

Competition and Safety Management report for 2019 ACM

It has been another busy year.

Clubs have very largely engaged with risk management and safety planning with the quality of the plans generally showing a steady improvement although there is clearly some significant year to year consistency.

We have had safeguarding issues and a number of injuries but no major life changing events that have been reported to us.

The committee has discussed safety and looked at a number of issues over the year and in particular has considered the issue of buoyancy aids. While we have no wish or intent to foist more responsibility onto in checking performance we do want to encourage the paddling community to be aware of the steady decline in performance of these items with time and use. The ICF process requires checking in a custom cage which is both cumbersome and excessively expensive. We are though proposing that paddlers / parents should use a system checking with a luggage scale and a 10kg weight. To this end there will be a luggage scale travelling to events with timing equipment and we would be happy to allow it to be used for checking performance. This is perhaps particularly important when buying second hand items to check that there is still an adequate performance margin.

There has been work on the safety of extreme slalom which has been taken forward elsewhere but has also been considered by the committee.

The organisation of competitions continues to get attention and the organisers handbook is incrementally getting modernised and updated for which Dave Spencer deserves much credit.

A number of clubs have needed to approach the committee over the last year to request support where competitions have failed to break even for a variety of reasons. These have been supported by the committee. I have explored costing at a number of races across the divisions and financial planning and forecasting is in many cases not fully taking account of all costs. Races where there is catering tend to rely on the catering to ensure that they break even. There are though sites where catering cannot be supplied as a charged item and indeed may in the near future become more difficult as the pressure on dealing with allergens increases. We therefore need to make sure that races are viable without profits from other activities. To balance that, it is not about making or maximising profit, and there is no desire to reduce participation.

While minimum fees have generally increased with inflation there are years where they have not been increased at all. We have also had to introduce enhanced fees where for example there are site costs which simply cannot be absorbed within minimum set fees. These pressures continue. The committee will put a proposal to the ACM to increase minimum fees to meet these needs and avoid increasing the

number of races where organisers need to plan ahead and request enhanced fees. To be clear there is no proposal to increase the levies other than by inflation so the additional monies would be solely targeted on supporting clubs to run races. Alongside there is the need to encourage participation and retention which in spite of Olympic success we have failed to do. Races can and should be improved wherever possible to ensure inclusion not just of paddlers but also spectators and volunteers. A modest increase in income which is all this represents and is not designed to create profits may facilitate some movement on this.

Issues with early booking continue for some races and early entry and later withdrawal is a major issue for some. We must remind all paddlers that while the majority of organisers will provide refunds there is no obligation on them whatsoever to do so and they may have to increasingly justify any withdrawal.

Conflicts between races have also been highlighted on a number of weekends during the year and the calendar as a result continues to have its own challenges as well as affecting expected competitor numbers. Sometimes this has resulted with the justified need to move races because of water supply or availability.

As ever questions are always welcome.

Peter Curry
19th November 2019