

## **Northern Rowing Council**

**Online meeting of Executive - 6 March 2023**

**Report of Secretary - Colin Percy**

### **Affiliation to BR of Lambton Rowing Club**

#### ***Report to last Committee***

The Committee received a report from me on 30 January 2023 about progress on this application. The meeting decided that the application including supporting documents was not sufficiently advanced to allow even a decision in principle to approve it.

If you recall a site meeting on the Lambton Estate was held on 28 January two days before that meeting involving Helen, John and me. We saw the (good) indoor spaces available to them in the Lambton Estate office park and the stretch of the Wear about 3km away which was proposed for rowing. Alternative boating sites were looked at. Rowing at that time had not commenced.

Our first reactions were generally positive but with a feeling that to get a new club up and running safely given the constraints of various sorts was a big challenge. By that time the club had a written agreement with the Estate on what access would be allowed and on what terms, though it did seem to differ on some details from actual practice being explained to us (now sorted in an addendum to the agreement).

#### ***Progress since then on documentation***

At that point there was a considerable amount of paperwork submitted in support of the then application but much was in need of revising or adding to. After the exchange of many, many emails and lots of advice from us there are now two overlapping sets of documents in existence which in themselves (a) nearly cover the required ground in adequate detail and (b) nearly represent reality. One set of documents supports the safety audit (a document in itself available to us) and the other set supports the actual application form to affiliate (also a document available to us). They are listed below.

As I write this on Monday morning (6 Mar) quite a few documents are being revised further in the light of suggestions (really requirements) just passed to them after our second site visit on Saturday, 4 March. Most revisions should be done and sent to us direct by our meeting tonight, but some fine tuning may well be needed after the meeting before we can finally approve the whole package. The safety audit and the application forms will have to be revised slightly online by LRC this week and we then get copies back from BR to check. There are two 'official' Google folders set up by BR, one for each set of the documents which, I can access. These show:

#### **Safety Audit form *plus***

Lambton Estate Agreement

Addendum to Lambton Estate Agreement

Risk Assessment

Safety and Emergency Plan

Inspection Checklist (*lots of useful info and sent out with this report*)

Steps and River Access Images

### **Application form *plus***

Blade design including club colours

Racing kit design

Main officer contacts

Safety Audit (copy of version as above)

Club Constitution

Minutes of AGM of 27-11-22 adopting constitution and electing officers and committee

Committee Meeting minutes of 23-2-23 (changing Welfare Officer & Safety Adviser)

The documents are not especially sensitive, but I think under GDPR should not be put by us in the public domain unless agreed by LRC (not requested). But in case you want to read them before or during the meeting I will place the latest versions online at 6.00pm and remove at 9.00pm tonight [www.nerowing.com/lrc\\_docs\\_060323.html](http://www.nerowing.com/lrc_docs_060323.html). Do not pass on to anyone else. The single most informative document (Inspection Checklist) is circulated with this report though. Again, please do not pass this on.

### ***Site visit on 4 March to see actual outings***

Helen and I visited the site again on Saturday last, 4 March, to see rowing in action. It was not a full session, possibly kept small deliberately to minimise the risk of problems in front of us! However, it did give us a very good idea of how rowing would work there. The enclosed Inspection Checklist document attached gives a good idea of what is happening. The stretch of river in use shown in a wider context than their maps is dead central on this Google Maps link: [www.google.co.uk/maps/@54.8685355,-1.5583615,14.75z](http://www.google.co.uk/maps/@54.8685355,-1.5583615,14.75z).

The stretch of river being used is about 600 metres long and is wide enough generally for two quads to pass in motion with care; fours not sure about. There is a slightly narrow spot where the boating point is. Boats are brought down from the trailer on the field edge above via new steps (see photos) to a pebbly 'beach'. We watched a quad being taken down with no problems, though being done with care as there is a right-angled turn with trees close. The river is not very deep in low to medium flows according to LRC. They will monitor the flows and depths before each outing to decide if rowing is possible.

We saw two singles out and a coxed quad and the circulation pattern worked fairly well, though lookout could have been better sometimes. The J15 boats were not going flat out by any means, so performance rowing would have to be subject to very careful management. There was a noticeable flow downstream - just top water as this is right at the top of the tidal limit but is only affected on a very high tide.

You can see all this a video (link below). The rowers were coping with the flow well. Though care would have to be taken with complete novices. We have been told that a quad did suffer a grounding in shallow water downstream before the current turning points were fixed and the signs/spotters system had been set up. There was no damage and no injuries, just wet feet, we are informed.

There are now good removable marker signs for rowers at the turning points at either end of the 600 metre stretch with a spotter (volunteer parents usually) at each. There will always be a coach and a spotter at the central slightly narrow boating point. I think if busy there will be other bank spotters too. Launches are not usable due to varying depth and difficulty of getting to the river - hence the use of multiple spotters.

Just below the lower turning point there is a stretch of shallower and thus faster flowing water. Rocks were visible. This is a clear barrier to the next 1000 metres of water they also have permission to use, but that is an issue for the future and the current assessment is only for the 600 metres in use now.

Overall, we were impressed with the organisation that has gone in to creating a safe environment for rowing in a challenging location. But it will have its limits in terms of number of boats out, speed of boats if training hard and so on. In the longer-term safe access to the next 1000 metres will be key to expansion.

It is suggested below that BR maintain contact with the club if affiliation is agreed to monitor 'real life' rowing and related procedures over the next few months. I think BR will ask for help in this if they impose it! There is a summer permissive path along this part of the river (contrary to the enclosed document) so unannounced monitoring could take place.

Photos and videos from the site visit are here:

[www.flickr.com/photos/197211784@N03/sets/72177720306484452](http://www.flickr.com/photos/197211784@N03/sets/72177720306484452)

### ***Club structure***

After *many* iterations the club's constitution and structure are in place and are very conventional. The club is totally freestanding (on paper at least) within no formal links to schools or other sports clubs. LRC does have permission to use a Parkview Academy minibus on weekends to ferry rowers down to the boating site through the Chair being a teacher there. Land training may take place at school or other locations as and when.

The constitution, officers and other committee members were agreed at the inaugural annual general meeting on 27-11-22. A club Captain post as per the constitution was not filled at this meeting, though a roughly equivalent Head Coach was. Clarity on the non-filling of the Captain's post has been requested. Both the Welfare Officer and the Club Safety Adviser appointed at the AGM have stood down since and new members were appointed to these roles at a committee meeting on 23-02-23. We have sight of the minutes of both meetings.

### ***Decision making***

British Rowing needs a decision from us to approve the application by Friday coming to allow them to make a final decision at their Board meeting in late March. To achieve this, it will be necessary for our meeting tonight to hear what is said, agree to approve the application in principle and delegate powers to the Chair and other named officers to make a final decision on the basis of the final sets paperwork of various sorts being resubmitted as described above.

The safety audit is actually signed off by John Mulholland as RRSA so technically it is up to him rather than the Committee to decide if it is good enough, but I am sure he will take advice from the Committee.

There are some still concerns around the region about how the new club would operate given what happened at the old CLSARC that eventually resulted in suspension and the presence inevitably of some of the now LRC officers. We need to ask British Rowing alongside notifying them of our approval (if agreed) that they must consider such ongoing

concerns in their deliberations, given that they know much more than we do about what occurred at CLSARC.

In addition, given the challenging nature of the site the club now rows at, the considerable need for volunteer input at every session to supervise, the fledgling committee structure and the recent changes in key post appointments (welfare and safety) then we should recommend to British Rowing that they monitor how the club operates day-to-day on the water and land and also in terms of administration and procedures, as they are doing already for 12 months at the newly reinstated CLSARC.

Colin Percy  
06-03-23