



All-Party Parliamentary Group for Rowing

Ordinary Meeting Minutes

1800, 18 July 2016, Committee Room Five

Meeting commenced 1802

In Attendance

Members: Dr Matthew Offord MP (in the Chair); Lord Thomas of Gresford; Lord Addington; Jim Fitzpatrick MP; Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Honorary Members: Isobel Pollock-Hulf; Alan Foster

Organisational Associate Members: Annamarie Phelps, Kenny Baillie, Andy Parkinson (British Rowing); Steve O'Connor, Natysha Hubbard (Fulham Reach Boat Club); Max Beverton-Palmer, Evan Whittal-Williams (Lea Rowing Club)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Matthew Gordon; Paul Lorenzato; Sally Pettipher

Honorary Secretary: Mark Ramsdale; Jack Baker

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, the first since the Group's reconstitution. The Group has been reformed to support the sport of rowing, both in Parliament and outside.

The Chairman encouraged all, and those from clubs in particular, to encourage their MPs to join the Group.

Apologies

Members: Roberta Blackman-Woods MP; Lord Paddick; Lord St John of Bletso; Greg Mulholland MP; Mark Garnier MP; Jonathan Djanogly MP; Rebecca Pow MP; Sir Peter Bottomley; Earl of Courtown

Honorary Members: Dr Haruhisa Handa

Organisational Associate Members: Colin Middlemiss (The Company of Watermen and Lightermen)

Individual Associate Members (all, no affiliation): Ray Cassidy; Will Pettipher; Michelle Dite

Correspondence

Sent

- Lord Thomas of Gresford wrote to Alan Foster with thanks for his support for the Parliamentary Boat Race.
- Lord Thomas of Gresford wrote to Midori Myazaki regarding ISPS's support for the Parliamentary Boat Race.
- Lord Thomas of Gresford wrote to Andy Parkinson, CEO of British Rowing, informing him of the Group's reformation and requesting support.

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- Matthew Offord MP wrote to all English MPs with rowing clubs in their constituencies, providing them with information on the Group. The Secretariat has requested information from Scottish and Welsh Rowing and the same exercise will be completed for Scottish and Welsh MPs. +Northern Ireland.
- Matthew Offord MP wrote to Nilesh Patel, ISPS's UK representative regarding their support for the Parliamentary Boat Race.

Received

- An invitation to hold a stall at the Parliamentary Sports Fair on 13 September was extended. **Action: Secretariat to take forward, liaising with British Rowing.**
- From Nilesh Patel of ISPS, confirming their support for the 2016 Parliamentary Boat Race.
- From British Rowing, confirming that they would like to support the Group.
- From the Company of Watermen and Lightermen, expressing their support for the Group. The Company has joined as an Associate Member.
- An email from Fulham Reach Boat Club, informing the Group of their work and offering their support for the Group. **Action: Secretariat to look at a potential speaking opportunity.**

Group activity report

Parliamentary

The Honorary Secretary provided references to rowing in Parliament since the inaugural meeting.

In a Question in the House of Lords, Lord Addington called for fair coverage of all Paralympic sport in the forthcoming Parlympics. Rowing during the games will currently not have any television coverage.

At Business Questions, John Howell MP referenced the Henley regatta in his constituency, and requested a debate on the important role that rowing plays in national life, and the contribution that it makes to young people's sporting activities. Responding, the Leader of the House of Commons gave his support to the Henley regatta, and expressed his support for those rowing at the Olympic games.

Public

Co-Chair Matthew Offord MP and the Secretariat met with representatives from British Rowing.

The Secretariat met with Nilesh Patel, ISPS's UK representative, to discuss their support for the Parliamentary Boat Race.

Co-Chair Lord Thomas of Gresford and the Secretariat met with Alan Foster to discuss preparations for the Parliamentary Boat Race.

The Group sent out press releases on:

- the Group's reformation
- it's first Ordinary Meeting;

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- the Group's call for Paralympic Rowing to be broadcast on television;
- the Group's invitation for non-Parliamentarians to join as Associate Members;
- the award of Honorary Membership of the Group to Alan Foster and Isobel Pollock-Hulf;

At the time of the meeting, the Group had 115 followers on Twitter. The Group's twitter name is @ParliamentRow.

Paralympics Coverage

The Chairman noted that the Group has been particularly active recently in raising the lack of coverage of rowing at the Paralympics. Lord Addington has raised in the House of Lords, and the Chairman and Honorary Secretary met with British Rowing.

Lord Addington outlined the situation, and noted the importance of putting pressure on at the individual bid stage, for future Paralympic Games. It was also noted that other Paralympic sports have had similar lack of coverage. **Action: Honorary Secretary to look into what support the Group can provide.**

Parliamentary Boat Race

The Honorary Secretary outlined preparations for the 2016 Parliamentary Boat Race, to be held on the afternoon of 14 September, which would run in a very similar way to past years.

The Group's thanks to the late Robin Hulf were noted, as to Alan Foster who has stood down from the organisation of the race. The cup has been renamed in Robin's honour and will be presented to the winners this year.

Members agreed that invitations should be opened up to Associate Members at costs.

It was requested that the race take place from Lambeth Bridge, following a gentle rolling paddle to the bridge.

It was suggested that embassies could be included for future events. **Action: Honorary Secretary to investigate in future years.**

Members noted their hope that disability participants could once again be included, and the Honorary Secretary confirmed that this would be the case.

Action: Honorary Secretary will liaise with British Rowing on invitations to Olympians.

AOB

The Honorary Secretary noted that the CASC scheme and access to water had been informally raised. **Action: Honorary Secretary to liaise with British Rowing.**

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Ordinary Meeting Minutes

1800, 18 July 2016, Committee Room Five

The Honorary Secretary noted that the Group would be taking a stall at the Parliamentary Sports Fair on 13 September, and thanked British Rowing for their support.

Action: Honorary Secretary to look into the possibility of a rowing exhibition in the corridor outside the committee rooms.

There being no other business, the Chairman brought the main business of the meeting to a close.

The next Group Ordinary Meeting would be held on 31 October.

Main business concluded: 1826.

Presentation: Andy Parkinson, Annamarie Phelps, British Rowing

The Chairman welcomed Andy Parkinson, CEO of British Rowing, and Annamarie Phelps, Chair of British Rowing.

Parkinson outlined his role at British Rowing, and the work the organisation is doing to make sure people have high quality experiences of rowing, and to push to a wider audience.

There are opportunities for the sport to expand into different communities, and also to find alternative formats. Junior and Masters rowing are booming, and the challenge of how to re-engage people who used to row is an important one.

Parkinson outlined the improving coverage that rowing is receiving, with the sport's profile never higher than around the Olympics and Paralympics, and the importance of expanding the visibility of rowers to inspiring the next generation. He noted that British Rowing are optimistic about their medal prospects in Rio.

Parkinson outlined the various relationships that British Rowing have, both internationally with organisations like World Rowing, and domestically with Sport England and UK Sport. He outlined British Rowing's 10-year strategic plan for the sport at all levels, which will take the organisation through to 2024.

British Rowing want to promote rowing for all, and Parkinson noted that the organisation's vision is around getting all involved in the sport mobilised in the same direction.

Opening to questions, on access to water, this is an area that British Rowing are aware of, and are working closely with the Canal and River Trust. This is a challenge, as there is only a limited amount of water space in the country, which is increasingly busy. The general issue is around mooring, as in narrow sections of the river, three abreast mooring of barges makes rowing difficult.

Action: Honorary Secretary to liaise with British Rowing.

On developing rowing across the country, forty percent of British Rowing's membership is from the Thames region, but the organisation is increasingly working with coastal and indoor rowing.

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1800, 18 July 2016, Committee Room Five

On coastal rowing, British Rowing support with funding, training and governance.

Action: Honorary Secretary to look into possibility of a meeting on coastal rowing.

British Rowing are always looking for regeneration projects, and Parkinson referenced one such project that benefited Fulham Reach Boat Club.

Problems around Hillingdon Rowing Club were raised.

On what the Group can do to help the sport, Parkinson noted that British Rowing need to understand what Parliamentarians can do to help. He hoped that the Group can provide a strong voice for the sport to various Government departments, and that British Rowing will come back to the Group with areas in which the Group can support. The CASC scheme was raised as one such issue.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking Parkinson and Phelps, and all those in attendance.

Meeting closed at 1908

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