

Tuesday 28 November 2023, 19:00 hours for 19:30, Putney Bridge Canoe Club Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Venue:

The Atlas Pub (upstairs rooms), 16 Seagrave Road, London SW6 1RX

Present: Fi Ritchie (Chairperson), Paola Bernoni (Meeting Secretary), Richard Bate, Guy Douglas, Jonathan Fidler, Stephen Hargrave, Geoff Onyett, Olwen Ross, Suki Tan, (Committee Members), Mina Anderson, Fenella Brown, Harriet Eastman, Craig Garlington, Julia Heydenrych, Kevin Heydenrych, Nik Ilukkumbure, Tim James, Tom Keane, Connor Lennon, Katy Loffman, Eric Morgan, Simon Moses, Frank Norall, Darren Palmer, Tracy Pitsialis, Annete Price, John Richards, Phil Roast, Anna Ryten, Adam Smith, Nita Solanky, Michael Stafferton, Florence Trower, Johanna Williams.

(A total number of 34 club members were present)

Apologies: Claire Ashby, Peter Colvin, David Creasy, Annabel Crowe, Rachel Garratt, Tim Gilby, Mark Hammond, Cathy Jacobs, Jenny John Chuan, Neil Montgomery, Maxine Nelson, Dennis Paul, Simone Rossi, Andrew Scott, Mike Smith, Ronald Tranter, Catherine White, Paul Wright, Tom Xiao.

2023 AGM Agenda

(as provided to members by email on 17 November 2023):

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| 1. Chairperson's introduction | Fi Ritchie |
| 2. PBCC registration as CIO and transition to new status | Jonathan Fidler |
| 3. Financial status | Olwen Ross |
| 4. Membership status | Paola Bernoni |
| 5. Club Activities | |
| a. Thames paddles | Fi Ritchie |
| b. Pool sessions | Guy Douglas |
| c. Racing | Stephen Hargrave |
| d. Lee Valley, Wandle and Dart | Guy Douglas |
| e. Equipment and lock-up | Geoff Onyett |
| 6. Committee for 2024 | Fi Ritchie |
| - All committee members will be appointed Trustees of the CIO | |
| - A list will be circulated either prior to or at the AGM | |
| 7. Chairperson's closing remarks | Fi Ritchie |
| 8. AOB | |
| - A vote of thanks to Geoff Onyett, Olwen Ross,
Phil Roast and Richard Bate | Fi Ritchie |
| - A vote of thanks to Adrian Clark, Kevin Heydenrych,
Martin Shirley and Tim Gilby | Guy Douglas |

Proceedings for the Putney Bridge Canoe Club (PBCC) 2023 Annual General Meeting were opened at 19:38 hours by the Chairperson, Fi Ritchie, who then handed over to Jonathan Fidler for Item 2 of the Agenda. Jonathan provided an update on PBCC's registration as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation ("CIO") and the transition from the club's current status of an unincorporated association to that of a CIO.

Jonathan had outlined the committee's thinking about changing the club's legal status at the 2022 AGM, held on 29 November 2022, as several significant drawbacks associated with the club's current status would be addressed through the transition to charitable status. A summary of said drawbacks is as follows:

- An unincorporated association is not a legal entity in its own right, which means club members could be personally liable if the club is wound up, breaches a contract or a claim is made against it;
- The club is unable to accept online credit and debit card payments via online payments service providers such as PayPal or Stripe for membership fees, pool session payments and off-site trips (e.g. to The Lee Valley White Water Centre) from its members or prospective members. Instead, it is only able to accept bank transfers, cheques and cash payments, which entail a significant administrative burden for the Treasurer, the Membership Secretary and those running pool sessions and organising trips;
- The club is potentially liable to pay corporation tax on its profits.

A notice was sent to the club's members on 29 December 2022 informing them that the club would hold its first virtual extraordinary general meeting (EGM) on 2 February 2023, at which a single resolution would be put to members attending. David Creasy, the club's membership secretary, set up an online proxy voting system, so members who could not attend the EGM could still vote. Alternatively, they could vote by sending an email setting out their voting instruction to a dedicated email address.

As at 31 January 2023 the club had 94 members who were entitled to vote. 15 attended the virtual meeting, including over 60% of the committee members, which meant the meeting was quorate and able to conduct business.

The resolution put to members was:

"To approve the committee's recommendation that PBCC change its legal status and constitution from that of an unincorporated association to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), to appoint Paola Bernoni, Jonathan Fidler and Olwen Ross as trustees of the CIO until the club's 2023 Annual General Meeting, to authorise the trustees-elect to tailor the Charity Commission's association constitution template as they deem appropriate and then to submit an application to the Commission for registration of the club as a CIO."

The votes cast using the proxy voting system and by email were added to votes cast in person at the EGM. The outcome was that 37 members voted in favour, 1 member voted against and 2 abstained. Abstentions are not counted when calculating the proportion of votes for and against, so the result was that 97% of members voting voted in favour of the resolution. The club's current constitution requires 75% or more of the valid votes cast for a resolution such as this to be passed, and so it was.

Thereafter, the 3 trustees-elect worked to prepare an application for registration of PBCC as a CIO. This involved drafting a new constitution, based on a template provided by the Charity Commission (CC) and, following input from committee members and the membership secretary to align the document with PBCC's activities and structure, the draft constitution was approved by the committee in May 2023 and submitted to the CC on 15 June 2023, together with a completed application form.

On 6 September 2023 the CC replied, raising several queries. It also advised that it required the trustees-elect to draft a Safeguarding Policy, which was submitted to the CC, together with a Code of Conduct, on 28 September 2023.

PBCC's application for registration as a CIO was approved by the CC on 2 October 2023 and our club's details were entered onto the Commission's Register of Charities, with no. 1204998, on that date.

The Register shows, in addition to the basic information regarding any registered charity, the charitable objects/activities on which PBCC's income may be spent is:

"The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation for the public benefit by the provision of advice, guidance, facilities and opportunities to participate in canoeing, kayaking and other related paddle sports for which British Canoeing is the national governing body."

The committee decided it would make sense to continue to operate as an unincorporated association until 30 Nov 2023 and to start operating as a CIO from 1 Dec 2023 onwards.

In practical terms the committee's view is that the club's change of legal status will, so far as the members are concerned, produce few, if any, noticeable differences. The established programme of Thames paddles will continue, the pool team will continue to run sessions on Wednesday evenings for prospective and existing members, and there will be periodic club trips to Lee Valley White Water Course (LVWWC) and elsewhere. In terms of its operations, these still be planned and run by members who are willing to give up their free time to organise and oversee the club's activities without being remunerated for doing so.

However, behind the scenes there will be differences, not all of them necessarily immediately obvious:

- From 1 December 2023 onwards, committee members will be trustees and will be subject to the obligations imposed by the CC in that respect (e.g. to be required to act in good faith to further the purposes of the club, to apply special knowledge they possess for the benefit of the club and there will be a mechanism for removing any trustee who fails to do so etc).
- Members will no longer have any potential liability for the club's debts.
- The club will be able to take out contracts in its own name – eg for pool or LVWWC hire.
- The club will have a better and more comprehensive constitution, based on the template provided by the CC, which reflects and aligns with the way in which organisations such as PBCC are expected/required to operate in 2023.
- End-of-year accounts will be prepared and submitted to the CC each year. Claire Ashby, a chartered accountant and a regular Thames paddler and keen sea kayaker, has kindly offered to assist the club's Treasurer with that process.
- The committee will not comprise the same faces year in/year out. The new constitution requires trustees to retire at each AGM, although they can offer themselves for re-election. However, that process cannot continue indefinitely, as the constitution imposes a time limit of 5 consecutive terms/years on those willing to take on a committee role. This means the club will need to engage in succession planning.

In short, the club is moving to a new footing, one which many other similar size BC-accredited clubs have also made and which the committee believes is appropriate for a kayaking club with over 100 members.

The floor was then opened to questions from members which included queries in respect of potential funding (it is possible to apply for grants); gift aid (PBCC has not applied to HMRC for gift aid status because claims are not permitted for subscriptions/activity fees but only in relation to donations, although the club could apply in the future, if it is deemed advantageous to do so); safeguarding (a Safeguarding Policy has been drafted, approved and adopted by the committee); whether the club will be open to people with disabilities (the requirement for members to be able to swim at least 50 meters fully-clothed remains in force); admission of junior members (the current requirement for a parent or guardian to be a member and take part in the sessions attended by the junior member,

and to be responsible for the junior members safety and well-being, remains in force); whether the current membership level is suitable for the new club status (the committee feels confident that the current position of circa 130 members is a manageable number); what is being done to assist inclusion of financially disadvantaged applicants (whilst the club's membership subscription is low compared to similar clubs, the club is willing to accept bi-annual payments from recipients of means-tested benefits and may be willing to offer free pool sessions in exchange for an agreed programme of volunteering).

It was also pointed out that the committee was not recommending an increase of the annual subscription for the coming year 2024, but an adjustment will be made to align membership year with financial year (which will now run from 1st December to 30th November).

Olwen Ross (Treasurer) then took the floor for Agenda Item 3. with the presentation of the annual accounts (from 16 October 2022 to 24 November 2023). The accounts had already been provided to members by Olwen by email on 27 November 2023. The club has a healthy bank balance of £17.9k, slightly lower than last year's (which was in excess of £19.3k) largely due to the purchase of new boats.

Pool sessions receipts were slightly in excess of pool hire fees, whilst LVWWC sessions receipts were slightly below exclusive hire fees.

As per Agenda Item 4., Paola Bernoni (Secretary) gave an update on the current membership figures for the club:

- at the end of 2022 PBCC had around 140 members;
- at the beginning of 2023 PBCC had 95 members (77 renewal members, 1 life member and 17 members who had joined in Q4 2022 and therefore were be entitled to membership until 31 December 2023);
- on 25 November 2023 PBCC has 127 members (123 adults and 4 juniors), of these 3 are associate members and 1 a life member, hence 32 new members have joined since the beginning of the year;
- Of the 32 new members 12 were experienced paddlers that joined in the first 7 months of the year, before PBCC was in a position to re-open membership applications to novices;
- The remaining 20 are a mixture of experienced and novice paddlers: the former continuing with the fast-track route to membership (1 pool session required) and the latter joining after PBCC reopened swimming pool access and membership applications to novices in late July;
- The club currently has a total of 8 active trial memberships (beginners who attended the pool in late summer 2023 after the re-opening of access and have 1 free river paddle and 3 months to decide whether to finalise membership);
- We have a group of people registered on the booking system who have yet to finalise their status and/or attend a beginners-only paddle;
- Paola, as club secretary, has received and responded to 96 enquiries throughout the year; 41 people have contacted pool team directly and attended pool sessions since re-opening of membership access to novices (pool data to early November);
- 86 people have paddled on the river at least once in 2023 in standard, beginners and racing sessions (up to 25 November 2023): of these 76 are current members, 6 were guest paddlers and 4 were trial members who either have not become full member or are yet to finalise.
- The club has had a total of 911 attendances in 188 river sessions (of which 29 were racing sessions with 77 attendances). Kindly note, racing sessions figures are not entirely accurate, as signing-up on the paddles' register in the container for these sessions only resumed in late June 2023, so sessions and attendance numbers are way lower than the actual ones.

Agenda Item 5. was then addressed with the Chairperson inviting the Committee members in charge of the relevant sections to report on the activities undertaken in year 2023, with interventions by:

1. **Fi for Thames Paddles;**
2. **Guy for Pool Sessions;**
3. **Stephen for Racing;**
4. **Guy for Trips;**
5. **Geoff for Equipment and Lock-up.**

1.

Fi thanked the River leaders for their invaluable commitment which resulted in a great many hugely successful Thames paddling sessions throughout the year. In order to keep up and enhance the skills pool of the leaders and prospective leaders, dedicated training, funded by the club, was organised this year (with coach Natalie Maderova and her team) and more is being planned for 2024, including a First Aid Course in the near future.

In addition to the activities organised by the club, individual members also pursued training opportunities on a personal basis, took part in trips nationally and overseas, and attended sea kayaking symposia in Anglesey and Cornwall.

Last but not the least, a club member who had joined in 2023, Mark Agnew and his three teammates became the first ever to complete a human-powered kayak traverse of the Northwest Passage.

2.

Guy reported on another very busy pool season and thanked all the pool instructors for their invaluable contribution to the success of the sessions, which were well attended throughout the year by club members, prospective new members (experienced), Chiswick Pier Canoe Club (CPCC) members and, since reopening of pool access and membership applications to beginners at the end of July 2023, by novice prospective members.

In order to make pool sessions break even with pool hire costs, attendance of at least 10-12 paying people per session is required. Guy stressed the importance of the pool induction system as portal to introduce new members to the club, but also reminded current experienced members of the necessity of refreshing one's skills in rescue techniques.

In 2023, also thanks to the support of CPCC and PBCC members moving sea kayaks to the pool, 3 dedicated sessions took place. It was suggested that further specialist pool session with sea kayaks might be arranged in conjunction with members' planned trips to assist their preparation.

3.

Stephen reported on the activities of the small, but growing, racing group. Due to tide constraints, sessions do not follow a pre-arranged schedule, with activities and attendance organised via a dedicated WhatsApp group, managed by Stephen. Therefore, whoever is interested in taking part should contact Stephen directly to be included in the dedicated WhatsApp group.

The racing group now includes new members who have joined PBCC in 2023 to train for the 2024 DW. The racing group and the club are now saying goodbye to Arnoldas Latvenas, who is returning to his home country as his posting in the UK has come to an end.

4.

Guy also reported on away-trips held in 2023, namely:

- Participation in two Dart weekend trips in February and November 2023. These were organised as usual by Cherwell Canoe Club (CCC);
- Two LVWWC exclusive hires of the Legacy course (two hours each) in July and November 2023, very successful and well attended as always;

- A very successful and well attended Wandle Trip, led by Olwen, in May 2023. This is in high demand and will be repeated as soon as practicable.

And the upcoming ones:

- Usk weekend trips in December 2023, organised by PBCC;
- Participation in the CCC Dart weekend trip scheduled for February 2024.

5.

Geoff reported on equipment and lock-up status and thanked Tim Gilby, an essential component of Team Equipment Officers 2022/2023, whose enthusiasm and wealth of both practical and kayaking knowledge, has proved to be invaluable. Geoff also thanked Richard Bate for his ongoing support and help with equipment matters, all members who helped in the two lock-up clean-up sessions that took place in July and September 2023, and David Creasy for setting up an equipment booking system for the upcoming Usk trip in December 2023.

Geoff then reported on the boat and equipment stock held at Barn Elms and at the pool and on the main activities relating to equipment carried out in 2023, which include the following:

- January 2023: the water supply to our tap froze and pipes split. The repair was completed by Geoff himself later in spring, when the warmer weather had finally settled in.
- March 2023: the cold damp weather was making access to the container difficult. A combination of the container settling slightly and the timber sleeper in front of the container expanding, made opening the door very difficult. Whilst Geoff took care of the issue by chiselling out a groove in the sleeper for the locking mechanism to travel through, a more permanent solution, which involves digging out the sleeper and lower it slightly, is required for the future.
- April 2023: Some padlock issues were experienced and eventually resolved without replacing the padlock to the main container (though we now have a spare one with numerous keys, original plus copies, not all of them working properly).
- May 2023: a kayak trailer which would accommodate 6 boats was offered by CPCC but was declined by PBCC.
- July 2023: Lock-up Clean-up session #1 took place with sorting and remarking of all spraydecks and paddles, filing cabinet sort-out, purchase of maintenance items, etc.
- September 2023: Lock-up Clean-up session #2 took place concentrating on boat stock. All boats were cleaned and photographed, with the result of the boat inventory upgrade made available on the club's website.
- A recent attempted break-in at the nearby Battersea container has prompted us to increase our security measures on the second container, but further measures are required to enhance security for the main container.
- The two boats acquired in late 2022, a new P&H LEO and used P&H VIRGO, have proven very popular and used on the Thames and elsewhere extensively throughout the year.
- Two new Northshore Atlantic RM LV sea kayaks from Marsport are being delivered on 29 November 2023 and will be soon available for general use.
- The club still has the Epic V7 for sale: this boat was replaced with a second Epic V8 in late 2022.
- Maintenance on various boats was undertaken throughout the year, with largely successful outcomes, albeit with some failures:
 - the Weekender has been in need of repair work for some time and it represents a H&S concern due to with sharp fibreglass/resin wear. Various unsuccessful attempts were made to identify a specialist glass fibre workshop to do the repair, as PBCC does not have the facilities to undertake the gel coat repair. The boat was moved to the second container in November 2023 and is currently out of commission.

- The issue of water leaking into the rear hatch of the P&H Virgo through the skeg housing system was addressed, but the repair was unsuccessful and the leak is still occurring.

Geoff also kindly reminded all paddlers to return paddles, spraydecks and BAs to their correct locations - all clearly marked - in the container, not to leave personal items in the container and preferably take rubbish home or, should it not be possible, use the little dustbin, which he has periodically emptied. The borrowing and return of club equipment should always be recorded and items returned promptly after use.

Fi addressed Agenda Item 6. by reading out the list of the proposed 2024 Committee members as endorsed by the 2023 Committee. The list had been provided to members by email on 27 November 2023. No objections were raised, and the proposal was passed unanimously by the AGM. The full list is attached at the end of this document. The 2024 Committee members will be appointed alongside the existing trustees once they have completed the required paperwork.

Finally, outgoing Committee members and other former officials and volunteering members were thanked and presented with tokens of the Club's appreciation for their service throughout the years.

On behalf of all present and past club members, Fi thanked Geoff, Olwen and Richard, whilst Suki thanked Phil and Guy voiced overdue thanks to Martin Shirley for his role with the pool team, Tim Gilby for his support to the pool team and to the equipment officer, Kevin Heydenrych for his tenure as Chairperson and for his great work on the storage containers and Adrian Clark. Regrettably Martin, Tim and Adrian were unable to attend the AGM.

The Meeting concluded at 21:20 hours.

Paola Bernoni
Club Secretary

6 December 2023

Putney Bridge Canoe Club

Proposals for 2024 Committee

Chairperson: Fi Ritchie

Committee Proposal: Fi Ritchie

Co-ordinating the work of the Committee. Collating members' views, wishes and concerns.

Secretary: Paola Bernoni

Committee Proposal: Paola Bernoni

Club contact for new members and enquiries. AGM and Committee Minutes.

Treasurer: Olwen Ross

Committee Proposal: David Creasy

Managing the club's income and controlling expenditure, and maintaining accounts as required by the Constitution and by the Charity Commission.

British Canoeing Olwen Ross

Committee Proposal Fi Ritchie

Management of the club's affiliation with British Canoeing.

Equipment Officer: Geoff Onyett

Committee Proposal: Simon Moses (to be assisted by Tim Gilby)

Kayak and equipment booking, recording problems with club's boats and other equipment, purchasing spare parts, effecting repairs and maintaining an up-to-date inventory of all the club's boats and other equipment. Maintenance of the containers, stand-pipe and annual clear-up. Disposal of redundant club's boats and other equipment in environmentally friendly manner.

Pool Officer: Guy Douglas

Committee Proposal: Guy Douglas

Management of pool sessions. Organising and managing trips to Lee Valley WWC and other white water trips.

Racing: Stephen Hargrave

Committee Proposal: Stephen Hargrave

All racing activities, booking of K1 / K2 kayaks, and surf skis.

River Leaders: Jonathan Fidler and Suki Tan

Committee Proposal: Jonathan Fidler and Suki Tan

All River Leaders will be represented within the Committee by the Thames Paddles Officer.

Sailing Club Liaison Olwen Ross

Committee Proposal Eric Morgan

Liaison with South Bank Sailing Club including access and use of club house and liaison with Battersea Canoe Club liaison, as required.

Sea Kayaking: Richard Bate

Committee Proposal: Darren Palmer

Organising and providing guidance and advice on sea kayaking trips and working with Welfare Officer to provide a comprehensive training programme for the club.

Thames Paddles Officer: Phil Roast

Committee Proposal: Darren Palmer (to be assisted by River Leaders, Jonathan Fidler and Suki Tan)

Contact for Thames paddles and representation of all River Leaders at Committee level.

Thames Safety Officer: Richard Bate

Committee Proposal: Jonathan Fidler

Safety officer and liaison with the Port of London Authority.

Welfare & Training Officer: Olwen Ross (Welfare); Richard Bate (Training)

Committee Proposal: Connor Lennon (to be assisted by Darren Palmer for Training)

To be contacted directly or via any Committee Member.

Whitewater Officer: Guy Douglas

Committee Proposal: Guy Douglas

Whitewater safety officer, trips, training and advice.

Organising and providing guidance and advice on white water trips.

Women's Representative: Olwen Ross

Committee Proposal: Anna Ryten

Representing female Club members.

Non Committee Positions

Website Manager: c/o Richard Bate

Committee Proposal: c/o David Creasy

Updating information on Club website, promoting Club online and any other business relating to the Club website, Club email group and all social media activities.

Membership Secretary: c/o David Creasy

Committee Proposal: c/o David Creasy

Administration of membership, liaison with Treasurer regarding membership subscriptions and other income, maintenance of members' personal data.