

Chairman's Report 2019

Hi All

It's been an absolute honour to have been the Chairman for the last year. Not only is it a pleasure to represent the Class but also to be part of a fabulous Committee team.

I've broken down my report as follows:

- The situation
- The long-term solution
- The people
- The output
- The outlook

The situation:

All discretionary leisure spend has, and will continue to be, put under extreme pressure. This is in part due to the economic climate but also to major changes in social relaxation decision making.

Sailing as a sport has many perceived barriers to entry that are well understood. Additional pressure is created by virtue of the sheer number of different dinghy classes now existing, all attempting to compete for 'customers' with associated financial and 'extinction' risks.

Lack of experience in the amateur dinghy sector on how to achieve a class 'turnaround' is resulting in what I shall call a "Catch 22"; a paradoxical situation from which an individual or community cannot escape because of contradictory rules or limitations. The term was coined by Joseph Heller who used it in his 1961 novel of that name.

The long-term solution:

Recognise that the reality of 'The situation' will be a reduced active participation within some fleets and that linking up with other classes for Championships and Open meetings will give opportunities for two significant added-value benefits:

- Combined class turnouts will be greater than those for an individual class alone, so the prospect of a larger fleet will open up a wider range of sailing venues which in turn proves more attractive to participants and sponsors alike.
 - Host clubs can expect to realise higher food and beverage revenues, which are more likely to be sustainable rather than being dependent on one class alone.
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Combined these two benefits yield the key to breaking out of the 'Catch 22' situation!

The Scorpion class isn't exclusively unique but the longevity of the hull means that a reduction in the number of new boats produced does not mean that an 'extinction risk' is imminent. To the contrary, it actually enhances the fleet's status because competitive boats are always available irrespective of age. A quick analysis of the Top 5 boats at this year's Scorpion Nationals in Llandudno underlines my point here; the winning boat 2013 being 10 years old and the fourth placed boat 1923 a mere 30 years old!

Rationalisation of Open meetings/ events is also important. A vibrant, well-attended and 'perfectly formed' Open circuit with a concise number of meetings will support greater attendances; in contrast to many meetings where the reality is reduced fleet turnouts. Dovetailing the circuit to include high-profile 'Regatta' events enables the class to showcase its vibrancy and competitiveness to other fleets, i.e. a subtle form of 'come join us' marketing! A great example of this approach in action was the mid-July Sika Weymouth Dinghy Regatta held at Castle Cove SC where the Scorpions accounted for 22 boats out of the total 99 entries and were the largest single fleet with their own starts; ahead of the Ospreys and Fireballs who accounted for 18 boats and 11 boats respectively. The remaining 50 boats consisted of at least nine classes and were split into asymmetric and fast/slow handicap fleets. Doing the math you can see that their average turnout was only 5-6 boats!

The people:

Without doubt the 'Scorpion Gang' are the most inclusive and fun seeking bunch, and the long-term friendships thus formed are a unique and under-leveraged resource. The Committee structure is set along traditional lines but members make extensive use of e-mail and the WhatsApp smartphone messenger application to optimise time management and aid decision making, which in turn encourages devolved responsibility and accountability. The Committee members this year have been absolute stars:

- Steve keeping us on-script.
- Malcolm keeping us financially stable (and taking on the *sailscorpion.co.uk* website).
- Dave doing an amazing job at the Llandudno Nationals.
- Peter securing a programme for the 2020 Silver Scorpion circuit eight months ahead of schedule!
- Nicola for not only bringing a 'family of boats' to Open events and the Nationals but also for her ingenuity in sourcing unique and valued prizes.
- Chris bringing a professional perspective to both the class rule challenges, as well as a halo of expertise to the Class!
- Hannah for her continued creation of bespoke graphics artwork and PR activities.
- Colin for his organisation of the membership database.

- Simon for all of his help and support with a multitude of things; hopefully to return to the Committee as website administrator and full-time sailing next year?

We do, however, need to recruit two additional team members to help promote the Class to the widest possible 'customer' audience. The first role will be to source short- and medium-term sponsorship solutions for the Class. The second role will help drive attendance for events on the Open meeting circuit.

The output:

With the above solution and people in place, I am confident that we will deliver the following results to build on everything we've achieved to date and ensure the viability of the Scorpion Class well into the future:

- Take the 'Catch 22' as an opportunity and drive attendances at each of our Silver Scorpion events to meet or exceed the benchmark figure of 23 boats.
- Deliver medium-term partnerships with one or two other dinghy classes; effectively forming a mutually beneficial 'firewall' to protect the Classes against transient factors and economic risk.
- Trawl through our membership and boat register/ historic records to encourage lapsed members to renew their subscriptions and get their boats back on the water for Penzance 2020! Set a baseline entry target of 50 boats.
- Keep the core Committee intact for three years so that the Class can benefit from a period of stability.

The outlook:

Today you have heard about a concise programme of (six) Open meetings for the 2020-21 Silver Scorpion circuit which is now published on the website (sailscorpion.co.uk) and also maps directly into our WebCollect online membership/ events management portal (webcollect.org.uk).

Well done to Peter for all the work necessary to book and firm-up these events with the respective host clubs. Steve's work with WebCollect allows you to get all of the meeting dates in your diary and then to book and pay for them on-line! Amazing result Steve, well done.

You've also heard that we have achieved financial stability, with a small profit resulting from the Llandudno Nationals. Fleet partnering can only see the Class finances move further into the black, so no more Tenby-style losses of £1,500 or so due to diminished entry levels.

The Nationals programme has been very well delivered this year thanks to the sterling efforts and teamwork of Nicola and Dave. We have a 5-year plan which can now be revealed as follows:

- 2020 – Penzance, shared venue with Hornet class.
- 2021 – Porthpean, shared venue with Hornet class.
- 2022 – Looe, shared venue with Hornet class.
- 2023 – Paignton, shared venue with Hornet and Enterprise classes (TBC).
- 2024 – Castle Cove, shared venue with Hornet and Enterprise classes (TBC).

With our partnership plans, Nationals venues and Silver Scorpion fixtures confirmed for the next five years, the Class now has the appropriate structure and leadership resource to stabilise with a level of confidence and look to the future with real optimism.

Many, many people continue to support our great Class and I am conscious that I haven't been able to recognise everybody who has played a part this year – no matter how great or small – in helping to take us forward. I extend my sincere thanks to the following:

- To Amy, Carl and Chris whom are standing down from the Committee after long periods of providing unwavering service
- To the 'Castle Cove Gang' who never cease to surprise us with party games!
- To lapsed sailors like Carol, John and Keith who provide constant wisdom and council.
- To the professionals including Gosling Dinghy Craft, HD Sails, North Sails, Ovington Boats, P&B and Paintcraft who provide credence and credibility to our racing events.
- And finally to the entire team at Llandudno Sailing Club who stepped in at the last moment to host an excellent 2019 Nationals for us.

And if I've missed someone or somebody out, I apologise in advance! Just remind me not to forget next time! From myself and on behalf the Committee of the National Scorpion Class Association, a heartfelt Thank You.

Best as always

Chris

Chris P Yates
Chairman
National Scorpion Class Association

28 January 2020