

Durham Regatta AGM

15 November 2023

Chairman's Report

Purpose

1 The purpose of this report is to present to the AGM

- some reflections on the 2023 Regatta and some proposals for the 2024 Regatta attached at Appendix 1
- An update on some of the longer term opportunities and challenges for the Regatta

2 The Regatta would not take place without the commitment and generosity of the Executive Committee and many volunteers and supporters. My first duty is to recognise their contribution and offer my thanks for everything they do for Durham Regatta

The 2023 Regatta and proposals for the 2024 Regatta

3 Durham Regatta is a limited company with Directors registered with Companies House. The Executive Committee manages the day to day organisation of the Regatta. The main duties of the Executive Committee are to

- Operate a safe event where the health, wellbeing and welfare of all attendees is our priority and is safeguarded and promoted
- Be a "going concern" and help the Director's in the performance of their duties as a limited company
- Offer a programme of exciting and enjoyable rowing across a range of events in line with British Rowing's requirements and any local rules
- Encourage the rowing community and a wide range of people to become involved with the Regatta and the sport of rowing
- Recognise and respect the traditions of the Regatta as a major sporting, cultural and social event in Durham City and the North East and seek to continuously improve and evolve

4 The 2023 Regatta was a successful event, helped by good weather over 2 days, because

- It was managed in a safe way with a prompt and appropriate response to incidents on and off the water
- Financially the Regatta covered its costs and generated a contribution to our grant giving activities
- The rowing was exciting and eventful. The Championship events in particular were well contested with elite athletes from clubs, universities and colleges taking part
- there was a varied and popular offer of entertainment and displays and refreshments
- the Present's Marquee continued to grow in popularity with positive feedback from participants

5 However there are also some areas for evolution and improvement such as

- The Saturday programme was very busy and consequently did not run to time. Some time was caught up by implementing various measures but the Executive Committee is in the process of looking again at the events and programme for the Saturday of the Regatta

- There are some difficulties in managing a presentation on Sunday which is on a different site to the Regatta. This is under review and it is likely that the Regatta Executive Committee will work with Durham ARC to find an alternative on the site of the event
- The 2023 Regatta did not have a corporate sponsor. This is a financial challenge as without a corporate sponsor we depend on gate receipts which in turn are influenced by the weather. We need to identify and select a corporate sponsor. This is a specialist skill which we may have to find outside of the Executive Committee.
- At the same time as finding a corporate sponsor there is an opportunity to improve the offer we make to corporate bodies and the possibility of them partially funding the Regatta through corporate hospitality. We have to balance this corporate involvement with the tradition of the Regatta as being an event for the residents of Durham City and the wider North East
- The Regatta has a strong identity and a recognised brand throughout the rowing community. As a way of attracting corporate sponsorship and forming ever stronger visible links between the Regatta and our supporters we will look at ways to promote our brand and have a strong merchandising and Executive Committee presence
- The Regatta depends very heavily on volunteers. For 2024 we will ask for volunteers earlier in the year and try to attract a wider group of people with a connection to rowing

Update on Longer Term Challenges

6 Our main challenge is the condition of the river bed especially our intention to dredge the river near the Regatta start. To do this we need

- The permission of the Environment Agency (EA) which we have secured. However this allows us to dredge during a specified period from June to October. We submitted a request to dredge following the 2023 Regatta. However the EA has asked for further assessments and reports and consultation with other river users. Our intention is to re-apply and carry out dredging after the 2024 Regatta
- Funding which we have secured from partners and applied some Regatta funds
- A contractor who we have identified and who has done some preparatory work for us

7 We are incredibly grateful to our volunteers but in the longer term we will need to

- Continue to support our Umpires and marshals and encourage their training and involvement
- Make sure that the Executive Committee reflects the rowing community and has the skills needed to engage with the public and manage an event
- Is a “going concern” financially and has a more secure income stream through corporate sponsorship
- Promote the Vice President roles as a mark of esteem and to help them be ambassadors for the Regatta

Recommendations

8 The AGM is asked to

- i. Note the contents of this report
- ii. Note the actions for the 2024 Regatta attached at Appendix 1

Michael Laing, Chairman, 30 October 2023