

## **Leicester Rowing Club AGM Address 2021**

### **Welcome**

Welcome everyone and thank you for joining this, the Leicester Rowing Club AGM 2021. I'm sure you will all understand our decision to, once again, hold the meeting remotely. It seemed to work really well last year and with Covid cases continuing to rise, it seemed sensible to use Zoom again. It's a shame not to see you all in person but it is, at least, quite efficient!

### **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 the officers will give a very brief summary of the reports and be able to answer any questions you might have. 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 objection 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.
- 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**

- With the ongoing pandemic, 2021 has again been a challenging year. The lockdown and increasing case numbers in Spring, unfortunately forced us to cancel the regatta yet again – which was a real shame. So, our last regatta was held in April 2019. We sincerely hope that we will be able to run the regatta again on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2022 - we are all just hoping we will be able to remember how to organise it!
- Despite Covid we have still managed to attend a few events and competitions over the year, with the rec squad recently making trips to row at Burton and Nottingham, and with a number of members getting their racing kit back on at a few of the late summer regattas, and more recently at Ancholme Head. It certainly has been great to see people back out racing, and racing really well too, with some very impressive performances, which I'm sure Ben will cover later.

- Despite all the issues and challenges we have faced as a club, I have to say that we are in fact, in a good place at the moment. As Nicola will cover later, our financial position is strong; our memberships numbers are good, the club atmosphere is really supportive, and I really feel that the watermanship and skill levels across our entire membership have improved. This is due in no small part to the commitment of our coaches. In particular, thanks to Ben and Hazel who have put a lot of effort into getting our new adult members out on the water, with a number of them now racing and recording their first wins at Ancholme Head. Well-done to you all. I also know that our recreational squad are very grateful to Paul Shaw, Mike Watson and Graham Clark; I know they all feel that their skills have improved tremendously under their guidance, so many thanks to them. Thanks also to Ang, Tim, Alex, Hazel, Sophie, and Howard for coaching the junior and performance squads, and thanks to Clare for taking on the junior organisational work. I'm sure Ben will talk more about their successes later but we are very grateful to you all and thank you all for your efforts.
- It's been a year with some highs, but sadly a few lows as well. We received some very sad news in August this year, when we learnt of the passing of former club Captain and President, Tony Green. Tony was our Club President for 22 years, from 1984 until 2006. He was an athlete, a coach, an umpire and above all, a leader. He contributed hugely to the club and those of us who knew him, remember him with great fondness. It was very sad news indeed.
- But there have also been some great highs too, most notably of course was Lauren's performances at the World Under 23 Championships and Henley Royal Regatta – but I'm going to leave Ben to give you all the details there. And, in June, we were all delighted to hear the news that Anne Hock had been awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's birthday honours list. As you all know we are a club entirely run by volunteers, so it's absolutely fantastic for the efforts of one of our volunteers to be recognised in this way. I am sure you will all want to join me in congratulating Anne's on her award. Well-done!
- Of course, there are many other people who have contributed to the club over the year. These include all of our hard-working committee – to whom I am very grateful, our junior parents who have continued to run the bank, remove debris from the river, and provide additional supervision of our on the water training, Joe Holohan who has serviced the trailers and got them safely back on the road after their extended lay off, Tim Walton who has ensured the building and facilities are maintained and compliant with relevant legislation, Sally who has made sure we are safe on the water, Nicola who has managed our finances and accounts, and many, many others. Thank you all very much for your input.
- Of course, there is one person that I haven't thanked fully yet, and that is Ben, our tireless and hard-working club captain. Ben has continued to do an outstanding job despite all the challenges that the club has faced. He, supported by Sally, has worked so hard to make sure that all our Covid protocols are in line with HMG and British Rowing guidance, whilst also being pragmatic and workable for the members. As I mentioned earlier, he and Hazel have organised and run our L2R courses, he's fitted new racking for some additional private boats, and of course he's also been busy training himself. So Ben, I am absolutely delighted that you have decided to stay on as Captain for another year. On behalf of all our members, thank you very much indeed.
- I mentioned a few moments ago that our membership levels are good. This was a cause of some concern for us this time last year, we really didn't know how well the membership levels would stand up to the recurring lockdowns. Well fortunately, it seems they have stood up very well, and been further bolstered by the new L2R group and by new intakes

into the recreational and junior squads. It takes a lot of effort getting new people out onto the water, so a big thank you to our squad leads and coaches for all their efforts. Thank you too, to our existing members have been incredibly supportive. Rowing with experienced people to start has not only helped to quickly develop the skill levels of our newest members, but has also helped to make them feel welcome and part of the club, making the whole rowing experience more fun. So, thank you all for the part that you have played.

- On the financial side, hopefully you are now all aware that we have restarted running the football car parks, bring a very welcome revenue stream back on line. Thanks to everyone who has already volunteered to run the car park for us – but if you haven't already done so, please do put your names forward. The football car parks have the potential to bring between £8,000 and £10,000 a year – a very significant sum, so please do your bit and put your name forward. If you need any more information, or want to know what you need to do, please just speak to one of the 'old hands'; we are all more than happy to help.

### **Looking Ahead**

- As you will have read in Tim's maintenance report, the club is facing a significant outlay due to the potential requirement to replace the, now obsolete, lift. This is an emerging issue and Tim is currently exploring our options. He can provide more details, but it seems this is likely to involve some serious fundraising and will become a high priority agenda item for the new committee.
- We have recently opened discussions with the Castle Mead Academy, the new school built alongside the river on the site of the former Kirby and West dairy. We have now had two very constructive discussions with the Academy Principal, who is very keen indeed to get rowing into the school programme in some way. It's early days, but the initial plans are to introduce them to indoor rowing first, and then, hopefully sometime in the future, find ways to get them out onto the water too, hopefully during school hours. We will keep you all informed as this relationship develops, but we really see it as a win-win situation for both us and the school.
- One thing I am keen to think about as we move forward, is to consider what we can do as a club to help combat climate change. We have already started on this journey, with installation of LED lighting, ensuring we have timers on the heaters and refurbishing our equipment rather than replacing it, but I'm sure there is much more that we can do. If this is something you feel passionately about, and if you have ideas about other things that we can do, I would love to hear from you. And remember, a lot of small changes can help to make a big impact, so please do let us have all your ideas and suggestions, no matter how small.
- Before I close, I just wanted to remind you all of a couple of things. First is that we are running a Christmas Charity collection for City of Sanctuary, who are supporting asylum seekers in Leicester. We are asking members to donate items for gift bags that they are putting together to be distributed in time for Christmas. We have some donation boxes in the committee room and a list of items they are trying to collect, so please do see what you can do to support this very worthy cause.
- The other thing I wanted to let you all know about is that we are planning to run club races again this year. We have fixed a date of Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December and more details will be available closer to the time. We will also use the occasion to host a club social event, including the presentation of the annual club awards, so please do your best to keep the date free – it will be great to get the whole club together again, a cause for celebration in itself!

- So, before I close and move on to the business of the meeting, I just want to say a final thank you to you all for your continued loyalty to the club over the past 2 years. Seeing the club in such a strong position, despite everything the world has been through, is really quite inspiring. It feels like we have developed into a truly supportive and caring community. So, thank you all and please do keep up the excellent work. Hopefully we will be in an even stronger position this time next year.