

BRITISH CANOEING'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-21 CONSULTATION MEETINGS FEEDBACK ANALYSIS

This is a summary of the combined feedback from the regional consultation events held in England in May, June and July 2016. Sessions were run in Cumbria, Yorkshire, North East, East Midlands, South East, West Midlands, East, North West, South, South West, and London

PART 1 – THE PURPOSE

Over the course of the consultation events the wording was changed to reflect feedback. The first version was:

'More Canoeists, staying healthy, finding fun and satisfaction, enjoying challenge, improvement and success.'

Through initial consultation it became clear that the wording of this statement could be better – with a new purpose discussed at further meetings. The purpose was updated as follows:

'Lead, enable and inspire an involvement in paddlesport for enjoyment, health, achievement and success.'

Final iterations have resulted in our current working statement for the purpose to read:

'To inspire a passion in Paddlesport for all: for enjoyment, health and wellbeing, friendship, challenge and achievement.'

Initially, the discussion on purpose yielded a relatively high level of critical responses – with most concern over the actual structure of the wording. It is possible this is also a reflection of the discussion of purpose marking the first discussion point – at this point in the discussion many attendees would probably have wanted to voice opinions they had formed prior to the meeting, as opposed to objective views of the specific discussion point. However, at the final few consultation events there was greater agreement and overall satisfaction with the intent of the Purpose statement, whilst acknowledging there are still improvements to be made to the words.

The responses have been split into three categories; positives, suggested improvements and critical comments regarding the proposed purpose alongside current perceptions of British Canoeing. Where a comment is accompanied by a number in brackets, this indicates the number of times the same comment was made at three different consultation meetings.

Positive Interpretations:

- Good for all – Inclusive and Balanced (6)
- Good – but we should aspire to be the best
- Lead and inspire links to performance, health, achievement and success broaden it to include everyone
- Leadership is important – want a strong NGB to lead
- Like the relation to health
- *“That’s what our club essentially does, we don’t say it in that way but that’s what we try and do.”*

General Suggestions:

- Add in something about ‘community’ and how canoeing builds an ‘inclusive community’, ‘friendships, and ‘social interactions’ (4)
- **‘Inspire, Enable and develop’** (3)
- If it isn’t for enjoyment, why are they doing it? This has to be high priority (2)
- The primary aim should be to service the needs of the members (2)
- Focus on quality, not just numbers (2)
- ‘Increase, Maintain, Support’ (2)
- Include or add in ‘Adventure and Exploration’
- Our Purpose should include providing a pathway for coaching and participants and the resources needed to do this.
- ‘More Canoeists’, should this say ‘More individuals involved in the sport of Canoeing’, this then encompasses the volunteers, officials, spectators and those who wouldn’t consider themselves a Canoeist.
- ‘Environment’ should be included
- Better facilities and more places to paddle?
- Replace the word ‘Canoeist’ with ‘Paddler’
- Replace the word ‘health’ with ‘well-being’
- Should disciplines be included in the purpose somewhere?
- Replace ‘lead’ with ‘guide’? Less top down
- Is ‘involvement’ the right word?
- *Suggestion of ‘creating and supporting communities and individuals who seek new experiences to enjoy, keep healthy, achieve and succeed in paddlesport’.*
- Regular is the key word, taster sessions that carries on to regular participation.

Critical comments regarding the purpose:

- Statement is too long - needs to be snappier and punchier (4)
- Some concern over the use of the term ‘Paddlesports’ – is this the correct term? No alternative put forwards though (2)
- Needs to be jargon free and less businesslike (3)

- Whilst 'health' carries an importance – is it a main reason why people take up canoeing? Does it belong in our purpose?
- Sounds weak and glossy – could not stand behind it
- Why do we start with 'more' – start with how fun it is so more people want to do it
- Currently as phrased the purpose is not future proof, it serves our current needs but not the following steps
- There are lots of fractured groups that need to be included – people see British Canoeing as one of the fractures rather than as something drawing us all together.

In addition, the following comments were made with regards to the purpose:

Our purpose should be to provide a structure for the sport and be the front face of the sport. If that is the case, what does that look like for all of the British Canoeing component parts e.g. clubs, committees, members etc.?

There are lots of people who are not members who just go canoeing, what about them?

There is a danger that we lose the richness when we distil the title too much.

PART 2 – THE VISION

Similar to the development of the 'Purpose', over the course of the consultation events the wording of the 'Vision' was changed to reflect feedback. The first version was:

'Canoeing recognised as a modern, growing and successful lifestyle sport; connected, engaged and meeting the very varied needs of paddlers throughout the UK.'

The Vision statement was then updated to reflect the views of those already consulted:

'An organisation that is joined up – connected with partners; and engaged with paddlers and the community. Recognised as one of the most successful governing bodies in the UK.'

Following further discussions around the vision, the working statement for the vision presented at the last consultation event is as follows:

'The whole of British Canoeing striving to be excellent; responsive to the needs of participants and members, exceptionally co-ordinated in delivery and strongly connected with partners'.

During the discussion on vision, three main types of response were identified – general changes which could be made to the wording, a push to be more optimistic and a call to be less ambitious.

Each of these categories are summarised below - with comments which occurred more than once marked as previously.

General Structural Comments:

- Needs to be punchier (4)
- 'Inclusive' should be added (3)
- 'Modern and Effective' (3)
- Members and Paddlers should come before partners in the statement (3)
- Replace 'governing body' with 'Community' / 'British Canoeing' with 'Us/We' (3)
- Joined up and Connected (2)
- 'Communication' could be added (2)
- Replace 'engaged with paddlers' with 'responsive to paddlers needs' / 'understand the needs' / 'meet the needs'
- 'Protect, Promote, Provide'
- Replace the word 'Paddler' with 'Participant'
- Pathway needs to be represented
- 'Transparent and Fair'
- Nothing about external links and partners – is connected too general?
- 'Represent' is a key word
- This is fine for existing paddlers but does it meet the needs of new people?
- Build on Quality, - Quality coaching, quality services and effective communication
- Volunteers are key – should they be in the vision?!
- Put people in general first – to help and inspire PEOPLE to paddle for enjoyments sake!
- Second half could be bullet points
- Adapting and continually listening
- To Inspire and Deliver (Enable / Facilitate / Support) a love of paddling for all – for fun, friendship, challenge and achievement
- Make it more of an open statement e.g. could it be "All of BC" rather than whole and striving to be replaced with "being.

Those pushing for Optimism:

- Is our vision aspirational enough – could we be more ambitious? (3)
 - 'The best'
 - 'The most successful'
 - 'Outstanding'
 - 'Expert'
 - 'Inspirational Leadership'
- This is a vision that could work, we are very segregated at the moment. Insular within own clubs
- Needs to serve to unite all disciplines and across all levels
- Could it be *'British Canoeing – the place to go for all your Paddlesport needs'*.

And those less Optimistic:

- Being a successful governing body is not relevant to most paddlers (2)
- This statement might be too hard to achieve in four years – more of a 20 year plan (2)
- Connecting partners will be a difficult yet necessary task (2)
- Replace the word ‘recognised’ with ‘become’
- Need to sort out internal issues to coordinate and bring disciplines together
- This vision is too generic – could apply to many corporate organisations
- It should be more about us and less about our partners
- Retailers and commercial partners are missing from this statement.

In addition, the following comments were made with regards to the Vision:

“The continuity of wording between statements – vision and purpose, enables greater understanding of what is being discussed.”

There was concern in early events that it did not accurately reflect the North/South divide that currently exists in the country and the difference in the disciplines that are participated in around the country.

“Is trying to be all things to all people realistic? Can the management of British Canoeing do everything that enables people to do what they want easily? Should it just focus on doing some things well?”

“Support with Vision, not just members or community lots of organisations outside of British Canoeing would like this vision. (BMC etc.)”

“Great Vision.”

“Pat on the back if we get half way there.”

Taunton (SW) very positive with regards to the vision.

*“The general consensus from the room was that the vision set out a positive view of our sport.”
Strongly connected to partners suggests that British Canoeing is not strong enough to stand on its own as an NGB of its sport.*

PART 3 – OUR AREAS OF FOCUS

The responses to the discussions on each of the proposed areas of focus (pillars) are summarised below. The number of areas of focus increased during the consultation process. Responses for the initial six pillars are as follows.

1. Increase Participation and Membership

- Membership should be separate to participation
- Consider changing to – Increase and Support Participation and Membership
- Better communication to clubs to enable similar policies to be implemented in each club
- How can we have other sporting conversations, especially in schools? E.g. Rowing is more imbedded into the schools program. Priority should be to increase presence in school to hit the mass youth market
- There is a big increase in participation but no transfer to membership, the offer needs to be suitable to the needs of the paddler. Suggest we need to focus more on the membership part
- Increase participation, membership - needs a statement, bit more of a descriptor to underpin this
- Need better communication around where your British Canoeing membership is invested.
- Individual members who are not part of a club need a pillar to meet this (them).

2. More Places to Paddle

- ‘Maintaining’ rather than ‘More’ – more important to improve and maintain what we already have
- Consider changing to More and **Better** Places to Paddle.

3. Competition and Performance

- Just seems to describe Elite and not anything outside of Elite Competition. What about local competition and the pathway?
- Remove the word ‘competition’ as the heading still includes competition. Different interpretations will depend on which discipline or aspect of the sport you are coming from. Competition to sit as sub heading under performance and pathways
- Add another pillar to include ‘recreation’ to balance against performance. This is restricted and limited by our current coaching scheme
- Where does the concept of events sit? I.e. non-traditional competitions. The NE region has many smaller local events (Tyne Tour, Boxing Day Durham to Finchale social paddle and race, and these should be recognised equally to competition.
- Could it say ‘Supporting and improving competition and performance at all levels?’

- Include 'Pathways'. Pathways and Progression separated from competition?
- 'Challenge' should be drawn out more
- Word 'excellence' is missing. Can excellence be used either to replace or in addition to this pillar
- Does the word 'Disciplines' need to be included here.

4. Invest in our People

- Underplaying the importance of Coaching
- Don't like the word 'People' used to describe everyone, not clear. Can we include Coaches and Volunteers in the title? (2)
- What does it mean by investment to coaches and volunteers? Would it be better to say support Coaches and Volunteers?
- Improve offer from clubs should have added – improve offer to clubs and centres.

5. Great Organisation and Governance

- No direct comments to change, keep
- Ensuring proper procedures are in place and that the sport is managed properly
- Transparency and clarity is needed throughout the organisation due to the amounts of money turning over and the responsibility involved
- Need to avoid getting bogged down in bureaucracy
- Consider an alternative title such as 'Responsibility and Accountability'
- Could combine two Pillars - improve offer from clubs and centres by establishing good governance at club, regional, national level.

6. Improved Profile and Communications

- No mention of Commercial and Sponsorship gains anywhere?
- Communications needs to improve across all levels
- Remove the last Pillar – it should be covered in the other areas?
- Keep profile and communications in - in visibility and credibility and promoting of the Sport are essential
- Communication, some members struggle with technology so don't get Canoe Focus or CoDe. In fact, some coaches do not know what CoDe magazine is!

General Comments on the Pillars:

Include 'creating greater clubs' as a separate pillar.

Links to other sports – with likeminded participants and also similar challenges, look to enable joint working and sharing of information.

In the pillars we are missing retention and how to challenge the participants so that they keep coming rather than encouraging churn within the sport.

Is the word Adventure missing from all of these?

A lot to focus on could it be narrowed down. Danger that we are spreading ourselves too thinly.

Communicating this – use videos. Make it relevant through survey etc. It needs to be taken to the grass roots and pushed.

From a British Canoeing perspective what weight are we going to put behind each pillar – how will we prioritize our resources against each one? Need direction on what we are going to focus on (one subject) so clubs have a focus.

Sub headings from each pillar, letting people know what they need to know.

Introduce a new pillar for BC to be smoother and more efficient.

Following the initial consultation, the number of pillars was increased – firstly to 8 pillars and then to 10. The feedback given to the ten proposed pillars at the last four consultation meetings (South, East, North West and London) is provided below:

1. Increasing participation - start and stay:

- Capacity is the biggest issue for clubs, do they have enough space, equipment and coaches to meet additional demand
- More people – what are the barriers to entry if a large latent demand?

2. Attracting new members and engaging with existing members:

- A corporate membership for businesses
- How does BC make money in a way that supports the members?

3. Creating more opportunities for exploration, adventure and challenge:

- Great to see this recognised as important by BC

4. Improving the offer to and from clubs:

- All very good but clubs have volunteers and that's a lot to load onto volunteers
- It was then discussed how clubs might select which pillars are most important to them and what would be appropriate actions for them as opposed to what might be regional actions or national actions
- Clubs and Centres should be able to draw from the focus areas to help develop their plans of where they want to go and to help us all work together to be one organisation. There was popular support for the idea of tailored support for tailored communities
- Membership for clubs could be done by BC rather than the club itself. So anyone joining a club would be handled by BC, and the subsequent renewals, saving a volunteer from having to chase
- Club management toolkit – club management software in with affiliation.

5. Creating more places to paddle and great facilities:

- No specific comments

6. Improving access and environmental awareness:

- No specific comments

7. Providing excellent competitions and pathways to performance:

- No specific comments

8. Investing in coaches and volunteers:

- Please include Leaders and Volunteers within the coaching topic
- Better access to limited coaching records by Clubs/Centre/RDT that tells if the coach is updated, and what needs to be done to update them
- Too hard to become a coach, too easy to lapse – reminders emailed to coach when something is about to run out of date
- More coaching courses regionally.

9. Establishing good governance at club, regional and national level:

- No specific comments

10. Improving the profile of the sport and improving communication:

- No specific comments

General comments relating to the pillars:

- The consensus was to keep all the 10 pillars
- It looks great and I think they are great areas to focus on, but is it too much?
- Make the wording simpler so that clubs can feel included, plus ensure that the same wording is used throughout – Canoeing / Paddlesport etc.

PART 4 – GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Within the consultation evenings attendees selected a specific area they wanted to discuss in more detail and groups were formed to facilitate discussions around the following topics;

- Access and the Environment
- Developing and Supporting Coaches
- Getting more people to start and stay in Canoeing
- Improving Pathways and Events
- Clubs, Centres and Volunteer Support and Development

The responses to these topics have been summarised below. Feedback has been grouped into strengths/keep doing, suggested improvements and general comments.

4.1 Access and the Environment

Strengths/Keep Doing:

- We should continue to work developing partnerships – including but not limited to CRT. (7)
- Reinforcing Check, Clean, Dry and other environmental messages (5)
- Showing paddlers in a positive light regarding the environment and promoting challenges and successes (4)
- Continue to work with others on access arrangements – the group was generally happy to accommodate other users. Would be ok moving off a particularly sensitive stretch of river if for example it was good angling section or important for fish spawning but would have to move to a similar section elsewhere (4)
- Continue networking and supporting stakeholders on environmental work such as river clean ups and wildlife surveys (4)
 - E.g. the working relationship with RSPB for paddling in the marine environment is a positive step i.e. Langstone Harbour
- Campaigns such as the ancient ways work are seen as very positive and progressive (2)
- There was a recognition that our stance and communications in this area have improved over recent years (2)
- Working towards Land Reform Act
- Trails – seen as very valuable
- We should look at the waterways holistically alongside targeting specific sections to increase access, enabling the access debate to build momentum
- Developing our sense of paddler's rights and supporting this
- Better Signage
- Shared resources with home countries
- The participants are happy with the fundamentals of our policies themselves.

Suggested Improvements:

- Be more vocal on what you are doing with regards to access campaigns (8)
- Consult and work closely with partners, external bodies and websites (8)
- Be innovative in access and environmental campaigns – e.g. physical obstructions are key to stopping salmon migrating upstream – can we form partnerships with Riparian Owners to develop combined Fish and Canoe passes in exchange for navigation rights (6)
- Find a legal solution for access arrangements (6)
- More Information and resources – on where, how, facilities etc. (6)
- Encourage shared use of rivers (5)
- More recognised access points (4)
- Develop and promote canoe trails and facilities (4)
- Be transparent and clear about access policies (4)

- BC must be more robust in setting an end goal for access improvements (3)
- Include environmental awareness/education as part of the CPD at Coach Updates or standard activity instructor training (3)
- The term Access Arrangement was treated with some scepticism as it implies to paddlers a need to ask permission – instead it was preferred to use terms such as Managed Arrangements, implying a partnership (2)
- There was a feeling around the table that access and environmental issues are very under resourced in British Canoeing, and not perceived as being taken seriously compared to other activities of the organisation – leading to increased pressure on volunteers to pick up (2)
- Have an Access Campaign with a strategy for positive outcomes. To be linked with engaging with the government and their policies for keeping fit/wellbeing
- Secure public navigation rights on the side streams of river navigations i.e. River Kennet
- Promote responsible paddling
- Increase the amount of durable and sustainable signage
- Economic Assessments to be promoted
- Try and engage canoe clubs
- Develop Environmental Committee – marine and inland waters which would include volunteers, partners and staff. We could do the same for Access.
- Enforce and promote CCD more strongly
- Promote more widely some of our environmental schemes – and the hard work of clubs
- If Environmental work is to be included in club development then there needs to be consideration on how this is to be delivered as their time is valuable to volunteers who are busy already. Keep things simple and practical.

General comments regarding access:

- Different solutions for different disciplines accepted and valued
- In previous times British Canoeing, via its web, email, magazines, Year Book and network of LWAs was a great source of information regarding rivers – especially on access. They felt this had deteriorated, and had been lost
- People could see that if a fair process was designed, which engages paddlers and made any restrictions as minimal as possible (e.g. for the environment, or where there is a very real and large, unavoidable clash between user groups) that AAs could well work
- Our visibility in pushing the message was very important, especially in engaging paddlers who may feel BC does little for them
- A member of the group raised the point that access also includes better facilities on the waters we do have a confirmed right on – such as canals
- The group feels most paddlers will be very responsive to environmental messages, but in a way that engages and involves – aiming to be bottom-up rather than top-down

- It was felt that not only could BC do more to identify and promote environmental opportunities to organisations – but we could support paddlers and clubs to think ‘outside the box’ in terms of the organisations they might be able to offer support to
- Table participants expressed confusion with many aspects of the situation around access to and along waterways – confusion about the position of the law, how they could/should behave on the water (i.e. whether to access), and on British Canoeing’s position on the issue
- A few people expressed that working more cohesively on access was a great way to build a cause, and make paddlers feel ‘part of something’, which would give them a reason to join us. If we are seen to be investing in Access then more members will be willing to join, we could also start to appeal for specific access funds to enable more work to be done once people can see that we have contributed
- Hassle from anglers is becoming worse
- It was suggested that there is a potential clash between access and the environment, as increased access could lead to either increased impacts (e.g. seal launching, litter) or in perceived impacts by others – and that also improvements for the environment can also affect access (e.g. the River Abbey situation with restoration making the river too shallow)
- Suggested British Canoeing could lead on adding more to the evidence base on environmental impacts – so we can both effectively (once again ‘robust’ came up) challenge any myths about impacts, but also so that where a risk is real the sport itself is seen to be driving any changes needed
- Being more **robust** was highlighted many times during the Eastern consultation.

4.2 Developing and Supporting Coaches:

Strengths/Keep Doing:

- Well respected coaching scheme, recognised for its high standards world-wide (2)
- It has some rigor and the overall shape works – although lots of improvements are required
- Modular approach works – needs further development
- UKCC has strengthened this, made the content more defined – but has increased costs
- Star awards are a strength, as are Paddlepower – but need reflection and review
- EM RDT - key driver in producing what clubs needs to deliver courses / training / support. If this could be replicated nationally it would do a lot for coach and club development.
- Recognition to get people developed and identifying gaps in needs
- Great coaching is fun and leaves the paddlers wanting more, sparks their interest and enables them to grow as people and paddlers
- Diverse range of coach abilities
- Coaching Matters events, good opportunity to share knowledge and best practice

- Volunteer workforce
- British Canoeing Annual Coaching Conference.

Suggested Improvements:

- Improve and develop modular/discipline tailored structure (7)
- System needs to be better suited to club coaches – more specific to discipline and less complex pathway, lower costs (7)
- Need to develop system to be more financially sustainable – e.g. people paying for club coaches (4)
- APL needs review, restructure and improved promotion. More direct entry at different levels (4)
- Customer service provided by office could be improved (4)
- Need to try and align clear standards of coaching (3)
- Level 1 and 2 – too content heavy, more practical elements needed (3) (Taunton fed back heavily on this point)
- Progression from Level 1 to Level 2 difficult – cost and time
- Improve the administration and registration process – too complex and antiquated (3)
- Be good to build stronger sense of team and sharing between coaches in the region (2)
- Need to better define what is a coach and what is a leader (2)
- Could assessment be done at the same time as training?
- Centres feel isolated – need to include in the redevelopment
- Need to address issues of consistency in water safety awards
- Make courses like WWSR, recognisable within the wider working environment
- Better management of courses necessary – what, where, when
- Coaches are not reading CoDe – online not helped, also to academic and not applied
- Should have more online sharing – videos, session plans etc.
- Greater support for volunteer coaches needed
- Set out the standard for assessment, and recommend that people undertake the training courses, but if they are at the level, you'll pass the course
- Develop, support the role and activities of RAO's and LCO's
- Priority is getting the youth interested in coaching
- Training to enjoy coaching to minimise drop out
- Training should be free at the point of delivery for the coach to attend, plus these are our workforce - can we help with reduced membership and other incentives?
- More BC Performance staff involvement to help the local coaches in clubs and centres do it better
- Do more to help club coaches develop – greater access to training
- Clear pathways
- Charter that coaches sign that they will continue to do CPD

- Build international credibility of the coaching system
- 2 Star should be moderated to ensure level one coaches have good basic skills
- Remove need for 2 star in canoe and kayak as a pre requisite for coaching
- BC should, and must, receive more revenue from Coach Education courses and less into the 'private sector'
- SW has specific requirements around surf which is unique to region and doesn't feel catered for
- Need a 4 star touring leader – could it be just canoe or kayak? 4 star and five star need updating
- Communication + engagement - online shared library of resources, signpost –simplify access/support, regional support- robust and accessed/forums, accredited professional discussions.

General comments regarding developing and supporting coaches:

- The club activity assistant enables clubs to give recognition to club helpers, or allows those who are helping, that do not want to complete a qualification, the recognition for work undertaken
- Do you need qualified coaches in a club? If you take the need for qualified coaches out, you lose the ability to sign off people, put people in at the bottom level or sign off juniors in paddle power
- There is a strong recreational support structure available within coaching, but a region cannot support all disciplines. Each discipline should support its own coach development activities, with regions focusing on recreation
- Qualifications are important and there is an expectation from parents to see them?
- How do we (clubs and centres) judge whether coaches are improving?
- A strong sense from within the group that there were some key areas requiring attention and there was general dissatisfaction with some key aspects of level 1&2 qualifications:
 - Both levels too theoretical and insufficiently practical - too much theory which deflated candidates particularly at level 1 and too much paperwork in assessment
 - Courses are overly complex and as a result too expensive
 - All of this means coaches are discouraged from engaging in coach education rather than being stimulated by it
- Coaches did not feel pride, loyalty to the system and therefore British Canoeing. This has been eroded over time
- Level 4 is unattainable for the majority. Even more academic. Level 3 is a low ceiling
- System isn't great at helping coaches find their way through it – coaches largely have to do it themselves – can waste a lot of time and money.

4.3 Getting more people to start and stay in Canoeing:

Strengths/Keep Doing:

- Go Canoeing:
 - Good in principle, just needs to be bigger and better and deliver on its intentions – and also deliver benefits to clubs (3)
 - National Go Canoeing Week well supported by British Canoeing. Good uptake and response. Attracted people who wouldn't normally get involved (2)
 - Useful resources leaflets and posters
- Local connection and practice (3)
- Great breadth to the sport – real strength
- Performance Awards:
 - Touring Star Awards are a positive – enabling people to go and get skills to go canoeing/journeying
 - The star awards are good, they can be delivered and (to some extent) adopted to meet the needs of the participant
 - Good structure of awards – but keeps changing and can get confusing. Possibly needs more clarity or flexibility to dip in and out
 - Paddlepower – Good way to get young people involved in the sport (3)
- Emphasising the health benefits/adventure. Programmes that are relevant to clubs and to the local regions
- Keep working in schools
- Focussed sessions – e.g. girls only or disability.

Improvements:

- Closer liaison needed between local providers - commercial/centre section, youth groups and volunteer/club sector. Mutually beneficial relationship – BC to act as the facilitator (9)
- Better information about where you can access the water (5)
- Better information on the website – particularly with clubs – what to expect (5)
- Better use of technology: to promote paddling/contacts, to signpost to paddling types (4)
 - E.g. Go Canoeing to create an accessible app/location locator so when you are walking along the canal it pop ups with notifications of where there are canoeing opportunities, taster days etc.
- Better connections with schools and colleges (4)
- Better support for ALL disciplines region to region (3)
- Promote the 'freedom' aspect of canoeing more (2)
- It would be good to see more top end paddlers inspiring and mixing at club levels (2)
- Greater clarity on what people can deliver – for peace of mind (2)

- Communicate directly and efficiently with coaches as well as clubs as information is sometimes lost (2)
- Better awards system e.g. for younger people – e.g. 5 year olds – badge system (2)
- Would like more facilities/equipment for new and existing clubs (2)
- Disability should become part of basic policy rather than a separate initiative and equipment should be available (2)
- Make go canoeing more widespread – it is limited in its reach when using just centres. Why can't clubs run tours for example? (2)
- More tours, more challenges, more opportunities (2)
- Support clubs with mentoring from CDOs – investment from BC does not have to be monetary (2)
- National Go Canoeing Week (NGCW) suggestions:
 - Create regional/local calendars of when activity is happening for a more co-ordinated approach
 - Timing of it? Try having it at the end of summer holidays as people may have tried paddling on holiday and be more inclined to have another go
 - Is one week enough? Try having 2 weeks in the year
- Harness the casual market – e.g. lunch time quick activities, drop in etc.
- Increase the amount of large banners which can be put up at key points to attract passing trade, small poster can only do so much
- Not much at a national/regional level to help support experimentation between disciplines and few opportunities to try different things – new types of events that are fun and multi discipline could help
- Be nice to have more demo days, links with clubs, centres, and retailers
- Discounts for qualifications if for club use
- Provide more for independent paddlers
- Promote the 'adventure' aspect more
- Greater links between events and local offers
- There needs to be the proper infrastructure in place to support regular paddling
- Safe paddling intro and star awards video – tutorial style
- British Canoeing should be top of search engine searches for anything related to the sport
- Improve networks both between disciplines and geographically
- Consult with the youth – these meetings are full of old people
- Re-introduce different levels of membership – potential for cheaper/free student membership?
- Need to create links between retail and local opportunities
- Need more volunteers or coaches within clubs
- Clubs would like more ideas around how they can retain members

- Felt there would be a real value if BC staff could help with having high level meeting in local authorities to help getting swimming pool access
- Work on brand imagery
- Could we have more boats at a beginner level that are less specialist, more multi-functional that encourage people to try different things. Sit on tops used correctly can be a huge asset
- Work with clubs to remove insular nature and help to develop all disciplines. If a club is unable to offer certain aspects – perhaps they could signpost the person on to a more appropriate place to paddle?
- Improve the Regional Development team (RDT) structure to make RDTs more inclusive.

General comments regarding getting more people to start and stay in Canoeing:

- Families that join (as a family unit) show a much larger retention, if the parents don't join in or show an interest then the juniors tend not to stay with the club long term
- Coaching – All comes back to coaching – coach drives participation
- Youth Important
- Local networks important. We need to improve connecting between all providers – uniformed groups, centres and clubs to help keep young people involved. Some scout groups keen to pass their youth onto clubs, but don't know anything about the local clubs.
- There needs to be the proper infrastructure in place to support regular paddling
- Participants join and show a huge progression but either recreational or competitively they tend to hit a plateau and sometimes there is then nowhere for them to progress so they drop out
- Should we be looking abroad at how other countries develop their discipline and the sport?
- Feeling that the participation programs are gimmicky and the clubs are already doing their version to increase paddle sport
- 'Participation is down to the key volunteers and organisers and not necessarily the participation programs'
- Do coaches really need to be individual members if a member of the club?
- Sometimes it seems as a sport we put too many barriers in place to allow people to get on the water. Observation at an event recently where there was a SUP provider next to a kayak provider on the same piece of water. For the SUPS, people on the water in a couple of minutes enjoying an experience. Further along the beach to go canoeing it took 15-20 minutes with a safety brief and everyone had to wear helmets. Based on the environment this seems like too much and puts up too many barriers to people enjoying the experience. Also creates an impression that the sport is very dangerous
- Decline in retail shops has led to an Influx in people starting to use the internet for their first purchases, where they can be ill-informed. Often people buy the wrong boat and then have unpleasant experiences. Retailers want the sport to grow and provide good advice – could BC do more to support them?

- Great to get people involved when they are young, but don't push them too hard. Let them just enjoy the environment and explore the waterways. If they are interested in competition there is plenty of time for this. Allow them to explore and experiment with the various aspects of the sport
- Quite easy to engage people with Starter Sessions and 6 week course. Can be difficult to retain them at this point, high drop off. People don't always want to commit to the club or membership
- Noticed that people may have a real passion in adventure and challenge maybe white water running for about 5 years but then they tend to lose interest and may revert back to doing different things (want different stimulus). This is possibly also tied into different life cycles. It varies at different points in different disciplines eg slalom primarily juniors and polo university age plus
- In New York they run a new game that is a cross between canoe polo and dodge ball. It's proving really popular as in run at a lunch time. Lots of workers come out and take part. Great exposure and profile for the sport. Also SUP polo getting popular
- Observation that social aspect is important in the sport. When you get a group of 3-4 into a club or that are at a similar age, they are much more likely to stay and progress together.

4.4 Improving Pathways and Events:

Strengths/keep doing:

- Good calendar of events across different disciplines (5)
- Regional events such as the Hasler races (2)
- West Midlands Duathlon – good local event which we need to keep going
- Hosting major events like 2015 Slalom World Championships
- Star awards that provide skills that unlock paddlers potential into pathways
- Continue with current Event safety module
- Promotion and demotion of paddlers good systems in slalom and marathon disciplines (don't know about all disciplines)
- Talent ID programme at LVWW – providing equipment and coaching. But need to understand the longer term success of this investment
- Different and unique experience at each event (slalom)
- T Shirt designed by a youth for Club Champs for all participants. Very popular
- Keep event formats friendly and welcoming for all. Helps with keeping people engaged in the club
- Coherent national ranking systems.

Suggested Improvements:

- Ensuring events meet the growing market demand, i.e. recognising and supporting SUP events, Surf Ski Races, open canoe events, city centre, symposiums (5)
- Better promotion, marketing and branding of events (5)
- Ensure Pathways & progressions are clear and meet the needs of the participant from age 14 upwards (4)
- Pooling of resources and joined up approach across disciplines/clubs (4)
- Produce a joined up BC calendar of events (3)
- Develop the offer for youth within clubs (2)
- Volunteer strategy for events – like Hockey Makers. Attract local people. Use universities - young people benefit on skills CV – benefit new workforce. More top level too (2)
- Canoeing provides multiple pathway in terms of the sport/activity and into coaching and volunteering. But we need to improve the signposting.
- Create better exit strategies for athletes from talent pathways (2)
- Live streaming on the internet of events – stimulate interest and enable paddlers to see events e.g. like ICF streaming or Hurley (2)
- Support for young people when they go through exams and other critical life stages. Greater flexibility to enable them to take time out to focus on exams and to take exams whilst away
- More come and try – Paddlefest type events
- More encouragement and support to girls to increase numbers
- Support to improve the polo pathway - different needs
- Improve information and system of progression from heats to finals of sprint events at NWSC
- Integration of TID and club activity, shouldn't be separate
- Publication of events calendar for smaller disciplines e.g. Freestyle. Not easy to find out what is going on
- Sharing of knowledge across disciplines – support younger disciplines like freestyle and polo around event planning and ranking systems
- More and bigger events for everyone – e.g. big Tours like the Tyne Tour. Family events.
- Host more major events
- To run a series of taster events e.g. Local Sprint run the day before a marathon aimed at lower division paddlers
- Seek partnerships with adventure race events like Rat Race
- Develop entry level taster competition
- Develop try a boat 'dealer' days with local retailers
- Provide greater clarity on 'types of water'
- Develop a workshop for new event organisers
- Transparency on resource allocation for pathway provision
- Simpler pathway

- Send out the Event Safety Module booklet in advance of the training not post training
- Support clubs where they no longer have big membership to help run events e.g. co-host events with other clubs
- Identify clubs to support based on athlete performance – e.g. those that did well at a recent event
- Provide more incentive prizes to encourage repeat entries / interest
- Communication between Super Regional, Regional Coaches and Club Coaches
- More access to Senior BC Performance Coaches
- More financial support to the clubs/committees that organise events-central. Bank of resources, advertising, promoting etc.
- Cascade down expertise from our Olympic Performance coaches across all disciplines
- Wi-Fi around the regatta course at HPP, this would allow for more efficient and speedier communication to competitors/team leaders. The whole regatta events need a facelift; nothing has changed in 20 years
- Remove qualifying times to attend the regattas-pathway too long to get there
- Greater consistency across the star awards – perceived that in some disciplines it is easier to achieve an award than others at the same level
- Have a simple clear pathway for coaches to deliver the performance awards
- Make it easier for coaches to get L2 and L3 so that they can support the pathway
- Enable people to do a performance award in any boat – e.g. 2 star do it in the boat you chose
- Consolidate initiatives and awards - Keep it simple!

General comments regarding improving pathways and events:

- Fewer lower division slaloms now than there used to be – so less of a pool to feed into the top divisions. Very few adults in the top divisions. Whereas Canoe Polo seems to be all adults and very few juniors
- For marathon there are lots of local events and a good system where people can race against people of similar ability – all at the same event. There is a better sense of community
- Depends where you live as to what type of canoeing you do – also what the coach at the club is interested in
- Volunteers are stretched – needed to help across a number of disciplines (slalom)
- Do we have any quality assurance processes? Feeling this needed to be investigated
- Do we consider the participant experience enough i.e. everything around the event from parking to toilets and café tent
- Talent ID programmes can have a negative impact on kids that have come through the normal club system. We need to deal with this better

- There was a general feeling within the group that there is a lot going on that individuals/groups are driving but this is not being recognised by the organisation overall so the question being raised was, how can we better help grow the brand?
- For a great event it was agreed this meant happy customers/participants who are engaged, satisfied and feel their individual needs are being met, not everyone wants to strive to be the best they can
- Develop better customer experience at all events – could there be more off water activity at the regattas to entertain the whole family when they are not paddling?
- To create good pathways within the club, then club members needed to see a professionally organised approach at everything that was going on otherwise they would choose a different sport. It is not easy to create this and takes a vast amount of the volunteers time to meet everyone’s needs and wants
- Pathways need to be exciting, challenging and something people have to be a part of
- There was a strong perception that athletes are being told what to do event wise, but there was a strong feeling that the current system allowed athletes to choose not to do events if they felt they would get demoted etc. which might then affect selection onto a pathway team
- Calendar really full so really hard for paddlers to experience cross discipline competitions. Also hard for the discipline to schedule new events as there are no more weekends free
- Sprint are keen to run more regional events, but quite often difficult to find a venue to host an event and organisers are reliant on the same volunteers all the time which reduces capacity to run competitions
- The group felt that there was an issue with the way paddlers are taken from their clubs to be put into Talent squads. This takes away the role models from the clubs but also the club’s support to the young person. When those paddlers no longer meet the required standard in the talent squad it was felt they were dropped without support and they then left the sport. Whereas if they were with the clubs they could nurture them into other pathways.

4.5 Clubs, Centres and Volunteer Support and Development:

Strengths/Keep Doing:

- Activity Quality Mark for centres and clubs is a good system. Clubmark provides clubs with a structure and guides them to ensure all of club offer is right for members (4)
- Keep going with Affiliation (3)
- Insurance for clubs is good (3)
- Support for Centres/Clubs – Knowing who to go to and having that local contact (CDO) (3)
- Volunteer recognition evening – should be more recognition on top of this (2)
- Regional development team are communicating well and the regional structure is good

- Winter Club Challenge/NGCW – The literature involved is appreciated and valued
- Our sport is relatively low cost
- Coaches are good at ensuring safety of paddlers in their care (Duty of Care)
- Volunteers are happy to give much of their spare time to support activity delivery and behind the scenes support
- The work carried out by Sport England on Getting Active Outdoors was excellent piece of work. This type of insight needs to be continued and developed and followed up
- The river licensing scheme is good (but could have better information)
- One club likes that BC are easily accessible through the Canoeing Development Officer (CDO). The club does inclusivity, affordability reaching out to the local community
- Club matters tool is good – but BC should do more to promote rather than relying solely on the CDO.

Suggested Improvements:

- Better support and resources for coaches and clubs e.g. website template which ALL clubs can use and merely filling the blank with their club info, logos, news, pictures etc. (8)
- Regional clubs & centres to share resources and work more closely together and offer opportunities to deliver specialist areas (6)
- Clear communication and information to clubs e.g. of what is good practice and allowed and not allowed (6)
- More close contact with clubs – More staff getting out there and being the front facing organisation that the members want – providing information and training (6)
- Volunteer recognition needs to improve beyond volunteer awards (4)
- More personal, friendly and can-do office (2)
- Clubs and Centres would like knowledgeable support from British Canoeing in informing committees/management of staffing qualifications and when people are to be updated and what requires renewing i.e. First Aid (2)
- Integrated database of members for British Canoeing and clubs (2)
- The website needs improvement – both for clubs looking for information and the information we display about clubs
- The group would like to see a regional website that is informative to help with communication
- The clubs would like a good regional newsletter styled communication that tells them what is going on in the region, which puts the information directly to them and not for them to search the website for
- Sharing of where clubs get their financial support from councils and other funding areas
- Database with club members who have specific emails for different roles that they fulfil, e.g. RDT member, club secretary, personal email etc.
- Not completely clear what the benefits of affiliation are

- Club accreditation could be simpler and less time consuming, with all the detail on the website
- Re-introduce tiered membership – different for volunteers
- Improve the volunteer network – so can draw upon for events etc.
- Improved link between BC Performance department and Clubs
- We are not a customer facing organisation and this needs to change
- Clubs/Centre would like clarity on Paddle-Boarding/SUP. What is happening?
- Getting new people to try the sport is easy – sustaining them is tough due to lack of higher qualified coaches
- Scrap the need to do both single and double blade to gain 2 star as a pre requisite to becoming Level 1 coach
- Shifting from offering one off tasters transferring to regular participation
- Promote the sport better as a family activity
- Better networks between clubs and youth groups to share resources
- Support to develop more national level officials
- More club forum events for knowledge sharing
- Paddle Power app needs better promotion and possibly some videos on the coach part?
- 10 things to do in your first year of paddling. Better advice on how to get people hooked
- Universities provide a great opportunity for people to get involved in the sport. They should be better supported with free club membership
- BC needs to recognise that clubs can't always commit to weekly prescriptive sessions to coach Star awards. The expectation exceeds what is practical for clubs to deliver
- Need better support for clubs who are not Clubmark accredited
- A scaled system of membership/insurance should be introduced
- Go Canoeing template posters are great but more space required to write details of event. Also can they put an image of their venue which is more realistic than the Mediterranean style images used currently
- Volunteer Coordinator role (Clubmark requirement) in club is vacant but club manages ok without this role. Do we need to insist on all of these roles to be accredited?
- There is a need for helping pioneers and explorers in the non-disciplines to get further support both funding and stronger recreational pathways
- Certification needs improving – The Speed, Availability
- Access to some sort of club management tool, help manage coach qualifications
- Need more clubs!

General Comments:

- Some grants are restrictive and bound by KPI's. Many clubs require grants just to replace old and worn out equipment without being bound by restrictive targets. Clubs do not want

to increase membership fees to cover buying new equipment as they want to make the club accessible to all

- Volunteers enjoy/love the sport and want to give back and allow others to get same enjoyment
- Support to volunteers was difficult to do at a national level and this was very much about what the clubs and committees could do to recognise their own volunteers. Local level support was more important. Though support to develop more officials would be helpful
- Club accreditation was thought to be good as it gave clubs a structure for how to develop and recognition of what they had achieved
- Clubs need business advice. Too many operate at the financial margins
- People need to be enthused to want to put back into developing both the club and the sport
- Clubs need people with available time and few other commitments in order to run efficiently
- The volunteer awards were regarded as not being of value in their current format, could it be moved to a Bi-annual event, or a simpler method of saying thank you at a regional or local level – for example clubs could have a thank you pin badge that then nominates to a regional event? “It is nice to say thank you” The concept of locally led but nationally supported was popular across a range of subjects that was discussed
- Clubs are very inclusive and embrace diversity and in most cases even celebrate their eccentricities
- How can we encourage the younger paddling generation to help out with club running?
- Must be recognised that clubs come in all different shapes and sizes – one size does not necessarily fit all.

PART 5 – SUMMARY OF FIRST NINE CONSULTATION SESSIONS

In order to summarise the findings of these consultancy sessions, the top two suggested improvements within each group are listed below. Where there were more than two suggestions with equal weighting in a group – the additional suggestions are also given.

The top ten items (*consider 10 equally, this is not a ranking system*)

1. Be more vocal on what you are doing with regards to access campaigns (8)
2. Consult and work closely with partners, external bodies and websites (8)
3. Improve and develop modular/discipline tailored structure for coaching (7)
4. System needs to be better suited to club coaches – more specific to discipline and less complex pathway, lower costs (7)
5. Closer liaison needed between commercial/centre section and volunteer/club sector. Mutually beneficial relationship – BC to act as the facilitator (9)
6. - Better information about where you can access the water (5)
- Better information on the website – particularly with clubs – what to expect (5)
7. Ensuring events meet the growing market demand, i.e. recognising and supporting SUP events, Surf Ski Races, open canoe events, city centre, symposiums (5)
8. - Better promotion, marketing and branding of events (5)
- Good calendar of events across different disciplines (5)
9. Better support and resources for coaches and clubs (8)
10. - Regional clubs & centres to share resources and work more closely together and offer opportunities to deliver specialist areas (6)
- Clear communication and information to clubs e.g. of what is good practice and allowed and not allowed (6)
- More close contact with clubs – More staff getting out there and being the front facing organisation that the members want – providing information and training. (6)

Interestingly – three points which overlap across groups is the need for clubs and centres to work together and BC to act as a facilitator/umbrella to facilitate this.

Many of the top responses also demonstrate the need for clear and effective communication across the whole of British Canoeing.