

Analysis of the DW 2023 Questionnaire

The following is the near-complete set of responses to the DW 2023 Questionnaire. We have not included all the questions as some only received a very small number of (or no) answers. We are grateful to all who took the time to share their feedback.

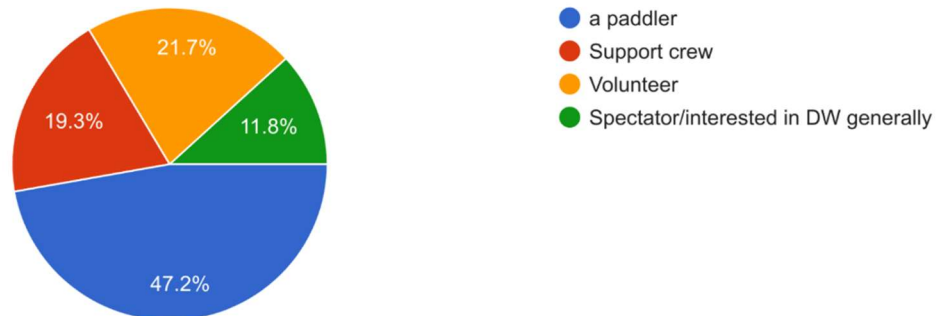
We will use these responses to develop, enhance and modify relevant systems and processes to make interactions with the DW Organisation in line with people's expectations as well as improving the overall user experience. Wherever possible, we will aim to make use of our systems and processes as simple and painless as possible for paddlers, supporters and volunteers of the DW.

The main sections of the questionnaire are listed below. Some sections are shorter than others, with many having plenty of comments that show the broad range of expectations, experiences, wishes and feelings across the respondents.

- Perspective
- General Questions – Ease of entry form, costs, entry price, finish options
- What We Offer for the Entry Fee – Things that are missing, things we don't need
- Paddlers
 - Senior Doubles All
 - Senior Doubles Screened Out
 - Senior Doubles Screened In
 - Senior Doubles Finishers Only - Tideway
 - Stages
 - All Paddlers
- Race Control Feedback – Paddler and support crew views
- Marshals and Checkpoints – Paddler and support crew views
- Support Crews
- Volunteers
- Spectators
- Communications
- DW Website
- Generating More Entries
- Relay Event
- DW Organisation – can you contribute?
- Other Comments

Who filled in the questionnaire?

Perspective
161 responses

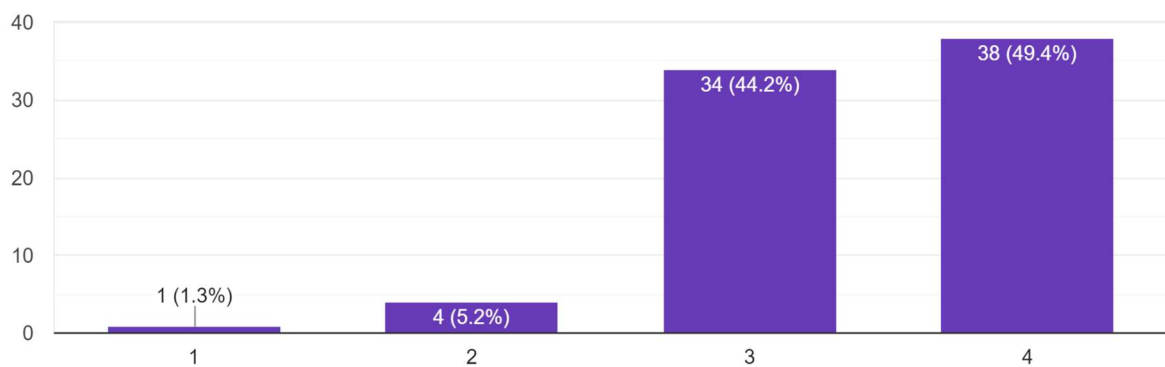


General Questions

How easy was the Entry Form to Complete?

1 = hard, 4 = easy

Entry process
77 responses

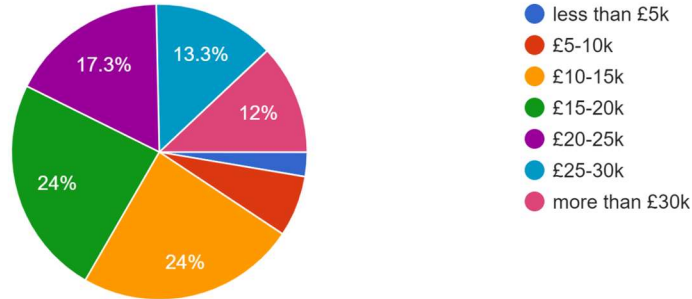


Costs

How much do you think it costs to enable the finish at Westminster? These costs include tideway safety cover, steps crew, first aid cover, facility hire charges.

Westminster costs

75 responses

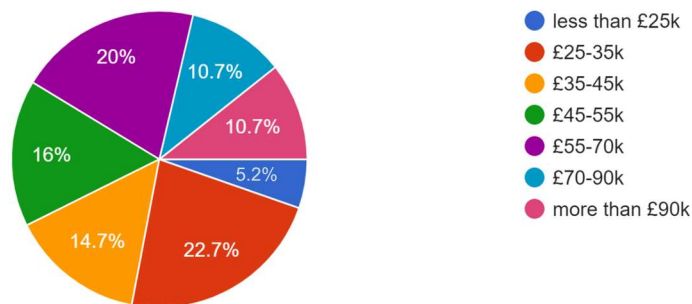


DW Comment : The costs incurred to run the race to Westminster are approximately £32,000. If the race were to be run to Teddington (for example), these costs would reduce to £5,000.

In a 'normal' year with a Westminster finish, how much do you think it costs to run the entire DW race?

Entire race costs

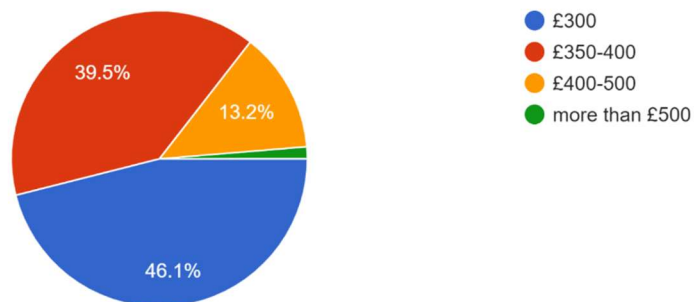
75 responses



DW Comment : The typical costs to run DW in any given year are about £80,000. The vast majority of these costs are fixed, independent of the number of entrants.

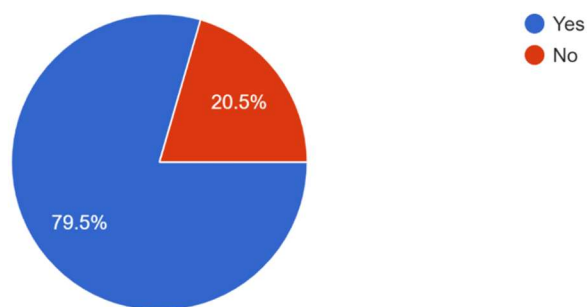
How much would you be prepared to pay to enter DW? (for Senior Doubles class)

Entry fees
76 responses



Would an early entry discount be of interest and persuade you to enter before 1st January?

Early discount
78 responses

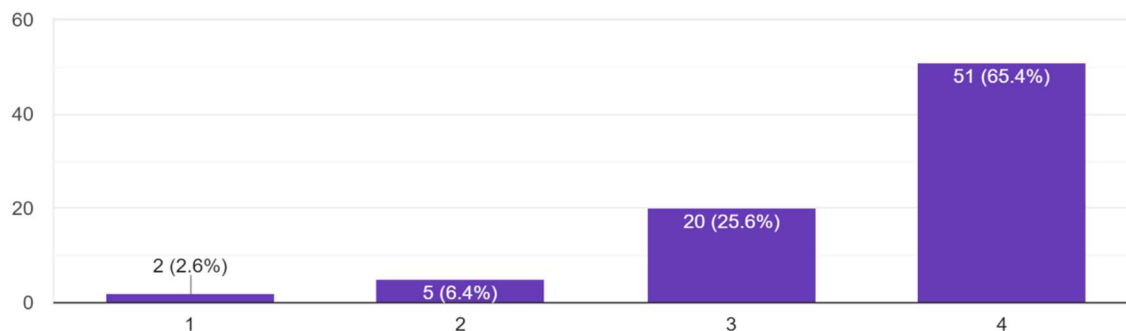


Significance of the Westminster finish:

1 = doesn't matter, 4 = essential

How significant is the Westminster finish to you personally? (1-4 option)

78 responses



Other Finish Options

If the race had to finish at a point higher up the tideway (e.g. Putney), or at Teddington, would this stop you from entering? If yes, please explain the reason (use the Other text box).

No - 40 (41%) Would still enter

Yes - 57 (59%) Would not enter

Other answers

- No, It's still the longest challenge on the river, and the one with the most history
- I don't know. It would depend on who else enters. If the shorter race remains competitive and prestigious, I would still compete.
- Shorter courses means it's not the Devizes to Westminster- as not finishing at Westminster. However, it's a tidal part of the Thames and a lot more dangerous. If changed to say the Bath to Teddington race, running up the Caen locks and finishing at Teddington, that would be a great endurance event and without the risk of the tidal Thames - but it couldn't be called the DW race.
- Yes, The tidal element is very important to the race as it sets up the finish. No one wants to finish in Teddington. If anything I would finish somewhere after Westminster as it would be a shame to go shorter
- Yes, It wouldn't be the DW
- No, Need to know before the race begins.
- Quite possibly!
- No, Provided this was the new race and wouldn't change every year
- No, It could no longer be called the DW in my opinion and the tideway and finishing at Westminster for me, is what makes this race. I would be disappointed if this happens because I am 3 races away from becoming a member of the 1000 mile club. Which has been my goal for the last 8 years!
- Yes, Overall distance and it's a different race from Teddington to Westminster.
- Yes, For SD, Westminster 'is' the finish, anything else is a different event.
- Yes, DW is the most iconic canoe race in UK (possibly global) Westminster finish is paramount to the race.
- Yes, It wouldn't be the same and I don't think it would have the same appeal to people
- I think a finish near the rowing accesses near downtown would be easier to facilitate and easier for the support crew to access. It would still be 123+ miles long.
- Yes, It's a different event and I would consider doing it for different reasons. I struggled with motivation last year having entered DW and then having to readjust to a 3 day event.
- Yes, Teddington is acceptable, nothing shorter [we deferred this year as Reading is too short]
- Yes, unless the entry fee is substantially lower, but I will anyway not be the highlight of my year anymore
- It would depend. If junior vet I would be willing to stop earlier. But senior race should go all the way if possible.
- It's a different race but would still think of entering

- Yes, Iconic race , iconic finish, having waited 53 sorry make that 54 years to get to Westminster I would feel cheated
- We were prepared to accept a Teddington finish in extremis, but not Reading. Somewhere near Westminster would be ok.
- Yes, Need 1000 mile finish! Has stopped entry before as it's DW not DT
- Yes, It's the Devizes to Westminster race, shorter would be akin to running 20 miles and claiming a marathon.
- No, It would no longer be iconic.
- Yes, For me personally the Westminster finish is iconic.
- I did my first DW in 2022 finishing in TYM. It wasn't the same as finishing in Westminster this year. It's very important to follow tradition and finish in Westminster
- Yes, Yes and no because put all the effort of training and as in since 2020 they not been a fully DW I was there last year support at finish giving medals and I get that was covid but then again this year stopped even earlier should be at Marlow so can say got to end of day 2 some paddlers did last year then entered for this year to say they completed DW but didn't I think if finishing not at Westminster like Marlow or Reading should get a £40 back or something like that
- Yes, The challenge is Devizes to Westminster, it would be a different event if not the proper course. If not Westminster then it is not the race the organisation was founded for.
- Yes, Due to getting out at Westminster and the atmosphere, it's heritage and history.
- Maybe, but it's not the DW
- It will lose the event title but I might compete anyway
- Yes, Having done it before, I wouldn't bother entering again if it wasn't finishing at Westminster. Just not the same.
- Yes, The finish being in the capital is very special and iconic. To finish near London would change the feel of the event to just another paddling event.
- It would not stop me entering but clearly it would not be the same!
- Yes, 1000 mile target is essential. Would still race but would take a lot away from the meaning of the race
- No, As long as the race is over 100.
- I think the finish at Westminster is critical but would (as per Covid) I did the K1 race at Teddington.
- Yes, It is DW. I believe the first event started in Pewsey, and that the finish point has fluctuated at different times. The general principle has been established as Devizes to Westminster. That said, I am not truly aware of all the challenges that a Westminster finish presents. I am aware of some (i.e., ownership of the space by the steps). Direct engagement with Dep for Culture, Media and Sport may help overcome this. DW has more clout than we may realise.
- Yes, The Westminster finish is central to the history of the race
- Yes, Because I've finished many times I see the shortened race as incomplete. Happy to go past Westminster
- No, Westminster finish is however an integral part of the race and is the final challenge to overcome.
- It depends on how much of the course is lost and why it is being cut. If it's shortened due to the conditions then fair enough otherwise I can't see why you would shorten the course.
- Yes, DW is the full race, tide window is important
- I'd rather know early than find out a change late

Things that are missing

Are there any things that you think are missing from what DW provides to entrants? (maybe comparing to other endurance events)

52 responses, 11 basically said no, nothing missing. Other comments:

- Better advertising, so more spectators and possible more interest in doing the event
- How about an additional qualifying race on a section of the Thames from Reading done at night
- Finish line ambiance
- A proper medal with dates of race. Poor in comparison to other events.
- A more explicitly spelt out contingency plan (i.e. a very loose guide on the website about proceedings if the flow, temperature, wind, etc is x and y). It does not have to be definitive but it should spell out the process and what will be considered and by what date.
- T shirt
- None - do not want T-shirts etc included just the essentials to safely run the race
- A T-shirt and DW car sticker
- Sponsored seconding tables where paddlers can refill juice bottles and eat something to enable less reliance on their support crew.
- If one could have water every half an hour (or an hour) available at portages, that would avoid need for so many supporters and reduce congestion etc
- Better changing /recovery facilities at the finish. Commemorative tee Shirt,
- More media coverage / promotion
- Meal at the end would be nice. Realize that is included in the banquet for those that live in the UK but not for those of us from the US
- The only other endurance event I have participated in is the Dordogne Integral. Paddlers get a pre-race meal the night before, optional continental breakfast , in race feeding stations and a post-race meal. There is also an event polo shirt in the entry fee. The race is heavily sponsored by the local Departments. That would not work for DW due to lack of space at start and finish
- Not really, but we are used to accept races as they are.
- I would be interested in a breakdown of costs and explanation of the entry fee [to be clear that's explanation, not justification]
- Should provide the emergency blanket to stop confusion. It is great to have the buff & gel. Maybe increase the fee and give a good quality sports t shirt like other ultra events.
- Possibly links and perspectives on other international/national endurance race equal to this. Celebrating these. I think the ICF had a 'classics' series. Not heard much of late
- For the 4-day race: Bag transport from start to finish each day (would pay for this), and the ability to race without an official supporter. It'd greatly reduce the logistics and need to impose on friends, and many of us are otherwise capable of self-supporting on the stages. To that end, a simple refreshment station (water) half-way would ease self-support too.
- The rules doc, particularly portage diagrams, could do with a refresh to simplify and improve clarity. Some cheap boat stickers to advertise the event and show that you've entered in a particular year?

- Survival bags always a controversial issue
- Toilet and changing area at Westminster
- T shirt or at least opportunity to buy a range of merchandise on the event or via online
- The portage drawings were a little confusing.
- No. I'm happy with what there is.
- Facilities at finish to change
- Some service in a finish like a shower, changing room. My best experience is the Vohandu marathon in Estonia. Food+sauna in finish 😊
- Maybe races before Waterside A so like Oct Nov maybe 2 races then as some people may want to do a longer paddle and get used to the course and conditions with other Paddlers
- On a previous question £300 for a boat is getting very expensive.
- Fantastic event.
- No. Please do not start giving away freebies that no one needs.
- Other events offer aid/feed stations useful if support crew are late, maybe just emergency ones at strategic points
- Shower, Food and a welcome/celebration of completion of this arduous event.
- Strangely the website lets it down quite a lot. Often out of date, not easy to find info and looks very amateur. I think an upgrade here would 'lift' the whole thing. Those of us who have done several times don't mind, but just seems quite amateur compared to all other events I have done.
- The event actually going ahead...
- I think we only want the fabulous cover (in terms of safety and volunteers) that you currently provide.
- More opportunities for supporters and non-paddlers to get involved along the course; making the race more visible on social media and other channels to promote and encourage people to come and cheer along the route
- Much better marketing and easy links to supporting charities and then promoting this on social media platforms.
- Specific, long-term action plans to ensure paddlers are deemed 'race ready'.
- Age-group categories.
- Reportage photos offered as standard during the race.
- Aid stations along the course (perhaps with the view of limiting the use of personal support crews).
- Higher profile finish line and finishers area to celebrate success.
- I don't have anything to compare it to. Seems very well organised.
- I think the head covering and light sticks should be provided (if required) at the start
- Better locations for support positions. These days What3Words provides very useful locator info that is specific compared to postcodes. It's something everyone needs, and having one source would be useful.
- In past years, no but this year the lack of changing facilities and paddlers breakfast.
- Independent choices on 'official' safety equipment...blankets, headgear etc
- Finishers t shirt or better merchandise to buy, better finishers area - there were not even toilets end of this year's race had to walk around for ages to eventually find some bar to buy and drink and use facilities - not ideal when you are exhausted and sore

- I think it needs more media coverage. As one of the toughest races in the world it is really underrepresented outside of the racing community
- Mandatory kit
- Support aid stations

Things we don't need

Are there things that we could omit without impacting the overall safety of the event?

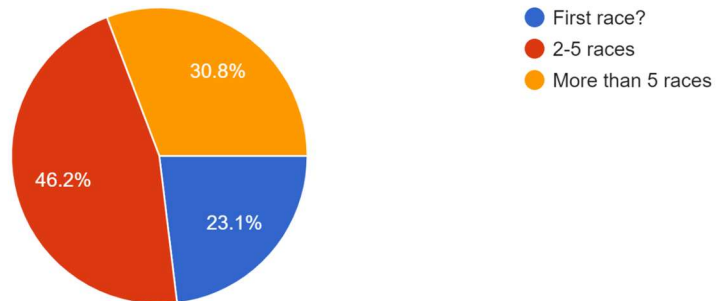
44 responses. 25 basically said nothing could be omitted. Here are the other comments:-

- RIBS on the tideway (*DW Comment: This is a safety mandate from the PLA*)
- Why do the young people camp? This is a massive cost and logistical effort.
- Inexperienced paddlers
- Energy gel
- Given the many variables I think the safety cover provided and minimum kit requirement are spot on at present
- The requirement to carry spare juice in the boat.
- Obligatory water and blankets are not necessary
- DW supplied head covering, gels & bag
- Not much. Liked the support at each of the locks on the Thames which was unexpected.
- The move back to supplying your own survival bag was a good one.
- We don't need breakfast. We don't need showers either.
- The need for a support crew for the 4-day race. We don't need them for D or the Thamesides, so why for this?
- It's pretty bare bones as it is. No need for 'free' merchandise like the neck covering.
- Already lost showers, food and toilets at Westminster! Not much left
- I know safety is a big thing but I kind of thought it should have finished at Marlow where day 2 would have finished
- The compulsory kit in particular survival bags and extra fluid seem beyond what would be needed given live tracking and the frequency of support crew points meaning any problems would be picked up on very quickly
- Yes, I believe mandatory carrying of decks at all times and the mandatory extra fluids could be removed without any increase in safety risk. All paddlers have a phone and carry plenty of fluids.
- Didn't see the RA but the lower part of the tideway is the only part I think needs covered. During the rest of the race there can be self-recovery at the bank.
- Allow change of craft for tideway or river to allow more stable craft when weather conditions require or considerations for paddlers.
- Printing entry/results books (provide everything electronically)
- Not knowledgeable enough about the organisation to comment.
- A bailer
- Unnecessary number of marshals

Paddlers' Questions

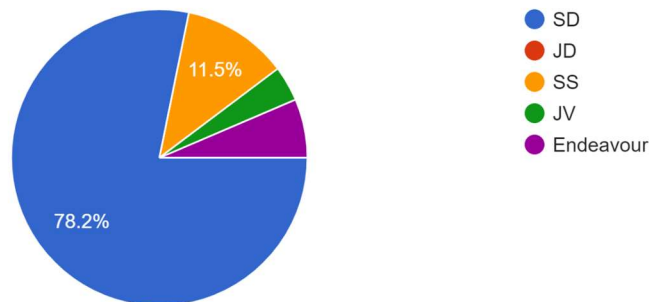
Experience

Paddler
78 responses



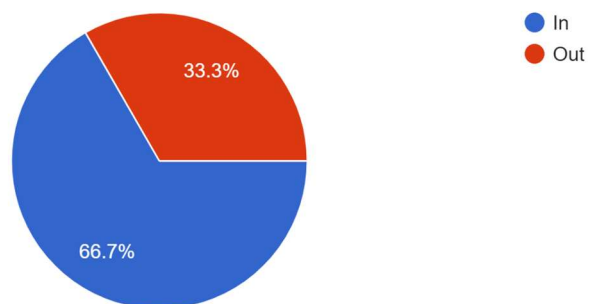
Class Entered

Class entered
78 responses



Screened In or Screened Out? (Senior Doubles Ony)

Screened
60 responses

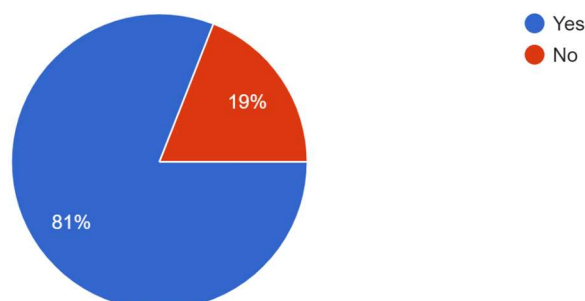


SD Screened out questions

Did you understand why you were screened out?

Understanding

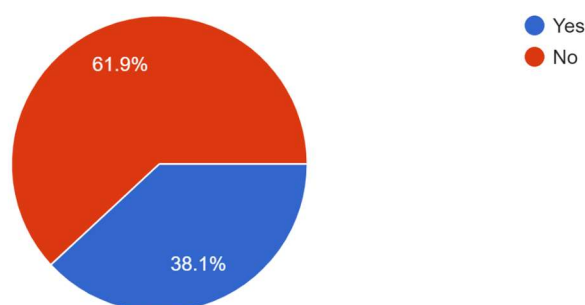
21 responses



Did you agree with the decision?

Agree

21 responses



Further screening questions that should have been asked?

What further questions/criteria would you have liked to be included to enable you to explain your competency levels more thoroughly?

- Strava data could have been taken into consideration
- I was keen to change into a folding boat for the race after being screened out. This would have made a huge difference if we were allowed to continue.
- Would you be happy to race a shorted course in one go for example Devizes to Reading?
- The questions were unclear. We were told that we hadn't attended the warm up races, however, the Thamesides were cancelled and the Waterside does not prepare you to paddle on the Thames at night. We finished 14th last year and chose to focus on paddle the Thames on Red Boards to prepare rather than race on the Canal. This seemed to go against us.
- Experience of similar / challenging races & paddling conditions - the screening questions did not give adequate room to explain this - as a focus on Thames. Clearly

relevant for the race but not as easy for those entrants living a distance from the Thames and training on other flooded and tidal waters. The initial entry form does give a chance to explain experience, but the risk assessment did not take this into account. The notification to screen out our entry was accepted as it was understood the organisers were working under difficult circumstances and had to make a decision, however it was disappointing to learn that other crews who had been screened out initially were then allowed to paddle after further conversations.

- As a long time adventure racer I would have liked my experience and that of our support crew to have counted more
- The screening decision was said to be final, this was clearly not the case as phone calls to people in the know seemed to help get approval. Looking at the paddlers on the day and commentary, entirely inexperienced people were allowed to paddle if the person they had partnered with had paddled before...doing the race for charity appeared to give you a shoe in. Lying on the form about fitness clearly paid dividends. photos of some of the competitors spoke volumes about their levels of fitness. In my personal opinion competency on a river/canal or on river/canal races was given too much weight, whilst a 'swirly' river may be daunting to people who solely paddle on rivers, this is not the case for a lot of competent ocean paddlers. They will have far greater experience of dealing with boat wakes and the necessary skills to deal with later stages of the race and will inevitably have paddled on fast flowing rivers too. I think when it was blatantly obvious that the criteria asked for before the race was not evenly applied to all people, the decision should have been everyone race or no one races, and if that means that a record attempt is off then so be it Photos of competitors would be a good idea. A much stricter start time would have been the best way to filter out the crews for competency and fitness. It would have been self-selecting.
- Risk appetite, adventure race experience, paddle experience at night on similar waterways
- I thought it was all very clear. Happy with the Marshalls advice
- Wider paddling experiences and competencies in moving water which was relevant for this event
- We entered in a very stable C2 - the questionnaire was designed for kayakers and the questions were very limited. It seemed to be a box ticking exercise and that the organisers were just going to allow well known crews to enter. The questions seemed to be copied from the Thameside races rather than specific to DW.
- Both of us had paddled and completed DW twice before and both level 4 white water and sea kayak coaches. It was a surprise to get screened out when others I felt we were stronger than were in and racing. I was aware that a line had to be drawn and we missed it but how much was done from the screening questions rather than personal experience levels.
- Questions related to wider paddling experience outside marathon discipline. Sub-questions which worked to better evaluate paddler competency. Original matrices were too vague and open to paddlers lying to get a higher overall score but with no comeback in the initial form.
- Screening was adequate for the purpose
- My partner was screened out as he hadn't paddled the tideway (paddled last year to Teddington. We had trained on high fast flowing water. We were offered the opportunity to paddle post screening but had already stood our support down and the partners wife was concerned.

- Experience not performance
- The type of training on moving water and if recent. Other experience which could be valid, an appeal system. An approximate time that you are aiming for in boat type.
- I self-screened out earlier owing to being poorly prepared in build up; there is no option for this. Had I trained fully I would be disappointed by being screened out owing to not training on the Thames specifically. Equivalent water was elsewhere, eg the Trent in winter is comparable in places.

Changed role?

Having been screened out, did you then support another crew, or become a volunteer?

1 became a Supporter

3 became a spectator

0 became a Volunteer

17 no responses

SD Screened in questions

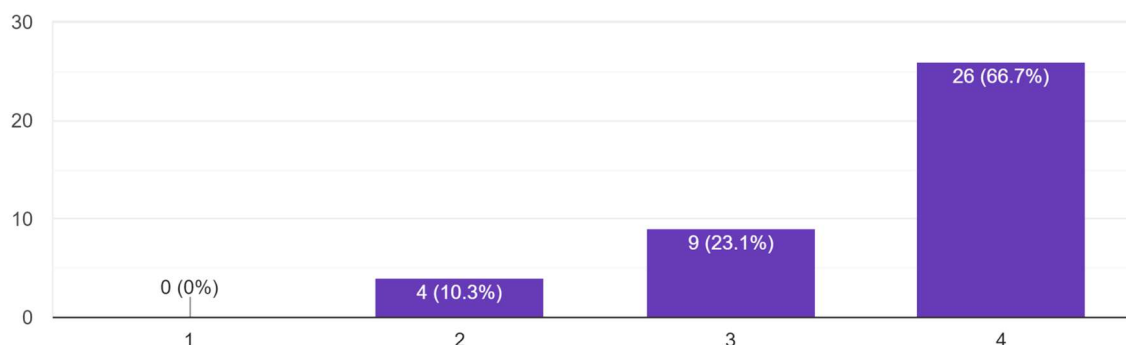
What did you think of the SD briefing at Devizes?

1 = Rubbish, not worth listening to

4 = Brilliant, really good, lots of helpful info

SD Briefing at Devizes

39 responses



Finish?

Did you finish? If not, why not? Where did you finish? (If you finished anywhere other than Westminster, please use the Other box to say where, and why.)

Responses - 40

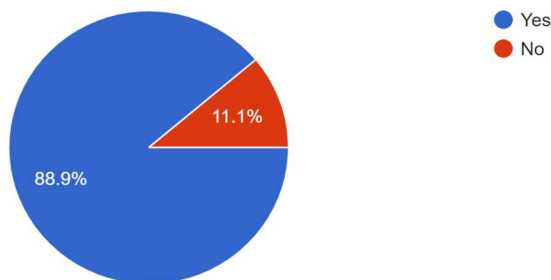
Westminster - 27 finished

Other – 13

- Illness, DNF at Shiplake
- Ish- boat broken by Uber river taxi. Still feel I haven't completed the event if not walking up those steps
- Boulders
- Deferred entry to 2024
- Wrong boat for the course, knew from the start that not going to Westminster
- Retired after head injury due to collision under a bridge
- Always completed the course to Westminster apart from the two occasions when the race was stopped at Reading
- Broke our boat against a barge on the Thames.
- Illness of partner. Boulders
- Sadly, during early hours Saturday morning by partner had D&V, so deflated after a year's trading 3 x a week
- Decided not to paddle after screening
- No we pulled out at Boveney - partner was dizzy/exhausted and we thought it too risky to continue. Marshals were excellent and treated us as grown-ups as we came to that decision together.
- Marsh

Tideway bridge navigation information

Bridge navigation Was the information on bridge navigation helpful?
27 responses



Tideway washes/waves

Did you encounter big washes/waves on the tideway? If so, please describe (text box)

Responses - 26

No - 4

Other – 22

- Some very large waves from the safety boat and the Uber clipper
- Yes mainly coming of the visitor boats barrelling up and down the river in central London. No problem until there
- Uber taxi on tideway- going SLOW but still needed to navigate through it and post initial waves-support strokes were a must!
- Only in the last 5 minutes we caught an Uber boat.
- Only at the very end from a Clipper
- The Uber taxi on the Thames was very uncomfortable
- Some, but saw them coming early so we'll prepared.
- Uber taxi & normal tideway conditions
- Yes a person with their own large cruiser came up right past us and caused loads of wash. Then at the finish I was able to witness the k2 snap in half from the UBER boat
- We were washed into the barges from an Uber Clipper near the finish which destroyed our boat. We passed an Uber clipper earlier and its wash was easily navigable but the second one produced a large wave that sent us backwards into the moored barges
- Uber boat stopped then crossed in front of us 3 bridges out. One wave came over the bow and into our C2.
- Yes. From general river traffic. Few large ones closer to the finish.
- Yes! Next to Lambeth Bridge, the same Uber clipper. But we survived.
- Very large waves just above Lambeth felt like 2-3ft. In previous years safety boats have sped for no reason and created the worst washes. This year the big waves came from a clipper
- Yes, but luckily not as big as it could be
- Only right at the end. Everyone talks about getting the best tide - 1.5hrs after turning etc. I think this misses the point that actually if you finish early i.e. around 7.30am you

are likely to miss river traffic and large wash from boats. We didn't actually but would next time and got some wash at very end but wasn't too bad and I'm not paddling a Nelo ;-)

- Yes - this is always a feature. I was once capsized by the RNLI safety launch!
- Yes - it's the Tideway. It has big waves by any comparison to flatwater paddling. That said, I've experienced bigger waves in previous years.
- Tideway (particularly lower sections) are always going to be a challenge once river traffic has become active.
- the uber boat caused them by going full throttle.
- Yes usual wash from clipper ferry's. Had both years I have finished. Manageable in stable boat
- Wash is a problem on the tideway. The waves under the bridges can be a challenge too

Tideway conditions

Were the tideway conditions as you expected? Please describe

Responses - 27

(simple) Yes - 9

Other comments:

- Yes - not bad until we met uber taxi (x 5)
- Yes. (or even better than expected).
- Yes. Been down it before.
- Yes, possibly less flow than I thought. But we got there a bit early!
- Yes until we encountered the Uber Clipper that produced a wave that was breaking over
- Yes, generally flat until we met the Uber. Not much else about.
- Easier than prepared for, but I know it takes little to turn the tideway into a roller coaster.
- Yes. But we got on at a good time. I think the tide window needs shrinking to force less good crews onto the ride as early as possible. This would allow them to do 3+ hrs and still finish before the big boats come out and the waves get silly. I have only ever finished late in big waves. All other times I have got on early and had a lovely run down. Shrink the window!
- Yes. We arrived into Teddington in a perfect time.
- Flatter apart from the 30 seconds of big boat wash
- Actually they were very calm. in hindsight we got lucky, we were 1 ahead of the SD boat that got the wave from the Clipper
- They were much better than expected.
- Yes, as mentioned, not as bad as everyone goes on about and I'm a slightly nervous paddler on the stability.
- Yes - I do understand this is the most hairy part of the whole race and is, of course, when all paddlers are exhausted so I do quite understand why a finish at say Putney would be attractive in terms of cost savings and safety.
- Yes although it felt worse than I remembered.

Stages Race

Understanding of the decision

Did you understand the reason for the shortened race to Reading?

Responses - 17

Yes - 17 (100%)

Agreement with shortening the race?

Did you agree with the shortening? If not, please add comments.

Responses - 17

Yes - 8 (47%)

No - 9 (53%)

- No. With the race being shortened due to a fast river in many years before, there is no excuse to not have allowances in the rules for competent paddlers to compete in those conditions. There needs to be an overhaul of the rule book to allow for more nuanced decision making rather than cancellations across the board.
- Could have done day 2 and 3
- I feel the race should be run over the course suitable for the year's conditions. I feel however disappointed I was, that my daughter could not continue to Westminster it was a fair decision.
- While I understand that safety takes priority, I can't understand how the endeavour class was allowed to continue and the senior singles were not. The same risk assessment should have been applied to the senior singles as was applied to the K2's. Having watched the K2's at Teddington it cannot be said that a K2 (which has already been paddling for 12+ hours) is inherently safer than a relatively fresh K1 paddler on the tideway. Furthermore the K1's would only have reached the tideway on Sunday, by which time the Thames was around 130/140 cumecs on Sunday morning
- Not my call but the guys didn't have any other options
- For juniors, yes. For competent SS and endeavours, no. The river is much safer during the day, and many of us are very experienced on it.
- Shortened because the fast flow I believe and no if it will be shorted again. I think end of day 2 Marlow is a better place or Teddington. I know it's about safety however I think some paddlers maybe don't want to enter again as this is 3 times cancelled or stopped
- SS crews should have been graded as with SD but I understand that this may have been impractical.
- The reasoning was fair given the circumstances. Giving the option to compete if desired was a good decision

Agree with medals?

Do you agree with the medals and prizes being awarded? If not, please add comments.

Responses - 17

(simple) Yes - 10 (58%)

- Medals are great. Perhaps the first in each category should be awarded their entry fee back or be given a free entry in next year's race.
- Communication way better than 2018, but proper DW medals for a very shortened race isn't right, medals and prizes yes .. but they should have been different [no medals awarded in 2018]
- Different race but still a race
- It is a shame that previously shortened racers did not get their finisher medals.
- Yes and there should be live video so if can't make it we can watch (*DW Comment – we think this refers to the prize giving*)
- Not sure what was awarded
- There were a few too many very similar awards, inevitably collected by the same paddler(s). Not a big issue and I seem to recall the organisation were looking at that anyway. Still makes sense to offer 2nd and 3rd place prizes for various things though, so perhaps just as many prizes but designed to create more winners rather than allowing the possibility of the same individuals winning a lot of prizes

All Paddlers

Did you capsize?

52 responses

37 = No (71%)

Reasons for capsize:

- Uber river taxi taking us out
- Hit object in water
- Just made a mistake when tired.
- Wash created from someone using their pleasure craft on the tideway
- Water conditions
- Hit something under a bridge
- Large wake contributed to hitting stationary barge broadside.
- We did capsize once in the night at a lock (can't remember which one) when the marshal advised us of a strong eddy and told us to head in a particular direction. This got us into trouble and perhaps we misinterpreted his advice! Anyway it was never going to be a safety concern!
- Water conditions AND emerging tiredness.
- Simple portage error exacerbated by small amount of stream and collision with crew behind
- Once at a Thames lock where there was a strong eddy. We must have misheard the instructions from the marshal and set off exactly the wrong way and got a dunking!
- Crew error approaching an island in the dark in fast moving water.

Incidents

Did you have any other incidents?

32 responses. No = 16. Yes = 16 and comments as below

- Wrong way taken
- Took a wrong part of the River Thames, but this joined up to the main river
- Injuries
- Wrong way, Not much lighting at the weirs on the Thames very different to see for the paddlers even with the Marshalls doing a good job to light them up. Almost ended up down one but was able to correct it
- Washed into the moored barges from the Uber Clipper. All other craft we encountered had a low wash that was navigable.
- Injuries, Fall at Marsh Benham, twisted both ankles.
- Low bridge
- Pleasure boater aimed his boat at us (for a short time) between Sonning and Shiplake
- Broken rudder
- Reported a crew that missed the cut at Temple. We came off the race to report this and potentially affect a rescue

- Low bridge, Bumped into a low bridge on canal, but our own fault!
- Wrong way, Despite having completed c 14 times I still rely on marshals illuminating the approaches to lock channels.
- A narrow boat on the canal completely blocked the canal (about 8 miles in) which was annoying but apart from that we found the conditions fine with no dramas.
- No - went wrong way at one lock but quickly recovered
- No, apart from one crew member struggling on the portages.
- Not really, the last stretch of the canal in the dark was very difficult, almost paddled straight into some locks and missed one portage and had to back paddle/turn

Race Control Feedback

Did you or your support crew report any incidents to Race Control?

48 responses

29 No incidents (60%)

4 Yes, reported (8%)

15 Not reported (31%)

Reported incidents (paddler)

If (as a paddler) you contacted Race Control, what was your level of satisfaction?

24 responses

3 = Easy to contact, Helpful response

0 = Easy to contact, unhelpful response

0 = Difficult to get through, but helpful response

0 = Difficult to get through, unhelpful response

0 = No reply, gave up.

18 = N/A (no incidents, or not reported)

Other:

- We got out at the end so there wasn't much to report. We did have to fill out a report with the London Port Authority
- Do not know, was done by support, guess it was easy
- Easy to contact, but the person didn't appear to understand the potential impact of what we were reporting and the actions that he needed to take.

Unreported incidents (paddler)

If you had an incident that you didn't report, why was this? Was it too difficult for you to do so?

22 responses

5 = Not important (23%)

9 = No incident

0 = Wanted to keep quiet about it

0 = Unable to get a reply from Race Control number

4 = Needed to keep paddling

Other:

- Assessed situation as we went along.
- Decided to carry on until next portage and see how it went, then just kept going.
- As I think most paddlers will not report issues as the DW staff maybe will tell them to stop and end the course then
- Resolved quickly, no issue

Race Control contact (paddler view)

If you had any difficulties in contacting or dealing with Race Control, please explain here.

11 responses

10 said N/A or No problems. Here is the only one who had a problem:-

- I emailed my withdrawal the day before the race started, but received no response, other than a phone call the next day asking whether I was planning to start, so comms not completely joined up.

Race Control contact (support crew view)

Only 5 comments received:

- Was very easy. We had a puncture on the way to the race and called to explain we might be late for check in.
- As a Team Leader, Race Control are helpfully communicative and it feels like we are working together
- Retirement phoned through to race control no problems
- Very good
- Race control contacted me following road traffic incident - very supportive

Not contacted Race Control (support crew)

If the support crew didn't contact Race Control, why was this?

Not contacted Race Control (support)

28 responses



Other comments:

- Whilst a member of our crew hurt her ankle she continued so no need to contact
- Reported - went well

Nobody ticked "Unclear on role" or "Couldn't get through on phone".

Race Control (all respondents)

What service would you expect to receive from Race Control?

82 Responses

- 2023 excellent
- A brief overview of the functions; who does what.
- Volunteers for race control who are arriving early/late should be trusted with the access codes, even if this means changing them before/after the race."
- A good one
- A professional one
- All good.
- Any changes to the event at the time/place I was volunteering, either at the time or in advance (if appropriate)
- Any warnings or concerns about paddlers/boats that might be in the area I was marshalling with advice on what might be needed
- As a checkpoint marshal at Aldermaston Lock we need to know the number of boats expected through - their race numbers - and an idea of when they have started so we can gauge the staffing levels for the day. There is a big gap in the middle of the day where we don't need so many staff but then we need to be available into late evening.
- As checkpoint information on crews
- As expected having read rules
- As is
- Be there for guidance as required
- Better plan of options of race.
- Can't think of anything that we didn't get.
- Cheerful, prompt and consistent advice
- Clear advice about entries and updates (as you did) about safety issues
- Clear and consistent communications
- Clear judgement. Not finding out on Facebook that novices have been allowed to race.
- Concise speedy updates
- Contact point in case of emergency or in case of withdrawal during the race.
- Current team do a cracking job. They are professional, reliable and risk is very well managed as you expect and need for this event.
- Decisions on rule breaking, decisions on the tide window at Teddington.
- Efficient and effective
- Emergency help.
- Exactly what was delivered this year. I started the race knowing what to expect and what had change at various portages. I had no questions about what was ahead and no doubts in my mind. A good place mentally to be in.
- Free Beer
- Good and effective communication via specific WhatsApp- receive relevant information and response and acknowledgment to any message sent
- Good brief. Owen did a cracking job on this.
- Good communication in the lead up to the race
- Happy with it as it is.
- Have never really needed any interaction from Race Control. last year I missed the entry deadline. I emailed entries@ too late and that inbox was apparently not monitored after the closing date but I do understand the need for cut of dates etc.
- Help with problems and retirements.

- I think the Race Directors did an outstanding job. I really appreciate the effort they put in to get such a world class race.
- I think they did a fine job this year with all the curve balls thrown their way. I can't ask for anymore.
- I think this was very well run
- I'm happy with the service
- information on course issues , report retirements, report issues to umpires
- It is perfectly good as it is.
- Just be on call if needed
- Just knowing when the last boat goes through
- Latest updates
- My wife relays to me
- N/A. Didn't need them. From a service perspective, to be available I imagine. Didn't have to test it though.
- No other
- None if all running smoothly
- None. They're busy. Let them focus. What they do.. and benefit of trackers is enough
- Not really applicable!
- Nothing
- Nothing additional to current provision.
- Nothing as a paddler.
- Nothing as a spectator
- nothing different
- Nothing extra required
- Nothing more than I already receive.
- Only important updates - race abandoned, race will end at XX
- Owen Peake was superb. Very good leader I thought, and his chat before the race was great.
- Positive support, good communications (particularly as we are not GB based)
- race management needs separating from race information
- Race updates
- Regular clear dates time when decisions being made- maybe more details are talking to in event if situation, so there is feeling of open communication
- Regular updates
- Report incidents, info on the race, crew eta based on the calculation
- Results
- Running a professional race
- Safe race
- Safe race
- Safety advice passed on about recent changes.
- Separate panel for appeals which is not the same team members. Clarity on chain of command.
- Solid safety cover
- some rough writeups in winter of the different scenario's / options can help to understand better why is going on and make crews more flexible to for example switch to Endeavour so the 4 day can continue.
- Strong comms
- Text commentary
- Texts or emails with updates or links to updates

- That depends on the nature of needing to contact them.
- The use of WhatsApp for on day comms seems the way forward.
- To be there
- Up to date accurate info.
- Updates on race progress
- What they do now, control and take care of the race and ensure paddlers are all through to each check point
- What you provide - no changes required
- Zero hassle. Well organised

Marshals and Checkpoints

Paddler view

Please let us have any general comments here.

45 responses

- Everyone was great
- All lovely, helpful, reintegrated the clear instructions from the brief about the next lock
- Superb and appreciated
- Absolutely brilliant - bit too much info at times as we knew the course- but all very helpful
- It felt like perhaps some of the canal marshals were drawn to the river due to the conditions but many of the canal portages were un-marshalled which was challenging in the dark. Particularly the road crossing somewhere near Aldermaston (can't exactly remember where!). Of course, we totally understand that the DW relies on volunteers and can only marshal in as many places as people volunteer! Perhaps the briefing should stress to support crews to assist other crews (not just their own). We kept bumping into the same support crew who were sat on their phone and it would have been really helpful if they could have guide us a bit about where to go in the dark/middle of the night. I know generally most support crews are amazing at supporting all racers.
- Great people very helpful
- Fantastic
- From County lock onwards I thought the marshals did an excellent job. They were helpful and gave out great advice about river conditions. The changes made to the put in at County, Shiplake, Boulters, Romney (especially) and Chertsey were spot on and probably saved us from a bad experience👍.
- All brilliant.
- Very good this year with advice on water conditions at portage entry & following portage egress. I guess this was due to the fact there were a lot less paddlers so they could brief crews individually. During the night I felt this was essential and eased apprehension about what was coming next, especially at non supported portages. I don't know if this was a DW org idea or off the marshal's own back but they were excellent and a reminder about the briefing, thank you.
- Overall marshals were fantastic! It was a dark night and sometimes hard to see the correct way into portages on River. (Almost went wrong at Cookham). The actual get out was always very well-lit / marshalled but from 50m out it could be hard to see the correct entry.
- Super and think all of the volunteers involved do a fantastic job to allow the race to happen
- For the most part, this was a very well run race. The only confusion we had was at the mandatory portage and whether we could leave or not was not clearly conveyed to us.
- Lovely to see lots of familiar faces. Great that Owen saw us at Boulters and we talked suitable lines. Pete was helpful at Eton.
- Very stimulating

- We deferred but paddled day 1, avoiding racing times [left Devizes after 11am] .. the signage at Crofton was very clear, thank you :-)
- A handful of marshals gave incorrect advice, ranging from suggesting spraydecks were mandatory on all of the river to suggesting bad entry points into the main flow.
- They were wonderful! Friendly, helpful. Brilliant! The best informed that I have ever known.
- Great to have marshals at as many check points as possible
- Inspiring to have so many volunteers! Please share this
- Always brilliant 😊
- Very helpful and friendly. We had a minor incident at County where the guide was telling us to go right but the way it was indicated suggested pulling in under the bridge rather than the normal portage which is actually what they were saying. That is quite a difficult portage when the water flow is that high and I would suggest experienced kayakers staff it if possible for the less experienced crews. As it was we had done it multiple times so figured it out but it could have been clearer. Only minor in the grand scheme of things and want to reiterate the marshals and volunteers and fantastic and very generous with their time.
- Everyone was very helpful and friendly.
- Really fabulous people. Thank you
- They were all brilliant. All very helpful and encouraging. Except the one at Fobney who thought I was looking a bit ropery and reported me to the Chief Umpire. :-)
- All Marshals and volunteers they were really amazing! It was so nice and lovely to feel so much care, help and good emotions. Also they were very helpful in portages especially in the night. A huge respect for all.
- Great as a paddler and a marshalling before in pass every year meeting people I know since doing DW always nice to see them along the course and supporting with water and food
- Marshals often seem to be poorly informed, this year there looked to be a lot of paddlers who couldn't race who were excellent
- Brilliant. Extremely impressed by first-hand knowledge of entry points and how to deal with the flow at each weir. Their advice was invaluable
- None
- I felt the marshals were not attentive enough, Kintbury, Hampstead Marshall, little help offered at the Oracle when we had boat problems
- Very good
- Excellent and especially good at some portages. If they can give some info on the route ahead it's very helpful. E.g. Keep right for the next 2 miles and next portage is x far away.
- Shiplake marshals in particular were great, they were calm, unflappable and gave great advice. Sonning marshal gave wrong advice but it certainly wasn't deliberate as it was unusual flow conditions, this made it the most challenging of the race. (hence the post someone put on FB with a very accurate flow diagram).
- The weir above County had a flapper, he was too busy shouting at crews to realise that all we want is rudder clearance, then we'll look after the turn, and if we get it wrong, we can recover. But all were Volunteers. Here is only an example of the best, worst and best intentioned.
- The marshals at all locks were superb and really made us feel safe in the swirly conditions on the Thames. Make a big difference! And thanks.

- Always brilliant, helpful and smiling. I am in awe of the sacrifice they all make each Easter for my pleasure?! Are checkpoints really needed in these days when we are fitted with trackers?
- All very helpful
- The marshals were simply excellent and encouraging. I was particularly impressed when we got to Boveney lock and my partner was struggling with some disorientation and exhaustion, the marshal (sorry don't know the name) had a grown-up conversation on our race options. Rather than simply pulling us from the race we (Paddlers and Marshal) collectively came to the logical decision that we should stop there. Although I was absolutely gutted it was the right decision and felt like it was not forced on us.
- Awesome, as usual. We tried to say thank you to them as much as possible.
- Brilliant. Clarity/consistency of 'guiding lights' at Thames lock approaches might help reduce confusion.
- There were very good marshals but some need to use common sense.
- Every single marshal that we encountered were absolutely outstanding. So much better than the last time I did it.
- Really helpful
- These guys are legends
- Think the marshals did a fantastic job, all were positive, cheerful, and encouraging

Marshals and Checkpoints (supporter's view)

24 responses

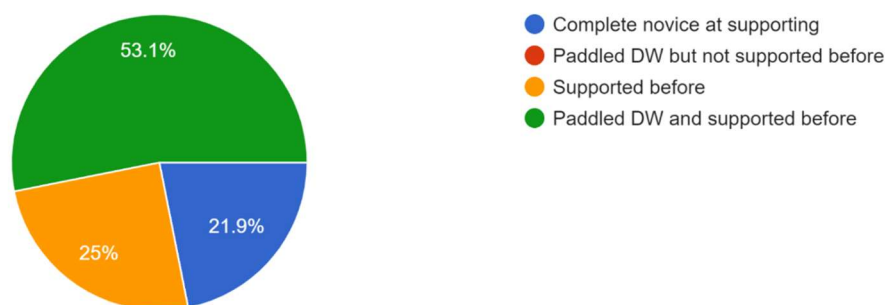
- Friendly, kind, helpful and patient as saints
- Marshalling was top class, pro-kayaker and crew. Very efficient, friendly and knowledgeable.
- Mainly very encouraging
- Everyone was absolutely excellent. The one thing I found surprising was there was no road marshal at Tyle Mill (I think it was there). We were there in the dark and we saw a lot of cars speeding over the bridge.
- Excellent
- Excellent
- can find some marshals overzealous, also at night wish wouldn't shine torch at the paddlers
- Very good.
- Very friendly and helpful the whole way!
- All great and friendly - especially Old Windsor
- Marshals generally very helpful and cheerful
- Excellent
- Outstanding 2023
- Very good and helpful
- Marshals were cheerful and helpful. Didn't really have any contact with checkpoints.
- Marshals were superb everywhere. I supported a Junior Doubles crew to Dreadnaught and then joined a Senior Doubles support crew to Westminster. The marshals were fantastic everywhere! Checkpoints were barely noticeable, which I guess is what we want. (Apart from at the start which was very thorough and professional.)

- All stars
- It is always humbling to deal with the DW staff. Their voluntary service and their positive and helpful attitude always leaves me feeling good about life.
- Had to direct several crews at Penton hook, to keep left before the weir, some crews struggled with the flow, no marshals at this point, or light beacon to aid target,
- Very helpful thank you
- They were great - very clear to spot and were helpful and reassuring
- Very clear
- All Marshals and checkpoint staff were brilliant. One area for improvement though would be for a system for lost property. At checkpoints. It did seem a bit left to chance and if there was a process some staff did not know what it was (*DW Comment: The lost property arrangements are stated in the Rule Book – in 2023 it was in Section 6, page 32*).

Support Crew

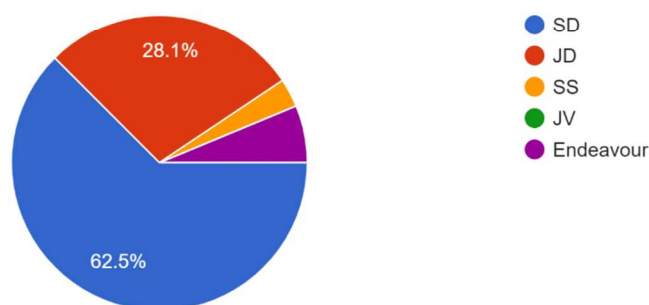
Experienced?

32 responses



Class supported?

32 responses



Alternative contact method

We currently use phones for immediate two-way communications with Race Control. Would you find it more practical to use some other method when on the towpath? If so, what would you prefer, and why?

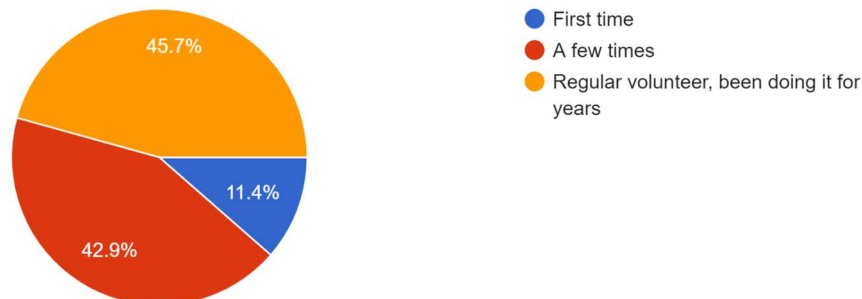
13 responses (4 just said no, none or n/a)

- WhatsApp group for general announcements and updates that only admins can post to.
- The year it was cancelled we found out from another crew, need a formalised way to communicate to everyone if something like that happens again
- The year it was cancelled we found out from another crew, need a formalised way to communicate to everyone if something like that happens again
- No, phone is perfect
- Text msg can work as not always possible to answered phone or poor signal
- Perhaps a Teams chat - makes relevant info viewable for all - then phone for individual queries
- I think phones work well
- Phones work
- Phones are fine.

Volunteers

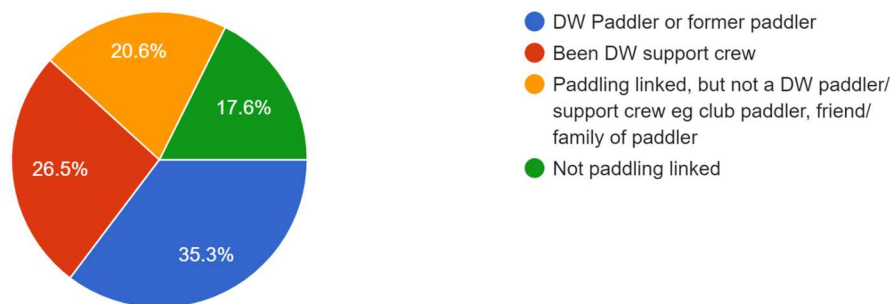
Volunteering Experience

35 responses



Are you?

34 responses



What else could DW do to encourage volunteers?

27 responses

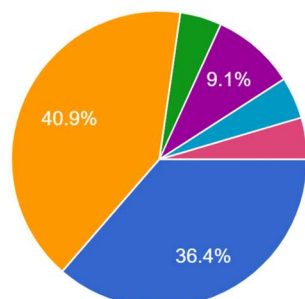
- Keep spreading the word - regularly
- Sorry no ideas
- Perhaps some more recognition on social media?
- Prompt who is running what check points / marshalling points / so others see who is involved
- Publicity in local media. Perhaps give all those already involved some fliers or posters they can put up in their local area - not too far from the route - or give to canoe clubs nationally to share with their members and wider community.
- Ask canoe clubs to post on their websites
- Not sure. Seem to have enough
- More engagement at times other than shortly before the race.
- Hard question, have you tried advertising in the area the event will be going through?
- Difficult one to answer - you all do a sterling Job!!!
- More publicly in canoe clubs

- Certainly Winchester DCC had no requests
- Advertise to the public as well as paddlers past and present
- Reach out and encourage initial interest without commitment
- Ask clubs for more volunteers
- Reach out to smaller clubs and canoe businesses to advertise it.
- Local social media - Facebook local sites - editorial in local paper and news sites along the route
- Print flyers to put up in canoe clubs with DW paddlers
- Look broadly at what volunteering is, I worked for the NT and am used to recruiting from ex teachers. How many volunteers do you need? Do past paddlers/parents have any idea what is involved and what it takes?
- Perhaps better advertised?
- Don't know. You seem to use obvious communications
- Promote the race in the villages & towns that the race passes through and encourage people to come & support the race
- I think you do a great job advertising when you need help. I think there is not much more you can do. Either people are happy to get involved or they are not.
- Free buff/trinket?
- Put message out throughout the year with roles outlined and highlight positives of being involved
- Open evening in various places on the course
- More publicity, contact sports related organisations who already use volunteers who may be willing to help

Spectators

Reason

22 responses



- Been a paddler
- Been a support crew
- Been paddler and support crew
- Been a volunteer
- Friend/family of paddlers
- Been paddler, support crew and volunteer/time keeper for over 20 years.
- All of the above, Although the volunteer part was never in a formal way

How did you follow the event?

22 responses

- Car
- GPS trackers and Facebook
- From the start of senior doubles as far as Reading for a few crews early and late then took up our positions for overnight marshalling
- Facebook & Tracker
- Online and on the banks
- online via tracking and Facebook
- By Car
- Tracking
- Internet
- Online
- Online
- Mostly FB
- Behind the desk this year
- Online / via information from friends
- Facebook
- Day time viewing at Newbury and then at Marlow later. Internet
- Online Trackers
- By car
- I supported it this year
- Online tracking
- WhatsApp groups

What else could DW do to make the race more accessible to Spectators?

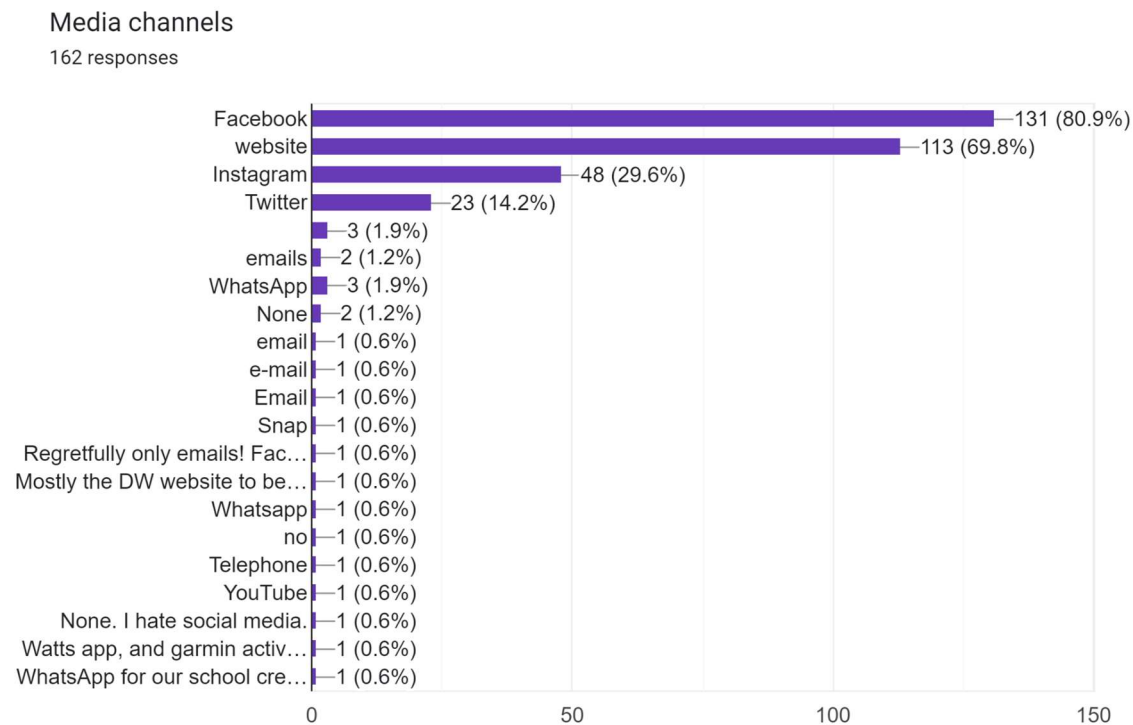
17 responses

- Live stream Web cam at portages
- GPS trackers are unreliable

- Live streaming / webcams / spectator locations
- Designate locations, publish a map of locations on banks where spectators can go and follow their crews without hindering support crews.
- Do some live broadcasts on Facebook or other social media platform in real time
- Physical Web updates from your perspective, but may not have enough people/time
- Not sure that would be a good idea as parking would then become a big issue, especially for support crews?
- Real time footage
- Better comms on social media
- Not sure it needs to
- Netflix, live coverage by all news media etc.. (in reality it is hard to judge from this far)
- Live links from particular sites
- Better visibility and interpretation of progress , and information about what the race is about, its Britain's best kept secret
- I have only followed the fast senior crews and never experienced any problems
- I am surprised about the number of the general population who do not know about the DW and thus it appears that a DW needs to do a new advertising campaign.
- Live online feed
- Live video feed from certain points

Communications

Which media channels do you use? FB, Website, Instagram, Twitter?



A few comments received:

- Regretfully only emails! Facebook at a push. I missed the entry closing date last year probably because I don't use such media!
- Facebook, website, Mostly the DW website to be honest. Facebook sometimes, but more when my SD partner mentioned something useful.
- None. I hate social media.
- WhatsApp, and Garmin active tracking
- WhatsApp for our school crews

Pre-race communications

What is your view of the communications from DW in the weeks before the race – newsletters etc?

148 Responses

- 2023 Excellent (x 10)
- Very Good (x 9)
- Good (x 28)
- OK (x 23)
- Better than in past years (x 8)

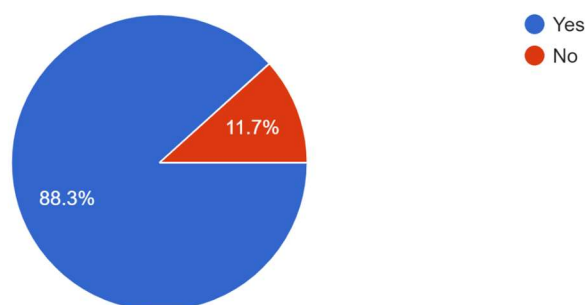
- A bit haphazard.
- A lot of comms came through FB which was great but didn't appear to have been led on the website. Obviously most of us got the FB posts but a friend who doesn't have it kept asking me what the latest was. I remember there being info on the site but comes back to what I said about the site not being very clear - i.e. it was there but not easy to find.
- Barely adequate
- Brilliant under such challenging circumstances for you.
- Communications are very limited and feel very officious and not really in the spirit of adventure and enjoyment that many other endurance sports (with similar risk profiles) adopt.
- In the weeks before the race information seemed to mainly be put onto Facebook first and then disseminated to other media as an afterthought. Comments on Facebook were also unclear whether they were coming from the organisation or from an individual with links to the DW.
- Could be better, more frequent
- Could be improved by more engagement sooner.
- Decent, especially as this year they had a hard choice to make with who they would allow to compete with all the additional screening
- Didn't really look
- Documents are very long. It might be better to distil them a bit for volunteer purposes.
- effective via FB and email.
- Fairly poor. Updates weren't given when they said they would be, sometimes several days later. There are lots of cost for competitors other race entry, lots are not refundable, and dangling on a string expecting updates that don't happen, makes race preparation extremely stressful.
- FB was my main source of info - this was more up to date than the website
- For the race to be effectively cancelled (finish at dreadnought) within 24 hours of the start I thought was poor given that the communications prior to this indicated that the event would go ahead as planned, even despite the forecast.
- Frustrating
- The organisers have a thankless task when making difficult decisions so close to the race and this year I think they left it as late as they could. All decisions were passed out in a timely fashion.
- I didn't get any newsletters and had to rely on finding them on Facebook - which I don't really use
- I don't recall seeing newsletters. I would be interested to receive brief updates on how preparations are progressing.
- I get emails but not newsletters
- I like them, it would be good if they were always emailed (more formal) as well as the other platforms.
- I think it was helpful. However you did need to look for the updates rather than them being sent out.
- I would appreciate if newsletters were emailed to entrants
- I would like to see the DW newsletters, it would make me feel more part of the DW family rather than just turning up at Easter.
- It was insufficient. Many of the communications were on Facebook before they were anywhere else.
- It was useful. Too much a little bit, but I understand, because the conditions in a river.

- Late comms reference decision, prior warning of thought process would have been helpful.
- Like the newsletters. Consistency of formatting could be better (that's one of my things).
- Lots of effort has gone into this. Design is not great though.
- Love the newsletter idea kicking in. Let's outsiders appreciate some of the work going on
- Mixed, FB unofficial group was clearly more up to date than official group or website. But this year was far better than previous years and really appreciated how much work was going on behind the scenes. Emails to entrants with each update would have been great.
- N/A as a volunteer we don't receive a newsletter.
- Newsletter sent to email addresses but also EVERYONE has the ability to view a website regardless of how you communicate socially or in business.
- No complaints. Always found it good
- No experience, I just waited for my husband to tell me what I needed to know
- No issue, have done DW five paddles, three support,
- No problem. Difficult conditions
- Possibly not frequent enough, people start following intensity in latter few weeks
- Rachel kept us very well thank informed
- regular updates were useful
- Sometimes information for paddlers seems slow
- Sorry, can't remember
- Strong
- Sufficient
- The lack of communication before the race was lamentable. We all knew there was a risk the race would be cancelled if there was too much water. But there was no communication or expectation set around at what water level the race would be allowed to continue or not. This should have been communicated.
- The news section on the website could have been more prominent, newsletters could have been more timely (important information seemed to make it to Facebook and the website before reaching my mailbox)
- This year threw up some of its own particular challenges with the Hendron debacle. Otherwise it was very little publicised from what I saw.
- This year was rubbish
- Too negative
- Too broad and obviously touch and go. People have trained for months to then be told that they are not racing. Clearly some people just lied to compete.
- Very efficient nice not to have to rely on social media would be happy to receive email SMS
- Very slow, entry's last minute,
- We were very disappointed that the race was shortened so my so will definitely be back but I think I would have appreciated a little more communication

DW Website

Did you use the DW website?

163 responses



DW Website Information

What additional info would be useful?

91 Responses

12 No, n/a, nothing, etc

79 Others:- (Note, some people wrote more than one comment)

- A written version of Owen's briefing. Particularly helpful for support crew who started somewhere midway down the course and were therefore not in Devizes at the briefing
- A document explaining the contingency plans in different conditions. This could be published well in advance of the race (e.g. in January). It would give clarity so that if you were for example not very fit and using an unstable boat, you would know you were less likely to pass a competency matrix should it resort to that. Similarly it would explain that if conditions are unfavourable the stages race would be more likely to be cancelled than SD. It could also have some loose thresholds of at which flow rates the race would go ahead, go ahead for only those deemed competent, be cancelled for all.
- A decent site that's not based on Marsport
- A map showing all the bridges on the tideway
- A news feed linked to the social media posts. It's simple addition but you can have all DW posted posts appear on the side if the home page. Might be already there, I can't recall.
- A news type or update section - I always feel the Website has the least updated info so you get caught in trap of Facebook gossip, it almost like you need an authorised version of the Facebook page - that quite rightly often has note to remind it's not a part of organisation
- All good
- All good. Latest rules could have been uploaded a bit sooner perhaps?
- As much as possible so that I can monitor it and obtain info I need for my entry/race
- As you log on - update on weather and race updates clearer

- Better layout so easier to find information. More news items to generate interest and show an active organisation.
- Buying merchandise.
- Clear section for the Newsletters - and email notifications that a new Newsletter has been posted
- Difficult to navigate, more interest in selling merchandise than offering clear information
- Don't know
- Don't know
- Earlier notification of entry.
- Easier access to mandatory kit checklists etc without digging through pdfs
- Easier to navigate for my supporters
- Email/ WhatsApp information
- Entries by boat class. I couldn't distinguish canoe vs kayak entries easily.
- Flow rates
- Given the fact that weather did become more unpredictable in the last few years, it would be good to have an option of entering a week before the race when the conditions are more certain - or swap classes/withdraw w/o penalties. It may make things harder for organisers though so possibly not a solution. It may be worth looking into allowing different boats for the Thames or extending daily time limits.
- Had everything I needed.
- How to use the tracker my support crew had troubles with it
- I could not find the date/location/timings of the Prizegiving.. It needs updating more regularly!
- I have to answer the question asked, while knowing it is put together by volunteers. I'm also yet to see an endurance event website that doesn't require a bit of thought.
- The website prioritises the wrong things. e.g. It currently has the date for the 2023 race. It should say, IMO, Next Race: 29 March to 1 April 2024
- When entries were opened, it was difficult to find the form.
- Don't have sections that say coming soon (Paddling Technique - <http://www.dwrace.co.uk/Technique.html> and Training Days and Seminars - <http://www.dwrace.co.uk/TD.html>). A cardinal sin on a website these days. And BOTH these topics are really useful and important.
- Sponsors. Currently "Those wonderful folk that help make DW happen every year!" Better if: "We're extremely grateful to these organisations for their support which helps make the Devizes to Westminster happen. If you'd like to help, please get in touch [link to director email address]"
- Merchandise: <http://www.dwrace.co.uk/merchandise.html>. Currently "Our merchandise is currently under review. More news to follow soon" Better holding text: Official merchandise is available at Devizes Wharf on Good Friday and Easter Saturday. Interestingly, there is Merchandised of sorts on Marsport. <https://www.marsport.co.uk/dw-merchandise>
- A website has to be appropriate for all users.
- I like the race stats for crews
- I think it could do with a redesign as it is not always clear where information is.
- I think it is all there on the site.
- I think it needs redesigning as it is never clear where information actually lives
- I think making sure the information on race days is easy to find can be better

- In the weeks leading up to the race, after entries are closed, the news section could feature far more prominently and relevant documents should be easy to get to.
- It was very thorough and the updates were clear
- It's very difficult to find information on the web site. Not at all clear when looking for stuff
- its fine
- Just found it not great, rules were not up to date for the current year, especially the bits about the finishes. Can't remember what I wanted, but it wasn't easy to find.
- Keep it as up to date as FB!
- Link to Thames flow data
- Links are unclear and require far too many clicks to reach the intended destination. Layout doesn't always transpose easily to mobile devices.
- Unclear who is in charge and what their titles actually mean that they should be contacted regarding.
- Links to news and social media for event
- Live web cams on the starts and at key points would be a very good idea and not overly difficult to arrange with modern facilities.
- Make sure website up to date
- Marshalling points.
- Maybe a few testimonials
- Merchandise link. More detailed Portage guides for support crew
- More breakdown on different classes
- More info on portage, postcodes for over seas
- More information about the course - points of interest and identifying good spots for supporters - advertising portages/spots where people can come and watch, where local charities are serving bacon baps and tea! We need to get more support on the banks and potentially bringing some advertising support (£). Marsport are fantastic, but more support could help any funding issues and help raise the race profile and strengthen the validity of finishing at Westminster (a big corporate supporter would love some advertising at Westminster bridge???)
- More Sat Nav codes for overseas competitors
- More training and kit guidance
- Nil. It was difficult and patience and tolerance was needed
- No additional information was necessary
- Only thing I would say is it would be good to take the last year's race information off the website earlier in the year.
- Outdated and little feed. Recently did the Liffey and had four emails and updates.
- Quick updates from social media
- Re-think it. Update it. Make it the main source of all info. Communicate earlier how you will whittle down the entries in the event of high water etc. I appreciate this is a new strategy, but put that on paper now, so if we all start training we know it is very likely us faster / more experienced crews won't waste all the training, i.e. it's ON!
- River levels
- Routes, postcodes, hints and tips for parking , places for food etc
- Routes, postcodes, hints and tips for parking , places for food etc
- Some pages can be hard to find sometimes.. I recall it was hard to tell if looking at latest rules, last updated date or next date due for some stuff would be useful
- Support crew section with estimated timings between the available support points, parking ideas, where toilets are available for support crews etc.

- Supporter directions (GPS or what three word locations to parking for portages.)
- Text messaging not everyone is on social media
- The main objectives of the role I and my fellow volunteers could be bullet pointed somewhere prominent.
- The Newsletters should go on there! And links shared to the website on social media. It should be the main source of info. A better news stream should be used. The website certainly needs some love.
- The same information which was given in briefing
- The website always feels out of date, not updated during the year
- Race splits for leading crews
- The website is very poor, perhaps not as stylish in the past but far more informative and interesting
- tide times
- Timeliness of updates
- Timings information, general advice re what needs to be done at each lock etc.
- Unsure.
- Up to date information
- Updated emergency course changes
- Very slow to be updated
- Volunteering in race control is very well coordinated.
- Website but hard to navigate for results info
- Website was out of date compared to FB info

How to get More Entries

Ideas to generate more entries

131 responses

7 were just Yes, No, or None.

- 2 / 4 day stage race
- Actually I quite enjoyed being part of a smaller event this year, though I recognise that you need to increase entry numbers to make it viable. Closing the Tideway below Putney to powered craft may make the event more attractive, especially since there have been high profile incidents this year and in 2019 which may have put people off. It is an intimidating piece of water and anything that can reduce the fear can help. Also consider a guided paddle to see the course at a similar tide state (closed river of course- University Boat Race weekend?)
- Advertising
- Aid stations like in an Ironman triathlon, so you can get water/nutrition and don't have to organise a support crew
- Allow boat changes to deal with changing conditions
- Allow entries after W/S D. (Maybe by the Weds after). A long training paddle and a long race are not the same and many people want to see how they go (as a pair) in a long race and have a day or 2 to think about it.
- Apart from the obvious safety implications, senior doubles should be allowed to race.... regardless of conditions. Unless the complete event is cancelled.
- As a DW paddler, the tideway, especially after Battersea power station is the worse bit and puts people off. Could there be a shorter race with a different category whilst keeping the history of the DW in place.
- Better marketing and advertising of the event - mainstream media such as the BBC report on significant sporting events but I didn't see anything about DW on there.
- - Facebook and insta campaigns to raise awareness well in advance so people have time to train etc. Also articles in paddler mag and such publications
- Better promotion / advertising / media awareness
- Better publicity. Drone footage. Invite media to make a movie. This is prime for a Netflix documentary. We watch so many about random running events, this is perfect! DW is a book I have of 100 ultimate endurance events to do, but it just isn't publicised. A few of us would be willing to partner with celebrities to get it on the map. Maybe even talk to the BBC about sport relief. It just needs some attention to bring it into line with other events.
- Bigger emphasis on the sub classes, particularly ladies and Canoe classes. Bigger video presence through the race, possibly live updates during the race
- Blanket advertising on all the social network groups. Encourage clubs to up your presence on their sites from Easter onwards to catch anyone who might just be looking at their local club site thinking of joining. If they see this challenge early enough it might become the reason to join. If they see it too late in the year they may be put off with not enough time left to go. Get Cadet organisations to advertise it as well. We have schools but not many CCF or other teams (Scouts aside).
- Bring back 2nd tide window, stop the elitism! Make it a challenge for all like it used to be."

- But media outlets and more National cover of the event.
- Clarity over course and standards expected to paddle it - so entrants are 100% clear on where they stand in the days before the race in each type of eventuality. I appreciate it is difficult to predict weather and river conditions - but some clarity over expectations for crews as to what would happen in different circumstances would be useful. For example if the Thames is on red boards and flow at xx rate then paddlers at xx level prevented from racing.
- Confidence that the race will go ahead if safe
- Cost is critical. As are entry requirements and ensuring a POSITIVE narrative. The politics is off putting for newcomers.
- Create a one design 'stable' boat class. Offer a package to include rental of all equipment coaching input and competence assessment. All novice crews must enter this class.
- I have a very long list that you have chosen to ignore for more than a decade. My KataKanus put more than 100,000 people a year on the water.
- Develop build up races
- Difficult as it can't be entered 'for a laugh'
- Don't shorten the race
- Encourage more to come out of retirement!!!!
- For international paddlers, some way of hooking up with local support crews may be valuable, but in all honesty I don't think it is going to help much. Maybe people don't have what it takes anymore ;-).
- For the 4 days race introduce entries for single day. People who are not keen on portages could join only the last 2 days, those who don't want to deal with u boat washes can do only the first 3 days etc.
- Get a poll from would-be entrants and get a picture of limiting factors
- Get an email out to clubs in September
- Having more races or training days on the tideway section to improve paddler competency. Going to Westminster is also a big draw card.
- I think more promotion of the whole event. At the moment all I ever see about it is within the Facebook group itself and hear about is just other people who have been involved in it or relatively involved in the sport. I think you could do a lot more with the people along the Thames as some of them don't even know the event runs
- I think that the combination of Covid and 2018 when it was cancelled may have made some people more wary. Also more stringent checks (?) but this is not a bad thing as river traffic has increased so a greater degree of competency required. I think many events have taken a slight knock and hopefully numbers will start to rebound
- I think the current actions of the DW committee are pushing it towards being an elite race only which will only decrease entries. Unless you work against that and find a way to relax the restrictions that continue to come in, the numbers will struggle. I also think that the idea here that the other races are not worth supporting is the wrong one with a push towards also getting those numbers up should also be made. One of things I most enjoyed about racing the K1 race was the mass number of paddlers out from across a range of abilities and maybe if that was highlighted rather than just treating it as a poor second which both the general DW community and also the DW committee through its actions appear to think.
- I think the DW needs to stop fixating on the senior doubles and needs to look at improving the race generally

- I think the senior doubles would benefit from a contingency plan published with known parameters before the race. So for example: Plan A is 125miles from D to W, if the flow is over xxx at xxx on xxx then Plan B will be invoked which is from D to Reading. In this way there would be confidence that the training would be worth it and the race will go ahead in some form no matter what.
- I think we make too much of the Everest of racing thing, I also believe having done K1 and seeing the endeavour event that the name doesn't do it justice, do these crews get a published time, I think they should, then we could see more pull through to senior k2
- I was shocked by how few entries there were this year. Increasing entry size brings you many challenges - congestion of supporters at locks, longer time span between first and last etc. It is such a fantastic event I don't understand why it is not attracting more endurance athletes. Probably marketing is the answer perhaps particularly targeting athletes from other sports such as rowers, cyclists, runners etc.
- I will not be entering the DW SD Race again unfortunately. The risk of not being allowed to finish at Westminster or even to start is just too great with the risk appetite of the committee. A real shame and a waste of time, money and negative impact on desire to continue kayaking.
- I'm afraid not.
- I'm still perplexed as to why no surf skis. I know tradition, but someone just crossed to Ireland in one.
- In Oct Nov maybe you sort out a DW paddle in the evening before gets dark and then they can get used to paddling in daylight then into dark
- Increase media coverage, make a noise about the long standing records that were broken this year.
- Increase University participation, partner with a charity and look for event sponsorship that could reduce fees (for example 'DW powered by red bull' etc)
- It definitely needs to run all the way through - with Covid and poor weather and the race not being run for the last (I think) 5 years I think people have forgotten about it. It is such a momentous feat of endurance it does need to be publicised more!
- It didn't seem to be promoted to the local communities as well as it could have been. The more local interest you get the easier it is to grow the sport.
- It has to be aspirational. Trying to water it down to get more entries is counterproductive as you will lose the strong racers. The reason people want to do it is because it's a set distance. John Ince's website holds all the records and people want their name in those records and to be able to say "I've done a DW".
- Perhaps looking to the SA races might give ideas.
- Leave entries open longer, some people don't decide to do it until the very last minute.
- Less is more, thought the smaller field was fantastic from a fast crew point of view, no snarl ups with pushy parents or lumbering old geezers (apologies!), Parking a dream-less stress worrying about tickets/clamping/illegal parking etc
- Let people use recognized surfski designs to make the tideway less intimidating. They're lightweight now and popular at longer races in France like the DI etc.
- Live Instagram updates during the race.
- Flags etc on towpath for passers-by to see.
- My general impression is the interest among the non-paddling community has dropped off. Richmond used to have lots of people enquiring about joining just to do the race. Maybe clubs need to do more to foster that rather than discourage it.

- Look at what was done to attract entries in the DW's heyday
- Lower costs, later entry deadline, a few years without cancellation or curtailed course
- lower entry fee as got to dear now may encourage some of us back
- Lower price. It is unaffordable for many now and is therefore only for the affluent paddler
- Make it more about the challenge and less about the elite race
- Marketing, branding, social media, strap line eg 'The big Daddy of going long!' as per DW documentary - I think 2009!
- Maybe advertise the event to other endurance sports and get more media involved. It's a largely unknown race outside of canoeing.
- Maybe consider allowing experienced singles - say those who've done it before in doubles and know what they're getting themselves into. The much longer and more dangerous Yukon River Quest allows even single SUPs, and no-one is supported en route.
- Maybe providing more certainty that the race will actually run- I think I would be put off six months of hard training for an event that, on the balance of probability, will not run in its entirety (and even if it does I might be screened out based on a few multiple choice questions).
- Media / exposure could be a lot better, there was hardly anything on Instagram accounts this year and the record was broken! Dusi run live updates on their Instagram and great to follow.
- Media has to be the answer but I know how hard getting positive coverage is
- Media traction. Get famous people who have raced to publicise
- More advertising, using FB to put the challenge out to more paddlers.
- Include SUP as this is a huge area as people are taking this up in big numbers.
- Maybe allow Surfski boats as well- different class for medals
- Possible canal only (Devizes to Reading and return 24hrs). As this removes the risk of bad weather.
- More international crews. More PR
- More live coverage on social media platforms. Team profiles on the website.
- More media coverage, what about some form of live radio coverage, similar to other sports
- More media presence of the event
- More press coverage. More club talks
- More promotion on social media through the year. Not just up towards easter. Top tips, quick fire interviews with 'legends'. Tips ideas from manufacturers. Interesting little nuggets throughout the year.
- Much more publicity! I was really surprised at how low key the build up was. Unless you are in a fairly small kayaking community, you wouldn't have any idea it was even happening! There wasn't a great deal about it anywhere apart from dedicated DW channels.
- Need to get more clubs paddling. Promote DW at Hasler races and Nationals
- Needs publicity outside canoeing circle. Ironman, Tri etc
- No why would you ? and how many entries do you want? and what are you looking for? More international paddlers? More solid crews ? More one timers that do not know what they are doing? In the end the race is a bit messy. in trying to cater for a number of people.
- Not many of my friends, work/social know of the race. More promotion at canoe races and maybe cycling/ultra marathon type events.

- Not sure off top of head, maybe a travelling road show go to clubs around country maybe much further away than London area and try and advise put together info how training practical issues etc could be sorted if you can't train anywhere near the race location to encourage a wider network to sign up
- Open entries earlier
- Open evenings at canoe clubs who don't enter
- open the rules up more.
- Perhaps better advertisement
- Perhaps it's worth considering two finish point and entrance fees. : i.e.: Teddington £ X plus a premium fee to finish at Westminster. Just a thought.
- PR! Get the word out there, use sponsors. I am from Lifesystems (who you buy the blankets etc. from). We sponsor other events. You need to use various brands and your own social media to publicise and get word out there. It will then grow. Look at races such as the Montane Spine race and others like this.
- Promotion to grassroots organisations from the summer. Post an A4 poster out to clubs that have taken part, asking them to put the poster up. By clubs, that is EVERY type of organisation for which there is a trophy and / or award. At the awards on Saturday (very nice btw) there was a Scouts award. How many scout entries do we get?
- Provide more information to teams starting out, as an international support crew we it took us years to figure out some elements
- Provide more information to teams starting out, as an international support crew we it took us years to figure out some elements
- Publicise the race more - social media, news channels, sell it - consider looking into prize money or sponsored incentives for winners or podium - make it a bigger deal
- raise the races profile outside of the racing community, perhaps try to draw people in from outside of paddling
- Recognise that Ireland is Overseas!
- Reduce price, maybe for entries submitted before Christmas.
- Reduce the price
- Rental of kits for 4 months. Wider advertising outside of kayaking community as a "Challenge", multi year build up. Get more celebs to do it and advertise it via their social media
- Run a reliable race. Keep it Devizes to Westminster, every year, rain or shine. This race could be an attraction for international athletes but who would want to commit all the money and training required on entering an event that is fickle.
- Run it during a Bank Holiday weekend later in the year. Then you can guarantee that the race will happen. Have one finish window and more group starts so that you feel that you are in a race. You can paddle for hours without seeing another crew with such few numbers.
- Since when has this been a problem? Yes...how about a stages race run as part of the ICF calendar
- Sorry no ideas
- Spread the word - many are interested once aware of the event
- Standalone 'race'-was so much easier as support crew 2023 to actually get through to support and not trip over/be blocked by schools supporters
- Stop cancelling the race! It represents an investment in the region of £2000 (being conservative)per person in a 2 person crew to enter the race once all things like accommodation and food for crew, fuel, training, travelling, equipment (even just

small things add up very quickly) are taken into account. That's not including the ever rising entrance fee. It's hard work to find and train a crew that will give up not only their time but also the one 4day weekend they get all year only to be told the night before that all the effort was for nothing! There are far more dangerous races around the world with far less safety cover and to keep refusing paddlers because of water levels is not in the spirit of the race. It is nothing more than political. Of course when there has been raging gales and government lockdowns it is beyond the organisers control. But to stop people competing because the levels are high is enough for me to not want to enter or give up my time to help with the race again. It's becoming something I no longer wish to be associated with. The time of year it is run practically guarantees high water levels every few years.

- Stop playing “nanny state” & let paddlers take responsibility for themselves & their ability. It is not possible to run a safe race - all water sports are going to be dangerous
- Target some of the other endurance events with info. Get a more stable craft/ class for less competent crews
- The culture over the years has become too elitist and related to marathon racing.
- The South African river races are promoted on social media for months before the race (Fish and Dusi etc), to grab everyone's attention and create excitement around the race. The same should be done here. Also, what about holding the race over the May bank holiday? There are a number of advantages: less paddling in the dark, not nearly as cold, easier to train for the race. The only disadvantage would be that the stage race paddlers may have to take a day's annual leave to compete. Finding seconders for the race also deters entrants, so having general seconding tables with juice and food for all competitors may be a good idea, so that paddlers can place less reliance on supporters.
- There could be advantage to more publicity around the endeavour event, to encourage more people to do that first, and then step up to the senior double event (min, risk of inexperienced crews). Do we advertise to all canoe clubs in UK? Could promotional videos be sent around/shown at National championships etc? Do DW have a promotional stand at National marathon Champs (needs volunteers however)? Could we advertise on other ultra sports social media (Ironmans etc)?
- There is a sad culture within some of the online DW community to hound and blast people that are new or unsure, watching people get pulled apart for fairly innocent and innocuous questions. Watching some of these 'hard working volunteers' reducing girls to tears (she'd asked when the cut-off time of entry was) or using their status to absolutely ridicule one of the only kayak boat repairers (he'd ask for clarity on craft as he wants to build a DW specific boat: a founding ethos) in London and the SE was just sick. No matter how valuable some of these volunteers are, cancers need to be removed. Witnessing some of these has put me off ever engaging with DW until there is some amount of change and accountability.
- Unfortunately no, as a previous attemptee I know how much commitment is required not just from paddler but support crew and with such unpredictable weather it is a huge undertaking for some
- Unsure .
- We have had a few years of disruption which has put people off committing to the race. Hopefully it will return to normal levels soon. The chance of a daylight run would encourage some.

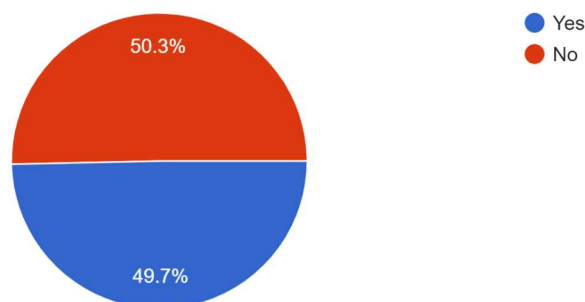
- While there is obviously a risk involved in the sport, the best way of increasing numbers would probably be to widen the marketing into other ultra endurance sports and view this as one of the 'crown jewels' of ultra distance, rather than keeping it within a purely kayaking world. There are plenty of boats out there stable enough for people to paddle with limited experience and DW could even look to invest in a fleet which could be hired out to crews looking to compete as a one-off.
- Press and social media presence are obviously key nowadays and there was very little information about the race outside paddling communities. Even though the course record was broken, this wasn't widely reported.
- Hold the race at a time of year more suited to good conditions and likelihood of high spectator numbers (or passersby) on the course.
- Why do you want more entries- sounds like you only want the top divisions to enter (shorter window to complete due to start times fixed on Saturday morning)
- Would involve reaching out to clubs throughout the year highlighting positives of doing the race and succinctly conveying prep required - on fb pages info tends to become quite convoluted
- Wow - stop p***ing people off that could have done the race, this is a known fact.
- Yeah, don't kick people out of the class.
- Yes - advertise in South Africa and other countries with big canoe marathon ethos.
- Hold the event in July (easier to train for and less likely to have cancellations but tougher with slow water)
- Better marketing. The marketing of the extraordinary achievements post this race was really minimal. Took media a long time to latch on.
- Yes - as above, possibly change of boats and relaxing seriously time windows, it will make the race much more doable for many.
- Yes, interacting with clubs earlier and getting posters up in clubs and colleges/universities. Improves mental health and wellbeing. Also getting the armed Forces more involved through all services and units. Especially through the Royal Army Physical Training Corps and Sandhurst. Branding one of the toughest Canoe races in the world.

Relay Event

Should the DW run a Relay Event?

Relay

145 responses



Relay comments

87 responses

2 n/a or None

- 3 paddlers, Dev to New, New to Read, Reading to Teddington and all three paddle tideway together
- 4 person team
- A relay is not in the spirit of the race! It was and is a long distance challenge to be completed in as quick a time as possible. Not to mention the added logistics involved which with added vehicles needed will cause the whole event massive issues.
- A relay race would be a perfect addition to the DW. And might increase entries.
- A very bad idea that will undermine what little integrity this event has left
- Allow some flexibility where change overs can happen, not fixed rigidly, I'd be an example of someone who love to race again but my div 7 speed is now bit too tight to make tideway times whereas in relay I could still be involved as in combination would be faster
- An interesting idea, as an older paddler the portaging took its toll on our times. Younger team members can do the majority of portages...then the older fellas can crack on with the Thames! 😞
- Anything to get more involvement
- As a Hasler paddler I would be interested in doing a short distance in a relay whereby I am not remotely interested in completing the whole event!
- Be great for under 18's to get involved in the nonstop event
- Be interesting to see although could end up increasing supporter traffic on the event.
- Could attract people to do sections rather than having to do the full race
- Could be a fresh option for those not prepared for the full race
- Could be an interesting challenge

- Could be great fun also maybe for K1 too as some paddlers don't want to do all the distance but want to paddle some
- Could it include School crews?
- Could possibly dilute the race
- Definitely not - relay is a different type of race altogether
- Depends on format
- Designated change over points
- Don't water a great event down
- Don't make it easy it's meant to be hard
- If people aren't good enough don't enter
- Don't water down what you already have. You have the stages non-competitive class, use that.
- DW is a non-stop single crew race
- Good idea but I think at present with current entries falling this will detract from what the race is about.
- Good idea.
- Good idea.....possibly fixed change over points though could cause parking issues?
- good idea crews of 4/6 to be able to change paddlers at any time in race may be use different boats at times i.e. k2/c2 but with same numbers on
- Good team event that could be done to strict rules.
- Great idea, especially if can be done in K1's
- I am wondering who you are expecting to enter a relay race.
- I have paddled the Glasgow to Edinburgh as a relay, it was a good format which added to the race.
- I've seen this tried in several other races and it tends to dilute the racers that would also compete in the overall race such that you get the same number of racers but fewer boats.
- I think it will detract from a brilliant event .
- I think it would only be good if it was to pull in paddlers from outside the current paddler community
- I think the committee needs to make up its mind what it is promoting. Whatever new events or classes it wants to bring in needs to bring in paddlers from outside the current ones who do the event or it will be struck where it is.
- I think this detracts from the achievement of nonstop racing
- I think this is a great idea to boost entries
- I think this is a great idea. Team 4-6 changing as they like. The tracker as the relay batten. This could be great! it might encourage people from endeavour to straight through relay (not sure if this helps?)
- I would but personally sign up for it, but I think it's a great idea.
- I'm in favour of the relay race idea but it should not be run in a way that would allow the non-stop event to use the relay race for wash hanging! - this would invalid any records achieved.
- I'm not a paddler
- I'm not sure it would appeal to me personally, but it sounds like a great idea to try and attract more people into the main event (would this include singles?)
- If is something I have done as part of charity bike rides (see Challenge Adventure Charities)
- if it gets more people interested who know they are not up to the full thing. The Ultra challenges do 100k which can be walked/jogged or run over a weekend. There is an

option to do the whole thing in one go, spread the 100k over 2 days or even just do one day (either the sat or the sun) of @50k. (I think there is even a half day option) It means that almost anyone can have a go

- If this could be allowed for singles, it'd be great. A relay format would be much safer for an overnight race, as singles wouldn't risk falling asleep.
- Interesting idea - May get more clubs involved
- It might for fun, but the Blue Riband event is the DW non-stop.
- A relay might increase the traffic, without adding to the event.
- It might be worth seeing what the numbers are for English Channel swims - individual and relay. Channel Swimming Association (<https://www.channelswimmingassociation.com/swims>) logs the following: CSA SUCCESSFUL SWIMS SINCE 1875 – 2779. SOLOS – 1827 RELAYS – 952. So about adding relays increases entries by about 50%. Looking at total number of swimmers in an event using the Advanced Search. 1827 solos has 1829. 951 relays (of between 2 and 9 swimmers) has 4976 swimmers. Google sheets spreadsheet with more detail at <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PszvozJxXXJWNSLoxOOtLD161WN773Lyi3-X5gg52s/edit#gid=0>. If charging per person, that's a BIG revenue earner.
- It used to work for Cheshire Ring but would probably require even more volunteers
- It would have been - back in the day.
- Keep going to Westminster, a relay race would be a good idea to encourage/give people a taster of non-stop event .
- Like the Cheshire Ring - brilliant event
- Love it
- Make the endeavour class a timed competitive event instead. then it's all daylight.
- Maybe additional categories for the Mature paddler.. crews with an age of more than average age of in the 40s 50s 60s 70s. With 3 crews total age in 200-249, 250-399, 300-349, 350-399, 400+ maybe other categories for 2 crews, and or 4 crews....
- Maybe of interest, but not sure. Hadn't thought about it before, but I suppose most people think of the race as a mission to do the whole distance themselves
- Naahhh. Not for me anyway. It's fine as it is. Need to encourage more entries, but I'm not sure diluting the distance is the way to go. Keep it to pure endurance.
- Not for me but I would think this would interest a range of crews
- Not interested
- Not personally, but I can see the value in attracting new entrants with an initiative like this.
- Not sure
- Personally feel this would be a different style of event
- Personally I would not get excited about this but recognise it would probably generate some interest.
- possibly - could open the race up to a different paddlers
- Selfish reason. I am getting on in years and will probably get to point where the SD is just too much. But I would definitely do a straight through relay with another K2 crew once I got to that point. I don't think I would do the staged race again unless I couldn't find a partner.
- Sounds like a great idea. It works well at other long distance races as a way to engage beginners and those who haven't had time to train for the full thing.
- Allow different crews in the relay to use different boats.

- That could be a good idea, but finding a good format in there will be again a challenge. There was a 200 km Elfstedentocht relay in the Netherlands that never picked up. In running it is easy , with paddling it always will be a lot hard to get the logistics working . Each part of the relay in their own boat or 1 boat that should fit all? 12 x 10 mile ish , the classic 4 stages? Can anyone make their own plan? etc..
- That could be fun.
- That is not DW
- That's a great idea. Much more manageable than doing the whole thing. The team spirit could be really exciting.
- There are many paddlers who feel the total distance would be unachievable for them and therefore never enter but would be more likely to consider a section of it. This may also encourage them to consider the whole race, whether as stages or straight through, if they felt comfortable with the relay. It also might be a more affordable way of taking part for many.
- Think this would be difficult to add miles for the 1000 mile club, which is important to many.
- This could give less experienced paddlers a taste, and encourage them for future events, and tackle the full race
- Washing issues
- While such races would definitely be cool, I see no added value in organising them on this particular course. A relay race could finish before the tideway.
- Why not try it
- Works well with the Cheshire Ring
- Would add significantly to costs for overseas crews
- Would be exciting to watch
- Would be good to have a separate female relay category for clubs.
- Would be great for clubs to get people involved that are perhaps put off by the significant distances and times involved
- Would crew use this to pace make crews.
- Wouldn't need the same stringency as senior doubles; juniors or mixed club crews could do a straight through relay with appropriate attention paid to who is on the water when (eg at night)
- Yes, would interest me but it already interests me. Good idea but would this actually take numbers away from the Senior doubles?
- You risk having relay crews being brought in to help some senior doubles crews with a wash and fresh paddlers. Would ruin the competition

DW Organisation

Can you contribute?

Would you consider taking an active part in the organisation of the DW? This does not necessarily mean that you have to be a full time Team Member, or cannot enter the race, but maybe you have specific skills or interests that would be useful for a Team Leader to call upon. Yes/No. If yes what support can you offer DW?

148 responses

57 = just No

24 just Yes

- Apologies for not saying yes to the above but my time commitments in other areas preclude any further involvement. I have trained up several novices and previously ran a School team thus introducing paddlers and supporters to the race who have continued to be involved. So in my way I've done my best.
- As requested by James Treadgold I'm filling in the survey. I'm from Open Tracking.
- Assist as part of regular JD campsite crew
- At some point in the future I would be v keen to be involved but currently and for 2024 race my schedule doesn't allow
- At some point. Not for 2024 though due to personal reasons
- Happy to volunteer for the race at portages
- I don't have the time. I also think that one of the solutions to the DW is more paid people with the appropriate increases in costs and fees.
- I have volunteered previously and will do so again as a marshal or wherever is required
- I was on the committee for a number of years and would be happy to help in a specific way. Probably in comms or opportunity development.
- I will gladly support a crew
- I would consider volunteering once my racing days are over. As ex-military I could help in logistics, planning, liaison prior to the race and on the day, act as a marshal anywhere along the course. Still got 3 races to go though!
- I would love to help but not sure how. I know how to paddle :)
- I'm a teacher working long hours but could help if needed.
- I'd like to complete it first and then assist in the future.
- If I lived in the UK yes.
- if I'm not doing the race then I will volunteer to help as a Marshal. Maybe in the future if I have more time I will help the organisation.
- If you need the portage diagrams redone, I can assist. Also could originally help with a supporter's guide doc if you think it would reduce the issues caused on the course by the schools parents etc.
- If you think I can be handy just ask
- I'm happy to marshal if for some reason I'm not competing
- In the future - but family life prohibits me now
- in the future, yes .. limited time currently [too many other things to do !]
- Irish based, would love to help in London (have accommodation) whenever we are not supporting

- Never say never, but not yet
- No, Currently I don't feel that the organisation wants to hear new ideas or look outside the traditional paddling community.
- No, I already did 8 years on the steps for the doubles.
- No, It doesn't feel accessible; it is exclusive, much like the MRC and SRC.
- No, Live in Ireland
- No, Not at this stage but it would be something I could do in the future
- No, Not at this time
- No, Not while I am working
- No, Sorry my work commitments would make it quite difficult as it is the busiest time of year.
- No, Sorry not to be able to help rather busy with aged parents/ teenagers and full time job
- Not realistic being from Holland
- Not sure, trying to give things up at the moment - not take on more commitments!!
- Not this year (already have too many commitments unfortunately, but definitely in the future!)
- Not UK based
- Perhaps in future, but I would struggle at the moment given my school commitments.
- Probably.
- Right now with young children I don't really have time but will definitely consider it in the future. Would also be happy to help / give comments with the idea of using or getting brand sponsors to help generate some money and the profile of the race if that is of interest, but possibly opens a can of worms.
- To be honest, the organisers already have very strong opinions on the event, best to keep a low profile and not get caught up in any bun fights.
- Very happy to once I stop being a team leader but that will be a few years yet.
- Well, I wouldn't discount the idea, but I'm pretty full volunteering for my local club as it is.
- When I retire I would certainly want to volunteer but don't have any specific skills.
- Whilst I fully support the DW, I do not believe that I have the spare time to involve myself in the DW. I think that this request goes to the one of the core issues of the DW where it is trying to run a large event on an amateur basis where most similar events are run by fully paid companies
- Yes, Admin / computing.
- Yes, I am a Paddler than is now part of the DW community and would want to offer help for future events
- Yes, I am a program manager, I am a DEI lead for a business and a Planner
- Yes, I have served my time on the org team
- Yes, I would be involved more but already committed at a high level with the marathon sport in terms of volunteering hours
- Yes, I'd be happy to get involved if the committee see fit.
- Yes, I'd be happy to help put together the written version of Owen's briefing.
- Yes, In future I would like to help out with marshalling or with the start activities.
- Yes, in principle yes, in practice I don't have any special knowledge or skill. done the event five times.
- Yes, Just past knowledge of racing and support, I helped a local parent last year with maps advice etc who had never been involved before but heard I knew about race
- Yes, Marshalling / Finance / Accountancy

- Yes, No special skills and intend continuing to enter in the future!
- Yes, Not sure what I could offer but happy to help on practical level.
- Yes, Not sure what skills I have as a DT teacher but could be linked to school involvement.
- Yes, Offered took up a role, started, then the roles disappeared
- Yes, Paddling experience
- Yes, Spreadsheet/IT
- Yes, Supporting Vicky!
- Yes, The race is fantastic, well done! My only thought for improvement is to consider a formal dinner for the prize-giving. Perhaps the schools that enter crews could take in turns to provide the venue for this, and my company might be one that is interested in sponsoring it to help cover the costs. I think a formal dinner would be a great contrast to the grit of the race and may have particular appeal to youngsters, especially girls, and help attract more entries into junior and JV crews and up the stakes a bit for winning a prize
- Yes, Volunteer when I stop racing

Any other comments?

Please provide any other comments that you feel would be useful to the DW Organisation. We would prefer these to be constructive suggestions. If there is not sufficient space, please state this, add contact information and we will get in touch with you.

86 responses

- Consider moving next year's senior race to a Friday to allow an earlier finish so the race can get down to Westminster before the big boats come out
- Consider putting the tideway safety back out to the community to see if anyone can help at a cheaper rate
- Finish at Putney for juniors! Definitely a great idea!
- Have some contingency for the junior event in case of flood. E.g. day 2, they then run to Marlow. Day 3. Paddle on Dorney and do some shorter races
- Seniors to go to Westminster but shrink ride window. Get more finishing closer together and as early as possible. No event tents required. Keep it simple like this year.
- A massive thank you to all the volunteers
- A supporter info / direction pack would be very useful. Maybe keep the briefing a little shorter. We aren't going to remember every lock in detail.
- Allow Surfskis for K1. We're seeing people buy the Nelo k1/ski combo which they wouldn't be allowed to race.
- Although not possible every year it was refreshing not to be held up at portages by slower crews fading. I think a rule about not feeding while sat at a Portage would be good to make people eat on the move or stop off the line at a portage would be a big improvement. In 2016 I supported Davis + Davis in C2 and it was extremely frustrating to see them make up time on the Thames only to lose it all stuck behind slow crews at portages
- An acknowledgement of the email that I previously sent would be a start
- As well as creating media campaigns to increase the number of paddlers it would be great so see more comms going out to the canal and river towns affected to generate support from locals and encourage people using the river to be mindful of the event taking place
- Be quicker with decisions and WhatsApp, text out. We personally had hotels booked that could not be cancelled in time, costly for no paddling.
- Boat stands at check in makes it easier to check
- Coming from the US, I found the race to be very well organised. The getting in part I found to be very stressful as we do not have the paddler ranking system over here like you do over there. Had it not been for the wash from the Uber Clipper, I thought the course was challenging but not overly difficult. Thanks for letting us race.
- Communications this year were much better than previous years, difficult decisions had to be made right up to race day and participants were kept informed
- The issues around individuals and the AGM created extra distraction and I think all those involved handled these challenges well
- Conditions were harsh, and I could see why the organisers stopped juniors and K1s at Dreadnought. Endeavour didn't continue because of insufficient numbers. If we have the same again, allow selected, say, 'top 10 junior crews' to join Endeavours. I

sort of get the reasons for the decisions that were made, but my crew were far more stable and competent on the water than many (most?) of the Endeavours (which would have been allowed to continue given sufficient numbers). We could have then had a daylight race. (We are a Thames river based club, and my crew were training in those conditions right up to the race). I'm sure there's more to it than that, but something to bear in mind."

- Decent consistent comms. Find someone who knows what they're doing, not some random enthusiast who fancies having a go. Keep Marsport at bay. There are other canoe equipment companies. Proper comms and marketing will help you get sponsorship, that would significantly help keep costs for competitors down.
- During the build-up you guys seems to use twitter, I don't use this system, possible blog section on you website, with different categories.
- Generally had a positive experience - it's a shame we were screened out. but we will apply next year
- Great work this year. It's a phenomenal effort for a phenomenal race. And fantastic to get an opportunity to give feedback.
- Keep up the good work. Don't bow to pressure to water down the race. Look at other endurance sports, they are going longer and harder and it's drawing more and more people.
- "Half DW nonstop to Reading. Starts with Seniors on Saturday (1 hour start window 7- 8)) K1 and K2 event. 14 hour time limit
- Provide glow sticks for paddlers (to many issues with paddlers providing their own)
- I am not suggesting that you haven't taken this as far as you can already but: the liaison with the PLA and notice to other tideway users needs to change somehow to increased and improve their awareness of the racers presence on the tideway on the Sunday and Monday. Every year I have paddled down the tideway boats have been tipped over by other water users resulting in tragedy and many near misses. Other than that I can't thank the DW team enough for putting the race on this year, despite the difficult conditions. The race and competitors needed it to happen and finish at Westminster. Which you achieved safely. This might prove crucial for the continuation of such a historic and epic challenge.
- I didn't like the bad social media stuff about the committee before the race. I think the race is pretty special and its strength is its inclusivity, what other sport offers such a race away from the normal league aspect and allows novice crews (div 3/4) with a bit of planning and endurance the chance to impact in the top 10 or 20 while they are paddling with a pair from their club going for an epic 30r time.
- I did really enjoy the race brief and the unflappable can do spirit of all involved particularly at the start. We'll done committee 😊"
- I do not feel the need to be so strict with penalties/disqualifications/etc - if someone enters the race, they know what they are signing for. And if they cheat, this is to their conscience. I would like time cutoffs to be removed as personally I know I can do the race every time, but these kill me, but I understand the marshalling issues. Race can be done unsupported if water is provided in a few places, this will also help to bring in more paddlers. Many people are worried about Tideway - so a really good cover, boats following paddlers closely will give comfort. There is no way to stop boat traffic but maybe more visibility to the race?
- I have sent some specific comments re safety in difficult conditions at night

- I liked the way the DW committee made a decision and stuck with it. We all knew where we stood.
- I note that you are only asking this year's paddlers whether the finish at Westminster is important. I am concerned and confused that this question is not going across all the questionnaires as I would have thought that this would have a key question to ask everyone. My personal view is that the DW loses its uniqueness and becomes a lesser event if it cuts out the tideway. I do think that the DW organisation thus should do everything in its power to keep a Westminster finish, even if that does mean costs and thus fees to paddlers going up.
- I suppose you could do a 125 mile race from Lechlade to Teddington, that would cut out the tideway , or even Bath to Teddington a similar distance I would guess.
- I think DW is a fantastic experience and wonderful organisation. As a School Team Leader I finish the Easter weekend feeling that I have been given the chance to be part of something special and very grateful for it.
- I think it would be beneficial for safety for crews to have to have paddled the section they will do in the dark as a prerequisite of entry with some exceptions i.e. overseas crews at the discretion of the senior umpire. The mentality that completing the Waterside series is the main training build up does not prepare crews for the rigours of the paddling through the night whilst tired. Portages should be amended to suit conditions i.e. Shiplake portage lock right when the river is in spate, Sunbury and Molesey portage lock right not the rollers when the downstream landing stage is under water etc. In 2001 I wrote a route guide that is no longer available through the DW shop.
- I think it would be useful if a competency level was assigned at the time of entry to help manage expectations in the run up to the event - then if conditions became dangerous paddlers would have a better idea of how likely they would be to be allowed to race
- I think it's a wonderful race with a storied history and I hope it keeps going.
- I think the conditions in a river wasn't so bad how it was described in briefing. And I think the decision to cancel K1 race wasn't necessary. But any way I respect it. Thank you all for huge work organising that brilliant event.
- I think the organisers did a great job this year in very challenging circumstances. I'm a big fan of the DW having been a competitor since 1989.
- I thought the way the race was reduced in numbers to get around this year's danger / high water issue was excellent and would hope this is a route for all future races, so that it can go ahead no matter. Be clear in this before each race, lay out the criteria, then it won't come as a surprise when somebody doesn't get to race etc.
- Do something with the website, get a communications person to look at this and the whole of social media - not just talking on the FB pages about the race, but promoting it - assuming you want more entries. Tell 'non-paddlers' they can do it and it's a great challenge. I was an ex-rower with no paddling experience at all and it was a great thing to have a go at. Get an Instagram page set up with somebody posting. It is an awesome and tough event, everybody in it is very modest which is nice, but the event doesn't need to be quite so modest - shout about it and communicate the hardcore event that it is, through good marketing.
- The actual organisation and running of the event was very good, I don't have anything to add here, except can we have the old breakfast back at the finish? ;-)
Thanks.

- I was extremely hurt by the way that the field was cut this year. I hope that even if I was given the chance to compete I would still have seen this decision as being overly officious, last-minute and based on cronyism. If fields have to be cut in future then I personally don't feel that course records can stand (what if you had discounted a crew who were actually very quick but were unknown to you) or places should be given (listing entrants who complete the course as 'finishers' would reflect that not all were given the chance to take part). Unfortunately based on the conversations I had in the hours before the race and reading some posts on social media afterwards, I doubt anything I've just written is likely to be taken on board in a constructive way by those in charge of the race. Having been involved in a year when all participants were barred is very different in feel to this year's decision (we had trained for a year to paddle the DW in 2021 as well, so I know the difference).
- On a wider view, the timing of the race may traditionally be supported by many, but if the headache every year is water levels and course conditions then this should be questioned. It would also perhaps go some way to negating the constant question about course records being linked with high flow rates.
- The race needs to find ways to (safely) bring endurance athletes from other disciplines into the DW community. Additionally the schools race can't be seen as an afterthought and constantly be the first to be cancelled if this is the future of the sport.
- Overall I have at present lost faith in the organisation and the race in general. This was supposed to be my 'A' race of the season but the haphazard nature of communication, closed shop feel and lack of recognition among the wider ultra-distance community means that this isn't likely to be the case for many years to come. Good luck with your endeavours in rebuilding trust and building the profile of the race. It could be something special again but doesn't seem to know what it wants to be at the moment.
- I've been commenting about Ireland and the Overseas class for 20 years. You have GOT to change the rules on this. It is deeply insulting....and, unfortunately, a source of ridicule for the race in Ireland....
- If the event is too risky, such that it is cancelled or curtailed as much as it runs, it might be that DW is not for the masses in the modern era with H&S and risk aversion (rightly so). Devizes to Teddington might be the future for a mass event... even then the Thames on Red Boards is still a big hurdle to an annual event can run.
- If the last leg was a time trial with a mass start time would this make the tideway safer?
- In reality there are only really a few crews racing. I would really like to see a common craft category for those who don't race low divisions. A Condor class (stability 8+) would give newcomers or ultra racers an opportunity to be involved in their own race/challenge. The DW is one of the only long distance race in the UK. If Westminster is an issue, why not race from Lechlade to Teddington?
- In this year's race, the decision for the crews who were allowed to race, should not have been taken by the paddlers. It is either safe to race or it is not. When there is a chance of records being broken the paddlers are going to opt to race regardless as this chance only comes on very rare occasions and their judgement could be clouded. Even the most experienced can come into danger and fall in on the weirs. (Although a fantastic achievement by the winning crew, of which I followed throughout the race)
- Isn't it time that the race became more forward thinking? Why have certain things gone backwards, for instance, checking of equipment and what needs to be carried. I

personally would agree with a price rise if the service was then able to match the rise for instance, free T-shirts.. DW still possibly the cheapest adventure race out there. The question is, is that a good thing?

- It is a wonderful event and given many people so much over many years. A 25% discount on race entry if the year before one had made a significant volunteering effort.
- It was a close run thing this year so congratulations on running a successful event. I thought senior K1 could have run.
- It'd be nice to distinguish sit-and-switch style marathon canoes from high-kneelers. They are completely different boats (kneelers are way faster for similar athlete level), yet they share the same categories, records and prizes.
- It's an amazing event. It's great to see this survey. I'm sure you'll get some negative comments which, hopefully, will also be useful.
- Just a very big THANK YOU
- Just to say what a difficult job you have and as a volunteer for other organisations I know how thankless it can seem at times - well done
- Keep up the good work.
- Maybe a two day, all daylight, event as a race, not as Endeavour.
- Maybe we could advertise for volunteers by getting more of Devizes people involved. As many people like to watch perhaps through the Devizes Gazette and Herald we could let people know how they can actively contribute and enjoy the weekend volunteering
- Merchandise could be improved and generate some useful income.
- Merchandise should be improved both for income generation and for publicity.
- The race is awesome, unique and extreme. It offers a unique challenge accessible to all with the right minerals! It should be aspired to by all endurance athletes.- not just paddlers but rowers, runners, triathletes and cyclists alike. It has a glorious history that must not be undervalued and creates a powerful brand that needs greater promotion.
- My belief is there is a need to manage and meet the expectations of people of the range of paddlers without putting the event at risk of being stopped. I like the idea of pre DW event say the G2E. Including the Watersides might not be a good move because for many it's a long way to drive for Waterside A and B. I appreciated the Marsport's session for newbies to DW - it was a chance to meet people who have completed DW and get some real insight to what is involved to complete the challenge.
- My biggest recommendation is lights at weirs. I knew the river well, but at night was always a challenge navigating River Thames at weir portages. Can we not put together a distinguishable light that flashes at each exit. So that paddlers get assisted with seeing portage exits earlier. Also the portage at Windsor was a stroke of genius. Going through the bridge adds nothing and it helped with safety.
- My skills wouldn't help organisation but will volunteer again.
- Open entries earlier - every week that passes is one less entry you will have. Make it easy to enter.. even if it costs say 5% to use an entry system.
- Parking at the finish is an obvious issue these days. Is there any opportunity to use other car parking ... eg IBM nearby .. could someone open a door there perhaps?
- Personally. I could do with at least two more volunteers assisting with the traffic management i.e. cones laid out & collected

- Please keep DW as is, it won't be the same if too much changes. Thank you all for the great work x
- Please see my comments above re the idea of a formal dinner for prize-winners. I raced with my 15 year old daughter, indeed I have 2 daughters, and the purpose of my own business is to encourage youngsters into physical activity in the countryside on land or water, for all the benefits that brings. This was my first DW but the event is an amazing thing for young people to take part in, so I wanted to make the suggestion and would be happy to discuss the idea more with anyone.
- Race 2023 for SD was top notch-knowledgeable marshals/chief/great comms and support from DW-hugely improved from 2018
- Screening this year was sensible. I think this should be made clearer in the future in the rules and at point of entry that this may happen in high water levels, to take away uncertainty. Maybe it's time to consider permanently finishing all junior and singles crews at Teddington (TYM) to reduce the increasing tideway risk and reduce the cost of Westminster set-up to one finish window on Sunday am (as this year for SD). Allow slower SD crews to start earlier at Devizes to negate the reduced finish at Westminster. Consider continued briefing by marshals at portages, especially when dark and at unsupported locations. Keep SD as the 'blue ribbon' event by finishing at Westminster, whenever feasible (note - I support decisions to shorten races that have happened in the past).
- Singles team race using Cycling TTT rules eg time taken from 4th competitor to cross line.
- Sorry last box is playing up and a Strategic Leader used to organising large events so happy to advise on any of the above. Once I retire (3 years) I am likely to offer more tangible support but happy to do the odd thing ahead of then. Thanks
- Suggest prizegiving be part of the Easter event , try and promote the event more , share stories from volunteers, support crew on the page & have someone give a daily results or nightly live up updates on the social pages!
- Thank you to the organisers, because without you and the volunteers it simply wouldn't happen.
- Thanks everyone for running a race on a year where I thought it would not run. Keep up the good work.
- Thanks for trying to maintain the race in its existing traditional format. We enjoyed the training events that lead up to the event (Waterside and Thameside races and paddles on the Thames) we were disappointed that we couldn't compete this year but fully understand and respect the decision that was made.
- The current team are doing a great job - thank you! Really proud to be a part of the DW family and this year was such a special year for everyone - well done :)
- The organisation does not welcome new people or ideas
- The race is very dear to me, but as a busy foreigner I don't feel in the capacity to really help out, sorry.
- The stress the race organisers were under due to the previous week's rainfall was apparent. It was clear that the main driver to run the race was so that the record may be taken. This being the case the wisest thing to do may have been to only allow a handful that stood a chance to take it to compete, and that expressly said that the purpose of everything appeared to happen to facilitate a record attempt, all other races were cut short, and half the SD field pulled. If you're pulling half the SD race entry and cutting short others days before the race, then clearly the race shouldn't have been run, because its either deemed safe or it's not. The screening process

and what happened will put people off from entering again, it came across as a race for mates, even more so after seeing how early some crews dropped, and photos of others that had deemed themselves in the screening as very fit etc. The hardest thing to do would have been cancel the race, but I think that would have been the fairest option and the easiest for all competitors to understand. I wouldn't wish to be the race organiser, especially in such conditions. However I do not think that just because the record was taken means that deciding to run the race was the right one.

- There needs to be a reinstatement of the finishing village. The whole point of the race was to meet up with fellow competitors at the end and congratulate each other. Without it the whole race seemed a complete waste of time and a massive anticlimax for me.
- There were a number of comments from people local to the race course who expressed interest in becoming more engaged in the event. I am not sure how much contact is made with residents in the areas but maybe this is a way to encourage local support and help. They may not have the understanding of the people of a paddling community but might also help with avoiding less upset with those who consider the event is detrimental to their lives. It would, of course, mean more work with the organisers but maybe direct contact with any that have commented this year might increase the band of dedicated supporters.
- Think it's good as it is
- Thought the Senior Doubles this year was phenomenal! Hugely appreciated the sleek, professional set up, communication and appreciation for the athletes involved. Acknowledgment that this is the Kayaker's Everest!
- Trust the crew's personal Risk Assessments
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- Try to keep personal differences outside of the events publications (social media), the in house fighting was extremely disturbing to read. Experienced paddlers, such as members of the 1000 mile club should be asked (or invited) to offer their (valued) opinions on some of the events decisions.
- Volunteers are needed to run an event, I get that (immediate net gain). But if those same volunteers are so venomous that they put off people engaging with the race in the future, there is a very real net-loss. The rotten apples stay on and the good eggs don't come in. It is vital that the community is policed appropriately if the race is to have a future. The boat builder that asked about definitions of ski/kayak was looking for clarity so they could build a K1 that could be deep-water-recovered like a ski. But needed to know where the definition lines were. He got absolutely chewed-out by the community. When actually 'building a craft that is durable enough for the canal but stable enough for the Thames' is a founding ethos of the race. To be told "you're a p***k, it's tradition" for trying to pursue the innovation that the race is meant to encourage is a dark irony and means the current race fails to adhere to its founding objectives because a handful of vocal individuals feel they own DW due to their volunteering. The boat builder will no longer try to build 'the ideal DW kayak' -the community well and truly bit the hand that feeds it. Rip out the caner.
- We deferred until next year as less than half-way seemed a waste of entrance money but we fully understood the reasons and appreciated the efforts in comms and trying to keep some sort of event going. I think the biggest issue the event has is a lack of publicity and sponsorship and that needs somebody skilled and dedicated to that alone. Changing times and challenging ones!

- Well done for getting the event to run in 2023. Add the screening system to the website so people are aware of the system if conditions are challenging. Make the screening process clear. Try to keep the Westminster finish as it is cool paddling into London. Is there an issue with the Thames boats which needs resolving?
- What a great job you do. The scale of what is achieved is mind blowing and a privilege to be part of.
- You are all an awesome lot and I am very grateful for all your hard work.
- You had lots of drama this year with the AGM, then the increased rainfall stopping a number of entrants. You are all unsung heroes that need more of a PR campaign to show what challenges you are facing/overcoming with maybe using FB for transparency.