



The Evidence – What activities would attract both ARA members and potential members and how important is time and lifestyle in determining what people want to do

Sport England - Henley Centre –Satisfaction

- As a solo/individual sport, the more intrinsic factors such as exertion and fitness, performance and diversion/release are important to increasing satisfaction in rowing
- Overwhelmingly the cues for lapsing come from shifts in participants' lives, lack of time and energy. Participants can be retained by more flexibility and enabling people to try activities without long-term commitment.

TNS Rowing Survey

Non-rowers, the appeal of rowing is that –

- It keeps you really fit
- Being out on the river
- It's different from other sports
- Part of a team
- Gives a real sense of achievement

Members

- Two-thirds of members 'Definitely Will' continue to row, and another 30% 'probably will'. In fact this does not happen suggesting that people enjoy rowing and want to continue, but cannot
- When asked which of following would help improve their experience of rowing, many of the ideas put forward found favour with members (they had the option to choose 3)
 - Competitions organized so that you have a minimum of 3 races (39%)
 - Tours with overnight stays in Britain and abroad (38%)
 - Summer head races (33%)
 - Fun competitions where boats are provided by the host organisers (32%)
 - My club encouraging me to carry on rowing even though I don't want to train or compete regularly. (32%)
 - A low cost ARA membership that allows me to compete in local competitions (29%)



- When asked what aspects of rowing were most discouraging the overwhelming reasons were –
 - It takes up so much time (51%)
 - Rowing equipment is expensive (48%)
 - It takes too much commitment (25%)

The wider outcomes – the value to clubs of retaining members

It is expensive and time-consuming to teach people to row, and clubs need enthusiastic and competent members who will be committed to rowing and their club long-term. Committed members will have an interest in taking part in club activities, becoming volunteers introducing friends and family to the club. It is important that they are able to continue the activity that first attracted them, rowing, in a way that will suit either their competitive or non-competitive nature, and the commitment they can make. Vibrant clubs with a large community membership will attract support and funding from local sources, and will provide a heritage for future generations.

Supporting the Strategy - sustainability

Following initial investment of funding, resources and energy, all the new activities will aim to be self-supporting and sustaining, by generating their own organizational structures, funding and volunteers.

The ARA will provide an overall ‘umbrella’ of low cost membership, insurance, good practice guidance, on-line training and website publicity and resources to support the activities.

Supporting the strategy – new competitions

Local competitions targeted at parents and 35+ age groups

The details of how and when these competitions would be run would be decided locally to meet the needs of the clubs taking part. However there are examples of how this might look.

To take place on Sunday afternoons or summer evenings

- Use ‘committee boats’. The more stable, durable, light boats to be purchased for the ALtoR programme would be ideal. There would be no need for the added complications of towing boats, loading trailers etc.
- Offer a barbeque/tea and make it a social occasion
- Offer prizes of bottle of wine or bunch of flowers rather than ‘pots’
- Offer mixed, or father & son etc. events
- No ‘club’ wins, taking part most important.

Local competitions targeted at HE students





The format of events for HE students could be just the same as those above, except that they might be run on traditional sports times – e.g. Wednesday afternoons, providing timing can be arranged, the same boats used by clubs on Sunday afternoons could be used for the students.

'No points' events run within existing ARA regattas

Many ARA regattas already run special events within their events for more occasional competitors and there is a tradition of 'Town' and 'Pub and Club' regattas. There are many more opportunities to expand these events.

Summer heads

Head races, or time trials are more adaptable to offering personal challenges for improvement, and their popularity has grown hugely since their introduction originally as training events for the summer season. Extend

Supporting the strategy – personal challenges

Long distance rows (marathons)

For many rowers the improving their performance and the personal challenge of rowing is an important element of their enjoyment of the sport. However lifestyle factors often mean that they cannot take part in competitions arranged at specific times. The popularity of marathon running, walking and climbing challenges, cycling distances are apparent. Similar events for rowers would provide a really flexible opportunity to complete a distance event, or a series of events, and improving on times and records. Boats in situ at suitable river sites would remove the difficulties of transporting boats. (a further use for the boats provided for the 'Row Regularly' programme). These type of activities would be very suitable for students and clubs wishing to raise money for charity and other good causes.

The same venues and boats could also be used for touring rowers who wish to complete the course at a more leisurely pace.

The ARA would provide information and advice on access etc. on the website, and also the opportunity for the more competitive rowers to record their times.

Supporting the strategy – touring and recreation

Recreational Rowing is essentially all forms of non-competitive 'participation' rowing. At its simplest it can be a Sunday morning paddle followed by a pint or a picnic, whilst those who aspire to greater things can move into touring, starting from a long distance row on home water through regional and national tours, then to international tours culminating in the FISA tour.

Recreational rowers fall mainly into the veteran age category, and are either former competitive rowers who no longer have the time or desire to continue training at a high level, or people who have started rowing later in life and may not have sufficient fitness or skill to compete in mainstream competitions. For some however, particularly those coming from other sports, recreational rowing provides a pathway to learn and move on to competition if they wish. For less competitive late entrants recreational rowing provides an opportunity to take part in a sport which they believe to be physically demanding and many felt was otherwise out of reach for them. They find achievement in learning new skills, working as a team and rising to the challenge of long distance rows.



The spectrum of rowing and the position of recreational rowing may be viewed as:

- Serious competitive rowers who are committed to the training and time needed.
- Casual competitive rowers who cannot commit to extensive training but still wish to go along to two or three local regattas and heads a year.
- Serious recreational rowing who wish to go touring both in UK and overseas
- Casual recreational rowers who wish to have outings on a more social basis

Over the past 6 years since the formation of the ARA's Recreational Rowing Working Party (RRWP), the number of clubs offering recreational rowing has increased from a mere handful to some 20 that are now accredited under the ARA criteria for recreational rowing. This has been achieved through promotion by the regional representatives on the RRWP among the clubs in their region, assisted by the ARA's Volunteer Support Officer. The other major contributory factor has been the availability of grants from the Project Oarsome Xtra scheme, which has enabled several clubs to buy suitable and dedicated boats for recreational rowing coupled with promotion of "Learn to Row" schemes. This increased capability and visibility has laid the foundations for a significant increase in the number of recreational rowers. Some evidence of this is the increase in participation in the annual ARA Tour which has grown from typically 25 to 30 rowers to 61 on the 2007 Tour. Club growth is difficult to quantify because the majority do not become members of the ARA and they are mixed up with other categories of Club membership.

The objectives for the next five years should therefore be to continue this upward trend in a way which can be measured and recorded:

- Increase the number of clubs offering recreational rowing. Clubs to be accredited by the ARA and listed on the ARA's website under the "Club Finder" page.
- Increase participation and encourage recreational rowers to join the ARA.
- Improve retention of new entrants
- Open up new waterways to rowing and promote the formation of new rowing clubs or community rowing centres

Action Plan

To be completed showing timescales, actions and personnel





Row Regularly

Grow

