

Participation Working Group Report 2023

A participation working group was set up after the last ACM, with the view of looking into how we can increase the participation in the sport at the grassroots. We would like to thank all of the clubs, organisers and volunteers that run and support races.

The group has had 3 virtual meetings and one in person meeting. Our initial meeting saw us look at what possible changes we could influence within the sport. This included looking at barriers to remaining in the sport. The barriers looked at were:

Value for Money

- Is the sport becoming too expensive for people to continue doing?
- Is the sport pricing out people in their early 20s?
- Fuel is very expensive at the moment, is this putting people off?
- Once promoted to Div 3, paddlers require home nation membership and a bib.

Water time

- Regional issue, White Water courses are expensive and especially at Lee Valley it is hard to get water time if not a performance squad paddler.

Squad Problem

- Children do not stay within the club, they are invited to paddle with the squads and tend not to return to their club.

Our second meeting focused on identifying what questions we would like included in the proposed slalom committee questionnaire. Unfortunately the questionnaire did not go out to the slalom community this season. It is hoped it will go out early next season.

We also discussed how to promote our sport, in particular how we could use social media, maybe set up an Instagram page like WWR have. This idea has been superseded by what will happen with British Canoeing 's rebranding.

Our in-person meeting on the Saturday evening of the Tees race saw us consider what motions we might like to bring to the ACM that could potentially increase participation at the grassroots.

Areas under consideration were:

- **Clarification of the volunteer coach route for Slalom Coaches.**
 - No action for ACM, but is it hoped more clarification will come from the coaching conference.
- **Removing the 3 wins for promotion**
 - Analysis of promotion data showed that whilst at Div 3 it could slow promotions and potentially allow paddlers to gain more water experience

before being promoted. It was not helpful for the top C1 divisions as nearly all paddlers are promoted on 3 wins and not points.

- Working group decided not to go through with this idea.
- **Look at the implications of the increased % for C1 women passed last year at the ACM**
 - No work was required by this working group as we support the motion put forward by Sheffield CC and CR Cats, which will address the issue
- **Change in how Div 4 Promotion is achieved**
 - Do not have to accept promotion from Div 4 on first win
 - It was felt that automatic promotion could be prohibitive to paddlers remaining in slalom.
 - We discussed making Div 4 a points division, this would not be simple to implement and has the potential to have a lot of non quorate races so has been included in the Divisional Structure discussion point.
 - Replace Division 4 with Novice
 - Throughout their first season of racing, paddlers have the option of racing in the Novice class. The class is open to all beginners to slalom. There is no automatic promotion to division 3. Whenever they or their coach feel they are ready, they can apply for their division 3 bib. Any paddler that is achieving consistently good results and would be placed in the top 50% of Division 3 should be encouraged to enter the divisional system by their coach or ranking officer. Immediate entry to division 3 is an option if appropriate. A version of this will be brought to the ACM as a motion backed by the slalom committee

In conclusion the working group has highlighted various areas of concerns with participation at the grassroots of the sport. We as a group will consider any ideas people may have in how we can get people to take up slalom and enter the divisional system.