

The Devizes to Westminster Organisation Limited

DW 2024 – Directors’ Statement

Many of you, if not all, will be aware of an appeal launched by Friends of DW last week. This was in response to the Director’s statement regarding the financial situation of the company, and the potential impact of trying to deliver a Westminster whilst remaining solvent through the rest of the year.

The Directors, on behalf of the Devizes to Westminster Organisation Ltd, want to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to the DW Community for the overwhelming show of support and passion for the DW, and the simply massive desire to see it continue. The appeal has raised a staggering **£25,700** in just 6 days.

The strength, depth and breadth of support is mind blowing. We have had donations from individuals (so many of you), Canoe Clubs, the Military, and pledges from Paddle UK (formerly BC) and the Marathon Racing Committee. We have also had companies come forwards with some sponsorship for this year’s race.

In a previous statement we said that we needed £30,000 to confirm both a Westminster finish for this year and stabilise the company’s financial position to our financial year end in June. We are so close to reaching the target. It’s just 11 more entries, a few more donations, a company sponsorship or two.

Whilst we have stated we will formally announce the Senior Doubles race finish point soon after Waterside D results (or earlier if the target amount is reached), we are increasingly confident it will be Westminster. This is not saying the appeal should stop, it’s more a level of confidence we have in the DW community that the extra funds will come.

The appeal is likely to save this year’s race to Westminster. However, we should let people know that this year’s race will still lose money. We simply don’t have enough entries to cover our costs, even with the extra funding. This poses a real problem to the organisation going forwards, and it’s pretty obvious that we need to look at a different financial model for the future. Entry numbers have been on a downward trend since 2019 whereas costs have steadily risen (some by as much as 50%). Safety costs for the tideway have gone up 5 fold. We don’t see entry fees for 2025 of £600 or more being too palatable.

We recognise the feeling the DW Community has for the race as well as our obligation to safeguard the future of the DW for the paddlers of tomorrow. We fully understand that the magnificent fundraising effort of the last week cannot, nor should not, be repeated every year.

Therefore, we will be reviewing the options for how to finance the race going forwards. The obvious answer is corporate sponsorship, but it’s not the only one. There are plenty of ideas, many coming through the Friends of DW appeal. They will all be considered. We are delighted that people have already come forwards and offered to help the organisation with this review and subsequent action plan once we get past Easter. If you feel you would also like to contribute to this effort, please get in touch.

The Directors.
13th March 2024

Vice Presidents: Robin Meads
Mrs Janice Begent
Tom Armitstead