

The Devizes to Westminster Organisation Limited

DW 2024 – Directors’ Statement

Following on from the Director’s Statement of 8th March 2024 we have been reviewing the options for the Stages Race. We are considering all available information known to date and also want to provide an update on the on-going situation with the Senior Double Class.

Junior Doubles Class

We have been advised that many entrants in the Junior Doubles Class have simply not been able to paddle on the River Thames as most club/school rules and risk assessments prohibit juniors paddling on red boards. Therefore, entrants’ knowledge of the course and experience of the water beyond Reading is limited at best, zero in a lot of cases. Whilst the levels are dropping, there is more rain forecast this week which will raise levels again. Opportunities for junior paddlers to get out on the Thames before Easter therefore look to be limited.

In order to give certainty to Junior Double paddlers, parents and schools so that plans can be adjusted, we have made the decision that the Junior Doubles Class will race to Dreadnought Reach and not Thames Young Mariners. Whilst we accept that this may disappoint some entrants, we have an obligation to safety for all crews and cannot run a split race within one class. This event will be a race with medals, certificates and trophies to be awarded.

We also recognise that this is not the race that paddlers originally entered, and we are reviewing any cost savings that terminating the race at Reading will deliver and will be looking to offer those back to the entrants in the form of a partial race fee refund.

For any junior crew or paddler who may be considering changing class (into Junior Veteran or Endeavour), this option is available should the eligibility criteria be met - contact the Entry Secretary or DW Info via the website contacts page for more information.

Senior Singles, Veteran- Junior and Endeavour Classes

We have not made a final decisions on the other Stage Races as yet, but with the current conditions and mid-range forecasted weather, we are intending to run these races as planned to Thames Young Mariners. There will be an assessment of entrants’ capabilities based on a variety of criteria, and the course will be scored to set a screening cut off point. We have also set the minimum number of screened-in boats at 15 across all classes to make this option viable on safety grounds. Due to the small number of entrants across these classes there will be a simpler organisation at the Marlow finish/start and no camping or boat storage will be available at the site. Whilst we are looking to confirm this decision across these Classes soon after the Prize Giving at Waterside D, if the river levels rise considerably after that time we may have to review the situation.

Senior Doubles Class

Following on from previous announcements regarding the financial challenges to the Organisation of delivering a Westminster finish without adequate entries to cover the cost, something that would put the future of the Organisation in serious jeopardy, we have been overwhelmed by the support offered to the race by the DW Community in their response to the appeal initiated by the Friends of DW. We are enormously grateful to anyone who has donated money as well as all the messages of support.

To date over £15,000 has been donated and more has been pledged. We are feeding all of this into the cost model for not only this year’s race, but also for the impact on the ongoing financial commitments of the Organisation. We are reviewing things daily, and will make a statement on the finish of the Senior Doubles Class soon after the Prize Giving at W/S D. Of course, if the fundraising hits the target of £30K before then, we would be delighted to confirm a Westminster finish before that date. Entries still remain below our expected levels – we continue to urge any crews intending to race to enter now rather than wait until the last few hours of the closing date.

The Directors.
12th March 2024

Vice Presidents: Robin Meads
Mrs Janice Begent
Tom Armitstead