

---

## **Sprint Performance Strategy Group meeting #4**

### **14th August 2020**

---

<b>Paul Ratcliffe</b>	<b>Performance Director</b>
<b>David Joy</b>	<b>CEO and Chair of the Group</b>
<b>Laura Duffin</b>	<b>WCP Staff</b>
<b>Ian Wynne</b>	<b>SRC member/Independent</b>
<b>Rene Olsen</b>	<b>Sprint Head Coach WCP Staff</b>
<b>Richard Ramsdale</b>	<b>Head of Talent WCP Staff</b>
<b>David Parsons</b>	<b>Independent Expert</b>
<b>Paul Dimmock</b>	<b>International Panel/Independent</b>
<b>Abi Edmonds</b>	<b>Independent/ ex Athlete</b>
<b>James Clark</b>	<b>Independent/Club</b>
<b>Tim Scott</b>	<b>Independent/Club</b>
<b>Brian Cunniffe</b>	<b>EIS Head of Performance Support</b>
<b>Imogen Collins</b>	<b>England Talent Coach/SRC member</b>

---

#### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1** DJ welcomed the group and presented apologies from Jon Schofield. He advised that Hayleigh Mason has resigned from the group due to pressures within her other commitments.
- 1.2** DJ thanked the group for their work to date in producing the Strategic Framework. He reminded the group this set the strategic direction and that the Draft Strategy would provide the missing detail. It had however set out a strategic direction. Clubs and academies, WITTW/P as well as the Vision and Missions were the areas of concern that had been flagged during the consultation process.

#### **2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

- 2.1** The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record.
- 2.2** In matters arising a group member highlighted that within 3.35 the discussion on the club paper had only been brief as the group had only received the paper that day. It ought not to be misunderstood that the group did not want to consider the paper fully.

#### **3. Consider the consultation feedback on the Sprint Performance Strategic Framework**

- 3.1** DP thanked LD for pulling the feedback together from the survey and the focus groups. The following was reported and discussed;
  - 3.1.1** There were 61 survey responses and around half of these were from individuals in clubs

- 3.1.2 Focus groups had been conducted with athletes, staff, a leadership group, independent experts and clubs representatives (around 25 people from 15 clubs).
- 3.1.3 The headline feedback was overall positive and there was reasonable support for the emerging framework.

### 3.3 Survey responses

#### *Quantitative responses*

- 3.2 In response to the question which asked people what they thought about the strategy, 66% of the responses were positive responses, 12% negative and 22% undecided.
- 3.3 In response to the question which asked people what they felt, the responses were less % positive responses, 28% negative and 29% undecided.

#### *Qualitative responses*

- 3.4 There were some positive reflections. There was broad approval of the general direction of travel, a strong sense to encourage greater collaboration, a recognition that this represented some change from the current systems and that there was a move towards a more athlete centred approach.
- 3.5 Some more challenging comments highlighted the uninspiring language used and that the statements could have been bolder. Respondents needed greater clarity and detail and wanted to know priorities before they fully committed their support. Issues to be resolved include; the balance of power between British Canoeing and clubs as well as the control of performance academies, use of data, development of crew boat and canoe strategies and participation and clubs growth.
- 3.6 A group member asked if this is what might be expected through this process. **DP** suggested that this has been a good and generally positive response, particularly in light of the challenges presented through the Sprint Situational Analysis. He identified that the challenge remains to make the strategy resonate on an emotional level and a need to win hearts and heads. The feedback had helpfully identified gaps and areas that need more work.
- 3.7 It was noted that there were extremes of opinion expressed with opposite words appearing in the word cloud, and that clarity in the detail is now required to encourage more harmony.
- 3.8 A group member asked if the survey answers had been broken down by respondent group and whether that might be helpful. It was agreed to investigate this further. **Action: LD**
- 3.5 A group member felt that to receive only 61 responses was a little disappointing and questioned if we have not excited people enough and captured the imagination. Another group member pointed to the need to use more inspiring language and maybe present the strategy differently. They suggested that there was a need to be really clear on what academies are and whether they are run by clubs for clubs and that care was needed in 'tiering' the system.

#### **4. Reconsider Vision and Mission**

- 4.1.** The group discussed whether the Vision statement could focus on community inclusion, growth and development and not necessarily be as focused on medal targets. One thought process was that the athletes should be at the front and centre of the visions and that it ought to be engaging, uniting and inclusive.
- 4.2.** Within the Missions section it was intended that this described where we wanted to be in each of the next 4 years and that by 2032 we have a high quality, sustainable system which is stronger than at any point in the past.
- 4.3.** A group member suggested that if the vision was to be realised there would need to be full support from clubs, with people seeking to be linked and involved and with happy athletes performing to their potential. It was discussed that canoeing would also inspire people outside the community as well as those outside of the sport. Growing the sport and making it easy to love is very important and this is a role of the wider NGB.
- 4.4.** A group member stated that they wanted to see greater depth in the athlete pools through the age levels with multiple people at a higher standard to be in the running to be selected at the top level.

#### ***Mission***

- 4.5.** The group discussed the balance between growth, wider developments and medals within the mission statements. The group agreed that medal targets at senior level was appropriate but this was not as important at junior level when the focus may be on depth of talent. A group member suggested that the pressure of medals might be counterproductive at junior and U23 level and moving them up too quickly to senior level could also be counterproductive. It was also suggested that it is important to allow development time but at the elite level lots of athletes internationally do start performing at 21/22 and then just keep getting better.

#### **5. Reconsider Talent Clubs and Academies**

- 5.1.** It was noted that this is an areas where a big strategic shift is planned. The proposal is to start to decentralised the Academy programme from HPP and allow athletes to make choices as to where they want to train and which coach they want to work with.
- 5.2.** Within the new strategy there will be a drive to focus on athlete recruitment and have programmes within the Talent Club Programme which focus on inclusive recruitment with a better gender balance and more BAME recruitment. It was recognised that there is a need for a specific focus on canoe development within clubs.
- 5.3.** There was recognition of the benefits of professionalising the coaching system with more paid appointments and ore support for clubs to move in this direction. It was recognised that there is still a lot of work to complete to create this environment.

- 5.4. There was is question about where the control and ownership of the programme and club investment would rest. A group member welcomed the idea of giving clubs a blueprint and a specification to work to, offering help and advice but encouraging them to problem solve.
- 5.5. DJ proposed that this programme will be developed through partnerships and that roles and responsibilities would need to be clarified. This was in keeping with how British Canoeing is developing. Academies would be developed and that relationships between clubs and national programmes would be crucial. Clear roles and responsibilities would be essential. The key would be to ensure that a 'them and us' culture comes to an end and that there is professionalised extension in clubs to the national programmes.
- 5.6. This will require a further development of the talent pathway, focused on developing athletes at an academy level in clubs and creating motivational environments for younger athletes in clubs.
- 5.7. It was discussed that relationships between clubs and the national programmes are gradually improving. People are talking more and finding common ground, there are talented people everywhere and agreement in the community as well as a feeling of optimism

## **6. Reconsider What it Takes to Win and Progress**

- 6.1. It was noted that crewboats have been identified as a strategic opportunity to develop athletes and to gain qualification spots from a 2028 onwards. It was recognised that single boat entry into the sport is the culturally the current norm, but this may not e the best from a sports development viewpoint.
- 6.2. It was recognised that we often also lose people because slots are only allocated to one person and that crewboats can keep talented paddlers within the pathways. There needs to be a more developed coaching model for crewboats as well as training philosophies. We need to be clearer on composition and selection of crewboats. Coach discretion will need to be considered here. More competition for crewboats is required. Performance standards could be outlined. We need to develop a culture where people to want to be in the crewboat. It does encourages teamship and compliments K1 training.
- 6.3. Mens canoe and canoe in general is still a development area. The canoe journey needs to be incentivised with key tactics communicated outwards to show intentions. Some clubs have no pathway no equipment nor coaches. We have to assess how serious we are about canoe to ascertain if we really want to consider it in the strategy.
- 6.4. There is a reasonable canoe culture in the UK so we wouldn't be starting from scratch and there are medal opportunities. UK Sport is now about a 12 year horizon so we need to say where we see our 12 year ambitions. This represents a different approach. We should not actively restrict ourselves but this does come down to cost versus rewards in investment.

**7. Open discussion; Progress to date, satisfaction, identification of concerns**

It was suggested that the next version of strategy draft needs to identify 5/6 priority tactics along each strategic headline.

Multiple documents will probably need producing dependent upon the audience to aid understanding.

DP asked the group what more is needed. The group felt that there is a positive direction of travel emerging. It was felt the language could be tailored more to different groups.

There was a discussion around the extent to which coaches in clubs are aligned and behind the current work and draft strategy and recognition that this is still work in progress.

**8. AOB**

It was agreed to fix Strategy Group dates to at least end of December 2020.

**END**