

SPRINT PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

2021-2028

Draft Strategic Framework V1 (July 2020)

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to share **this Sprint Performance Strategic Framework** for consultation.

It presents the initial early thinking and headline proposals emerging from the various working groups for comment. This draft is not intended to present a rounded and fully coherent strategy, but does set out a series of principles and proposals about the shape of the Sprint Performance Strategy 2021-2028.

We are seeking early feedback over the next couple of weeks through the [accompanying survey](#) and a series of focus group discussions.

Why do we need this strategy?

Whilst British Canoeing has had some outstanding individual successes in sprint racing in each Olympic cycle since 2000, we have not yet been able to deliver the consistent success that would establish Great Britain as a leading Sprint Canoe nation, and that would indicate that we have a system which maximises the passion and talents of our athletes and our community.

The recent Sprint Situational Analysis explored why this is the case and challenged us on a number of fronts. This Strategy will ensure that;

- We have a clear vision and long-term performance strategy for the sport
- We better understand how athletes develop and how we can measure and assess their development
- We develop and deploy outstanding coaches alongside our best athletes,
- Our national programmes deliver outstanding experiences that meet the needs of our highest potential paddlers
- Our community of clubs have a clear role to play in the development of our elite paddlers
- The whole system will be well coordinated and led

Developing the Strategy

- We want to respond to these challenges
- We want to develop a strategy which is produced by the sport for the sport
- We plan to engage the whole racing community to determine the changes we need to make and draw together the expertise, passion, experiences and the ideas from throughout the whole community
- We want it to resonate with the whole community, to lead to the creation of a more united system from club to podium and to generate a sense of excitement and optimism throughout the sport

Consultation

The consultation survey to share your feedback on this Strategic Framework can be found [here](#).
The closing date for responses is 07 August.

A Draft Strategy will then be circulated in late August for further consultation, with the final Strategy being approved in early 2021. More details about this process can be found [here](#).

SECTION TWO: DRAFT VISION AND MISSION

This Vision for the Sprint Performance Strategy will align strongly with the themes within the wider British Canoeing Vision around *Uniting, Empowering and Delivering Excellence*.

Creating and working towards a vision with clear ambitions is critical to the long-term success of this plan and crucial to inspiring and uniting everyone involved in delivering it.

The Vision for Sprint Racing by 2032 (What we are working to achieve and become)

“To enable athletes to achieve World, Olympic and Paralympic success through a united high performance system that inspires the paddlesport community.”

What we will see in 2032

Canoe Sprint will have a sustainable high performance system from club to podium that consistently achieves Junior finals, U23 and Senior medals, delivering 3-4 Olympic medals.

What we will see by 2028

Canoe Sprint will deliver a high performance system from club to podium through consistent performance philosophies, high quality coaching and a strong athlete pathway that regularly achieves Junior finals, U23 and Senior medals, delivering 2-3 medals in Los Angeles.

What we will see by 2024

Canoe Sprint will build an effective pathway from club to podium by developing clearly defined performance philosophies, high performance coaches and supporting clubs to develop athletes with the skills to consistently achieve finals at Junior, U23 and senior levels, delivering 1-2 medals in Paris.

SECTION THREE: OUR VALUES AND CULTURE

Our high performance vision will drive what we do and our values will drive how we do it. The daily behaviours of staff, coaches, athletes and volunteers will ensure that these values are lived and that these shape the culture around the sprint environment.

The British Canoeing Values below will underpin the delivery of this strategy and lay the framework for the progress which needs to be made in this area.

Every Person Matters

We will build a culture in Sprint Canoeing that is people-centred and offers support for athletes and coaches based upon each individual's needs. We understand that an athlete's development and performance will depend upon their mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and that medals are an outcome of a system that prioritises looking after athletes as people.

Striving For Excellence

There will be a focus on continuous improvement through the sharing of knowledge, expertise and philosophies that creates a thirst for learning and curiosity that will maximise the development of athletes. We will set and expect high standards of athletes, coaches and practitioners striving towards success on the world stage.

Always with Integrity

We will develop a culture that is built on the foundations of mutual trust, respect, honesty and transparency.

Enjoying the journey

We will provide stimulating, challenging, positive and supportive environments that enable athletes to have the best possible experience in the sport.

Individually Committed

We will develop a culture where people are empowered and inspired to pursue their passion for the sport and where their efforts and contributions are recognised and valued.

Stronger Together

There will be a strong sense of team and unity where volunteers, clubs, coaches and support staff work together in an inclusive, open and collaborative partnership, aligned behind a long-term strategic vision for the sport.

What could this mean for you as an athlete, a coach or a club?

Athletes

If you're an athlete starting out in the sport or an elite athlete pursuing excellence at Olympic level you should feel like you are right at the heart of the system. We want you to feel supported, encouraged, challenged and excited by your experiences in the sport and inspired to be the best you can be. You will be able to see a clear pathway for your development and a clear vision for what it takes to reach the top and to achieve your ambitions.

Coaches

If you are a volunteer coach or paid professional, you should feel like there is a sense of teamship and unity for coaches with a shared passion, knowledge and understanding of training philosophies to support athlete development. You should feel like you are being supported to develop as a coach at every part of the system, are valued for your work and that you are excited to be part of a robust coaching chain that is curious, open and collaborative.

Clubs

As a racing club you should feel connected and aligned with the longer-term strategic direction of the sport and know the important role you play in athletes' progression. The whole club should feel supported to develop athletes and coaches to maximise the development of racing talent. Club coaches will feel part of a strong community of practice and a connection with the national coaches, with regular exchanges of knowledge and ideas that supports their development.

SECTION FOUR: THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ON A PAGE

By 2028;

- A high quality and connected athlete pathway that will provide outstanding individualised support in an inspirational environment that enabling high potential athletes to pursue excellence
- A community of Clubs will play a vital role in the development of talented athletes, working within a united system to broaden the talent pool and to support athlete success at all levels
- Coaching delivery and development will be consistently linked to individual need, as defined through robust 'What it takes to win or progress' frameworks that set out the skills, qualities and performances that indicate progression towards world leading standards at each stage of development.
- Athlete selection onto a programme will be underpinned by evidence-based standards
- A community of coaches will be inspired to be the best they can be and their roles will be valued across the sport; their development will be encouraged and supported through a range of opportunities, encouraging engagement, sharing knowledge and developing new skills and practices to create high quality, vibrant partnerships with athletes throughout the pathway. More full time and part time coaching roles will be created in clubs.
- A diverse competitive landscape of the highest quality will be open to all, providing appropriate, challenging opportunities from the recreational paddler to the elite athlete; Olympic and non-Olympic competitions will be integrated to develop the required skills and performance characteristics in an enjoyable environment capable of attracting world-class athletes.
- We will have created daily training environments at the National Performance Centre and Performance Academies that promote a culture of excellence, enabling athletes and coaches to thrive. Facilities will be an enabler to success rather than a barrier. There will be sufficient access to high quality facilities throughout the pathway

SECTION FIVE: WORLD CLASS PROGRAMME AND PERFORMANCE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

Vision for success by 2028

A high quality and connected athlete pathway that will provide outstanding individualised support, in an inspirational environment, that enables high potential athletes to pursue excellence

Why is this important?

Talented athletes need to have a clear view of their journey to becoming a world class paddler. The pathway needs to provide aspirational and inspirational environments within which athletes (and coaches and practitioners) can develop, make certain that standards of coaching and support are of the highest quality, and ensure that the athletes benefit from experiences that are aligned to their individual needs.

The various stages of the athlete journey need to be aligned and connected to provide clarity for athletes, and to ensure that their progress is optimised. It is acknowledged that the best athletes training together can accelerate development.

Priority activities and goals by 2024

World Class Programme

- Provide full-time support for an elite group of Podium athletes and Academy athletes transitioning into seniors at the National Performance Centre (In the next 4 years this is almost certainly to remain as the National Water Sports Centre, Nottingham)
- Provide the highest standards of environment, experiences and expertise at the National Performance Centre which inspires athletes to be part of the programme
- Provide outreach support for Podium or Academy athletes that choose not to be based at the National Performance Centre through to 2024; beyond 2024 the support for these athletes will be provided through the Sprint Performance Academies
- Knowledge and expertise will be shared across the whole pathway with opportunities sought for collaboration and partnership to maximise athlete development

Sprint Performance Academies

- Establish between 2 and 5 geographically spread Sprint Performance Academies. Academies will be based at an established club, have local partnerships with universities, and relationships with other surrounding clubs whose athletes will also be part of the Academy structure
- Academies will provide support for other high potential Under 23 athletes, along with those Senior athletes that choose not to be based at the National Performance Centre. This will allow athletes to stay in local environments for longer, allow continuity with coaches and keep role models in clubs for longer
- Academies will work with other local clubs to ensure a connected pathway and support for athletes and club coaches
- Academies will provide appropriate training facilities and suitably qualified and experienced coaches, who will almost certainly be paid and at least part-time if not full-time
- University links will provide sport science & medicine support, supported by core programme Sport Science & Medicine staff operating out of the National Performance Centre, and the potential for athletes to align their education and sporting careers
- Academy and club coaches will be involved in supporting national Junior and Under 23 squads

SECTION SIX: CLUBS AND TALENTED ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

Vision for success by 2028

A community of Clubs will play a vital role in the development of talented athletes, working within a united system to broaden the talent pool and to support athlete success at all levels.

Why is this important?

Whilst we know the routes into paddling are varied and include, for example, the uniformed youth groups, clubs are usually the starting point for talent development in the sport, and are responsible for building the foundations upon which future athlete success is based. Providing high quality experiences and support to athletes throughout their journey enhances the likelihood of athletes remaining in the sport for longer, achieving their potential, progressing to compete at a world level, and having a positive story to tell of their time in the sport.

Priority activities and goals by 2024

- Establish Sprint Performance Academies and revise and relaunch Talent Clubs as part of the structured pathway
- Create and define a clear framework that supports clubs to recruit paddlers from all sections of society, and to ensure that any new entrants' initial experience in the sport is a positive one
- Establish a development framework to support the early progression of flatwater racing skills in young people
- Ensure there is clarity in the athlete pathway with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountability for clubs, talent programmes and the World Class Programme
- Develop a framework of best practice for Academies and Talent Clubs that recognises, supports and rewards excellent racing club environments, defined through – for example – the club's coaching structures and development processes
- Ensure there is alignment and connection with all stages of the pathway to enable athletes to progress
- Ensure outstanding support is delivered to athletes through a community of paid and volunteer coaches and support staff
- Establish a process for sharing learning, knowledge and expertise across the pathway through communities of practice, and both formal and informal engagement
- Support clubs to develop their business models to allow long-term sustainability

SECTION SEVEN: WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN AND PROGRESS

Vision for success by 2028

Coaching delivery and development will be consistently linked to individual need, as defined through robust '*What it takes to win or progress*' frameworks that set out the skills, qualities and performances that indicate progression towards world leading standards at each stage of development.

Athlete selection onto a programme will be underpinned by evidence-based standards.

Why is this important?

Frameworks and standards provide guidance, clarity and consistency to coaches and practitioners, ensuring that there is alignment and connection between all stages of the athlete journey. The *What it takes to win* framework provides guidance at the Podium and Academy level, whilst the *What it takes to progress* framework provides guidance on developing Junior athletes.

Priority activities and goals by 2024

- A *Performance Matrix* will set out the critical success factors at each stage of the athlete journey perceived to be crucial to winning at future world and Olympic level
- Standards will be published to help drive ambition and expectations at all stages of the athlete pathway
- Athletes' journeys and future trajectory will be better understood and informed through systematic benchmarking and insight collation
- Athlete recruitment and selection at all stages of the pathway will be based upon those requirements deemed most important for future success
- Athletes' development plans will be based upon enhanced understanding of their current status and future potential
- There will be increased and consistent use of ergos to gain insights into athlete performance and progress across the pathway
- A technical framework will be established to align coaching language and practice, that supports athlete progression and training interventions
- The talent pathway strategy will clearly describe the key developmental standards and the training principles and coaching practice required for future athlete success
- A strategy will be established that outlines how to select and develop crew boats
- A strategy will be established for men's and women's canoe

SECTION EIGHT: COACH DEVELOPMENT

Vision for success by 2028

A community of coaches will be inspired to be the best they can be and their roles will be valued across the sport; their development will be supported through a range of opportunities, encouraging engagement, sharing knowledge and developing new skills and practices to create high quality, vibrant partnerships with athletes throughout the pathway. More full-time and part-time coaching roles will be created in clubs.

Why is this important?

Coaching is at the heart of an athlete's development and supporting the continual growth of coaches increases the probability of developing great athletes. Agreed philosophies act as a compass point in the way coaches across the pathway communicate, present and deliver, whilst athletes require specific support according to their bespoke requirements at each stage of their development. Developing coaches according to the specific demands of their role enables the coach to be much more likely to meet the requirements of their athlete.

Canoeing has fallen significantly behind other sports in the UK in the professionalization of coaching, the number of qualified coaches and those actively involved in regular development.

Priority activities and goals by 2024

- Deliver a plan leading to the creation of a career pathway for coaches and more full-time and part-time roles
- Develop and implement an 'Expertise in the role' framework that recognises coaches across the pathway and clarifies the specific skills, knowledge and experiences required at each stage; this will allow for improved recruitment, deployment, progression and development of coaches
- Provide context-specific Continual Professional Development support for all coaches working within Talent Development Clubs, Regional Performance Hubs and the World Class Programme based upon individualised development plans
- Provide formal coach education and resources for racing clubs to focus on learning environments, technical frameworks, participation and retention, recognising and nurturing talent, and understanding physiological development
- Inspire wider representation in the sport through adopting strategies that encourage greater understanding of female athletes, and a longer-term development of the BAME community within racing and coaching
- Establish a mentoring programme to ensure knowledge is retained in the sport and coaches are appropriately supported
- Develop a strategy for recruiting more coaches into the sport from a diverse range of backgrounds, including implementing a coach apprenticeship programme that supports the transitions of athletes into coaching
- Develop communities of practice to enable the dissemination and sharing of knowledge
- Create a system that provides appropriate opportunities and support for coaches to grow and learn as an athlete develops, with particular support being offered as athletes transition to new stages of the pathway

SECTION NINE: COMPETITION

Vision for success by 2028

A diverse competitive landscape of the highest quality will be open to all, providing appropriate, challenging opportunities from the recreational paddler to the elite athlete; Olympic and non-Olympic competitions will be integrated to develop the required skills and performance characteristics in an enjoyable environment capable of attracting world-class athletes.

Why is this important?

The competitive environment needs to support each athlete's unique journey, providing stimulating racing opportunities to develop the required skills and motivation needed to perform at the elite level, while maintaining their enjoyment and engagement with the sport. The diverse competitive landscape will integrate all routes into sprint racing, removing barriers to entry and providing a seamless transition between disciplines, so sprint racing is not seen as an 'either/or' sport. Competitive opportunities at the elite level will mirror the demands of international competition, whilst there will be greater diversity and range of opportunities for those athletes making their way through the pathway.

Competitions need to provide opportunities for athletes to test themselves, experiencing the joys of success and learning from 'safe to fail' situations throughout their journey; that requires vastly increasing the number of high quality competitive events which foster the development of specific skills to enable performance at the highest level.

Priority activities and goals by 2024

- Identify and promote the most appropriate quantity and quality of competitive opportunities required throughout the pathway to enable athletes to optimise their development
- Develop a co-ordinated and aligned domestic and international racing calendar, designed to support the continued improvement of the racing standards of athletes in the talent and performance pathway
- Develop a clearly defined, integrated and tiered competition structure (for example; club-region, national) that offers opportunities for and recognition of progression
- Develop nationally recognised performance standards and a database of all competitive results for every athlete
- Provide high quality domestic racing events to support the needs of a significant increase in A-class Junior, Under 23 and Senior athletes retained in the pathway but not engaged in international competitions
- Ensure that the national championships and national club championship regattas are the highest quality and most attractive domestic sprint events of the year, generating a desire to attend and a sense of national pride for those taking part
- Encourage athletes on the development pathway to move between racing sub-disciplines to stimulate skills development in a fun and exciting way

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- Recognise, promote, integrate and align existing competitions from the National Schools, Sea Cadets, Scouts, Commercial centres, Universities and other groups within the British Canoeing landscape
 - Develop mass participation opportunities for non-club members to race locally
 - Establish national records for local / regional sprint event locations
 - Recognise and provide training and development opportunities for volunteers involved in running competitions
 - Create an events promotion team to support and promote the domestic calendar

SECTION TEN: FACILITIES

Vision for success by 2028

We will have created daily training environments at the National Performance Centre and Performance Academies that promote a culture of excellence, enabling athletes and coaches to thrive. Facilities will be an enabler to success rather than a barrier. There will be sufficient access to high quality facilities throughout the pathway.

Why is this important?

Facilities need to enable the delivery of the core strategic objectives through a clearly prioritised action plan.

Priority activities and goals by 2024

(Final recommendations will be delayed until themes have emerged from other working groups, as facilities act as an enabler to progression and performance rather than driving strategy. However, work has been undertaken on a framework for facility requirements at club and elite level, and assessing sites against these)

- Establish a clear framework and criteria for training and competition facilities required at each stage of the pathway, particularly the National Performance Centre and the Performance Academies
- Audit existing facilities against framework and criteria, and create a system for monitoring and assessing facilities
- Establish a clear facility strategy to prioritise investment for the long term future of the sport
- Establish a consistent overseas training base
- Complete a feasibility study to establish the viability of a competition and training centre controlled by British Canoeing

SECTION ELEVEN: THE FUNDING PRINCIPLES

The delivery of this strategic plan will require a funding commitment from all levels within the sport.

It will not be possible to precisely cost out the delivery of all the actions at national, regional and club levels. There is not going to be a single organisation which underwrites the cost of delivery and so the actual funding available for its delivery is not simple to collate.

New funding models will need to be explored at academy and club level to meet the increased costs of delivery and the appointment of part time and full time paid coaches in academies and some talent clubs.

The actions presented within the Strategy for the next four years must be achievable within the resources which can realistically be expected to be available during this period.

To achieve this the following funding principles are proposed;

- Funding received by British Canoeing from UK Sport and Sport England for these purposes, will all be allocated in ways which fully meet the requirements of the respective funding agreements, but also contribute significantly to achieving the ambitions within this strategy
- Funding received by the National Associations from the respective Sports Councils for the Sprint Talent Programmes in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, will be allocated in ways which fully meet the shared outcomes within the requirements of the respective funding agreements, but also contribute significantly to achieving the ambitions within this strategy
- British Canoeing and the other National Associations shall actively pursue other sources of income to support this strategy from sources such as commercial partnerships and public sector partnerships
- All stakeholders including the governing bodies, clubs and national committees will be encouraged to each annually review their own plans and seek to allocate budgets to contribute to achieving the ambitions within this strategy
- All stakeholders actively seek to develop new partnerships with agencies that share our ambitions and to actively pursue new sources of grant and partnership funding which can be used to achieve the ambitions of the strategy
- Performance Academies and clubs supported to develop new funding levels to support enhanced programmes and paid coach structures