

Safety Team and Race Officers' Seminar April 10, 2016

About 45 Race Officers and Safety Team members attended.

1. Peter Saxton (Commodore) summarised the Club's membership, activity levels, and finances.

Membership

- February, 2015, saw 1079 members in total; in March, 2016, this had increased to 1091.
- Adults sailors and seniors (the ones whose membership fees are highest) were down a bit (561 vs 540, respectively).

Activity

- For activity, a "session" is defined as launching and then returning to shore (3 races back to back in an Open Meeting is thus 1 session; 2 Club races in the morning and 2 in the afternoon is 2 sessions).
- 2014 had 12 284 sessions, 2015 had 12 146; so a slight decrease.
- Sunday racing was up from 2126 to 2196.
- Wednesday evening racing was up from 1328 to 1381.
- The Club has substantial non-racing sailing: 5446 sessions in 2014 and 4802 in 2015 (the decrease being mostly windsurfers who did not get enough wind)

Finances

- The Club's finances are healthy, with a trading surplus for the year to March 2016 of £6k and a windfall VAT refund of £19k.
- Plans are afoot to replace the boiler system and to refurbish the men's toilets and changing area.

New activities for 2016

- 1200+ training and racing on selected Sundays has just started; so RS Feva and slower boats (mainly expected to be junior sailors).
- Starting in early May on Tuesday mornings will be #thisgirlcan, a Sport England exercise initiative, for all-female sailing.

2. David McNamee (Safety Co-Ordinator) summarised some of the numbers volunteering for safety and committee boat duties, with the caveat that inter-year comparisons can be compromised by different numbers being rostered on Dutyman each year (eg, the start of Friendly Fridays and Social Saturdays would mean more slots needing to be filled).

- For rib duties, 2013 and 2104 saw about the same levels of activity: about 390 slots being filled of around 540 rostered (about 72%), about 80 volunteers doing around 5 duties each in each year. 2015 saw 525 slots filled of 635 rostered, an large increase in both the numerator and denominator but with more slots being filled (83%). This coincides with Anna in the Office coming onstream for getting volunteers and the new idea that one can be Safety Crew as a newcomer to see how you like it. So, about 30 more volunteers last year (111 in total), but this higher number doing a lower average number of duties than previous years (4.2 duties in 2015).
- About 15 volunteers do 8 or more duties in a year.
- David presented Committee Boat numbers for 2015: 406 slots of 513 rostered were filled (79%). 143 volunteers filled those slots, doing an average of 2.8 duties each.
- For both rib and committee boats, the number of duties per year done by individuals is highly skewed, with many doing 1 or 2 duties a year and a hard core doing 8, 10, or even more.
- So, approximately, almost half (46%) of the Club's adult members did at least one duty on a Committee Boat or rib in 2015. This is quite a reassuring proportion.

3. David then led a discussion about the interface between the race team on the Committee boat and the rib crews. Some previously canvassed views had revealed some major themes:

- a briefing was always wanted (including for Club Racing).
- more understanding of the differences between Club Racing and Open Meetings (eg, GPS or radio-direction for mark laying).
- VHF discipline.

Interesting, positive, and lively debate and suggestions for the future followed. We can take some steps immediately at nil or low cost. For instance:

- Have a briefing for Club Racing akin to that for Open Meetings, so that the all volunteers can be introduced and the Race Officer can impart his or her intentions for the race(s) and describe their preferences for mark-laying, etc.

- To improve VHF procedure and to train more about GPS mark-laying, crib-sheets and mini-courses were proposed. The Club hopes to get 3-4 public and 3-4 private VHF channels, rather than the current 2 public ones.
- Lack of confidence and/or experience in using VHF and GPS were suggested as major contributors to things going wrong.
- A well-received suggestion was for a day of training modules combined with a barbeque get-together. So modules could be: VHF procedure, basic mark-laying with GPS, course setting, etc.

4. Peter summarised some ideas to make race management easier. These include:

- a test of digital wind-tracking on the Grafham Belle.
- purchasing a laser range-finder for the race box (to help to set/check the line length).
- Club course-size setting via a lookup table for windspeed and distance to mark 1. Beat length is based on 3 laps for a Flying Fifteen, which happens to be about the right course-length for all the other starts.

5. Plans for reactive safety cover await the access barrier coming fully online and then the signage can be updated. This cover means that a member or visitor signs out a VHF handheld (the Club now has 10 sets), mostly for midweek when the Coxswain might not be on lookout all the time. North-shore launching for windsurfing members (from Rectory Bay, near the cycle-hire centre) will probably be trialed, for strong winds coming on to that shore, subject to approval from Anglian Water.

6. The final general discussion was wide-ranging:

- Do we need the asymmetric mark and gate? Action – Racing Committee
- Does the yellow dan-buoy limit the first reach? Action – Racing Committee
- ST course board needs replacing Action – Coxswain
- Look at getting some new safety helmets for rib crews (or refurbish existing ones) Action – D McNamee
- Check operation of fixed radio on SR1 – transmission appears weak Action – coxswain
- Get consistency on P1/P2/P4 between radios. Action – D McNamee