretary reminded those Clubs and individuals who had not yet returned Trophies to bring them, in a clean condition to the Dinner.

A proposal from Gary Joyce, of Itchen Imperial, that the Association should present Club Shields for Hants & Dorset Championships, that had been previously submitted and discussed but left of the next meeting Agenda in error by the Association Secretary, for which he apologised, was then considered by the meeting. Gary outlined the scheme and the likely cost based on quotes he had received and while there was some dissension - 20 for and 5 against - the meeting agreed that the proposal should go forward to the AGM for further discussion and voting upon. A summary of the proposal is - The H&D may continue to get problems if it insists the championships are a 'club' championship but give medals to individuals who are the 'championship winning crew'. The proposal is that the clubs get something to acknowledge they have won the event. And if the H&D want to continue to award individuals championship medals then the club nominate the individuals to receive them (as they do now), with the right to apply for more under the guidelines if reserves have been used. The suggestion is that Clubs receive a shield/plaque measuring around 140 x 180mm. The idea is to have the H&D badge/logo in the centre of the shield with the words Hants & Dorset ARA and the Championship won and the year won on a scroll either above or below or above and below the H&D badge/logo. Costs are - *A one-off artwork charge of £35.00 for new designs on orders of less than 50. 25 - 49 shields will cost £12.95 plus VAT. 50 - 99 shields will cost £12.25 plus VAT. 100 - 199 is £11.25 plus VAT. 200 + is £10.25.* To change the artwork on the bottom scroll to indicate the relevant championship won and the year (e.g. Men's Novice Fours 2007 or MN4+ 2007) they suggest we have the H&D badge with H&D ARA on the scroll and for £1 they can make up a small brass plaque giving year and status won which could be attached above the logo. There is a minimum order of 25 shields so if we go ahead it might be appropriate to order minimum of two years worth in one order or 3 years worth to save the artwork charge. A 3 year order would cost £756.84 inc. VAT. A Club shield would also allow a Club to put as many names as they like on after presentation covering, in part, the problem of additional Championship medals.

Being related to the above proposal the meeting then discussed the rules/conventions covering the award of additional Hants & Dorset ARA Championship Medals. Written inputs had been received from the Association Chairman, Mark Viner and from Gary Joyce of Itchen which were discussed by the meeting which then agreed that the Association secretary should formulate a rule based on the points made to go forward to the associations AGM for consideration. Summary of the points made - 1) Applicants and have competed as a member of the championship crew and won at least three Championship points in that crew' before qualification for a medal can be discussed. 2) Clubs must submit request prior to delegates meeting where said request be read out with supporting evidence, however decision and vote be deferred to AGM for two reasons - i) to allow all parties time to investigate evidence and circumstances. ii) to

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eliminate any problem with presentation dinner. 3) Clubs must prove points needed are to win a championship. Once a Championship is won any additional wins would not count towards qualification for an additional medal. to be awarded. This would close loophole of extras (subs) qualifying for a medal once a championship was won. 4) The application should also be discussed between the members of the Executive Committee before the AGM and a recommendation as to whether to accept or decline the application should be announced.

The meeting then considered other possible rule changes to go forward to the AGM for consideration and it was agreed that the following should be included -

- 1) To amend the Veteran Status Rule so that no Championship Point would be awarded if it was a composite crew - with the first full Club Crew to finish receiving the point as long as two full Club crews were in the race.
- 2) To amend the rule relating to fines for crews scratched after the Regatta has started from £10 per crew/sculler to £5 per seat excluding coxswain.
- 3) To discuss the qualification for Junior (J16 etc) races with the view to introducing a rule that prevents any rower/Sculler who is not novice status being from entering Junior races, at Hants & Dorset Regatta's regardless of whether their age qualifies them or not.

The lack of entry fees received with regatta entries on occasions was discussed. Although most clubs 'catch up' with payment eventually it's an additional burden on regatta secretaries to keep records of which clubs have paid and who have not. Various deterrents were discussed but no appropriate rule change suggested. It was agreed that a reminder should be sent to all Club Secretaries and that Regatta Secretaries should advise the Association Secretary of all at fault next year who would be named and shamed.

Weather or not entry fee cheques should not be cashed until after the successful completion of the regatta in case regatta is abandoned and the situation arises where entry fees would be re-funded was discussed but no firm conclusion reached.

Clarification was also sought regarding the refunding of Regatta fees where crews/individuals pay to enter events but the events are subsequently not run due lack of entries. The meeting confirmed that in such instances that entry fees should be refunded.

Under Any Other Business the meeting discussed the abuse of the Novice Composite Rule where Clubs arrived at a Regatta with a composite crew already formed. Clubs and Regattas are to be reminded of the rules which should be more vigorously enforced next season.

The possibility of as many as possible of Junior Regattas beings held outside of the Hants & Dorset Championship season was also mentioned as this would ease logistic and adult support issues.

There was no further "Any other business" and it was agreed the date for the Annual General Meeting would be on a Saturday in March, depending on the Southampton F. C. Fixture List and Rowing fixtures. The Association Secretary would make the final decision in consultation with his fellow Executive Officers.

With no other business the meeting closed at 3.20pm with thanks to BTC Rowing Club for their hospitality.

H&D ARA Chairman.

[Minutes taken and written by Steve Bull, Association Secretary, November, 2008].

ATTACHMENTS.

The attachments listed below form an integral part of these minutes.

- 1 Summary of Race Officials, Correspondence and incidents at 2008 events.
2. Consolidated Accounts of the 2007 South Coast Rowing Championships at Dorney Lake
3. Report on the 2008 South Coast Championship Regatta. (master only)
4. Proposed changes to South Coast Championship Rules.
5. Availability of Coxed Coastal Quads for the 2009 South Coast Rowing Championships.

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AVAILABILITY OF COXED COASTAL QUADS FOR 2009 SOUTH COAST ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS.

<i>Club</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Willingness to loan.</i>
WORTHING	2	
SOUTHSEA	3	
RYDE	2	Probably make 1 available.
NEWPORT	0	
SHANKLIN	1	
SOUTHAMPTON	1	
COALPORTERS	0	
BTC	1	
ITCHEN	0	
LYMINGTON	1	
CHRISTCHURCH	1	
WESTOVER	?	
POOLE	1	

The Association Secretaries Report on the 52nd South Coast Championship Regatta, and the 3rd South Coast Junior Regatta hosted by the West of England ARA at Plymouth, Devon on Friday, 12th and Saturday, 13th September, 2008.

Hosted by the West of England ARA - Plymouth, where many had vowed never to return, was the controversial choice of venue for the 52nd South Coast Rowing Championships and the 3rd South Coast Junior Regatta. However the main concerns raised - the late start time (3.30pm) with the risk of racing in the dark, and the unfairness of the course - appear to have been unfounded. Both Regattas finished pretty much on time, with plenty of light and enough water left - however the water was ripping out during the last few races on Saturday - so the time remaining was limited. A reversal of the course direction appeared to have overcome many of the issues regarding the fairness of the course - although the shortening of the course to a declared minimum allowed of 1650m - but actually I suspect less than 1600m, also helped. The course would also have been better if numbered from the Clubhouse, with the start boat on that side, but they had to follow the ludicrous South Council Rule that dictates which side the Regatta must be started from - which I will continue to challenge.

The poor weather in the week prior to the Regatta leading to a waterlogged Blagdon Meadows and severe restrictions on the availability of parking and of the boat park but was obviously outside of the control of the organising committee - but was predictable and perhaps more could have been done to prepare for such an eventuality and a better fall back plan put in place. The restrictions on the area available led to a very spread out regatta which the PA system could not cope with and which also resulted in a loss of atmosphere on the bank as did a finish line some 800m away from where the Clubs were based. The reception, prize giving and Saturday evening party held in a water logged Marquee met the minimum standard required as did the catering but for the first time in many years there was no mug or similar memento for competitors. The Plymouth Clubhouse has seen better days and smelt of decay making it unpleasant to sit in. Information provided prior to the Regatta was at the level we have come to expect from a West of England ARA organised event - not very good - limited information received late. The Official Programme was also a pretty poor affair.

The time and venue for the Captains briefing was announced at the reception - but not all Clubs attended this so they might not have been aware of the briefing and so risking a fine for failure to attend. As it happens only Newport failed to turn up and we were able to cover for them - but I can see no reason why the time and venue for the Captains briefing can not be decided in advance and Clubs advised when sent the details of the draw. Communications were generally poor with little use made of E Mail and no effective web site provided.

While the safety cover on the water and first aid facilities ashore appeared adequate I was not aware of any boat inspections taking place. There appears to have been some confusion as to who was responsible for this - the Council assuming the Rowing Club was doing this - and the Club that the Council was. The covering rule is misleading and needs amending.

Turning to the rowing and the entries for the Regatta the Hants & Dorset ARA Clubs provided the bulk of the open and invitation crews with 39 along with the full entry of 12 Championship crews. CARA Clubs also entered a full 12 Championship crews but only 11 in the Open/Invitation events - an indication of the rumoured CARA boycott due to choice of venue! However, even more disappointing was the entry from WEARA, the hosting Association, with 19 crews in the open/invitation events and only 9 named in the Championship events - one of which did not turn up on the start line. It is hard to believe but the West of England was not represented in the Bowl race! 50% of the crews entered came from the Hants & Dorset ARA! While all Hants & Dorset Clubs except Southsea and Westover competed there was only Bideford Reds and Blues, Plymouth, Exeter and Dart Totnes from WEARA. Where were Paignton, Torquay, Dartmouth and the others - could they not even muster one crew each for the open and invitation events in support their own Association!

In the Junior Regatta the West of England did dominate the entries - with 61 of the 100 entries - but only one additional Club - Dartmouth. The Hants & Dorset had 18 entries and CARA 11 but this would have undoubtedly been more if the regatta had not been held on a Friday during the school term.

The Bass Charrington Shield for the most successful Association in the Championship races once again went to the Hants & Dorset ARA but the big prize, the Men's Senior Fours for the Bideford Bowl eluded us in spite of a brave fight from Hants & Dorset Champions BTC who finished 2nd behind CARA Club Bexhill with another CARA Club - Herne Bay - in third. Ryde were a very disappointing 4th.

Coalporters, Hants & Dorset Senior Ladies champions once again, successfully defended their South Coast title as well with a convincing two length victory over CARA representatives Shoreham who finished 2nd and WEARA's Falmouth in 3rd place. BTC, with three Coastal Juniors on board were never able to match the pace of these three crews.

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A second win for the Hants & Dorset ARA came in the Men's Junior Senior event, where once again the Hants & Dorset Champions, Christchurch, proved to be strong for the WEARA competition, from Exeter who finished 2nd - with the other H&D representatives Itchen in 3rd.

The Men's Junior Championship produced the closest race of the day and was dominated by the Hants & Dorset Crews with H&DARA Champions Ryde fighting off a determined Coalporters crew to win by just half a canvas.

The West of England ARA's one Championship win came in the Ladies Junior Fours with a win for Bideford ARC and disappointment for the Hants & Dorset ARA representatives from Christchurch and Itchen after CARA's Eastbourne finished 2nd and WEARA representatives Exeter 3rd.

In the Veterans Championship there was a further victory for the Hants & Dorset ARA with H&D Champions BTC winning a close race from WEARA's Falmouth and CARA's Folkestone, after the lead had changed several times during the race. Second H&D Representatives Lymington were fourth.

Hants & Dorset ARA Club crews also had the better of the other two Associations in the Open and Invitation events with wins in five of the nine events - Itchen in the Men's Senior Fours; Coalporters in the Men's Junior Fours; Poole in the Men's Novice Fours; Coalporters in the Ladies Senior Fours and BTC in the Veteran 50+ race. Their two wins and three second places gave H&D Club Coalporters the Port of Dartmouth Royal Regatta Sesquicentennial Trophy for the best performing Club in the Open and Invitation events.

Coalporters also had a win in the Junior Regatta on the Friday - in the Ladies J14 Single and there were three wins in this Regatta for another Hants & Dorset Club - Christchurch - who won the Men's J14 Single, the Ladies J16 Single, the Ladies J14 Double. However it was a West of England Club - Dartmouth, who dominated winning six events with fellow WEARA Club Exeter winning three, host Club Plymouth two and Bideford Blues and Reds and Dart Totnes one a piece

To reiterate my earlier point - in spite of the concerns and criticisms mentioned this was a successful Regatta as all events were completed, pretty much on time, and the racing, as far as I am aware, was fair with the results giving a true reflection of the crews abilities - and Plymouth A. R. C should be congratulated for this especially in view of the tragedy that befell the Club some weeks before when they lost their Club Captain and WEARA President - which made this a very difficult and emotional time for the Club.

In my view the single biggest threat to the continuation of this event is not suitable courses, not the finance and not even the availability of a suitable number of volunteers to run the event but the apathy and lack of interest and commitment of the West of England ARA Clubs.

I am indebted once again to John Bailey for a copy of his Press Report on the Regatta which helped me with the race details and results. The opinions expressed however are all my own!

Steve Bull.
Association Secretary.
Hants & Dorset ARA.
September, 2008.