



**GB FREESTYLE KAYAKING**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2022-2026**

## Foreword

The GB Freestyle Kayaking Committee are delighted to present the Future of Freestyle: the new four year strategic plan for freestyle kayaking in Great Britain for 2022-26.

The Future of Freestyle presents the aim and objectives of GB Freestyle over the next four years. Many of these directly support the ambitions of British Canoeing, as presented in the Stronger Together document. Other objectives are specific to freestyle.

Freestyle in Great Britain is in a very exciting place. We have many of the World's top athletes, growing and evolving national competitions, plus the honour of hosting the postponed 2021 World Freestyle Championships at Nottingham in the summer of 2022.

This four year plan has been broken down to an overall aim for GB Freestyle plus the eight objectives that must be achieved to reach this aim. Key performance indicators to track progress are included, as are action plans to inform our pathway for the next four years.

This strategy document is the blueprint for our sport's evolution over the coming four years. It follows on closely from the previous four year plan, which was ambitious in its scope and was intended to deliver a positive impact on the future of our sport. Unfortunately, many of that plan's ambitions were not realised, in large part due to the global impact of the Covid pandemic. Therefore, this plan picks up on many of the previous ambitions and looks to move them forward, which will only happen with continued dynamic support from the growing freestyle community and British Canoeing.

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February 2022

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## **Why do we need a four year plan?**

Freestyle started in the UK around the mid 1980s and, by the early to mid 1990s, freestyle (or rodeo as it was known then) had started to become popular. Early events included the first world championships at the Bitches in South Wales, The Hurley Rodeo and Nottingham Freestyle. The sport in these early stages was about pioneering where and how you could paddle. If there was a revolution then this period was surely it, with every season bringing a range of new boats, and with every design innovation came new tricks.

By 1995 design and technique had moved on, with paddlers able to do linked cart and split wheels. At the 1997 and 1999 World Championships, boats had started to get lift-off and tricks took the paddler into the air. The GB Rodeo Committee formed in the early to mid 1990s and initially served a purpose of running competitions and selecting a team. By the end of the 1990s, Rodeo had become Freestyle and the remit of the committee had evolved so far that the British Canoeing Union (BCU) fully affiliated it. The Committee now had a purpose which included looking at feature development, the future of the sport and team management, all supported by a £12000 annual grant from BCU.

Over the next decade, largely led by British interest, the sport became both European Canoe Association and International Canoe Federation affiliated and a maturity of competition now meant the party was less important than the competition. GB Freestyle did well in international competitions with paddlers becoming supported by evolving expert coaches. As the sport continued to evolve, so too did the coaching and committee structures.

Today GB Freestyle is the envy of the world freestyle scene. Great organisation, great coaching and amazing athletes set a high bar. With such an impressive history and obvious world leading status it would be easy to rest on our laurels, but ambition is still very high, with the people involved with freestyle knowing they can achieve more.

The Four Year Plan is all about us continuing to lead Freestyle, for us to have new and evolving aspirations, and for us to go into the 2022, 2023 and 2025 World Championships and top the medal tables. In these pages, you will see clear ambition which reflects not just on the future but also the past. We see where freestyle came from; there are clear messages about engaging in all levels including recreational freestyle. A future of newness is also emphasised with structures set up to allow our sport to not just grow but to flourish and grab the potential that all involved know is there in abundance.

## **Current status of freestyle in Great Britain**

### **Strengths**

- Growing numbers attending competitions and events
- HPP and Thames weirs offer world class training facilities
- World Class coaching providers working with athletes to produce world class athletes capable of winning on the highest podiums
- World Class event in Hurley Classic
- National Student Rodeo
- European Open (including Club Championship)
- British Championships
- A small, but increasing, number of very committed, high energy, inspired, passionate people involved in freestyle
- An increasing number of Grade A ICF judges
- Influential UK representatives within the ICF and ECA
- A strong relationship with British Canoeing
- Professional governance recognised by an annually increasing grant from British Canoeing
- A strong talent development pathway
- Improving recognition of volunteers

### **Weaknesses**

- Limited knowledge of numbers of people who freestyle but do not compete
- Venues around the country are not evenly distributed meaning there are areas where no moving water freestyle opportunity exists.
- Communication and marketing of freestyle activity although improved are still very limited
- Scotland and Northern Ireland are not well represented on the Freestyle Committee
- Many barriers for people to start freestyle
- Large gap between junior and senior team, so a lot of junior team and squad paddlers are lost to freestyle when they move up from juniors

## Opportunities

- Recognition that freestyle truly is both recreation and competition orientated
- Develop more freestyle specific training sites at man made facilities (Lee Valley, Cardiff, Teeside, Glasgow) and at natural sites/weirs (Tryweryn, Dee)
- World class event management software capable of managing many different formats of competition
- Domestic events are well organised and ready for more participation
- 2022 World Championships on home soil
- Growing pool of coaches and aspirant coaches to mentor and develop into performance coaches

## Threats

- Impetus from previous four year plan has been halted due to the Covid pandemic
- Committee structure aligned to competition committee with limited focus on other areas of the sport
- Pool of volunteers remains limited
- Financial / time constraint against world class coaching providers who volunteer opportunities for elite performance
- Control of GB Freestyle financial sustainability controlled by British Canoeing
- Elite performance relies heavily on self funding and self motivation
- Many volunteers have been involved for a long time and may fall away without FS having people ready to replace them

## Political

- GB Freestyle politically reports back to British Canoeing and with their recent organisational change, freestyle has become recognised as one of the forerunners of the non-Olympic disciplines within Great Britain paddlesports
- The European and World scene is influenced positively by what happens in Britain, as we are one of the highest participation nations and as such are well represented both in judging and governance committees
- Internationally, freestyle continues to aspire to be an Olympic discipline. The ICF has substituted Extreme Slalom for some Canoe Sprint events at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. For freestyle to emerge and penetrate that arena, global coordination and a shift in thinking within the ICF would need to happen. Consensus within GB Freestyle and then a clear political agenda which engages BC then the ICF and then the IOC would mean huge volumes of work. The

matter must be carefully considered to establish if this is the right path for GB Freestyle

## **Economic**

- GB Freestyle is dependent on a single funding source in the form of an annual grant from British Canoeing. The current budgetary arrangement is strong due to improved and highly professional governance. However, there is value in exploring new funding opportunities
- Specialised playboats are widely available, both new and secondhand. Whilst the US boats remain expensive due to trade taxes, GuiGui (France) produces highly popular and reasonably priced plastic boats, together with carbon boats also at a reasonable price point. Jackson are also selling European made Rockstars at a far more reasonable price than the US versions.
- Performance freestyle coaching is specialised with few providers. However, the revised suite of British Canoeing awards has included freestyle, so more coaches are coming into the sport, especially at the “beginner” end of the market. This means that freestyle coaching is much more widely available and at a more reasonable cost that may previously have been the case. GB Freestyle is also working to mentor and develop existing coaches to become performance coaches

## **Social**

- Freestyle is unlike other competitive disciplines within the British Canoeing remit as participation is both competitive and recreational. Ensuring both avenues are properly resourced and that we understand this level of diversity when creating that resource is essential
- Accessibility for people getting into freestyle is limited. Whilst the performance/competition pathway is in place, greater consideration now needs to be given to the recreational market
- Recognition that freestyle events have multiple purposes with different desired outcomes will drive event design
- Social media plays its part in GB Freestyle and needs to be better utilised

## Technical

- GB Freestyle has good digital capacity including a modern website and online process such as competition entry
- Competition management software in GB is the most evolved in the world. This has been driven by individuals and now as we continue to push forwards we need to engage a team led approach
- Coaching needs to broaden the number of coaches with a higher level of technical understanding at all levels of freestyle
- The facility development team needs to be reinstated and should understand how to make a range of freestyle features for a range of budgets. This, together with outside technical specialisation as required, will create new opportunity

## Legal

- GB Freestyle's governance is now at a highly professional level and is fully compliant with all guidelines from British Canoeing and UK Sport
- Safeguarding is well managed by the Safety and Welfare Officer
- An Event Officer is now in place and works closely with the excellent event support team at British Canoeing
- Team selection, athlete contracts and team management contracts and guidance are all now online and inline with the requirements of British Canoeing

## Environmental

- Freestyle relies heavily on Holme Pierrepont (HPP) as it is a truly world class training and competition venue. Ensuring the site has adequate investment to maintain and improve whilst nurturing strong cooperative relationships is key to freestyles success
- The Thames Weirs are another area where a large hub of freestyle exists. Ensuring the Environment Agency fully recognises their significant importance is an ongoing task. Being involved with any redevelopment decisions is absolutely essential
- Other WW facilities in GB continue to improve their facilities but as they are pumped can be cost prohibitive for freestyle



## **How will freestyle in Great Britain be different by 2026?**

### **Team**

- The team and squad have a clear pathway from joining to becoming an elite performer, however, this lost impetus during the last two years due to Covid. A return to team and squad training and international competition has re-ignited this programme, however, it will still require further development to provide tiered levels of support so that as performance thresholds are reached athletes receive greater levels of investment and support
- The team will have had the resource and support to be first on the medal table in the 2022, 2023 and 2025 World Championships
- British Canoeing will be supporting our elite performance programs, including better access to BC assets

### **Events**

- Event participation will have grown 20% with specific events having a strong new starter and emergent discipline presence
- Events will generate levels of revenue and fully understand the service they play to developing freestyle
- A further developed online entry and event management will be used on all freestyle events in the UK

### **Facilities**

- New facilities will have been developed in areas where no freestyle facility had existed before.
- National standard facilities will feel more supported by GB Freestyle and will be able to maximise their assets for freestyle purposes when requested
- A full record of freestyle features in the UK will be held on British Canoeing and GB Freestyle websites

### **Participation**

- Methods of understanding participation will be in place and trend analysis will be possible. This will show at least a 20% increase in participation over four years
- All areas of participation will be supported through coaching and events

- Clear development pathway will be in place, for both competitive and recreational paddlers and, through analysis, we will be able to track progression data and use that data to drive decisions to continue growth
- People in freestyle will feel aligned to British Canoeing and see the value in membership

## **Volunteers**

- Our Volunteer Charter will be in place
- Volunteers will understand the commitments we need and where they can engage to help our sport flourish
- Volunteering will be seen as an exciting possibility to engage with freestyle in the UK
- GB Freestyle will continue to cherish volunteers and officially thank them

## **Communication and Marketing**

- The Communications and marketing team will have been firmly established and GB Freestyle will have been working in the frameworks they have provided for some time
- British Canoeing and GB Freestyle will have established supporting relationships working towards common goals within this area

## **Governance**

- Terms of reference will continue to be reviewed and all involved will have a clear picture of what their roles encompass
- All governance documents will be at a stage where only minimal changes need to occur on an annual basis
- Operating procedures will be in place so that GB Freestyle operates effectively across all the home nations

## **Finance**

- GB Freestyle will have accessed grant funding to launch participation initiatives
- Potential revenue streams will have been identified with some funding coming into GB Freestyle from these

## Coaching

- Coaching qualifications and development pathway will be in place and we will have developed new performance freestyle coaches
- Our international standard coaching team will have evolved with multiple options available to GB Freestyle

## Aim of GB Freestyle

To create opportunities for paddlers to try, develop and excel in freestyle kayaking, whilst providing a top level arena for our elite athletes to inspire greater interest and participation throughout the sport.

| GB Freestyle Objectives |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1                       | Attracting new paddlers and supporting recreational paddlers, and improving membership                          |
| 2                       | Supporting clubs and delivery partnerships  |
| 3                       | Improving access, promoting places to paddle and growing environmental awareness, protection and sustainability |
| 4                       | Supporting coaches, and supporting and developing volunteers  |
| 5                       | Creating talent pathways to performance and international success   |
| 6                       | Providing excellent championships, competitions and events  |
| 7                       | Governance and regulatory   |
| 8                       | Communication   |

| Mapping of Aims to Objectives |                         | GB Freestyle Objectives |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                               |                         | 1                       | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Aims                          | Try Freestyle           | X                       | X | X | X |   | X | X | X |
|                               | Develop in Freestyle    | X                       | X | X | X |   | X | X | X |
|                               | Excel in Freestyle      | X                       | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
|                               | Provide Top Level Arena | X                       | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

## **GB FREESTYLE OBJECTIVES 2022-26**

### **BC Objectives:**

1. Attracting new paddlers and supporting recreational paddlers
2. Supporting clubs and delivery partnerships
3. Improving membership
4. Improving access, promoting places to paddle and growing environmental awareness, protection and sustainability
5. Developing qualifications and awards and supporting instructors, coaches, leaders and guides
6. Supporting and developing volunteers
7. Creating talent pathways to performance and international success
8. Providing excellent championships, competitions and events
9. Developing effective NGB services (people, governance, finance)
10. Improving digital innovation and effective communications

### **GB Freestyle Objectives:**

1. Attracting new paddlers and supporting recreational paddlers, and improving membership
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## **1. Attracting new paddlers and supporting recreational paddlers, and improving membership**

Freestyle canoeing/kayaking is a diverse area of paddlesport, encompassing four separate boat types, and both a recreational and competitive participation profile.

There are several clear barriers to initial participation, including:

- Perceived difficulty of freestyle: the belief that you need to be an “expert paddler” before you can even try freestyle.
- Lack of opportunity to “give it a go”.
- Lack of training availability.
- Lack of understanding of what freestyle is and the diversity of activities that come within the freestyle family.
- Feeling nobody “like me” participates in freestyle.

Clearly, the initial barriers that need to be overcome are the perception that freestyle is not for beginners, that it is difficult, and that you can only do it at a designated freestyle spot. A targeted marketing campaign would address these issues, combined with “how to” videos, not just focussing on the competition tricks, but on the whole range of freestyle, including surfing, squirt, flat water and down river activities.

Further developing Freestyle Hubs and widening our network of coaches will enable GB Freestyle to demystify the sport. We need to recognise that freestyle can encompass many elements, including flat water, wave, hole, eddy lines and down river, and embrace these aspects. Sharing our expertise, developing new play spots and embracing these diverse activities, together with targeted social media campaigns and video tutorials, will all help to achieve this objective.

Working with the Inspirers and clubs across the UK, GB Freestyle should offer taster days and beginner/development events, providing coaching expertise, equipment, plus Team members to inspire new entrants. Focused events should be provided for people who traditionally face barriers to participate in freestyle, including women, ethnic minorities and those from deprived areas, especially inner cities. British Canoeing help should be available for such events.

Developing our network of coaches will also help as it will provide a much better chance of finding training wherever you are in the country.

Running and promoting competitive events across the UK, which encompass a wider range of freestyle activities and levels of expertise will also help to encourage initial participation, and also provide existing freestyle paddlers with more opportunities to compete, meet other paddlers, and improve their engagement and satisfaction with GB Freestyle and freestyle as a whole. This could include stand alone freestyle events, or integrating aspects of freestyle in existing events, e.g. Tryweryn Festival.

Data is crucial in allowing us to understand the level of participation in freestyle in the UK. Competition data allows us to track numbers of participants together with some basic profile information. The data collected is limited and allows for little usable analysis. A clearly established data set embedded into each online entry form will enable more effective data collection and thus analysis. This will allow for more targeted planning and marketing to increase participation in freestyle events.

Recreational freestyle has almost zero data collection and relies heavily on anecdotal data. Most canoe clubs around the UK have some degree of freestyle presence or interest. Establishing data on the level of involvement in each club will again enable more effective targeting of support, planning and marketing to improve and increase regular participation at the grass roots level.

Where demonstrable freestyle activity does exist, GB Freestyle must interact with those participants to establish clear development pathways. Making better use of our existing Inspirer and Academy programmes will enable us to distribute expertise and open up more opportunities at the very start of participants' paddlesport experiences. These will all add tremendously to our participation potential and boost regular participation.

### **Action Plan:**

- Appoint a data coordinator who will:
  - Identify required data and establish methods of capture, including event entry forms and via club surveys.
  - Develop monitoring and reporting protocols and structures.
- Work with British Canoeing to understand membership relationship to freestyle.
- Offer events (competitive and development) based on data analysis.
- Further develop and implement Inspirer and Academy programmes.
- Increase education and participation opportunities regarding the variety of activities encompassed by "freestyle".
- Events officer to develop a series of taster days/events across the UK in conjunction with Inspirers programme, canoe clubs and British Canoeing.

- Events officer to ensure competitions include a broader range of paddlers, from beginner to elite, and consider including a wider range of freestyle activities.
- Events officer to work with paddlesport event organisers to try to develop freestyle aspects in existing events.

**Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Documented increase in participation at events throughout the four year cycle.
- B. Club surveys indicating increased participation.
- C. Increased numbers of people undertaking freestyle coaching and performance awards (and availability of such awards) - data available from British Canoeing.
- D. By year four, there will be an established calendar of taster days across the UK with an increasing participation year on year.
- E. By year four, freestyle competitions will be less elite-focussed and provide a broader variety of freestyle activities.
- F. By year four, there will be a stronger calendar of competitive freestyle across the UK throughout the year, for all levels of competitor.



## **2. Supporting clubs and delivery partnerships**

As discussed previously, clubs are where the majority of paddlers will start their freestyle career. Clubs will often have other freestyle paddlers, who provide inspiration and help. They may also have freestyle equipment, including specialised playboats. In Objective 1, we discussed the lack of data from clubs regarding their freestyle participation, including both numbers and standard. A primary requirement therefore will be to survey the clubs across the UK to establish a baseline of this knowledge. It is also understood that many paddlers do not belong to a club, however, this Objective focuses on the club environment.

Once the data has been collected and analysed, then GB Freestyle can review the needs of these clubs and decide how best to meet them. This could include offering coaching sessions or helping them to develop local playspots. GB Freestyle can also support clubs in applying for grant funding for equipment, etc, from British Canoeing or other such bodies. Working more closely with clubs will be beneficial to both club and GB Freestyle, and will definitely promote Objective 1.

### **Action Plan:**

- Appoint a Club Liaison Officer to the Committee, who will:
  - Undertake a club survey
  - Analyse the data
  - Present a report
  - Develop a plan (with the Committee) to address club needs
  - Oversee delivery of the club aspects of the Inspirer's Programme and the Development Pathway
  - Periodically re-survey the clubs

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. A data set will be in existence for clubs across the UK that is up-to-date.
- B. A plan will be in place to address club needs.

### **3. Improving access, promoting places to paddle and growing environmental awareness, protection and sustainability**

Improving relationships with clubs plus local stakeholder groups will enable GB Freestyle to assist in improving access to freestyle locations. This may be through raising the issues with British Canoeing, or actively in assisting with developing physical access to the sites.

To establish a nationally equal distribution of freestyle opportunity, understanding where people paddle is essential. GB Freestyle knows of many sites, but there is no register/map encompassing them all. Word of mouth or social media is often the means by which freestylers find where to paddle.

A process to capture all this information is therefore crucial, together with any local stakeholders. This will help to further strengthen the outreach from GB Freestyle.

GB Freestyle needs to create a Facility Development Team which will provide opportunities for local stakeholder groups to establish the potential for local freestyle facilities. This same team will, through this route, develop a “National Freestyle Venue Needs Strategy” that will set out what we have and what we then need to achieve our Aim and Objectives in terms of physical locations.

The Team will need to work closely with the NGB “Places to Paddle” (or similarly named) officers, who have the experience and expertise in working with planning authorities, land owners and overcoming legislative difficulties. Through working with these and other partners, and developing proactive relationships, GB Freestyle can increase the number of freestyle venues whilst also improving existing site arrangements.

It must be noted that the Team should be proactive in this work and both actively advertise their existence and the scope of their activities, and seek out opportunities.

It is everybody’s responsibility to consider and protect the environment. GB Freestyle therefore must be mindful of its environmental impact in all its activities. All new plans should contain an environmental impact section, together with a mitigation plan. We should also actively promote environmental awareness via our website and social media, and at all GB Freestyle organised or supported events. This should also extend to the awareness of the need to clean all equipment thoroughly before paddling at a different location to prevent the spread of invasive non-native species.

### **Action Plan:**

- Work with clubs and local stakeholder groups to improve access issues.
- Create a Facility Development Team
- Develop a register of freestyle sites to place on website and on British Canoeing's "Places to Paddle" database.
- Identify potential venues through local stakeholder consultation.
- Create a "Freestyle Venue Needs" report. Submit to British Canoeing and together identify routes to bring plan into being.
- Develop a "how to" guide for future freestyle feature creation in UK.
- Include environmental elements in all GB Freestyle plans.
- Actively promote environmental awareness.

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Have a regularly updated register of freestyle sites.
- B. Every three years, achieve development of at least one site on the Plan.
- C. All GB Freestyle plans will have environmental implications element together with plans to mitigate any negative impact.
- D. GB Freestyle website will have environmental awareness section (link to British Canoeing website).

## **4. Supporting coaches, and supporting and developing volunteers**

GB Freestyle relies completely on volunteers; without them, the sport would not exist. Historically, many of these volunteers have been involved with freestyle for many years. However, more recently, we have been fortunate to attract a number of newer faces to support our activities and bring new ideas and energy.

We cannot rest on our laurels, though, and need to ensure all our volunteers feel valued. One way we have addressed this is by launching a Volunteer Awards evening in 2021. This was a great success and will be continued going forwards. Another way is to ensure all our volunteers, including coaches, receive the support and training they need. As discussed, there is a plan in place to develop, train and mentor new and existing coaches across the board, including new to Freestyle, Inspirers and GB Freestyle High Performance Coaches. A plan already exists for the latter group (CPD Programme), however, this requires re-invigoration. We need to ensure that other volunteers also receive relevant training, e.g. event safety, safeguarding, anti-doping, etc.

GB Freestyle also needs to keep attracting and recruiting new volunteers. Advertising of opportunities should be a priority. Another essential is to ensure that volunteers receive their out-of-pocket expenses and are properly looked after at events, otherwise they will not repeat their offer of help.

A database of volunteers is needed, together with a Volunteer Charter, and continuing recognition of the importance of volunteers to the freestyle world as a whole.

### **Action Plan:**

- Create a Volunteer Charter.
- Create and maintain a volunteer database.
- Continue the annual Volunteer Awards evening.
- Ensure all volunteers receive the training they require.

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Volunteer Charter in place and periodically reviewed.
- B. Volunteer database in place and regularly updated.

## **5. Creating talent pathways to performance and international success**

GB Freestyle is amongst the most successful canoe sport disciplines. Much has been achieved at the highest level and GB has remained in the top three medal nations for the last 10 years. To further improve on this already impressive success, a talent development pathway has been created.

This pathway focuses on each Team athlete as an individual and uses performance analysis data to identify training objectives. It is overseen by the GB Freestyle Performance Director and utilises face-to-face training sessions and camps, combined with video analysis. Historical data is kept and used to demonstrate each athlete's progress. A sport psychologist is also on the team, together with conditioning coaches, nutritionist and a team physiotherapist. This pathway is continually being tweaked and improved. One of the weaknesses in the pathway is the lack of top-level coaches' availability. These coaches are often unable to provide their time for free and a lack of funding for coaching therefore has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the pathway. The ability to pay coaches for training sessions/weekends would greatly improve the quality of the training provision for the Team athletes and would allow the training to be extended to the development squad athletes.

A Partnership Strategy is in place between GB Freestyle, Serco (Nottingham Leisure Trust), University of Lincoln, and Mezzana, but is somewhat fragile, relying as it does on key personnel. The aim is to develop this Partnership and bring it to a more sustainable and robust status. Financial input, whilst not being key, will clearly enable us to access more of what's on offer more quickly. The Partnership brings mutual benefits, but budgetary restraints can impact these as we rely on volunteers so heavily, and being able to offer placements to students, etc, takes up considerable volunteer time. Formal recognition of this Partnership by BC would prove helpful.

To further improve the pathway, more coaches are required and a plan is in place to train new coaches and develop existing coaches into top-level performance coaches. Covid has had a big impact on this plan, but it is hoped to get it back online in 2022.

### **Action Plan:**

- Continue to develop and improve existing talent development pathway.
- Continue to train and develop new and existing coaches.
- Seek funding for coaching at team and squad training sessions/weekends.

**Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Team performance in international competitions.
- B. Number of freestyle coaches.

## **6. Providing excellent championships, competitions and events**

GB Freestyle both organises and assists in organising freestyle competitions across the UK. An Events Officer sits on the Committee and has responsibility for ensuring all such competitions are run in accordance with GB Freestyle guidelines, which are in turn firmly based upon the British Canoeing Events Organisation guidelines.

The Events Officer will undertake the events officer training run by British Canoeing and will, in tandem with the GB Freestyle Welfare and Safety Officer, ensure all relevant documentation is in place for each competition to ensure full compliance with all health, safety and welfare requirements.

GB Freestyle has a world-leading freestyle scoring software package. However, this software is very dependent upon one person to manage and therefore a wider team of users needs to be put in place to reduce the over-reliance on the developer. Online entry has been introduced for GB Freestyle events and works extremely well, but will require further development to include capture of data required (as discussed in Objective 1). Live-streaming of results was recently introduced and will again require much more development to be fully effective.

The 2022 World Championships will be held in Nottingham and will therefore enable us to further improve the standard of event management through the experience of organising this huge, international event.

### **Action Plan:**

- Ensure all competitions are properly publicised. Calendar of events on website and Facebook.
- Expand the event guidelines and exemplary documents and keep current. Develop “how to run an event” guide.
- Ensure each event has clear desired outcomes.
- Undertake participant feedback surveys from each event.
- Offer support to event organisers
- Improve online entry system to ensure capture of required data. Integrate with a world-class scoring and feedback system. Further develop live-streaming of results.

**Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Annual calendar of events in place.
- B. Event reports reporting against desired outcomes.
- C. Participant feedback survey results.
- D. Number of UK ICF judges currently qualified.



## **7. Governance and regulatory**

Good governance - planning, structure, appointments, decision making, clarity of roles, risk management - is essential at every level if freestyle is to operate effectively. The UK Code of Sports Governance sets out a very clear framework of standards for national governing bodies and freestyle has adopted this new structure, under the guidance of British Canoeing.

All Terms of Reference have been created and are annually reviewed with the post-holders. The Selection Policy has been through a number of revisions and is now a strong, live document that informs the work of the Selection Panel. All safeguarding and event safety documentation is reviewed regularly by British Canoeing. This more professional approach to GB Freestyle has directly impacted the organisation in positive ways and enabled the Committee to run effectively. However, we need to maintain this strong position regarding our governance and keep reviewing, updating and developing our documents, systems and procedures in line with current UK Sport and British Canoeing guidance.

This improved level of governance has had a direct and positive impact on our financial status. Our grant from British Canoeing has increased dramatically in recent years and continues to rise. This is a result of budget holders fully understanding their roles and therefore responsibilities, and thus being able to produce fully itemised and explained budget requests. This professionalism has been rightly recognised by British Canoeing.

### **Action Plan:**

- Annually review Terms of Reference with post-holders.
- Annually review all governance documents, systems and procedures.
- Ensure representation for all home nations.
- Ensure all GB Freestyle events make a profit.
- Establish other revenue streams.
- Continue to produce fully itemised, professional budget requests, working closely with British Canoeing to maximise our funding opportunities.

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Increase in budget funding year on year.

## **8. Communication**

Communication is often the difference between success and failure. In freestyle, we often miss that opportunity to publicise our activities and so do not fully realise the potential of our efforts.

Social media is an important and effective tool to get our message across. It is currently a bit hit and miss and needs to be improved and more organised. The Social Media Officer needs to work more closely with the British Canoeing publicity and social media teams and utilise their tools and reach.

GB Freestyle is extremely successful and this needs to be better conveyed. A team should be created for publicity and social media, not just dependent on one person. The website also needs to be updated regularly and all the information should be current.

Internal communications need to be more effective. Google Workspace has recently been adopted within the Committee and the use of Shared Drives and GB Freestyle Kayaking email addresses should enable more efficient internal communication.

### **Action Plan:**

- Establish a publicity and social media team within GB Freestyle to:
  - Create and implement a communication and marketing plan.
  - Work more closely with British Canoeing.

### **Key Performance Indicators:**

- A. Communication and marketing plan in place and successfully implemented.

## Key Performance Indicators

### Objective 1:

- A. Documented increase in participation at events throughout the four year cycle.
- B. Club surveys indicating increased participation.
- C. Increased numbers of people undertaking freestyle coaching and performance awards (and availability of such awards) - data available from British Canoeing.
- D. By year four, there will be an established calendar of taster days across the UK with an increasing participation year on year.
- E. By year four, freestyle competitions will be less elite-focussed and provide a broader variety of freestyle activities.
- F. By year four, there will be a stronger calendar of competitive freestyle across the UK throughout the year, for all levels of competitor.

### Objective 2:

- A. A data set will be in existence for clubs across the UK that is up-to-date.
- B. A plan will be in place to address club needs.

### Objective 3:

- A. Have a regularly updated register of freestyle sites.
- B. Every three years, achieve development of at least one site on the Plan.
- C. All GB Freestyle plans will have environmental implications element together with plans to mitigate any negative impact.
- D. GB Freestyle website will have environmental awareness section (link to British Canoeing website).

### Objective 4:

- A. Volunteer Charter in place and periodically reviewed.
- B. Volunteer database in place and regularly updated.

### Objective 5:

- A. Team performance in international competitions.
- B. Number of freestyle coaches.

**Objective 6:**

- A. Annual calendar of events in place.
- B. Event reports reporting against desired outcomes.
- C. Participant feedback survey results.
- D. Number of UK ICF judges currently qualified.

**Objective 7:**

- A. Increase in budget funding year on year.

**Objective 8:**

- A. Communication and marketing plan in place and successfully implemented.

