

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WEBINAR QUESTIONS AND REPLIES, 14 DECEMBER 2021

On Tuesday 14 December a webinar was held with British Rowing Board member Liz Behnke, Ash Wyatt, Community Support Manager and Angela Westley, Head of Insight, where they shared the findings from our survey on diversity and inclusion in rowing.

Thanks to everyone who attended our webinar and who asked the questions below. The diversity and inclusion webinar team give their responses below.

Q: With the number of people who have a disability - why is there such low numbers taking part in rowing compared with other Para sports?

BR: We know that indoor rowing does better on attracting adaptive rowers than on-water grassroots rowing and a lot of effort is being put into this side of the sport with a new adaptive strategy being added to our overall strategy. Many clubs do not have equipment or facilities, but this is to be looked at as part of the new adaptive strategy along with improving governance and resourcing, improving coach education, classification and information and comms.

Q: Do British Rowing believe that better commercialisation of the sport - in the same way as Formula One, the America's Cup, etc - where in-game stats are used would attract a wider spectator base and therefore a conversion opportunity to put new people onto ergs and into boats?

BR: I am not sure about commercialisation, but certainly increased profile through the media always helps. However, the vicious circle is that you do not get additional media attention without success and viewing figures, and you can't get people watching if they don't know about the sport.

While investment from commercial partners helps, this does not guarantee additional viewing. I guess that sliding-seat rowing doesn't make for the most exciting of viewing, but perhaps other forms - beach sprints may. So, which do we put first, the chicken or the egg?

My view is that we need to broaden the base, by getting people involved, this means work on the riverbanks, as in the 30 years of my working in sport, the media are only interested in the big-ticket events. We might get some traction if we can put other forms of rowing into things like the Boat Race coverage, after all there is a lot of time filling that goes on. The challenge is how do we encourage the BBC to give us coverage?

Q: How does British Rowing monitor abuse within clubs?

BR: On disciplinary matters, clubs are expected to follow their own club rules and code of conducts in the first instance to resolve any issues. If this does not find a suitable solution, members or clubs can submit a [grievance](#) to British Rowing which will be followed in line with the disciplinary and grievance procedure.

[Safeguarding](#) concerns for children (under 18) or adults at risk should be reported to the club welfare officer who should report it to British Rowing, but you can also seek support from the Lead Safeguarding Officer at iso@britishrowing.org

If you require support with a concern to do with equality, that may sit outside of safeguarding or governance, then you can reach out to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lead at British Rowing at inclusion@britishrowing.org

Q: I am surprised that in the themes to address we are missing:

- 1. Ease of accessing the sport (think football or basketball)**
- 2. Visibility of the sport and how we need to increase it**
- 3. Competition with other sports especially those with more lucrative futures**
- 4. How we work together towards tangible efforts and initiatives to promote D&I.**

The themes you raise are all valid ones and did come through in the research and we did have some ideas for solutions, however they have not been pulled out specifically from a D&I angle, as they are relevant areas to address to attract anybody new to the sport.

We know that having access to water is key, which is why pushing indoor rowing is important and we are already doing this, but of course can always do more. Sadly, outdoor rowing will always be more challenging to make as high profile as sports such as basketball or football due to the lack of water in many parts of the country, but access to indoor rowing is much easier as there are ergos in gyms, schools, community centres, to name but a few

On visibility of the sport, this needs media coverage to help us, and the right imagery, and again this is in the list of solutions. We will always be in competition with other sports, and we need to push the benefits of rowing (of which there are many) and people are mostly unaware of these so a big comms push would help, but also word of mouth.

You are absolutely right in us working together on this and this is very much what we would intend to do. Our Action Plan is being worked up and there is a lot more detail in there of what is needed.

Q: How can we enable the equipment needed for greater inclusion - for example, Leicester RC's lift was broken and we're needing to fundraise. Why isn't there a central fund that can be accessed to help with this?

BR: There isn't a 'central fund' as yet, but if clubs need support like this get in touch with the [Club Support](#) team at British Rowing - they will be able to offer support and recommend ways to access potential funding.

The British Rowing Charitable Foundation has been set up to raise funds for grassroots rowing and they will support clubs with grants. The charity is called [Love Rowing](#) and their mission is to open up access and inclusive programmes for all. They are still relatively new and cannot support everyone, but funding is starting to be rolled out.

However, it is worth having a conversation with them to let them know about your club and what you need help with. The right person to speak to is Sally Corander at sally.corander@loverowing.org

Q: It makes sense that British Rowing focus on Britain-first, however, how much interaction do we have with other nations on what they are doing, where they are winning in D&I and collaborating with them? Global inclusion equals local inclusion.

BR: There is a lot of interaction with other nations, and we are always looking at how we can work together and share on the global stage. There has been an initiative with coaching rowing in Africa [here](#).

I attended a World Rowing conference on behalf of British Rowing a couple of years ago, and it looks like we were a long way ahead of many other nations on women in rowing.

Q: Hi – I'm projects officer for a fixed seat pilot gig rowing club in Sussex. I think the themes are really relevant and match some of the experiences I've seen among coastal rowing clubs locally. I wonder if anyone has any thoughts on attracting less represented groups to the sport? Thanks.

BR: The kind of approach that Ash mentioned with the Lea seemed to work well - going and talking to local community groups, inviting them along for social events, talking to people on beach fronts etc. It's not likely that they will approach you if they do not think of it as a sport for them, so it is about making an effort to engage with them and inviting them in, in a safe and welcoming environment.

Also, some of the things we heard in the research indicated that how club websites look and feel are key to whether someone is likely to feel welcome. Do they see people like them in the imagery? What is the tone of voice? Does it *feel* inclusive to all?

The British Rowing [Inclusive Club Guide](#) sets out a framework for how to create an inclusive club and goes through these considerations in more detail.

Q: It is great to see British Rowing taking this so seriously. What practical support is available from British Rowing for clubs committed to D&I - and what's in the pipeline?

BR: British Rowing has compiled a Diversity and Inclusion Action plan, with all teams contributing actions to embed inclusion across the whole organisation.

Love Rowing has been created to support and prime inclusive rowing projects. The Community Support team are available to support clubs to become more inclusive, design new projects, funding applications and adaptive support. The [British Rowing Inclusive Club Guide](#) sets out a framework for creating an inclusive club environment.

In the pipeline are: a club diversity programme to support clubs to share and drive best practice in the clubs, a mentoring programme to develop a diverse young group of future

leaders, a new coaching programme to support projects to engage young people from under-represented groups and a webinar series tackling all areas of D&I.

Q: How does British Rowing think we can address the stereotypes related to HRR and the Boat Races? These two events are inherent to rowing's image - but of course aren't BR affiliated (at least not directly) - and haven't historically been known for making quick changes.

BR: This is a tough one, because as you rightly say, British Rowing do not have direct control over these events, and it will be down to influencing those who do and coming up with some potential ideas that could work for both parties.

We have discussed internally ideas around having a day of events for the Boat Race that could include schools (especially state schools), broader representation of universities with the top two going into the final, but these are just ideas at this stage. The Boat Race is one of the only televised events, so it gives a huge signal about the sport to the broader population and would get a lot of media coverage if it was to get a "shake up".

Q: Could Angela or Liz please answer this question: Q: Why has British Rowing chosen to not leverage the annual review used to grant the BR affiliation as a tool for better monitoring of diversity and inclusion and enforcement as well?

BR: This is certainly something that is being discussed within British Rowing and may well be actioned going forwards.

Q: As a female umpire, I try to recruit new women to join but would like to know what British Rowing are doing at a local and national level?

BR: Thank you for your support here, you are right that we need more people like you! We need to influence from both inside the umpiring community as well as from the outside.

We are taking the findings of the research to the NUC in January and will be having a dialogue with them about what we can do together to improve the diversity of umpiring. New potential umpires need to feel like it is a welcoming place for them and that they will be accepted no matter who they are. This is something we want to explore further with the NUC and get their ideas on how we can make it a more diverse area of the sport. We need their help and support on this one. If there are people within the umpiring community who are able to influence the agenda on this, then we would like to work alongside them.

Q: Excellent discussion on many areas of D&I. Well presented. Great to hear about the other projects that are going on around the country and hope to make contact to discuss what others are doing.

BR: We are working out a way how we continue this conversation with the clubs to support change at the grassroots and currently considering how we set up a club diversity forum or maybe a training programme that clubs can use to share their experience and progress in this space. It is great to see that there is demand from clubs to be involved in this type of

group. Please get in touch with Ash if you are interested in being involved at ashley.wyatt@britishrowing.org

There is also a club-to-club series of webinars which will be starting very soon which will highlight some of the fantastic practises out there that we can all learn from.

Q: Hi Angela, not a question, but it would be great to know all the clubs you've listed here as it would be great to showcase these initiatives with AllMarkOne and the wider rowing community.

BR: One of the actions we have talked about is having a central place to go and find out about all the clubs that are doing great work for others to get in touch and find out more. An action is to pull together a list in newsletters/website for all to see. But I'm happy to follow up offline with this request and get in touch with you separately.