

Captain's report - AGM 2026

Introduction

I would like to reflect on what has been a year of ups and downs for Leicester Rowing Club. I will return to these later in the report, but I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the strong sense of community among Leicester Rowing Club's membership.

Before I move into results and normal AGM business, I think it's really important to reflect on one event this year. Tyler Barrett, a member of our Junior Squad, passed away as a result of a road traffic incident earlier this year.

This tragic event has been extremely difficult for our club and community to go through. Tyler was an amazing young man who brought positivity and enthusiasm to our club and he will always be missed.

It is during tough times that the true strength of our community shines through. Since the tragic incident, I have seen our members come together to support one another and ensure that Tyler's memory is not forgotten. This is one of the qualities that makes Leicester Rowing Club a truly unique and special place. I would like to personally thank each and every one of our members for their support during this difficult time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to give special recognition to Liz, who, alongside her role as President, is also the Junior Squad lead. Liz's leadership of the club during these difficult events was exceptional. She provided outstanding support to others while, I know, feeling the significant personal impact of the loss. I would like to thank Liz for her leadership, kindness and support.

I will go on to thank a number of key individuals later within this report - I would however like to start by thanking the committee, some of which will be stepping down. For those stepping down, please accept my gratitude for your efforts. For the new members that will be elected at this year's AGM, I would like to warmly welcome you into the committee.

Results

This year the club has posted 32 wins, which is a reduction on the previous year of 44. Whilst this does represent a decrease, I am highly encouraged by the strong new intake of members - I am sure we will grow this number over the next 12 months.

There have been some important and significant results this year which need to be mentioned:

- Lauren Henry continues to be a source of inspiration on the world stage in the single scull. This year, she won World Cup gold medals in Seville and Lucerne, a gold medal at the European Rowing Championships in Varese, and then her first gold medal at the World Rowing Championships in Amsterdam.
- Lauren also successfully defended the The Princess Royal Challenge Cup at Henley Royal Regatta building on her 2025 success.

Women's Squad

Natalia Wadowska began the year in her second season as Women's Captain. Nat has always been a strong presence within the squad, bringing the group together around a common goal. Natalia has decided to step down from her role. I would like to sincerely thank Nat for her focus, support and positivity throughout her tenure as Women's Squad lead.

Going forward, Lucy Cleaver and Evie Paddison will jointly take on the Women's Vice-Captain roles. Both Lucy and Evie share a vision of an inclusive, friendly and competitive women's squad, and I am greatly encouraged by the strong start they have made in welcoming a new group of members into the squad.

Men's Squad

Kieran Blacker was the men's vice captain for the last season and undertook the role with diligence, care and positivity. Those who remember my last report will know that Kieran stepped into the role early in order to support the squad and I am sure the squad would join me in thanking Kieran for his efforts.

Zak Swift and Viren Mangharam will jointly undertake the role of men's vice captain for the upcoming season. I know they have been working alongside Kieran over the last couple of months to ensure that they have a running start into the new season, which has paid off enormously in terms of engagement.

The men's squad has a large membership base for the current season and I am excited to see what they can achieve.

Junior squad

Liz continues to lead the junior squad at the club, with the support of Angela Holohan, Sally Horrocks, Howard Marsh, Zak Swift and others.

The junior squad continues to bring regular new members to the club and provide a safe, fun and effective training environment for our junior members.

The Castle Mead initiative, championed by Liz, also continues to be a source of pride within our club. This has been running for a number of years now and remains a hugely rewarding activity for all involved at the club. I would like to thank everybody involved in this initiative and look forward to a sustained and positive partnership.

Clem Cowsill will continue in her role as Junior Coordinator for the coming year. Clem has done a great job at representing the junior squad and I would like to express my gratitude for her continued support.

Recreational squad

The recreational squad continues to be a hugely popular group within the club - boasting large numbers over our weekend rowing sessions. Anne, as squad lead for many years now, has done a great job of both organising and championing the squad in the club. Anne has also been a keen promoter of recreational rowing more broadly which I know will continue to have a positive impact on our sport.

Leicester Rowing Club is a volunteer led club and the rec squad are key contributors in many aspects of that effort - they also form a large part of the committee. I would like to say thank you to the squad for their continued support and contribution to Leicester Rowing Club.

Performance squad

Howard's influence at the club continues to be hugely positive. His willingness not just to support his own squad, but also to share his vast knowledge with all, provides support for athletes across the club in all squads.

Results in this space are always impressive. I would like to make special reference to Lucy Cleaver, Victoria Barker and Kate Duffy for representing the club at high level events such as Metropolitan Regatta and Henley Women's Regatta.

Equipment

I would like to thank everybody who has helped maintain our club equipment over the last year. This includes John Sephton, Graham Clark, Viren Mangharam, Howard Marsh, Liz Pulford and many others.

We have invested in our fleet this year by purchasing boats that improve the overall quality of equipment available at every level of the club. We purchased a WinTech 2x to support our performance athletes, alongside a Janousek 4x-, which serves as a club-level replacement for Millenium. We have also continued to expand our fleet of single sculls with the acquisition of an Aylings single scull, which has been well received by the membership.

Equipment must be rotated and maintained which is an expensive activity - it is important that all members take responsibility for looking after the equipment that they use on a daily basis. I would ask that members report issues as soon as they're identified to allow the committee the opportunity to repair promptly - this alongside maintenance days is imperative to ensure that our fleet remains robust and water worthy.

Reflections

Over this year, whilst the club has experienced a traumatic event, we have also seen examples of where our club culture and community stands out. You can look at the way the club came together at the regatta, the way that our members came together to remember and raise money in the "Race for Tyler" or the way that our club supports initiatives such as Row the Rhythm.

I would like to thank all members for supporting what is a strong, supportive and inclusive culture at the club.

Thank you's

It is as always very difficult to single out all of the great contributions, but please know that all are appreciated and welcomed.

Special thanks goes to:

- The squad leads for their work to ensure that all people in the club are supported and empowered to make the most out of their experience at Leicester Rowing club.
- Sally Horrocks for working closely with the committee to ensure that we're operating sensibly and safely in all activities.
- Brian Robbins for helping to generate funds for the club by volunteering to support the football car parks at the club.
- Howard Marsh for providing a great coaching example to follow, and providing many members at the club training plans, guidance and support.

- Nicola Henry who will step down from her position as club Treasurer this year. Nicola has been a dedicated member of the committee for a number of years and I want to recognise her diligence and support during that period.
- Liz for her steadfast leadership of the club throughout the easy and hard times.

My intent for the coming year is to continue in my role as Club Captain. I would like to thank you in advance for the patience, support and above all friendship that I receive in this role.