



BRITISH ROWING

Club Development Guide

Developing your club
for the future.





Dear Rowing Club Members

Welcome to the British Rowing Club Development Guide

Following consultation in 2019, this guide is one of several developed in response to clubs' requests for more guidance and support on a wide range of club related topics. We hope it will help you to develop your club and build good practice so that new and existing members can continue to enjoy rowing at all levels for many years to come.

If rowing is to prosper as a sport, we need a network of strong and sustainable clubs that give members the best club experiences. Whatever your club's size or circumstances, there are resources available to help support long term growth.

In this guide, we cover a range of topics and provide a working framework to help you develop your club, from preparing a development plan and ensuring effective pathways, to providing new opportunities for your members, developing facilities and managing events.

This guide:

- **Highlights the process to follow in preparing a club development plan.**
- **Flags some key questions to ask yourself and your club committee.**
- **Provides top tips and practical advice to help develop your club more effectively.**
- **Signposts you to additional guidance and resources on British Rowing or other websites.**

The guide will be a working resource, to be updated on a regular basis, so please provide feedback and share examples of good practices or experiences from your club.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The British Rowing Community Support Team

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Contents

Section 1 - Your club development plan	04
1.1 Introduction	04
1.2 Getting started	05
- Where are you now?	06
- Where do you want to be?	09
- How are you going to get there?	12
- How will you monitor and measure progress?	13
1.3 Club surveys	13
Section 2 - Your club offer	15
2.1 Expanding your rowing offers	15
2.2 Improving diversity and inclusion	20
2.3 Developing your club members and succession planning	23
Section 3 - Club events and Open Days	26
3.1 Organising club events and competitions	26
3.2 Organising Open Days	30
Section 4 - Facility development	32
4.1 Introduction	32
4.2 Optimising your facilities	32
4.3 Building new facilities	36
Appendices	40
Appendix A – Club development plan outline	40
Appendix B – Example club action plan	45



Section 1 - Your club development plan

1.1 Introduction

If rowing is to prosper as a sport, we need a network of strong and sustainable clubs that give members the best club experiences. Having a clear vision and development plan is one of the founding principles of good governance and management (see Club Governance Guide) that will help your club grow and meet your members' needs more effectively.

A club development plan is also a useful way of presenting the aspirations and future direction of your club to a wider audience. Not only will it provide your club committee/management with some clear goals and objectives, but it can also help communicate these goals to existing and potential partners, as well as external funders.

Sometimes, club development is based on a series of 'knee jerk' decisions rather than coordinated actions and this often results in missed opportunities. A good development plan provides a clear strategic focus to your club's activities, with many benefits.

Your club development plan should be a 'working document' that is reviewed and updated regularly.

Benefits of a club development plan

- It gives your club a clear direction for the future and supports growth.
- It helps your club committee identify specific tasks to focus on.
- It supports and encourages collaboration, aligning everyone to a clear course of action.
- It can increase member support and engagement, by involving them in the process.
- It helps you keep local or national organisations aware of your goals.
- It can help you secure external funding by demonstrating how your club's aspirations align with the key goals of funding bodies.
- It helps your club committee monitor progress more effectively.

Having a good development plan shows that you've analysed your present situation and thought about the future needs and goals of your club in a coordinated way. It can help you develop a strong and sustainable club that attracts and retains members for many years to come. Whatever the focus of your plan, the long term needs of your members should be paramount.



I.2 Getting started

There is no right or wrong way of writing a development plan and one plan can look very different to another. A simple plan with some headline statements, key objectives and actions can be just as effective as an in-depth document covering all aspects of club life.

Whether you are doing this for the first time or improving what is already in place, writing your club development plan need not be complex. The key is to follow a process and inform your plan by collecting relevant and accurate data and information.

A simple structure which you may find useful is based on four key stages/sections:



Some top tips on how to approach each of these stages are provided below.

A draft outline of a development plan is provided at [Appendix A – Club development plan outline](#). For a simpler, more concise plan, you may prefer the format in [Appendix B – Example club action plan](#).



Photo credit: British Rowing



Top Tips: Writing your club development plan

- Get the right people involved – allocate clear responsibility for writing your development plan. A small working group can often work better than a large committee or relying on just one person.
- Make sure that your plan is agreed and reviewed regularly by your club committee/management group.
- Consult with your members – by involving your members as early as possible, you will secure their ‘buy-in’ to help with key actions. This includes both committee members and your general club membership. [See section 1.3.](#)
- Consider wider consultation, such as:
 - British Rowing Community Support Manager – clubsupport@britishrowing.org.
 - Your local Active Partnership – find yours [here](#).
 - Your local authority or Council Sports Development Officer.
- Make sure that your development plan is in a format that everyone can access and understand.
- Consider how any future development activity might impact on your club’s human and financial resources, as well as its overall operation. For example:
 - Will you need to make changes to your facilities or governance?
 - Will a wider rowing offer require changes or expansion of your boat fleet?
 - Will growth require more coaches, volunteers and funding?
 - Will changes to future work patterns or the targeting of different groups require a daytime rowing offer? If so, are coaches/volunteers available at this time?
- Your plan may also wish to explore how to offset your club’s carbon emissions through sustainability initiatives.

The [‘Know your audience’](#) section on Sport England’s website can provide some useful insight.

Stage 1 – Where are you now?

Once you’ve decided who needs to be involved and how, the first stage involves a review of your current situation to determine **‘Where are you now?’** This is the data gathering stage. As well as reviewing your membership figures/growth, finances and club performance, you may also wish to conduct further research or insight, such as an anonymous club survey to inform both this stage and the **‘Where do you want to be?’** stage. Surveys can provide useful feedback on the overall satisfaction of your members with various aspects of club life ([See section 1.3](#)).



SWOT analysis

A useful starting point for any plan is a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). It helps to identify not only what is working well but also the areas that you need to work on.

Try to include as many aspects of club life as possible. If you have lots of information, you may wish to have a SWOT analysis for specific areas such as facilities, recruitment, membership, volunteers, coaching, squads, equipment, etc.

The following SWOT analysis example identifies some key questions and provides a useful format.

SWOT analysis example

Strengths

What do you do well?

What do your members love about your club?

What gives you an advantage over your neighbouring/other clubs?

For example:

- Only club within a specific catchment area.
- Experienced coaches.
- Management committee skill base.
- Large boat fleet.

Weaknesses

Does your club have any limitations?

What areas could you improve on?

For example:

- Only 500 metres of water.
- Lack of capital available.
- Old equipment.
- Few younger members.

Opportunities

What could help you expand or develop further?

For example:

- Growing local population.
- Local school wants to try rowing.
- Local community groups interested.
- New housing development planned for the edge of your catchment area.

Threats

Are there internal/external factors that could create issues or problems?

For example:

- Frequent flooding or low water.
- Not enough volunteers.
- Outdated facilities.
- No one wants to coach the juniors.
- High turnover of members.
- Only two coaches.



Once your SWOT analysis is complete, allocate some time to discuss the findings and any implications with your membership/committees.

The most useful development plans are developed in collaboration and with the 'buy in' of your members. This will ensure that your plan best serves your members' needs and helps to engage members with key actions. By consulting more widely, you will often see issues with a 'fresh pair of eyes' and it may also generate ideas and solutions that you've not thought of.

Consultation on your plan/SWOT analysis can be achieved through:

- **Committee meeting agenda items.**
- **Club development meetings.**
- **Club surveys.**
- **Informal discussions.**

Introduction to your development plan

This first section of your development plan, informed by your SWOT analysis, provides the reader with a clear and succinct overview of your club's current operations, showing progress to date, not just in terms of rowing activity. Try using some key headings to help structure your plan.

Club development plan overview – key headings

1. **Club overview** – a summary of your club's history – but remember, many readers are less interested in events before they were born.
2. **Club mission/vision** and **club ethos** (if you have one).
3. **Governance** – your current governance structure including key positions, committees, sub committees and volunteer set up.
4. **Club activities** – from recreational rowing to coaching and training, marketing and social activities and the opening hours of the bar and gym.
5. **Facilities and equipment** (including safety equipment) – covering their condition and usage.
6. **Membership overview** – a summary of your membership profile, including volunteers, coaches and rowers.
7. **Rower/Coach/Volunteer development and pathways** – how are your rowers, coaches, volunteers and club positions developed?
8. **Community links/partnerships** – any existing links and/or partnerships.
9. **Financial information** – some headline financials, such as budget, accounts, cash flow or grants data.



Try to avoid using too much rowing jargon, for example:

- *'Adaptive rowing'* objectives may need an explanation of what adaptive rowing means.
- *'Winning the Thames Cup in 1980'*, although a fantastic club achievement, may mean nothing to a non-rower.

Stage 2 – Where do you want to be (in the future)?

The second stage of your development plan involves setting out some clear goals or aims for where you want your club to be in the future. It can relate to any timeframe but is usually for a medium term of 3-5 years.

Your main goals or aims should ideally be short, memorable and easy to summarise so that members can also use them for club promotion.

This section of your plan sets out your club's overall aspirations for the future – a clear vision of where you want to be. These aspirations may stretch your club but should be realistic to ensure 'buy-in' from your members.

When writing this section of your plan, try using the same headings from the **'Where are you now?'** section, to make it easier to follow.

Data, research and insight

Data gathering, along with further research and/or insight will help guide your club's aspirations and should inform both the **'Where are you now?'** and **'Where do you want to be?'** stages. An anonymous club survey, for example, may reveal some useful ideas about your club's future direction that members don't wish to discuss openly – [see section 1.3](#).

Most coaches use the data gathered on their crews to develop training plans and hone crew skills to improve performance. Your club data can be used in the same way to help improve club development.

By incorporating data, research and insight into your development planning process, you'll get a much more detailed understanding of your club members' needs, motivations and the overall club environment.



Photo credit: John Anderson



Data sources

From population statistics and social media analytics to research on the reasons why people take part in sport – there's a wealth of data that can be accessed for free to inform your club planning. It's important to understand how your members feel and view your club.

Membership data

Your club will already collect data about your members and your club operations, such as:

- Membership form information.
- Booking sheets for boats and the crews using them.
- Booking sheets that show the busiest times of the day.
- Social media analytics, such as number of likes, replies or views, etc.

From your membership forms (or club surveys), you can determine:

- Membership numbers for each membership category.
- The catchment area for club members. Where do the majority of members travel from?
- Demographic breakdown of your membership.
- Your members' motivations and goals? See club surveys – [section 1.3](#).

You can also use other information about your members to help shape your club plans, for example:

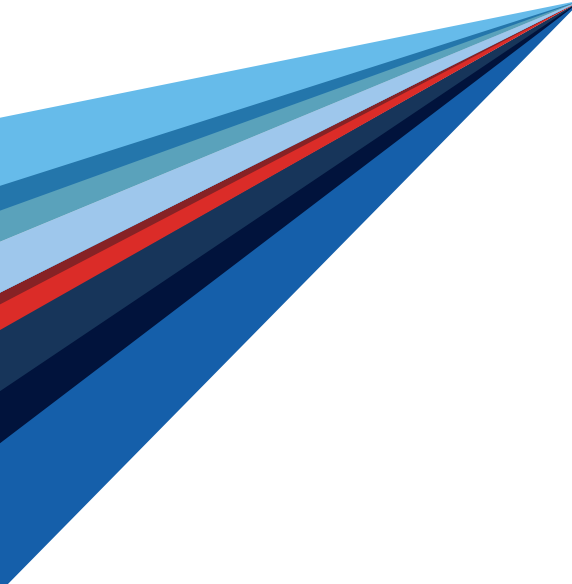
- How often do crews train? Are outings limited?
- Are particular types of boats more popular than others? This can help to inform future boat purchases.
- What's the best social media to use? Is your Facebook page popular but Instagram rarely used?
- Is your social media campaign working? What levels of social media usage do you have across your overall membership?

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

When using any information from your membership forms, always consider the GDPR implications i.e. what have your members agreed to. Always make the data anonymous, for example, by using travel distances rather than home addresses.

Further advice on GDPR rules and regulations can be found [here](#).

In addition, the [ICO](#) is the UK's independent body set up to uphold information rights.



The end result of any data collection exercise should be to focus on enhancing your overall club experience.

Further data sources

There is more information available on general sporting data, such as:

- [Sport England](#) research on sporting likes/dislikes and motivations, including data for specific age groups, gender or other target groups, as well as sample case studies. The [Know your audience](#) information is a useful starting point to help understand how socio-demographic factors impact on sports participation.
- The [Government Statistics Office](#) has local and national population data available, such as [census](#) data. This can be useful to analyse demographic information or identify population growth trends within your local community.
- National sports organisations, such as the [Activity Alliance](#) and [Women in Sport](#), also have statistics, research and case studies, providing insight on sport and physical activity.
- Your local [Active Partnership](#) can also provide local research and data on sporting impact. An example of this can be seen on the [Active Gloucestershire](#) website.

Goal setting

The principles of 'goal setting' (outlined below) can help shape the **'Where do you want to be?'** section of your development plan, along with your SWOT analysis. 'Goal setting' is used in many spheres of life, business and personal, and is commonly used in coaching. By setting out goals in your club development plan, you can focus your efforts in a more structured way.

SMART goals	
Goals can either be SMART or SMARTER .	
SMART GOALS are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific 2. Measurable 3. Achievable 4. Realistic 5. Time-based 	SMARTER GOALS are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific 2. Measurable 3. Achievable 4. Realistic 5. Time-based 6. Evaluated 7. Reviewed



Top Tips: Goal setting

- Set a specific overall 'end' goal for your club, for example, this might be to rebuild the whole facility.
- Set process goals to be achieved along the way ('how to' goals) and make them specific.
- Make sure that your goals are set at the right level – if they're too difficult, they may be unachievable.
- Revisit and monitor your goals at least annually (or more frequently for shorter term goals). It's important to understand whether progress has been made. If not, establish why not and revise your goals accordingly.

Stage 3 – How are you going to get there?

This section sets out 'how' your goals will be delivered, often in the form of an **action plan**. When compiling an action plan, break your overall goals down into smaller objectives. Once again, use the headings from the **'Where are you now?'** section to make reading easier. Your objectives should also follow the SMART principle – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time based. Focus your objectives on achieving your club aspirations by building on your strengths, addressing the weaknesses, recognising the opportunities and mitigating the threats from your SWOT analysis.

Each objective can be divided into short, medium or long term actions, to ensure a clear understanding of 'how' you are going to achieve it.

Example: Sunny Rowing Club

Sunny Rowing Club set out SMARTER objectives to help develop daytime rowing activity:

- **Specific** – To increase rowing activity in the daytime.
- **Measurable** – A new recreational section will be set up.
- **Achievable** – Sessions will run Mondays and Wednesdays from 10am to 12am.
- **Realistic** – Two volunteer coaches are available to assist.
- **Timeframe** – Sessions will start in the Easter holidays.
- **Evaluate** – The club will measure the uptake in daytime rowing.
- **Review** – The club committee will review daytime usage and if there is capacity/ demand for more growth.



Stage 4 – How will you monitor and measure progress?

Regular reviews of your development plan and the accompanying action plan help to check that you're on track and provide a focus for committee meetings discussions.

You could include a visual timeline that shows the anticipated timeframe for each task, with key dates and milestones. An internet search will show lots of free downloads (e.g. Gantt charts), but any timeline-based document can help.

It's also important to try to measure your progress where possible, for example, if a key goal is to increase club income by attracting new members, then monitoring your membership numbers/subscription income against your planned targets will help to measure success. It will also allow you to revise and set new targets as appropriate.

Remember, your plan is a working document that should be revised and updated as necessary. Your members and/or committee will have invested a lot of time in developing your plan, so don't let it sit on a shelf.

Long term plans

For more major infrastructure or facility projects and long term goals, you will probably need a longer term plan, e.g. for 10 years or more. This could be a separate plan or could be a supplement to your 3-5 year plan.

Planning beyond five years can be more difficult as there are more variables, but long term plans are very useful for significant projects such as new facilities, new water access or fleet replacement plans, where fundraising is needed or there are legal issues to address.

1.3 Club surveys

As part of your data gathering process, anonymous club surveys are a great way of finding out the views of your members, as some members may feel uncomfortable providing honest feedback on a face to face basis.

There are lots of free online surveys (such as [Survey Monkey](#) or [Google Forms](#)) which are useful for small surveys, with simple questions.

For more in-depth surveys, consider using the [Club Matters Club Views](#), which is specifically designed to obtain the anonymous views of members, coaches and volunteers on all aspects of club life.

You may also wish to complete tailored surveys on specific areas such as volunteering or coaching.

Once you've conducted a survey, remember to share the findings and show your members that you're responding to both negative and positive feedback. Survey findings can also be useful to help plan club membership drives and enhance your offers where necessary.

**As with any information,
don't just collect it, use it
to your advantage.**



Photo credit: British Rowing



Here are some examples of how research findings can be used to inform your action plan.

Research finding	Follow up actions
Membership information on where members come from, why they have joined and what they want to get out of their membership.	Targeted membership drives in certain geographic areas. Tailored adverts with images of the demographic/type of user that you're seeking to attract.
Poor attendance at club open days by the local population.	Leaflet drop to the local area. Encourage local participation by running a 'locals only' open and taster day. Attend local events such as church fairs, carnivals etc. and host a 'stall' to promote the club and showcase what you do – take an ergo.
Feedback from rowers that they want to raise their performance levels and be more competitive.	Tailored personal training data collection – from ergo scores to psychometric tests (see People Development Guide). Recruit/develop coaching resources to increase knowledge. Signposts to appropriate competitions and events to test performance.

If your club uses British Rowing's ClubHub Management system, you can download ready-made reports on topics such as membership, financial information, coaches qualifications, etc.

The more you understand what's going on at your club, the better equipped you will be to provide the best club experiences and retain your members for a more sustainable future.

Further information

For a range of useful documents and templates on development planning, visit the Sport England [Club Matters](#) pages.

Further top tips and advice on development planning can also be found in the other British Rowing Club Guides:

- [Club Management Guide](#).
- [Club Governance Guide](#).
- [Inclusive Club Guide](#).
- [Adaptive Rowing Guide](#).



Section 2 - Your club offer

2.1 Expanding your rowing offers

Many rowing clubs operate on an evening/weekend basis. If your club is like this, you could be missing out on hours of potential activity, as well as additional income. Making better use of your space and/or the spare time available can help you to develop a stronger and more sustainable club, with a broader appeal, more members and more revenue.

There may be people that either don't want to be the next Olympian or cannot make the session times in your current schedule, or even don't want to row on the water. Have you considered providing other types of activities such as indoor classes, touring, recreational rowing or rowing for health reasons? It's possible to structure these offers so that they don't impact on your current rowing activities.

Consider the two club scenarios below.

Any new activity brings potential new members and new money into the club.

Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Current activity times = 32 hours Monday-Friday between 5pm and 9pm (4 hours per day x 5 days = 20 hours) Weekends between 7am and 1pm (6 hours per day x 2 days = 12 hours)	Available activity times = 82 hours Monday-Friday between 9am and 9pm (12 hours x 5 days = 60 hours) Weekends between 7am and 6 pm (11 hours x 2 days = 22 hours)
<p>Scenario 2 offers more than double the amount of time for activities.</p> <p>Opening for just two extra hours each day would give 45% more activity time than Scenario 1 (2 hours x 7 days = 14 hours).</p> <p>How could you broaden your club offer to run during these times?</p>	

With careful planning, you can broaden your club's rowing activity to attract more members, more money, more volunteers and develop larger squads.

Do any of these statements sound familiar?

"I WORK WEEKENDS AND THE SESSIONS ARE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY."

"WE ONLY USE THE ERGO'S FOR WINTER TRAINING."

"I CAN'T JOIN AS I WORK SHIFTS AND THE CLUB IS ONLY OPEN DURING THE EVENINGS."

"OUR MEMBERSHIP FEES COULD NOT FULLY SUPPORT THE RUNNING OF THE CLUB."

"EVERYONE RACES IN OUR CLUB, WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO ROW RECREATIONALLY?"



Many clubs rely on the same ways of getting people through the door year after year – word of mouth, open days or ad-hoc Learn to Row – with occasional invites to ‘jump the queue’ if a prospective member can already row or happens to have won at Henley.

There is often limited scope for club expansion via these routes, which traditionally target the same days, times and/or groups of people. If your promotion works well and you retain a high proportion of new participants who attend your current session times, this can often lead to overcrowding on the water and high demand for equipment and coaches. Some members may complain about the ‘new’ people taking up equipment and water space.

A broader rowing offer will often have a knock-on effect of increasing your membership numbers.

It’s important to have a regular re-think about how your club operates. Whilst attracting and retaining new members is important to generate income, attracting a wider membership through a broader offer will lead to more effective use of water, time and equipment, often with more volunteers.

Remember, when offering different types of activity, you will also need to consider how many helpers you need and your operating procedures.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Some ideas to try

- Pay and go sessions – do you have suitable boats for those who want to just turn up and row? These could be beginner boats with stabilisers, stable crew boats or sessions for experienced rowers.
- Indoor rowing groups – do you have a space suitable for indoor rowing sessions? Could your club become part of the [Go Row Indoor](#) programme?
- Daytime rowing sessions – not everyone works 9am-5pm or is available in the evening or at weekends. Consider sessions for groups such as:
 - Local schools.
 - Holiday clubs.
 - Weekday Learn to Rows.
 - Home or remote workers or those with more time post-pandemic.
 - Anyone working a shift pattern, e.g. retail, doctors, nurses, etc.
- Try weekend afternoon sessions when there's often lots of free time.
- GP linked health schemes – your local council or authority can give further details.
- Specific target groups – remember considerations such as attire, support, activity, number and gender of the coaches or having changing facilities.
- Recreational rowing or non-racing – this is a huge opportunity for all clubs as many people would like the opportunity to learn a new skill, make new friends or get fit and healthy by being on the water.
- Adaptive rowing – there are many people with disabilities or impairments who would like to try rowing and depending on facilities, many clubs could be suitable. For more details, see the [Adaptive Rowing Guide](#) or contact adaptive@britishrowing.org.
- Touring – could there be demand from groups or even individuals to travel to row on your stretch of water? Could you offer or organise a tour of your waterway and the waterways nearby? For more information, see [Touring and different types of events](#).
- Corporate days – has your club considered offering team-building days? Businesses often arrange 'away days' where staff can interact informally. The 'team' aspect of rowing is appealing to many businesses.
- Local 'Pub 'n' Club', 'Works Fours' or 'schools regatta'. Short Learn to Row sessions for certain types of businesses or groups followed by a social event, have proven popular at many clubs.
- 'Event in a day' – if you have suitable boats and the help needed, learning to row in a few hours followed by a short competition can be fun and appealing to those that want to try something new.



Case Study: Blade Rowers

Go Row Indoor (GRI) Club Initiative

Blade Rowers is an inclusive indoor rowing club that encourages everyone to use rowing as a tool to get fit and healthy. It is part of the British Rowing [Go Row Indoor](#) (GRI) club initiative that encourages clubs to expand their rowing offer, connect with the wider local community and help get more people active.

During lockdown, GRI coach, Rob Mayes, was delivering indoor rowing classes online via Instagram live (Monday 8am and Friday 7am). Every live session was uploaded so people could access it anytime, with 44 sessions delivered between April and September. Following this success, Rob decided to create an indoor rowing club called Blade Rowers.

The memberships available include:

- **Gold (£65) – All sessions comprising 2 x RowFit, crewroom, 2 x circuits and 30-minute coached session.**
- **RowFit (£45) – Both RowFit classes and 30-minute coached session.**

Membership sign ups have increased since launch during March (7), April (8), May (8) and June (12). There are some challenges including the cost of buying a rowing machine which is prohibitive for some.

"In addition to those participating live, there were lots "popping in" and watching which was brilliant because it meant I could showcase both myself and the sessions. More people had rowing machines at home than I realised. Seeing my sessions has encouraged people to use their unused rowing machines and the course has also helped to prevent isolation during lockdown."

Rob Mayes, Blade Rowers.

Top tips:

- Offer free sessions to get people through the door (actual or virtual).
- Use social media regularly to promote and showcase your sessions.
- Find a club member with excellent social media know-how to do the posts for you in return for free sessions.
- Use 'follow along' sessions with timed intervals online – members find it more motivating and easier to follow and it keeps the group in sync.



Photo credit: Blade Rowers



Top Tips: Turning ideas into a success

- Keep your **overall club goals in mind** when planning any new offer – does the offer fit with your overall club goals, e.g. attracting new members, increasing income, etc?
- **Research your market** – ask people or put sign-up sheets offering a variety of choices in local shops, gyms and other high footfall venues, such as doctors' surgeries. Make sure you have a clear plan on how to follow up on all enquiries.
- Think about **who is going to run any new sessions** before you start promoting them and try not to always rely on the same volunteers. Getting the right people involved can make all the difference – enthusiasm, knowledge of the club pathway and empathy are all important.
- Ensure a **warm welcome** – make all members aware of your plans and encourage your more sociable members to get involved.
- Will you need **more helpers or a paid coach?** Bear in mind that if sessions are successful, you may find new volunteers from within each group or could even introduce the expectation that everyone will help with the next group.
- **Understand the financials** – how will new session be funded? Build this cost into the session price.
- Make sure you have **suitable equipment**. Stable boats have become the norm in many clubs. There may be grant funding available. For more details on grant finding, see [Club Management Guide](#).
- When targeting specific groups, make sure you have the **skills or contacts** to communicate with them, or find someone who does.
- **Advertising** – explore the best advertising for your target audience. For example, images of lycra-clad racing crews may not appeal to those who feel self-conscious or just want to row to keep healthy.
- **Gaining interest** – provide activities with 'perks' such as 'first session free', 2 for 1, or 'bring a friend' for a discount, etc. You may wish to offer a reduced club membership fee if someone joins at the last session of Learn to Row.
- **Affordability** – cost can be an issue for new rowers from non-traditional rowing groups. Do you have contingency plans to support them?
- **Partnerships** – are there other local groups that you could link up with for mutual benefit? For example, a group needs a space for daytime meetings – in exchange they all take part in a Learn to Row (which they pay for), which runs alongside their group sessions.
- **Retaining interest** – most people like a challenge no matter how small. Don't automatically think that new recreational rowers don't want to improve or have coaching.
- **Conversion to membership** – how do you convince potential members that this is just what they need? Make sure you know how many new groups or members you can cope with and have an 'after plan' for all new groups.
- Remember to **collect and retain information** on uptake for new activities – it will help you learn and improve your promotional efforts next time around.



Example: Riverside Rowing Club

Riverside Rowing Club's volunteer coaches ran a Learn to Row (L2R) but had difficulty retaining the participants as members. The club employed a coach to deliver daytime 'follow on' sessions for 10 weeks, with session fees. Ten participants from the latest L2R attended and during these sessions, each person learnt to cox so they were self-sufficient after the course ended.

Financial analysis

Learn to Row

Income: 10 participants paying £100 per person = £1,000

Expenditure: L2R run by volunteer club coaches = £0

Daytime 'follow on' sessions:

Income: 10 participants paying £3 per person for 10 sessions = £300

Expenditure: Coach fee of £30 per session for 10 sessions = £300

Profit/loss = Breakeven

Overall financial gain:

Eight participants subsequently joined the club after the 'follow on' sessions providing:

- Membership fees £2,000 (8 x £250 per person).
- Initial L2R income £1,000 (10 x £100 per person).

By converting 80% of 'follow on' attendees into full time members, the club has earned £3,000 for paying a coach for one hour a week.

2.2 Improving diversity and inclusion

Introduction

Diversity and inclusion is about accepting members who may have differences such as race, culture, faith or religion, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation or any other characteristic. Inclusion is the practice of making sure everyone has a sense of belonging and equal support.

Being an **inclusive club** means that everyone has an equal opportunity to become a member and enjoy the offer provided by the club.

Your club should allow everyone an equal chance to participate and have the opportunity to progress if they choose. Inclusive clubs are welcoming, open, friendly and committed to helping everyone enjoy the benefits of rowing.

Being more inclusive and diverse can only be a benefit to your club, with potentially different views and ideas offering a chance to expand your membership and club knowledge base. Many clubs say that they operate an 'open door' policy but, without meaning to, can be quite off putting. Make sure that your current members understand your club policy, what it looks like in practice and the benefits of being a more diverse club.



How to improve the diversity of your club

Making sure your club is representative of your local community should be one of your main aims when looking to increase membership. For some clubs, this will have a 'knock-on' effect of automatically making your club more diverse.

To find out what the demographics of your local community are, see [section 1.2](#) or use [ClubHub](#) (Diversity & Inclusion section) to do the analysis for you. Bear in mind that diversity is not just about your rowing activity, for example, do your committees and key positions represent the diversity of not just your membership but the local community?

Diversity and inclusion – Questions to ask

- Could you share your facilities with other local groups? When promoting your club, make sure you consider different approaches if you want to reach a varied population. For example, this could include approaching local faith leaders or existing exercise groups.
- Could you expand your calendar of activities? For example, have you tried targeting women only, older people or disabled people?
- Can you run sessions, training or meetings on different days and at different times to accommodate family, faith or other circumstances?
- Are you flexible in terms of attire, sessions and cost?
- Do you have an equity policy and a code of conduct that addresses offensive behaviour? Are they implemented? See [Club Governance Guide](#).

There are lots of organisations that can offer support and advice such as:

- [Women in Sport](#) – promoting participation by women at every level.
- [Sporting Equals](#) – promoting ethnic diversity across sport.
- [Age UK](#) – helping everyone making the most of later life.
- [Pride Sports](#) – working to make sure LGBTQIA+ people are able to get into sport.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Case Study: Stourport Boat Club

Expanding your rowing offer: Adult Learn to Row (L2R)

Stourport Boat Club (SBC) had provided free of charge L2R sessions in the past but had achieved low retention rates and club volunteers often felt daunted overseeing absolute beginners.

What was done?

- The club introduced a new 12-week Adult L2R, which aimed to grow SBC membership, increase income and develop volunteer/coach skills to support club socials and regattas. Six coaches, working in 'Covid safe' bubbles, provided weekly sessions with daytime, evening and weekend slots.
- A L2R 'open night' was held prior to the course to introduce participants to the club. This included various activities, including a one minute ergo challenge, rowing technique practice and club members were on the water/in the bar to create an atmosphere.
- Coach mentoring (including discussions on technique and drill sharing) has helped to build the confidence of the L2R coaches. Two retired coaches/coxes returned to the club to work with new crews.
- A clear pathway was established from 'open day' to L2R (12 sessions) to rowing with club members (8-12 sessions in recreational groups) to winter training groups for those with potential.
- Existing weaker club rowers were invited to attend the course for free, as a cox, coach or participant, to help retain them within the club.
- A Splash 'n' Dash event, with club barbeque, provided race experience, introduced participants to other members and encouraged participants to stay in the sport.

What was the outcome?

- The club has attracted 17 new members and retained two existing members who have gained confidence and improved their technique.
- Additional income: L2R = £2,880 (18 people at £160pp), Membership income = £561/month (16 new and one returning member) and bar income on L2R evenings is up by £100-£200 per night.

Top tips:

- Ask for payment for L2R – this has increased the commitment of participants compared to the free L2R offered previously.
- Make sure you have enough helpers to cover last minute dropouts.
- Create pathways, with clear routes into club activities after the course. Integrating L2R participants in boats with existing club rowers helps to develop skills and promotes club integration.



Photo credit: Jane Ryman



2.3 Developing your club members and succession planning

Has the time come to find replacements for your club committee members or other senior positions? Have you planned ahead or is there no one ready and willing to take on new roles?

Succession planning for your club

Succession planning is a process that many businesses rely on to identify and develop the next tranche of leaders or managers. Your club can use this process to help plan for the day when your Club Chair retires, your head coach leaves or your Regatta Secretary is unwell and unable to continue.

The ideal scenario is to fill key roles with the right people before the current person leaves, ensuring a transition of knowledge that makes the process less stressful for everyone and provides support to the 'incoming' post holder.

Clubs rely on many enthusiastic, hardworking members and volunteers. All **key roles** should have a succession plan in place to help maintain effective club operations.

Getting started

1. Make a list of the **key roles** in your club, such as:

- Chair.
- Committee members.
- Safety Advisor.
- Welfare Officer.
- Coach(es).
- Umpires.

2. Identify the needs that these roles require. For example, does the Chair need to be a rower when it's more important for them to represent the club in a professional manner at external meetings?

3. Set out role descriptions, including any skills needed for the position. See [People Development Guide](#).

4. Start looking for likely replacements as early as possible.

5. Provide opportunities to 'shadow' the current position holder.

6. Handover the job and offer mentoring, or further training if necessary.

7. Start looking for the next replacement.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



This matrix can help you decide which roles should be considered for succession planning:

Impact on the club if the role remains empty	High			
	Medium			
	Low			
		Easy	Average	Hard
		Difficulty in filling the role		

Key:

- Succession planning is essential
- Succession planning is recommended
- Succession plan not needed

Everyone joining your club should be viewed as a potential volunteer and club asset. In many clubs, there are so few members that everyone needs to have a role. In this case, roles can be rotated as a way of maintaining interest and enthusiasm – no one wants to be the person looking after the grass forever.

Have you considered having a junior rower on your committee to represent the interests of junior members?

Younger members

Remember to consider the next generation of committee members, umpires and coaches. You may have juniors who are interested in assisting coaches, shadowing an umpire or holding a position on your committee.

Younger members will often have ideas or views that differ from more 'established' members – embrace these talents and ideas, see if they work and then develop meaningful roles for suitable juniors.

Role progression

For coaches

Your coach development pathway could be as simple as:

1. Rower helps with Learn to Row (L2R).
2. L2R helper shadows and assists qualified coach.
3. L2R helper attends a coaching course and coaches their own sessions.
4. Retiring coach provides mentoring for new coaches.

For umpires

Many clubs rely on other clubs to provide the umpires for their event or competition. Having 'home grown' umpires can be really beneficial – it gives people an opportunity to help, support and give back, not only to their club, but to the sport – whether they are rowers themselves or non-rowers such as spouses, club supporters or parents.



A typical umpire development pathway is:

1. Build knowledge of the sport by attending regattas, either as a rower, coach or observer.
2. Attend an umpire course.
3. Take an umpire exam & complete trainee slots.
4. Obtain umpire qualification.
5. Regional umpire.
6. Multi-lane umpire.
7. FISA umpire.

What if you don't plan?

Sometimes, clubs can find themselves in the position of having no Captain, Safety Advisor or Chair, with members who think that the positions are onerous and are reluctant to take them on.

Or, there may be people seeking to compete for positions as a means of achieving their own personal aims or power which, if known, can be very off-putting for everyone and result in the club becoming fractious and inharmonious.

Succession planning will help to alleviate this, by allowing your club to look forward and adopt a more consistent and reliable way of filling key roles. Identifying positions that are easier or harder to fill through a succession planning process will give you more time to consider and take the action needed.

Succession planning helps everyone to see what changes will happen and when.

And finally...

One of the hardest challenges for anyone holding a club position can be to 'let go' when the time comes, especially if they see the club as their 'baby' and have been in post for a long time. If the individual has been useful to the club, why not encourage them to take on a mentoring role if appropriate.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Section 3 - Club events and Open Days

3.1 Organising club events and competitions

Club events and competitions, whether indoors or on the water, can provide important revenue streams that many clubs rely on and some would struggle to exist without.

The success of club events or competitions depends on many things, the most important being the people that organise them.

There are different types of events, such as:

- Rowing competitions – indoors or on the water, such as regattas or head races.
- Club challenges or fun competitions.
- Club social events.
- External events, such as hosting a car boot sale in your car park.

Here are some questions to ask when planning any event.

Questions to ask – Planning your club event or competition

Overall goal

- What is your overall goal and rationale for the event? Who is the event for and more importantly, do they want it or need it? Do you **need** to make a financial gain or is the main aim to boost club morale?

Clear objectives

- What are the objectives of your event? For example, the objectives for your club's annual regatta could be:
 - Racing opportunities for every category of rower, including Learn to Row participants or adaptive rowers, or;
 - A fun opportunity to test your rowers against other clubs.
- What level of rowing are you targeting?
 - Is it a low key 'sport for all' event, with free or limited entry fees that just cover your outgoings, or;
 - An elite level competition with multiple entrants, aiming to make a substantial profit?



Questions to ask – Planning your club event or competition

Social or clubhouse events

- Are you looking to boost club morale and team building by getting everyone to interact?
- Or do you want to raise funds? Or both?

Timing

- Does your event clash with anything being held at the same time nearby? For example:
 - Is there another regatta on the same day in a neighbouring region?
 - Is your social event planned for the same night as major events such as the World Cup Final?

Costings

- Have you considered all your costs carefully and itemised everything from extra bar staff and toilet hire to new megaphones for umpires, plastic glasses and paper cups, etc? Make sure that all costs are accounted for.

Planning

- Do you need an organising committee or will a group of 2-3 people be sufficient?

Insurance:

- Is event insurance an option? Is it financially viable?

Contingency plans:

- Do you need a contingency plan?
- For example, if you organise a head race for November and your river rises three days before the event, what are your options? You may be able to arrange an alternative venue at short notice, such as a local canal-based club in exchange for a few of their crews entering for free, or you could move to an indoor or remote racing format. Note that not all events/competitions need to have contingency plans, or the contingency plan may be to simply cancel or postpone the event.

Safety:

- Do you have clear response (or emergency) plans? For example, if you hear thunder at your competition, do organisers know to follow the 30:30 rule? See [RowSafe](#).
- Do your response or emergency plans cover different event situations? Preparing these plans doesn't need to be onerous but the interpretation should be reasonable, based on the combination of probability and severity, as identified in your risk assessments.



Planning and organising

It's important to plan your event well in advance and consider the resources that you'll need to deliver it. Events usually need financial outlay, volunteer time and/or logistical support, so you'll need a budget and timeline for any formal permissions or other lead-in times.

For most events, you will also need an organising committee. This might be two or three people for a small event or a full committee for a larger rowing competition. If your organising committee/group is separate to your main club committee, make sure that your main club committee is kept updated on anything that may affect the club, such as permissions.

Everyone on your organising committee should have a clear role, such as:

- **Organising volunteers** (bar staff, umpires, etc).
- **Collecting or paying out any money** (treasurer).
- **Ticket seller or entries secretary.**
- **Catering.**
- **Welfare Officer and Rowing Safety Adviser, if needed.**
- **Safety** – note that if you intend to use water safety or first aid groups you may need to book them months in advance.

There are some specific rules for organising British Rowing affiliated competitions, and these can be found on British Rowing website [here](#) and [here](#). There are also links to many useful documents for organisers on the British Rowing [Organising Competitions page](#).



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Top tips for planning events and competitions

Permissions

- There may be certain permissions needed to run your event, such as exclusive use of the water you row on for safety reasons, or an extended or outdoor bar licence. Make sure that any permissions are sought and granted well in advance.

Safety

- There is specific guidance on safety at British Rowing affiliated competitions [here](#) and in [RowSafe](#).
- For club based social events, make sure you consider the risks of organising the event, with provision in place for incidents/accidents etc.

Communication

- Use 'save the date' communications if you've planned well in advance.
- Send out reminders, particularly if the planning has taken several months.
- Use as many communication channels as possible, such as social media, personal invites, local media, word of mouth, etc.
- Make your event as appealing as possible – it should be 'the place where everyone wants to be'.

Volunteers

- Organising rotas for any event or competition can be a headache – it is often best to encourage lots of people to help (with clear roles) rather than rely on just a few people to do everything.
- Make sure that your 'public facing' volunteers are friendly and knowledgeable – they are the salesforce behind the success or failure of your event.
- Never turn down the offer of help, as people almost certainly won't ask again.

Sponsors

- Identify and talk to potential sponsors well in advance. Sponsorship should be mutually beneficial so think of innovative ideas that will appeal. See [Club Management Guide](#), section 3.5.
- Do your research and have a sponsor proposal ready. For example, at your regatta, will you entertain sponsors all day (costly) or at specific times? Can they sponsor the whole competition or individual events? Or can they provide 'value in kind' such as food and refreshments?

Wash up/review meetings

- Always have a 'wash up' or review meeting after your event to see if there is anything to change for next time. Hold this as soon as possible after the event whilst its fresh in people's minds.
- Invite feedback from participants and volunteers to get further ideas for improvement.



Further information

If it's the first time you've run or organised an event or competition, make sure you ask for help. For rowing competitions, your [Regional Rowing Council](#) will always be on hand to offer support.

3.2 Organising Open Days

Holding an Open Day can be a great way to showcase and raise awareness of your club's activities to your local community and ultimately, attract new members.

How many times have you been told "I didn't know there was a rowing club here!"

There are many successful Open Days run at clubs across the country every year, both in rowing and in other sports, with lots of tips and ideas to learn from. If you feel that your club Open Days have become stale, try attending one at another club to see what they do, or review the ideas and tips below.

Top Tips: Organising Open Days

Timing:

- Consider the weather – a mid-Autumn open day may not show the enjoyable side of rowing if it's cold and wet. Always have a clear plan and a plan B just in case of bad weather.
- Do hold Open Days just before your Learn to Row courses so there's a clear exit route for interested people. You may wish to develop an Open Day schedule that fits with your Learn to Row courses.

Have a clear plan:

- Your objectives – is the Open Day for everyone or are you targeting families or couples, juniors or older people? Ask local community groups to attend so they can see your club in action.
- Use the event to attract more volunteers or encourage people into coaching.
- Decide if the open day is free or you will charge or ask for donations, before advertising goes out.
- Have enough members available to assist and allocate roles clearly and appropriately. For example, don't allocate someone without sales or public speaking experience to deliver the selling speech at the end.
- Make sure your club insurance includes events such as Open Days.
- Have an emergency plan available.



Top Tips: Organising Open Days

Promotion and advertising:

- Advertise as widely as possible using social media, local media, posters and banners in locations where your target audience goes, e.g. gyms, high footfall venues, schools, etc.
- Invite your neighbours – even if it is only to call in for ‘coffee and cake’ on the day, they will be more amenable to the increased traffic noise or coaches/coxes using megaphones. Good community relations are always a benefit.

On the day:

- Hold an event briefing so that everyone knows the overall objectives and understands the emergency procedures.
- If you’re not using an online booking system (such as [ClubHub](#)), make sure you have some alternative system to gather contact details, including email addresses, to follow up post event.
- Think about your target audience and what they might like to do – most people can try the indoor rowing machine – if it’s nice it can be outside – but remember not everyone wants to be visible.
- Use suitable boats if you’re offering taster sessions – these sessions don’t have to be long or very technical. Ask some club members to sit in the boat to keep it level and safe.
- Have plenty of life jackets available and use them – you won’t know the swimming ability of everyone.
- Offer club tours and provide details of opening hours, available sessions and social activities.
- Allocate members to talk about the club and how to join – prepare a structured ‘selling’ pitch to help members prepare.
- If you have a bar, provide drinks or tea, coffee and snacks.
- Include tours of the boathouse to show the types of boats, explain how many people row in each type and how safe it is.
- Visit [RowSafe](#) (section 6.1.1) to get more advice for those new to rowing.
- Have spare clothes available (hopefully they won’t be needed!).

After the event:

- Follow up on all interest and look to maximise the conversion of interested people to new members, or sign them up for Learn to Row.

Remember, your [Regional Rowing Council](#) is always available to offer support.

If you have any stories or ideas to share about organising successful Open Days, please share them at [#yourstories](#).



Section 4 - Facility development

4.1 Introduction

Many clubs have aspirations to expand or improve their existing premises, or even to build new facilities, but the removal of central government capital funding has had a negative effect on these types of projects, with large grants becoming increasingly difficult to secure. Your club may need to scale down its facility development or expansion plans or look at a phased approach over several years. A phased scheme can work well, particularly if you are planning to increase your membership base and will generate additional income.

Whilst many clubs would like to have a boathouse at ground level (for boats, equipment and a maintenance/workshop area) with other facilities (gym, social, ancillary) on an upper level out of the reach of potential flooding, most clubs built in the last century do not have these facilities.

Whether you are considering the challenge of a new build/club expansion project or are looking to refurbish or reorganise your existing facilities, here are some key points to consider. It may also be useful to refer to the [Club Management Guide](#) section 4, which has further information on boathouse/facility maintenance, tenure/leases and environmental sustainability.

4.2 Optimising your facilities

In view of the challenge of securing capital grants for new builds, many clubs are looking at how to optimise their existing facilities to make them fit for future use.

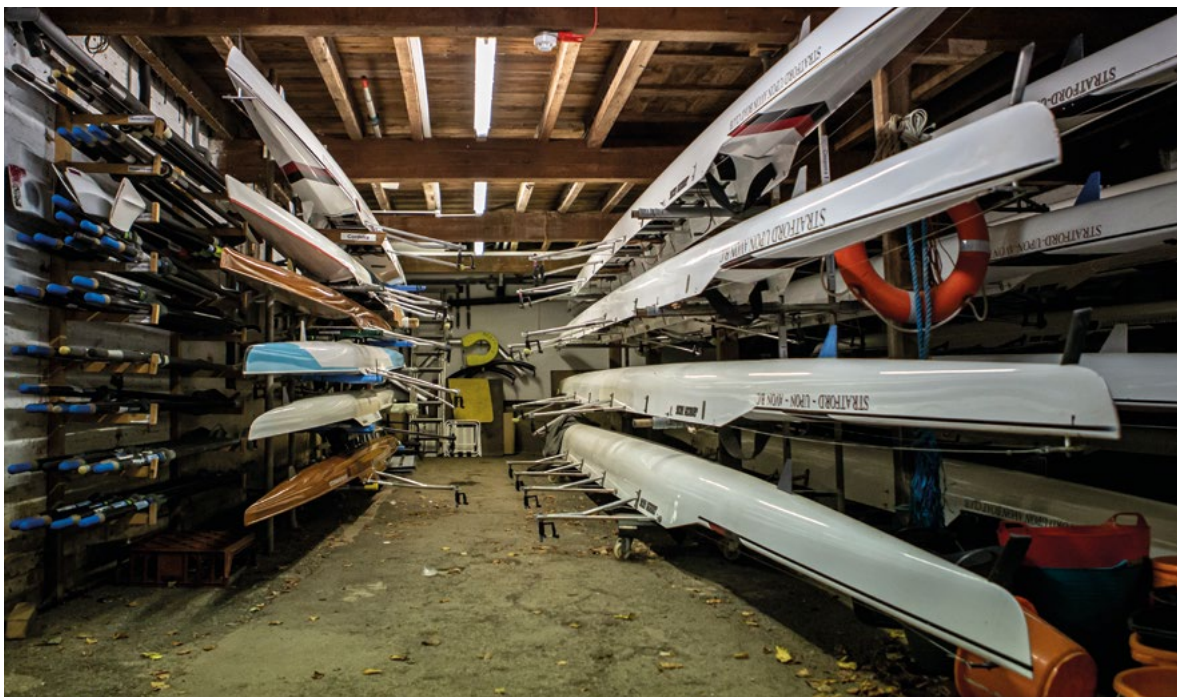


Photo credit: Drew Smith



Top Tips: Optimising your existing facilities

- Consider replacing, re-sizing or just re-arranging internal layouts – it can be a lot less expensive than starting all over again and can be considered for different aspects of your facilities.
- Start by taking a careful look at your facility footprint, with a ‘to-scale’ plan of the external and internal layout. This can help you to review how to optimise the internal layout by re-arranging the space, i.e. more room in the gym or more equal changing room space or more toilets.
- Try being creative – you could always design a working model such as those used in theatre design. It could become a project for a design class at a local college or school.
- If your boathouse hasn’t had a re-plan for several years, there may be more space than you think – use the same process of scaled measuring to help.
- Modern boat and oar racking takes up a lot less space than older style racking/scaffolding – try contacting custom made suppliers or even a local fabricator with your own designs. See case study – [Queens Park High School](#).
- Dispose of old boats and oars that are not used regularly – there is always a market for these, either from other clubs or other sources such as the suppliers of interior fittings for hotels or public houses. Or, you could donate them to a new start up group. It’s surprising how much space you can generate by disposing of unused or old equipment.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Case Study: Warrington Rowing Club

Developing club facilities

Warrington Rowing Club was looking to provide facilities to serve the needs of its members but needed a low cost, flexible option due to the potential need for club relocation. The initial plans were to provide a 2-storey block of 'container' buildings to provide changing/shower facilities, toilets, gym and a reception area.

Following some significant challenges including issues with suppliers and underestimated costs for foundations, the club revised the project and a single storey block of containers was installed to provide male and female changing including toilets/showers, plus a central teaching area.

Although the final outcome looks rather 'industrial', the project has provided low cost, secure club facilities that are flexible (can be moved and added to), within a much shorter timeframe than a conventional build.

Top tips:

- Make sure you check if planning permission is required.
- Consider insulation and cladding to help with temperature control.
- Use a specialist company that can design to your club's own specification.



Photo credit: Richard Sinnott



Case Study: Queens Park High School (QPHS) Rowing Club

Boat and equipment storage solutions

QPHS Rowing Club had a lack of space to store new equipment and boats, with minimal funds to buy new storage solutions. The existing storage areas were disorganised with stroke coaches, cox boxes, loud hailer and radios stored in boxes, with boat rigger bags and buoyancy aids kept in a pile on the boathouse floor. The oars stored standing up against the wall kept falling over.

What was done?

Several changes were made to improve storage:

- A scaffolding contractor erected storage racks with old scaffold equipment, at a cost of £500.
- Old kitchen storage cupboards are now used for equipment.
- Boat racks made from fence posts and treated timber are now used.
- An old storage cupboard was cleared to use as an equipment room.
- Boat stroke coach brackets screwed to the wall now display/hold stroke coaches.
- Shelving units provide storage for cox boxes, with hooks underneath for cox box microphones.
- An old storage unit is used for boat and rigger bags and spare buoyancy aids – each boat has its own shelf.
- Buoyancy aids and life jackets are hung on the wall using coat hooks.

What was the outcome?

There is now a much tidier, safer and well organised storage area. The capacity to store boats has doubled by using the outdoor storage racks, which are strong and robust, although it's important to ensure that boats are tied on securely. The racks are checked regularly, particularly if they have large boats on them and efforts have been made to discourage youths from climbing on them. Dedicated storage for cox boxes, stroke coaches, microphones, etc. saves time looking for them, keeps them safe and reduces damage.



Photo credit: Richard Cox



4.3 Building new facilities

The sport of rowing is reliant on club facilities, both in terms of their overall provision and location. As clubs seek to develop their club offers with activities such as [indoor rowing](#), gym training or social events, there is a demand for more modern and flexible facilities. New builds provide a great way of achieving your club goals by providing facilities that are tailored to future use. You may also wish to explore alternative local development opportunities close to your current location.

Sport England's [Facilities and Planning](#) pages have lots of information on the development and planning processes for a facility re-build or re-design. There's advice on everything from planning guidance to assessing needs, as well as design and cost examples.

If you are considering alterations to your club, contact clubsupport@britishrowing.org for further advice, support and contacts. British Rowing has a Facilities Advisor to support clubs with their facility development planning and related issues.

New build requirements and permissions

When considering new build projects, your first port of call should be to consult with relevant qualified personnel. Here are some other questions to consider.

Questions to ask – New build requirements and permissions

Requirements

- Is there suitable water available, with permissions for use?
- Is there access to the water? Is it across anyone else's land? What is the launching access like? Is it suitable for everyone? Do you need landing stages, floating pontoons or will you access the water off a bank or 'beach'?
- What equipment do you need, such as boats and oars, safety equipment, indoor equipment, etc? Are you planning activities such as adaptive rowing?
- Is boat storage indoors or under cover? Don't forget to include racking.
- Toilets & changing facilities? How many? What's the best location? Are they accessible?
- What size of meeting space or social areas do you need? Do you hope to hold large social events or hire out your clubhouse for external use?
- Are you 'future planning' for increased membership and usage? By thinking about this in advance, you can avoid expensive alterations later.

Permissions

- Do you know the various permissions needed for your build plan? These will depend on your location/circumstances and include planning permissions and building regulations; and surveys such as flood risk, landscaping, arboriculture, environmental or contamination surveys. You may also need permissions or licences from your navigation or waterways authorities or local landowners regarding access and water usage.



Construction

New build construction can comprise a variety of materials from steel frames with many different options for cladding to traditional brick buildings, as your budget and local planning department allow. Your choice of building material will clearly affect the cost, but always include a contingency fund of at least 10%, as well as your professional fees and VAT.

Don't forget to consider:

- Your local flood plan – this may require additional groundwork, especially if you encounter running sand.
- Do you need permission for landing stages or pile driven access? Consult your local Waterways Authority – see [Club Management Guide](#), section 4.4.

Build costs

Build costs can vary widely depending on your location, the materials used and the level of supervision or contracts that you secure.

Cost considerations:

- How much funding do you need? How much funding can you raise?
- Have you factored in planning permission and fees?
- Can you build in 'stages' if you're unable to fund the whole project at once? If so, what is the best way to proceed and what do you build first? A staged approach may be more expensive but could be the only way to achieve your plans.

VAT recovery

British Rowing recommends that all clubs take appropriate legal and professional advice before committing to, or proceeding with, any building project. Always account for the cost of any non-recoverable VAT until such time that the law may change.

For further information about VAT and building works, use this link:

[Government Advice on Buildings and Construction](#).

VAT zero rate is only available to charities (not CASC or community clubs) and when premises are used for a "relevant charitable purpose". Find out what qualifies for relief [here](#). It is best to include VAT at the standard rate in your costings regardless of your status.



Funding

Although external funding for new builds is becoming increasingly difficult to secure, it's not impossible. Almost all funding bodies require match funding and want to see evidence that your club is making determined efforts to secure some financial input. Make sure that your club explores all sources of match funding such as club reserves, sponsor approaches, appeals to members and other fundraising activities, before approaching external sources.

For further information, see:

- [British Rowing Club Management Guide](#).
- [Sport England](#).
- [Local Authorities](#).
- British Rowing Community Support Team, contact: communitysupport@britishrowing.org



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Case Study: Northwich Rowing Club

Redevelopment of club facilities

The club facility at Northwich Rowing Club comprised a wooden 'shed' dating back to 1920 that badly needed replacing. The project was to provide a new purpose built and fully equipped 'farm shed', with an initial cost estimate of £120-150k (2016). The club had savings of £80k but needed to fundraise and apply for grants to cover the balance.

The project was challenging and several issues arose that ultimately increased costs:

- Deeper foundations were needed due to the location close to the river.
- Additional fittings and fire cladding were needed.
- The fitting out costs for the toilets and changing rooms were higher than anticipated.
- Committee disagreements about cost, design and choice caused delays.

The final cost was £215,000 (2018) and British Rowing helped to secure Sport England grant funding for the shortfall for fit out and fire cladding. However, cost overruns meant that no male changing could be provided.

Despite these issues, club members are now enjoying a much more modern club facility – a great improvement on the original facilities.

Top tips:

- Speak to planning officers before commencing any project.
- Have a contingency plan/budget.
- Get realistic estimates, including fit out and ensure you consider the additional costs of projects located near rivers.
- Use a specialist company to design to your specification.
- Find out what skills your members have and use them if appropriate.
- Don't manage the project via your main club committee – progress will be quicker if a smaller group takes control.
- Don't apply for grants citing commitments that you can't fulfil – understand the grant criteria before you apply.



Photo credit: Rachel Hooper



Appendices

Appendix A – Club development plan outline

1. Introduction/Club overview

This section should give the reader a potted history of the club, without being too long – you could include historical information such as when your club was formed and any notable past achievements. Does your club have a vision or mission statement that shows what it stands for?

2. Where are we now?

An overview of your club's current situation, to build on the introduction, including:

- **Governance.** Your current operating model (e.g. incorporated members club, CASC, Limited Company, Charity) and club structure, including committees/positions and how they align with each other.
- **Club activities.** An overview of your club's activities, such as opening hours for bar, gym and clubhouse. Current activities, such as daily/weekly sessions for adults/juniors, competitive, recreational and events e.g. any social, regattas or head races.
- **Facilities and equipment.** Current facilities and equipment, including safety equipment.
- **Membership overview.** Your club's current membership profile (numbers and categories) and catchment area, plus details of coaches/coaching and volunteering (how many and key roles).
- **Rower/Coach/Volunteer development and pathways.** To show how rowers, coaches, volunteers and club positions are developed.
- **Community links/partnerships.** Any relationships with the local community, such as local authority, local schools, businesses or organisations or with British Rowing, Regional Rowing Council or the Active Sports Partnership.
- **Financial information.** Some headline financials, such as budget, accounts, cash flow or grants data.



3. Where do we want to be?

A summary of your club aspirations and key objectives.

- **Governance.** Are there any upcoming changes? For example, are you thinking of changing the structure of the club to a charitable status or Ltd Company?
- **Club activities.** Are you planning any changes? Do you want to increase the amount of water or gym usage times? Are you thinking of opening the clubhouse for more hours during the week? Are you looking to attract a different audience – for example more recreational rowers by having sessions in the daytime?
- **Facilities and equipment.** What do you want to see in the future? Will you need more equipment, a bigger boathouse, a separate gym, a better landing stage? This is where you need to match growth aspirations to any infrastructure improvements.
- **Membership overview.** Do you wish to increase membership, or streamline your membership classes? What would increasing the total membership look like, what else would you need to cover it? Will you need more volunteers, coaches or helpers to cope with increased membership? Will you need more qualified coaches?
- **Rower/Coach/Volunteer development and pathways.** If you didn't have a defined pathway before – what will this look like in the future? Will you have a volunteer development and support plan?
- **Community links/partnerships.** Will these remain the same? What links or partnerships would you like to develop, for example a new school link?
- **Financial information.** What are your financial goals or targets for particular areas of activity? Do you need a specific amount of funding to complete a project?



4. How are we going to get there?

An explanation of HOW the aspirations listed above will be achieved.

- **Governance.** If you've outlined changes, explain how this will be achieved.
- **Club activities.** How will this be changed? How will you cover more opening hours? How will you attract a different audience? What do you need to do next?
- **Facilities and equipment.** How will you action these changes? For example, do you need an environmental study before you can build a new landing stage? How will everything be funded?
- **Membership overview.** How are you going to attract more members? If you need more coaches, where will they come from? How will you attract and train them? Where will the money come from if a paid coach was one of your aspirations?
- **Rower/Coach/Volunteer development and pathways.** What actions are needed to develop your pathway plan for rowers, coaches and volunteers?
- **Community links/partnerships.** How will any new links be nurtured, developed and maintained? Who will do this and who do you need to speak to?
- **Financial information.** How will you achieve your fundraising targets? What is your fundraising strategy? Is there a % that needs to be raised? This may need to be shown in a separate document.

5. How will we measure and monitor progress?

It's very useful to include targets or measures so that progress can be monitored, e.g. number of members in a particular category, uptake or conversion from club Open Days, etc. Set out what success look like for each of your goals.

6. Supporting information

Some other documents are often included as appendices to the club development plan.

- **Club action plan.** [See Appendix B – Example club action plan.](#) This format can also be used if you wish to have a shorter or simpler plan to guide your club's development.
- **Membership growth plan template.** See Table 6.2 below for a template showing membership breakdown and growth targets.
- **Club business plan template.** See Table 6.3 for an example template with some general headings. Please tailor the line items to match your club's main areas of income and expenditure.

**Table 6.2 Membership growth plan template**

Sector	Baseline (Date)		Target Yr 1		Target Yr 2		Target Yr 3		Target Yr 4		Target Yr 5	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Junior Under 14												
16-18												
19-24												
25-34												
35-44												
45-54												
55-64												
65-74												
Over 75												
Recreational rowing												
U18												
19-34												
35-54												
55-74												
Over 75												

6.3 Club business plan template

Income Type	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)	Year 4 (£)	Year 5 (£)	Total (£)
Subscriptions						
Bar						
Facility hire						
Regatta/Events						
Other Fundraising						
Sponsorship						
Grants						
Rate rebate						
Regional Rowing Council Rebate						
Totals						



Expenditure items	Year 0 (£)	Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)	Year 4 (£)	Year 5 (£)	Total (£)
Revenue Costs							
Insurance							
Professional fees							
Utilities							
Expenses (coaches)							
Total Revenue Costs							
Total income							
Total expenditure							
Profit/Loss							



Appendix B – Example club action plan

Where do we want to be? What's our goal?*	How will we achieve this?	What resources will we require?	What is the cost and how will this be funded?	What are the timelines/ key dates?	How will we measure and monitor progress?
Well run, structured and more sustainable club.	Review all governance documents and structure of club.	Chairman, secretary and working group to review all documents and the structure of the club. Club solicitor (working pro bono).	£0.	12 months.	New constitution, rules & policies in place and adhered to, with a review timetable that is adhered to.
Enhanced safety provision.	Purchase new safety launch.	Secretary to complete funding application forms.	Application to Sport England small grant fund for £8,000.	1 year.	Safety launch in situ.
Increased membership.	Recreational section to be introduced (2 sessions/ week). (L2R) & recreational membership.	2 stable 4x+ & blades. 2 coaches/ supporters.	Advertising: £50. Boats: £7,000 from club funds for one extra boat.	Year 1 – introduced in April.	10 new members at end of 1st year.
Improved boating facilities.	New landing stage with level access needed.	Members to supply level access £0. Purchase 4 floating pontoons.	Club funds: £12,000.	2 years.	New and improved landing stage in situ.
Reduce energy costs by x%.	Solar panels on boathouse roof.	Purchase panels.	Funding search for green grants: £25,000 needed.	5 years.	Panels in situ and cost of heat & light reduced due to feed in tariff. Monitor % reduction in energy cost.

*Remember to use the SMART goal setting principles described on page 11.



Thank you.

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Thank you to everyone who provided photos to support this Club Development Guide.