

## **Racing Meeting Outcomes**

A steady decline in entries since around 2008 prompted a number of member clubs to approach CYCA to facilitate a meeting at which this topic could be discussed. CYCA were pleased to do so and the meeting took place on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011 with 44 attendees from clubs, marinas, one designs and interested parties.

Group discussions took place on 5 topics and the primary outcomes have been distilled into this short paper. Two overarching issues – the racing calendar and the complexity of starting racing are looked at in a little more depth. A single sheet presents the outcomes and potential actions.

Attendees identified two types of racing owners:

Those who are fully committed to racing with all its associated costs and take it very seriously

Those who enjoy the fun element of racing, are competitive but are not willing to invest the considerable sums of money to move further on in the sport.

The meeting concluded that the first type will come out racing anyway and so have been ignored for the purposes of this paper. The second will come out if the whole package (race type, social event, destination, weather forecast etc.) appeals – it is this sector of the racing fleet which has been dropping away – and which needs attracting back into the sport.

New entrants to racing are sparse: there is a perception that racing is “complex and difficult” and you have to have the best of everything.

### **Summary**

It was recognised that there is no one simple solution – however there are many small steps which clubs can take to encourage interest in racing.

Inter-club dialogue, co-operation and a willingness to innovate are key drivers to reversing the decline.

Perception of racing – difficult, complex, cripplingly expensive – needs to be addressed in conversation (bar/pontoon chat) with owners who don't race, emphasising that fun can be had at all levels.

Creative, friendly, barrier breaking approaches to those outside the traditional club structure (marina berth holders, etc) may prove fruitful.

Consolidation/rationalisation of events to avoid duplication and to achieve critical mass is vital – this requires clubs to work together to offer an enhanced race package.

Social events at the destination are a driver towards entry for the more casual racer.

Two handed, white sail and passage races appeal to many, especially in connection with a ‘fun’ social event at the destination. Outside of committed racing owners, who appreciate their purity in sailing terms, windward/leeward courses are particularly disliked.

To encourage new entrants, clubs need to be creative and flexible in addressing the ‘must haves’ of sail number, handicap & club membership.

Again to encourage new entrants, clubs should find innovative ways of increasing confidence in new entrants perhaps through novice races, buddy systems, ‘learning the ropes’ on an established boat, etc.

Clubs can be flexible with the elements that make up racing – radical and joined up thinking might produce results. Just because “it’s always been done this way” doesn’t mean that “this way” is still valid.

## **The Racing Calendar**

A key conclusion across all discussion groups was that the amount of racing currently offered is excessive and that a consolidation/rationalisation of the racing calendar should take place. The meeting was adamant that the amount of racing should be reduced, offering quality rather than quantity, at both regatta and club level.

Older attendees noted that the calendar was already shadow of its former self, yet younger attendees noted that the pace of life and its demands had changed radically in the last 10 years and such a full calendar was no longer sustainable.

New events have been shoehorned into the calendar which could lead to owners and crew racing several weekends in succession. This is increasingly unacceptable to families, with crew and owners losing those 'Brownie points' which so smooth domestic harmony.

Achieving any consolidation/rationalisation will not be easy.

Negotiation between clubs, event organisers and other interested parties will be needed to achieve progress. Sponsors may be more accepting of rationalisation than expected. Most sponsors would prefer to see a larger better supported event than a poorly attended event.

At club level, it was noted that several different clubs might offer a race to the same destination during the season, all with low numbers of boats leading to a small social scene.

One suggestion being made from across the floor was that clubs should combine their efforts into larger races i.e. to have one race to that destination on one day. As social scene is a key driver for entry, consolidation of Club A's Round Bute race with Club B's and Club C's would provide a larger fleet and a better social scene. It also reduces pressure on the participating clubs to find race officers. Modern results systems make it easy to break out individual club results, allowing individual club trophies to be awarded.

Should the consolidation/rationalisation route be accepted by a number of the major racing clubs for both their regattas and club racing, it would mean a fundamental shake-up of the racing calendar – perhaps to the extent of tearing it up and starting again.

The consolidation/rationalisation route is not a "quick fix" – there may, clubs willing, be opportunities in Season 2012, with the main focus being on Season 2013.

CYCA is prepared to facilitate opportunities for discussion through the re-establishment of its Racing Committee. Clubs have to play their part too – firstly by volunteering to join the revised CYCA Racing Committee (CYCA-RC) and secondly, making sure those who do join along have the authority within their club to drive change.

### **Reducing complexity:**

For an owner to race, he needs a handicap, a sail number, membership of a club and suitable racing insurance . . . . or does he?

All of the above are barriers to a novice. All cost money and the perceptions are of expense rather than value for money. Clubs could start thinking creatively on how these barriers are reduced.

Clubs can introduce variations to their standard sailing instructions to encourage novice racers. Variations suggested by delegates included:

In your first season of racing, allowing the novice to race without a handicap and/or sail number. (The CYCA database can be used to source/estimate handicaps)

If someone wants to try racing and isn't a club member – join as a temporary member for a nominal fee (perhaps donated to RNLI) and convert after 3 months to full membership.

The novice gets a club administered allowance on his handicap for a fixed period of time – each club decides what allowance will be given to a novice, applying it to each race the novice sails.

There is a perception that adding racing cover to your boat insurance is expensive. Not every insurer raises premiums dramatically for racing.

Clubs should work to break these perceptions down. Going racing is a swift and sure way to increase an owner's boat handling and sail trimming skills – giving an opportunity to promote the benefits of racing to novice or uncertain members.

### **Moving Forward**

The attached Race Meeting Summary list gives a broader picture of the discussions and lists numerous actions which can be implemented to start to work towards arresting the decline in racing turnouts.

To help move forward, to provide a central point for the collation & dissemination of information and to facilitate change in the calendar, the CYCA will re-establish its Racing Committee.

Volunteers with the authority to drive change in their club's racing programme are sought for this committee. Names should be submitted to the CYCA office via [office@cyca-online.org.uk](mailto:office@cyca-online.org.uk)

However, **all** drivers for change have to come from and be negotiated by the clubs – CYCA cannot, and will not, impose.

JA Lloyd  
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## Keelboat Racing Meeting – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011

- A. Connect with owners in marinas who are not members of any club, and with club members who feel they are being ignored or side-lined
1. Prepare material promoting advantages of club membership and use marina mailing lists to distribute  
1a Explore “spectrum wifi” or other location-specific means of publicising Clubs/CYCA/Marinas  
Clubs/Marinas
  2. Promote “rallies” as a non-threatening way of becoming involved, low formality “requirements” Clubs  
2a Consider piggy-backing on to existing events to introduce/welcome newcomers Clubs
  3. Offer “buddy system” arrangements to help combat ignorance/apprehension Clubs  
3a Consider extending into Social Networking solution, once devised (see also C1 below) CYCA
  4. Consider discounted club membership to attract new members Clubs/Marinas
  5. Improve club <-> member communications and provide what members want / be more welcoming Clubs
  6. Attract a broader range of members to committees Clubs
  7. Run training events to enable newcomers to learn the ropes on established racing boats Clubs/SSI
- B. Make Calendar and Events more attractive
1. Fix “class splits” so owners know who they’ll be racing against Clubs/CYCA  
1a Re-examine Clyde Series and Overall Championship, consistent SIs, entry system, etc Clubs/CYCA
  2. Offer increased One Design racing opportunities at least on Upper Firth Clubs/Classes/CYCA
  3. Encourage midweek racing as a foundation for weekend events Clubs/Classes
  4. Reconsider Feeder Races to attract boats to major event locations Clubs
  5. Offer a variety of courses and smarten up Race Management to reduce delays Clubs
  6. Attract and appreciate sponsors All
  7. Avoid Big Boat Bias in publicity, prize assignment, press coverage, etc Clubs/Press
  8. “Rationalise the calendar”  
8a Avoid calendar clashes which might dilute participation CYCA/Clubs  
8b Add variety to destinations – not just “Tarbert again” – and make more of an effort on the shore-side CYCA/Clubs
- C. Enabling Actions
1. Establish a centralised Crew Wanted/Available process utilising social networking technology CYCA
  2. Establish a dinghy-to-keelboat transition path RYAS/SSI
  3. Consider and/or resolve various handicap “approachability” issues  
3a Short-handed allowance which can be switched on at Race Entry time CYCA/Clubs  
3b Sleeping-on-board allowance for all sailing on a constrained budget ??? CYCA/Clubs  
3c Novice allowance / avoidance or delay of need to “tool up” to high-cost sail/rig configuration CYCA/Clubs  
3d Greater transparency in handicap allocation and especially revision – e.g. Handicap Newsletter? CYCA
  4. Re-establish the CYCA Racing sub-committee and encourage clubs to pay heed to outcomes CYCA/Clubs/volunteers