

Leicester Rowing Club AGM Address 2020

Welcome

Welcome everyone and thank you for joining this, the Leicester Rowing Club AGM 2020. The first time we have ever held the AGM remotely! Hopefully we can all use the technology! I'm sorry that we are having to run the meeting over Zoom, but you all understand only too well why we have had to do it. It's unfortunate but needs must.

Meeting Organisation

- Some points about how the meeting will be conducted:
 - The intention is to keep the meeting as brief and concise as possible. All the reports have been issued in advance and are available on the club website for you all to read. Reports will not be read out in full this evening. Instead this evening each of the officers will give a very brief summary of the reports. If you haven't looked at the reports already, please do read them after the meeting.
 - We are not intending to hold any voting during the meeting. All the nominations for the committee are uncontested, so no voting should be required there. All the reports have been issued in advance, and everyone has had the opportunity to read and comment on them, so the intention is to take their acceptance as read. That doesn't stop attendees raising questions or making additional points during the meeting.
 - The meeting is being recorded so that we have a record of the meeting and to assist Anne in generating the minutes. If any of you have an object to this please let us know.
 - All participants will be muted, except for the person speaking at the time.
 - If you wish to make a point or raise a question please use the 'chat' or 'raise hand' functions. Hazel has kindly offered to monitor these functions and will make sure you get the opportunity to speak if at all possible.
 - Video will be off for all except myself, Ben, Anne, and the person speaking
 - We realise that this is all less than ideal, so as a committee we have all agreed that as soon as we are able to hold an in-person meeting at the club, we will do so. We will run a semi-formal meeting, coupled with a social function, to give everyone chance to air any issues, discuss the way forward for the club, and hopefully renew our friendships and have some fun.
- All members are encouraged to read the written reports. They all contain a number of thank you messages. For my own part, I really would have preferred to give these thanks in person and publicly, but time doesn't permit me to do so. So please do read the reports as I really don't want my appreciation of you all to be lost in the ether.

Review of the Past Year

- 2020 really has been an unprecedented year. We have faced many challenges; dreadful weather forced cancellation of many events over the winter; then the juniors went on strike early in the New Year, then just when things were starting to get back on track, we were hit with Covid-19 which forced the closure of the club for 2 months. Then, we were just getting back up and running when Leicester went back into lockdown, forcing us to close our doors

again. The lockdown forced the cancellation, not only of our own regatta, but as it turned out, the whole regatta season. Now the head race season seems to be going the same way. It is so very strange to have so few results to report.

- And now here we are again – back in lockdown and with the club closed until at least the beginning of December.

However, it is an ill wind that blows no good!

- When the club did reopen after the first lockdown, we were limited to singles or single household doubles. Many members were initially a little reticent about going out in singles but so many of you managed to get over that initial fear, including many of our juniors and a number of our intrepid recreational squad, and I'm so impressed by the way so many of you have risen to the challenge. It's been fantastic to see so many of you getting out, learning new skills, and really enjoying the opportunity. The positive attitude shown by everyone involved has been absolutely brilliant and just fantastic to see.
- However, for me, the most pleasing thing to come out of all this adversity, is the very positive change in the atmosphere at the club. As a club I really feel that we have broken down many of the artificial barriers that had developed between the various squads. There is now a real feeling of everyone pulling together and supporting each other, for me it's been transformational, it all feels so much more 'fun' – which is exactly as it should be.
- The whole club has been involved in in this – and I want to thank you all for the part that you have played in this very positive transformation.
 - Firstly, thanks to everyone for rigorously following all the cleaning protocols that we have put in place. Knowing that everyone is following our robust processes has helped everyone to feel more confident about coming back to the club and getting back on the water
 - Thanks and well done to all the athletes who have stepped up to be brave enough to try new things and learn new skills
 - Our coaches who have given so much of their time to support everyone on the water, keep them safe, teach them the new skills that they need, and give them the confidence to continue
 - Thanks to Hazel and Alex who did a great job running the zoom circuits, which really helped to keep our members engaged, especially when the club was completely closed
 - Our juniors, and in particular, their wonderful parents, who have spent many, many hours, running and cycling the bank and supporting sessions on the water. It's clear that our juniors would not have been able to get out without your support, so thank you very much for your efforts – not just for your own children, but for our wider membership. Having you guys on the bank keeping an eye on what's going on has really helped to give everyone that extra bit of confidence and helped to keep us all safe.
 - Then of course the committee who have worked tirelessly in the background to get through this challenging period
 - Thanks to Tim, who returned to the committee at the last AGM saying he no longer wished to have responsibility for maintenance. Despite that he has continued to provide his advice and expertise, both practical and legal. He has ensured that our relationships with Riverside, West End Runners and DMU/Watershed are clearly understood and covered by formal Licence Agreements; liaised with contractors to

maintain the fire systems, lift and dance floor, and shown very impressive perseverance and resilience with respect to the club gates, which now seem to be working very well.

- We are all really indebted to Sally, Ben and Tim who all put in a huge amount of effort to put our COVID-19 systems, procedures, protocols and briefings in place so that we could reopen, and make the club as safe as possible for us all. I think the Covid systems we have at the club are really robust, and really have helped to give our members the confidence to return.
- Particular thanks have to go to Ben, who took on the captaincy this time last year. He has faced such a challenging and difficult year – but I'm sure you will all agree that he has done an absolutely brilliant job. Ben, I'm sure I speak for the whole club when I say that the leadership that you have provided has been just fantastic. So I want to take this opportunity to say a very sincere and massive thank you to Ben. You have been outstanding!
- Thanks to the whole committee for their input over the year. At times it has been very challenging, and very busy. I know a number of you have put your names forward to stand again in 2020-21, for which I am very grateful, but there are a few people who are standing down. In particular I would like to say a big thank you to Freya, our long-standing junior representative. Freya first took on the role as Junior Rep at the AGM in 2017 and had held the post ever since. Throughout this time, she has been a very active member of the committee and worked hard, both to protect the interests of our existing junior members, and to bring new juniors into the club. She has regularly organised junior rowing weeks during the summer holidays which have always been very successful and very much enjoyed by all. She has contributed fully to the management of the club and been a real asset on the committee. So very many thanks for you input and support Freya, your efforts are very much appreciated by us all.
- Also standing down this year are Caroline Haracz, Autumn Bates, Paul McGrillis and Graham Wright. Thank you all for you input.

Looking Forward

- Unfortunately, we don't yet know what the near future will hold. Hopefully we will come back out of lockdown and closure on 2th December, but we don't yet know what that will look like. I suspect we may well be back in small boats to start with – but we shall have to wait and see. The main thing is to be ready for whatever is thrown at us.
- Over the course of the year we have put things in place to support the changing dynamic and requirements of the pandemic. We have kept our Covid systems under constant review and they have been updated numerous times; we have moved equipment around to allow easier access to the small boats, and focused expenditure on buying/refurbishing our small boats (singles and doubles) which have been put under much more pressure and have been in much higher demand than would normally be expected. We will continue with this so that we are able to respond quickly as things change.
- It's difficult to see exactly how the future will pan out. We don't yet know quite how our membership levels will stand up – it certainly feels very uncomfortable asking you all to pay your subscriptions when the club is closed. I do however want to thank you all for the support that you have given the club so far during the pandemic. I understand that the vast majority of you have continued to pay your subscriptions, whether you have been using the facilities or not, and for that we are very grateful. That has been very positive for us, but

clearly, as we move into another club year, and recognising the financial challenges that many people are facing at the moment, we realise that some people may decide not to renew their subscriptions. Whilst the accounts show that our financial position is still strong, our future revenues will almost certainly be hit by reduced membership numbers and the loss of the football car parks. I'm still keen that we do our best to grow and improve our fleet but we will need to think very carefully about our future expenditure plans and we will undoubtedly need redouble our fundraising efforts in order to progress with some of our projects and develop the club for the future.

So, the new committee will need to work hard and really think ahead. I believe there are a number of things that we need to focus on:

- How best to re-engage our existing members, especially those who have not yet had the confidence to get back out onto the water
- How to go about recruiting new members and getting them out on the water safely
- How to prioritise our funds, find new sources of revenue and maximise our fundraising efforts
- The management, refurbishment and growth of our fleet to ensure that it meets the needs of the members under the new 'normal'. This goes hand-in-hand with optimising and potentially expanding our storage capacity, as the boathouse is now completely full.
- Then of course we have the regular issues to manage, such as the regatta (keeping our fingers very firmly crossed that we will be allowed to run the regatta in 2021, although I have to say it's by no means a given), the football car parks and the bar.

So, the new committee will have plenty to do. We can only hope that the vaccines which are now being heralded, are as effective as the media is suggesting, and that we are all able to get back out on the water and back to 'normal'. Let's hope that we can meet in person very soon in the new year and move on from this very challenging and unprecedented period.

Thank you.