

Chairperson's Report for Year Ending 31st Dec 2024

Activities and Developments during 2024

Killyleagh Container

Last year I was struck by the strong influence that members who attend an AGM can exert. That night the Committee was given a very clear mandate to go ahead and purchase a container for Killyleagh, despite the absence of grant aid. For the first time the Committee decided to have a Just Giving page and Rory put in a considerable amount of time to create this. Our page received generous donations by members and former members and very quickly raised £3000 which covered the cost of the 40 foot container. I would like to thank Sharon for liaising with the firm which sold and installed the second hand container, which is in excellent condition, and Peter McC for measuring and marking out the site. BKC consistently benefits from small teams of volunteers with the right expertise for tasks. Thank-you to the team who prepared the Killyleagh site, the team who fitted out the racking in the container and the team who installed solar panels for automatic lighting inside the container- the panels survived Storm Eowyn unscathed. The first Tuesday in July 24 marked the first club paddle which accessed the Killyleagh boat. A lock box will be added to the post beside the main gate and any member who has a remit to lead paddles in the area can access the boats in the container for paddles within their remit.

Club Paddling Events

In the past I've duplicated some of what Malcolm says about our paddling activities and his graphical presentation and commentary describes our calendar much better than I can. I would like to mention just a couple of things.

We had a very well attended series of Tuesday evening paddles, often with twenty paddlers plus. The large numbers were often accommodated by having two paddles in the area. The option of Killyleagh paddles greatly enhanced this series. The number of less experienced paddlers sharply declines in the winter months and I wonder if this is a choice to avoid the winter cold rather than something the club isn't doing to encourage this cohort. Jim Burrell organises a wonderful, popular series of weekly open boating paddles throughout the year, the paddles are often also suitable for sea kayaks.

The Sessions for training on the Ergo machines were over-subscribed and much enjoyed by anyone fortunate to get a place. Thank-you to Greg for servicing all the machines and running great training sessions.

Similarly Greg's excellent Indoor Navigation Sessions were heavily subscribed.

Pool Sessions

We are indebted to Sharon McC for organising the sets of weekly pool sessions. Several members attend these sessions very regularly but I find it a bit surprising that even more folk don't make use of such a big pool as so many paddling skills, apart from rolling, can also be practised. I would like to thank the members who regularly coach in the pool, Greg Miller, Kevin Murray and Joe Rogan and also the team of members who assist.

Achievement of British Canoeing/BC Awards

Congratulations to the following members for achieving BC awards

These members achieved the Sea Kayak Award in 2024. The award is a personal performance award similar to the old 3* and was achieved by Billy C, Colin N, Mal B, Richard P, Gillian and Tim P, Desi Miller and Sinead McM and Marty M.

More recently Helga, Aaron and Declan also achieved the Sea Kayak Award

Two members, Hannah M and Declan C achieved their Whitewater Kayak Award in Wales.

The Committee accepts that it is difficult to be assessed for Whitewater Awards in Ireland due to the unpredictable, often low, river levels. Historically the club did not award any travel expenses for awards but have recently agreed to reimburse £100 of the cost of these expenses.

Change in Club Officers

PaddleNI requires clubs to identify its Safety Officer. This role is being shared by Malcolm, Greg and Peter McC.

Greg Miller is now one of the Club's two Designated Officers for Safeguarding along with myself.

Clubmark, SportNI's former mark of a very well run club has been replaced with The Updated Standards of Deployment. I would like to thank Malcolm and Greg for spending many hours reviewing all our policies and relevant data for Committee approval before submitting these to PaddleNI. A newly required policy- a club Complaints Procedure- which is essentially the British Canoeing Complaints Procedure- was also submitted. These reviewed Policies will be placed in the Resources section of our website.

MND Ireland

A very special event in aid of this charity took place in April 24 to honour the life and legacy of Adrian Harkness in which small teams of paddlers circumnavigated Ireland. Well over twenty BKC members paddled across various teams and many more donated to the JustGiving page. In total well over £100,000 was raised for MND Ireland.

Looking Forward

We know that our governing body will phase out the recognition, for insurance purposes, of EPs/Experienced paddlers approved by individual club Committees by 2026. Malcolm will address this fully in his Training Report. On a personal note I think the club should keep the designation of EP to recognise and encourage folk who aspire to become Leaders. These paddlers could be mentored for leadership, eg being asked to 'lead' a section of a paddle being led by a BC accredited leader and maybe be given preference for any in-house training for the BC Leader Awards.

The hoped-for increase in folk going forward for the BC Leader Award will be a significant cost to the club. The Committee aims to continue to support written applications for the cost of 50% of the training and 100% of the assessment of those BC awards which benefit club members- in particular the Coaching and Leadership awards. The individuals must have a track record in supporting club paddles and the applicants must undertake in writing to develop/continue their support, according to their BC award.

In line with our belief that members who give their time to coach and lead within the club should not be out of pocket the difference between the cost of Affiliate membership and

the required Full Membership of our Governing Body membership can be applied for on the same Bursary Form.

Our Introductory Sea Skills Sessions for this year are already in the calendar.

If anyone who has little or no experience expresses an interest in joining the club it is best to ask them to email the club address which is on the Home page of our website. Olly does a fantastic job of organising these folk- essentially via the first set of Skill Sessions in the year.

Water Safety Days

We will continue to support the Water Safety Days held in a number of the North Down ports.

Proposed Event in aid of RNLI

It was proposed to organise a race in 2024, in conjunction with a local sailing club, on Strangford Lough in aid of this charity. It was later agreed to postpone the event until 2025.

It is set out in the Club Constitution that a Chairperson can stay in position for a maximum of six years and I have reached the end of that term. I would like to say that it has been an absolute privilege to serve as Chairperson of the Committee of Belfast Kayak Club. I thank the wonderfully dedicated members of the Committee and give special thanks to Greg and Malcolm, as in the early years particularly, I ran most things past them, and to John Stuart for his support throughout in guiding me on issues of club governance. I'm also grateful to the members as a whole for all your support. It is my belief that BKC continues to be a very special community of paddlers.

Patricia Scovell
Chairperson