

President's Address

Good evening everyone and thank you for joining us for the Leicester Rowing Club AGM.

Before I begin reflecting on the year, I would like to take a moment to remember Tyler Barrett.

Earlier this year, our club suffered a devastating loss when Tyler was killed in a road traffic accident at the age of just 16. Tyler was one of our junior members, a talented rower, a wonderful young man, and someone who brought kindness, enthusiasm and energy wherever he went. He was strong, hardworking, always full of joy, and greatly liked by everyone who knew him. He is missed enormously by us all.

Our thoughts continue to be with Tyler's family, friends, teammates and coaches. Losing a young person in such tragic circumstances is something that no club ever expects to face, and the impact has been felt throughout our rowing community.

In the months since, however, we have also seen the very best of our club. Members came together to support one another and to remember Tyler in a way that reflected the person he was. Tyler's parents asked for donations to be made to the Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland Air Ambulance, and more than £9,500 was raised in his memory. Leicester Rowing Club was proud to play its part in helping take that figure beyond £10,000 through our "Racing for Tyler" fundraiser at Ancholme Head, which to date has raised a staggering £2,164 – a wonderful total that I know Tyler's parents are delighted with. If anyone else wishes to contribute then the link and QR code are being shared in the chat and can be found on the dividing doors in the clubroom. We are planning to close the fundraiser at the end of November so you still have time.

Tyler had won in the double at Ancholme Head just twelve months ago, alongside his close friend and crewmate Ollie, so it felt especially fitting that members from across the club came together there to race in his memory. It was a special day and a reminder that whilst rowing is a sport, clubs like ours are fundamentally about people, friendship and community.

We have also taken the decision to name one of our boats after Tyler. The naming ceremony will take place on 29th November and will provide another opportunity for the club to remember and celebrate a young man who had such a positive impact on those around him.

Tyler's memory remains part of Leicester Rowing Club. He will not be forgotten.

Whilst this year has brought sadness, it has also once again demonstrated the strength, resilience and compassion of our club community. I am continually proud of the way people come together to support one another when it matters most.

One of the things I am most proud of is the way our club continues to make rowing accessible to people who may otherwise never have the opportunity to experience our sport.

Our partnership with Castle Mead Academy continues to go from strength to strength. The programme provides local young people with access to rowing through their school and continues to have a really positive impact on those involved. Many of the pupils who first encounter rowing through Castle Mead go on to join Leicester Rowing Club as members of our junior squad, and it has become an important route into the club for many young people.

It is wonderful to see the confidence, commitment and enjoyment that the pupils gain from the programme, and I would like to thank everyone who has supported it over the past year, particularly those who generously give their time during the school day to coach and mentor the students.

Our Row the Rhythm programme also continues to thrive. For those who are not familiar with it, Row the Rhythm is our programme for visually impaired participants and aims to provide access to rowing completely free of charge.

It remains one of the most rewarding things we do as a club. Watching the participants build confidence, improve their fitness, make new friendships and discover what they are capable of is genuinely inspiring. The feedback from those involved continues to be overwhelmingly positive, and I am incredibly grateful to all of the volunteers, coaches, coxes and launch drivers who help to make the programme possible.

Both Castle Mead Academy and Row the Rhythm demonstrate something very important about Leicester Rowing Club. Success is not measured purely by medals and results. It is also measured by the opportunities we create, the barriers we remove and the positive impact we have on people's lives through rowing.

Turning now to the wider year, 2026 has been another positive year for Leicester Rowing Club, with all squads continuing to develop and make progress.

Before moving on, I would like to recognise one particularly exceptional achievement.

This summer, Lauren Henry, one of Leicester Rowing Club's own members, became World Champion in the Women's Single Scull at the World Rowing Championships in Amsterdam. To stand on top of the podium as World Champion is an extraordinary achievement, and it's one that requires years of dedication, resilience and hard work.

Most of you will know that Lauren's rowing journey started here at Leicester, where she was coached by Angela, Jose and subsequently Howard, from the age of 14 through to 21 before moving into the full-time GB rowing programme. Whilst her achievements are very much her own, I know Howard, and indeed the whole club, take enormous pride in all that she has accomplished.

What makes Lauren's achievement even more extraordinary is that she became the first British woman in history to win the World Championship title in the Women's Single Scull. That is not simply a personal milestone, but a landmark moment in British rowing.

Howard and I were fortunate enough to be there in Amsterdam to witness the race and medal ceremony, and I can honestly say it was a privilege to watch. Seeing somebody who first learned to row at Leicester become World Champion on the biggest stage in our sport was a very special moment, not just for Lauren and her family, but for everybody connected with the club.

Lauren continues to be an outstanding ambassador for Leicester Rowing Club and an inspiration to our younger athletes. We are incredibly proud of her and look forward to seeing what comes next.

As always, our sporting achievements are covered in greater detail in the Captain's report, but it has once again been fantastic to see crews from across all sections of the club competing, challenging themselves and enjoying success.

Our regatta was once again a tremendous success and remains one of the highlights of our year. Events like this only happen because of the commitment and enthusiasm of a huge number of volunteers, and I would like to thank everyone involved in its organisation and delivery. Particular thanks go to Clare for once again undertaking the role of Entries Secretary, and to all those who helped before, during and after the event.

Financially, the club continues to be in a healthy position and our membership levels remain strong. Football car parking remains an important source of income for the club. Whilst Leicester City's declining fortunes mean there are a few fewer punters than we have enjoyed in previous years, football parking still provides a valuable contribution to our finances and helps us fund many aspects of club life.

Thank you to everyone who has helped with the car parks over the past year. Particular thanks must once again go to Brian, who always seems to do more than his fair share, although we are very grateful to everyone who volunteers their time. As always, if we all do a little, the burden on individuals becomes much lighter.

Across the club, it has been wonderful to see so many people out on the water and involved in training throughout the year. We are fortunate to have a fantastic coaching team who contribute enormous amounts of time and expertise to support our members. Whether coaching juniors, seniors, recreational rowers, Castle Mead students or participants in Row the Rhythm, the contribution our coaches make is invaluable. Thank you all for everything you do.

Like any successful organisation, however, we must also continue to look ahead and think about the future. As the club continues to grow and evolve, it is sensible for us to consider whether our current structure remains the most appropriate one for the future.

One of the significant areas of work undertaken by the committee this year has been considering whether Leicester Rowing Club should become an incorporated organisation.

No decisions have yet been made, but the committee and trustees are starting to consider what incorporation might mean for the club, particularly in relation to governance, liability and the long-term protection of both the club and its members.

This is an important decision and not one that should be rushed. Our objective is simply to ensure that Leicester Rowing Club remains strong, well-governed and sustainable for future generations. We will continue to develop our thinking and engage with members as this work progresses.

Another challenge facing clubs across the country is the changing coaching landscape within British Rowing.

British Rowing is continuing to introduce changes to coaching requirements, with increased emphasis on qualifications, training and continuing development. While the objective of maintaining high standards and safe practice is one we all support, the changes do place additional demands on volunteers who already give a great deal of their time.

As a club, we will need to ensure that our coaches continue to develop the qualifications and certifications required to support our activities. I would therefore like to thank our coaches for embracing these changes and for their continued commitment to the club.

Equally important is the need to attract and develop new coaches. If you have ever considered helping with coaching, even occasionally, I would encourage you to talk to one of our squad leads. The future success of the club depends upon having enough qualified volunteers willing to support our members on and off the water.

Finally, I need to mention one particular challenge we face this evening.

At present, we do not have anyone standing for the role of Treasurer.

As you will understand, the Treasurer plays a vital role in the successful running of the club. It is an important committee position and one that helps ensure the long-term financial stability of our organisation.

Whilst the role may seem daunting from the outside, there are established systems in place and support will be available. I would strongly encourage anyone who feels they may be able to help, either now or in the future, to come forward and speak to us. Like all rowing clubs, Leicester depends entirely on volunteers, and we simply cannot operate without members being prepared to step into these key roles. If you think you might be interested but are unsure whether you have the necessary experience, please have a conversation with us. You may be surprised at how manageable the role can be with the right support.

Before I close, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the club over the past year.

Thank you to our committee members, coaches, launch drivers, welfare volunteers, squad leads, junior parents, event organisers and all those who quietly get on with the countless jobs that keep Leicester Rowing Club running smoothly.

Most importantly, thank you to all of you, our members, for your loyalty, enthusiasm, friendship and support.

This year has reminded us that rowing clubs are about far more than just racing. They are about community, resilience, opportunity and looking after one another. Those values remain at the heart of Leicester Rowing Club and are one of the reasons I am so proud to be part of it.

Thank you all very much, and I now look forward to moving on to the formal business of the meeting.