



ICC Development Plan 2015-2018



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About the Club

Inverness Canoe Club was formed in 1996 and now has over 250 members paddling at all levels - from beginners to the very experienced. We are active in most areas of paddlesport - including sea, white-water, open boating and surfing: our emphasis is on recreational paddling and we aspire to be welcoming to all paddlers.

The Highlands of Scotland offer some of the best white-water and sea paddling in the world. Whenever water levels allow, members will be found on local rivers, including the Ness, Findhorn, Spey, Meig, Moriston and Garry, in river kayaks or open canoes. The sea kayakers meet on Wednesday nights between May and September, usually at Rosemarkie, while members arrange weekend trips away throughout the Highlands and even further afield over the summer and into autumn. A floodlit slalom course in the Bught Park, Inverness, is most often used in the winter when water levels are higher.

Pool sessions are held on Friday nights during the winter months in the Inverness Aquadome. An introductory course, run in the spring, allows beginners to gain confidence in the pool, before progressing outside onto the Caledonian Canal at the Muirtown Basin and then onto the river and the sea. Further courses, such as safety and rescue, are arranged as and when demand requires.

Members of the Club benefit from a wide range of canoes and kayaks available for hire and from a number of qualified coaches covering all paddling disciplines. Our coaches are volunteers, but they are ready and willing to pass their skills on to others. The Club is affiliated to the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA), allowing members to benefit from their insurance scheme when taking part in recognised Club activities.

The strengths of the Club

These include;

- Our membership: over 250 members, paddling at all levels and interested in all the main disciplines of recreational paddlesport.
- The passion and commitment of members to enjoy paddlesport.
- The number of experienced, long-standing members, alongside the number of new members attracted each year.

- The willingness of many in the Club to organize events, to lead trips and to coach, to the benefit of other members.
- An extensive fleet of boats and equipment, allowing the Club to support newcomers exploring the sport.
- A strong bank balance that will support investment in development, and an annual membership income of around £6,000.

Our Mission

Our mission statement captures the purposes of the Club:

- To meet other paddlers,
- To enjoy our sport,
- To learn and develop our paddle skills, and
- To encourage and support coaches and leaders.

Our Priorities and Challenges

The committee has identified a number of priorities based on consultation with the members:

- **TO ASSIST THOSE INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING THEIR SKILLS ACROSS PADDLESport TO DO SO SAFELY THROUGH THE CLUB.**
- **TO IMPROVE THE COACHING AND LEADERSHIP PATHWAY IN THE CLUB.**
- **TO ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO PROGRESS THEIR SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE TO A POINT WHERE THEY CAN PADDLE INDEPENDENTLY AND SAFELY AS PART OF A PEER GROUP, WITHOUT COACH SUPPORT.**
- **TO PROVIDE MORE FAMILY PADDLING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AS PART OF THE CLUB'S COMMITMENT TO MEETING ALL MEMBERS' NEEDS, WHILE ALSO RECOGNISING THAT SOME MEMBERS PREFER TO PADDLE IN AN ADULT GROUP.**
- **TO RESOLVE THE CURRENT ISSUES WITHIN THE CLUB CONCERNING FACILITIES (PARTICULARLY STORAGE, THE SLALOM COURSE AND TRANSPORT), WITHOUT CREATING AN EXCESSIVE ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT BURDEN OR LIABILITY.**
- **TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEMBERSHIP, SO THAT MEMBERS FEEL WELL INFORMED ABOUT CLUB ACTIVITIES.**
- **TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF PADDLESport IN THE INVERNESS AREA, AND TO ENCOURAGE THE RECRUITMENT OF NEW MEMBERS TO SUSTAIN THE CLUB AND REFLECT INTEREST IN THE SPORT.**
- **TO ENCOURAGE AN ETHIC OF VOLUNTEERING AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY ON THE WATER AND IN THE RUNNING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CLUB.**
- **TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THE CLUB'S ASSETS TO BENEFIT ITS MEMBERS.**

Our Priorities in Detail

Priority

- **TO ASSIST THOSE INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING THEIR SKILLS ACROSS PADDLESPORE TO DO SO SAFELY THROUGH THE CLUB.**

The Club can assist in a number of ways in developing members' paddleskills. One way is to provide new and challenging paddling opportunities within a safe environment. A key reason why people join ICC is to participate in trips, so arranging a regular programme, along the lines of the now well-established sea calendar, is vital. The Club can also facilitate the formation of social paddling networks and run specific events (such as the Ness Marathon) in which all members can participate. The introductory ('Spring') course is always a success, introducing around 24 people each year to the sport, but how members progress after completing the course is less clear.

Actions

A key action is, therefore, to organise a continuous programme of events and courses, utilising the Club's own volunteer coaches, as well as professional providers.

As part of developing skills within the Club, we will continue to support winter pool sessions, even when these are not wholly self-funding, and look to make the most of the coaching opportunities these present.

Priority

- **TO IMPROVE THE COACHING AND LEADERSHIP PATHWAY IN THE CLUB.**

The Club has benefited since its foundation from volunteer coaches, who have been very generous with their time. Coaches, too, benefit from the Club, often finding coaching one of the most rewarding aspects of their paddling, and using fellow members to help them progress through their training. Members are qualified variously from Level 1 to Level 5 in a number of disciplines, while those with 4* and 5* Leadership awards, whilst not coaches, can provide support to paddlers wishing to develop their confidence and skills in a peer group situation. However, over the past few years, coaching and leadership qualifications have arguably become more demanding to attain, and, as coaches have left the Club, a gradual shortage of coaching skills has emerged. This has left the Club struggling to operate its model of providing coach-led sea and river trips for those unable to paddle as part of a peer group. There has also been some concern about the reliance that can be placed on coaches by members who do not actively progress their skills. Additionally, there has been an absence of a development pathway for coaches, and, despite attempts to establish one, no formal mentoring exists to help coaches or leaders develop their skills. The coaching route, in particular, can be an expensive one, and their

cost - as well as the time commitment involved - can limit the affordability of coaching in some cases. The Club has traditionally not provided any financial support for coaches, partly because funding has been available elsewhere, but this support is less available than it once was.

Actions

The Club will use its resources to help support a structured approach to coach development. We will hold an annual coaching conference for Club coaches and use this as a basis to help set priorities for coaching support and to organise a mentoring system for existing coaches. We will produce an annual coaching plan each spring, which will be developed by the Club's coaching leads and approved by the Club's committee. This will set out the priorities for coaching support, mentoring and include a budget to support this work.

We will offer financial support to members for coaching and leadership qualifications (and their retention), if they commit to coaching within the Club for a period of at least two years after qualification. This may be achieved through the organisation of subsidised courses (e.g. Level 1, FSRT), or assistance to attend courses external to the Club (Level 2 and above). We will also provide support for coaches and leaders to attend SCA events that provide CPD. In offering financial help, the Club will maximize the use of funding support from other sources (**sportscotland**, SCA, Highlife Highland, etc.) and encourage participants to also make good use of available funding.

We may consider supporting training which does not necessarily lead to a qualification, including subsidising pool sessions aimed at coach development.

To support all this activity, the committee will establish a coaching group, led by the Club's coaching officers, supported by the President and Vice-president, co-opting other Club coaches as and when required.

Priority

- **TO ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO PROGRESS THEIR SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE TO A POINT WHERE THEY CAN PADDLE INDEPENDENTLY AS PART OF A PEER GROUP, WITHOUT COACHING SUPPORT.**

Over the last few years, paddlesport has become increasingly conscious of the need for adequate supervision to ensure safety on the water. The Club has been diligent in ensuring that numbers fall within coaches' and leaders' remits. This is necessary if leaders and coaches - and Club members - are to benefit from the Club's SCA affiliated insurance. As a result the Club has increasingly offered coach-led trips to members, alongside peer paddles. This ensures novices can undertake trips with adequate supervision, while ensuring that the numbers of less experienced paddlers are manageable. However, this places a considerable burden on coaches,

and, if existing members come to rely on there being coach-led places available, this becomes a barrier to the Club bringing on new members.

Actions

The Club will promote the progression of novices through coach-led paddling to self-dependent peer paddling. To achieve this we will introduce a greater level of coaching within coach-led trips, including Wednesday evening sea paddling sessions. We will also make more use of those with 4 and 5 Star Leadership qualifications, to introduce a greater level of safety for trips that aren't coach-led, particularly for those with less experience.

We will also seek to encourage and promote a wider range of peer paddling, at a level and in conditions appropriate to those within the group. This will include asking members to organise peer trips without coach cover. It will require an awareness by organisers and those participating of conditions, of group size, of how to respond to emergencies and incidents, and to be confident of their own collective judgment in paddling in the prevailing conditions. In order to develop the skills and judgement of peer paddlers, the Club will support training, such as incident management courses, in these areas. This approach will rely on sustaining and enhancing the ethic of volunteering and shared responsibility on the water within the Club.

Priority

- **TO PROVIDE MORE FAMILY PADDLING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, AS PART OF THE CLUB'S COMMITMENT TO MEETING ALL MEMBERS' NEEDS, WHILE ALSO RECOGNISING THAT SOME MEMBERS PREFER TO PADDLE IN AN ADULT GROUP.**

The Club has a significant number of family memberships (including 39 under 16 year olds). While not all members of the Club will wish to paddle with youngsters, the Club should reflect the needs of a significant proportion of its membership. Currently, children, largely in the under 16 age group, get to paddle in the pool over the winter (but the pool sessions take place at a not particularly family friendly time), while children over 12 are accepted on the introductory course in the spring. The only other event in the Club's calendar where children are specifically catered for is at the Open Day in September.

Actions

We will seek to develop opportunities for family paddling and youth development. We will seek to involve parents in a number of specific family paddle events through the summer, including trips. We will also explore our capacity to provide some youth coaching, either in the pool or outside.

Priority

- **TO RESOLVE THE CURRENT ISSUES WITHIN THE CLUB CONCERNING FACILITIES (PARTICULARLY STORAGE, THE SLALOM COURSE AND TRANSPORT), WITHOUT CREATING AN EXCESSIVE ADDITIONAL MANAGEMENT BURDEN OR LIABILITY.**

There are a range of views around the Club on the best option for a permanent Club base. However, there is reasonable consensus that the Club does need a 'home' (even if only to store boats and kit), but that any solution needs to be affordable and within the capacity of the Club to secure and subsequently manage. However, access to facilities, such as changing rooms/toilets and a meeting room, would be conducive to expanding the Club's capacity to offer coaching and become involved in other forms of paddlesport. More urgently, given Scottish Canal's wish to redevelop the Muirtown Basin, where the Club currently keeps the majority of its boats and kit - through the generosity of the Muirtown Sea Scouts - a solution for boat storage is necessary. In 2010, the committee undertook a detailed options appraisal for a new Club base. It generated a clear understanding of the accommodation needs of the Club, but, though a huge amount of energy and enthusiasm was put into looking for a new home, no suitable solution was found. Subsequent reappraisal of the challenges involved and the capacity of Club volunteers suggests that owning our own premises is a less desirable option for the Club. This option would generate considerable management and administrative burdens, as well as legal and financial challenges.

The slalom course offers us a particular challenge; it is not owned by the Club, and use is through an access agreement. Currently, a temporary dam is causing a problem in terms of environmental management, but its removal would make the course unusable, while it has not secured adequate water levels. However, its replacement with an approved structure would require significant time and effort, as well as funds. The funding the Club received to build the course places responsibilities on us to try ensure that the facility is used, but there is limited interest in slalom within the Club at present.

Actions

It is proposed that the Club continues to discuss the possibilities of sharing facilities on a more formal basis with the Muirtown Sea Scouts, when they replace their existing building and storage facilities at Muirtown Basin. We currently share the Scout Hut with them on an informal basis, largely without cost, but with a consequent lack of security of tenure. The view of the committee is that collaboration with the Scouts is the most preferable means of securing a long-term base; the Club could make a firm commitment to commercial rental of storage and facilities, but would be unable to make a significant capital contribution towards a new base unless we had a capital stake in the final facility (which is currently not the preference of either the Club or the Scouts).

In case we are unsuccessful in securing this solution, we should explore interim storage arrangements as a priority.

If the option of a base at Muirtown becomes unattainable or affordable, we should at that point pursue alternative longer-term options. These include shared facilities with another organization or simple storage facilities (preferably next to sheltered water). Unless an exceptional opportunity should emerge, attempting to acquire a Club base for our sole use is likely to be unaffordable, as it will require a considerable commitment on the part of the Club and its members and is not truly reflective of the aims and purpose of the Club.

In order to facilitate canoe paddling within the Club, we propose the Club acquires a canoe/kayak trailer which can be used by Club members for transporting Club and other boats at their own risk.

It is also the intention of the committee to regularly review the Club fleet in order to ensure that it best meets the needs of members. We will set a yearly budget for fleet and equipment replacement.

We will enter a dialogue with others managing and using the river Ness, along with **sportscotland** as the primary funder, to find a way of resolving the issue of the slalom course.

Priority

- **TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEMBERSHIP, SO THAT MEMBERS FEEL WELL INFORMED ABOUT CLUB ACTIVITIES.**

Communications are central to the Club. Over the past 2 or 3 years, members have complained particularly over the poor state of the website which had been increasingly showing its age, as well as too many emails. Maintaining membership records has required an excessive amount of committee time, while communications with members, using the current membership database and associated 'scripts', has proved unreliable. The poor quality of e-communication has been damaging to the reputation of the Club.

Actions

The website has been renewed in early 2015 and a commercial membership and events system introduced. The website is now a shop window on the Club and a source of general information for Club members. To reduce the emphasis on email, it is intended that the website becomes the first port of call for notices of upcoming events, etc. By keeping information relevant to trips and club activities on the website, it will become a resource for members (some information, such as a membership directory, will be in a members-only section) - as well as an effective tool for promoting the club, by demonstrating more effectively what the Club does.

It is hoped that the new membership tool (WebCollect) will simplify the membership system and, by enabling members to have more control over their own details, keep records up-to-date. This should go a long way to improving the reliability of email communications.

Although many members use social media, especially Facebook, they represent only about half of the membership. Nonetheless more effective use of the Club's Facebook page (now restricted to members, though viewable by others) and other forms of social media, such as Twitter, will enable the Club to keep more effectively in touch with its members, as well as raising its profile.

Priority

- **TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF PADDLESPORE IN THE INVERNESS AREA, AND TO ENCOURAGE THE RECRUITMENT OF NEW MEMBERS TO SUSTAIN THE CLUB AND REFLECT INTEREST IN THE SPORT.**

We wish to encourage new entrants to paddlesport. We recognise that this is likely to result in a turnover of members as some people find out it is not for them. More importantly, however, if we are to retain members, a clear route of progression will be necessary for those who have completed the introductory course in the spring; this may, at least in part, involve pointing them towards commercial providers, where it is beyond the capacity of the Club and its coaches to further their personal development. Nonetheless, a satisfied member is much easier to retain than a new member, so the Club must balance recruitment with meeting the needs and expectations of its existing members.

Actions

We will use our website, Twitter account and Facebook page to promote the Club. We will encourage members to post their activities and to link the ICC site when posting elsewhere. The events and publicity officer will promote our activities in the local media.

We will also host an open day or open event annually, either on our own or in collaboration with others. We will evaluate our involvement in such events, to ensure that they either benefit existing members or attract new membership.

Priority

- **TO ENCOURAGE AN ETHIC OF VOLUNTEERING AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY ON THE WATER AND IN THE RUNNING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CLUB.**

The Club is its members. If effort and commitment is not widely shared, the Club's activity will become unsustainable and the committee and coaches will be perceived as being remote from the membership.

Actions

The committee will pursue a policy of encouraging participation and contribution from the whole membership in terms of running events, organising trips and in coaching and leadership.

Priority

- TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THE CLUB'S ASSETS TO BENEFIT ITS MEMBERS.

As the Club has been concerned about a new base, it has generated a significant level of reserves. While this allows the Club flexibility and resilience, such a level of reserve is inappropriate if it is not intending to purchase a new base. However, given that the Club is likely to need to make an investment in terms of premises in the short to medium term (perhaps buying containers or providing a deposit as part of a lease), it is sensible to maintain sufficient to cover such eventualities, alongside ensuring reasonable reserves for sustaining core club activities.

Actions

The committee will produce an annual budget, identifying the main areas of expenditure (fleet renewal, training, pool hire, events, publicity, administration, etc.). For the period of this plan, the committee will seek to fully utilise its income to benefit members and reduce its capital reserves to a level appropriate to its future needs.

Three Postcards from 2018

I joined the club in 2014, and have recently progressed to three star sea. I have enjoyed the trips and coaching and have recently organized some paddling trips for other club members with the help of more experienced paddlers
Mark: recent 3 star

I started attending the children's pool sessions, and I have been on some family events with my dad at Loch Achilty, and just last week I paddled my first river.
Jamie, young paddler

I joined the club in 2015, and have benefitted from the support I have received. This has comprised financial assistance towards my coaching assessment, mentoring while I developed my skills, and support from members who were willing to guinea pig for me. I am now committed to coaching with the club for at least two years. That's great I enjoy it.
Gena Level 3 moderate water inland coach

An Action Plan for 2015-16

This is a short action plan for 2015/16. It provides a summary list of tasks to ensure that - having reached a conclusion on the direction the Club should take - we focus on the actions needed to bring this about. It has one further purpose: the delivery of these actions is entirely reliant on members, so we need to identify who is prepared to do their bit to make things happen.

The usual roles of the committee and members in maintaining “business as usual” are additional to this.

Action	Timing	Who	Date Completed
Arrange skills based courses (principally 1-3 star)	Spring courses (intro/refresher): Apr/May annually 1/2 star assessments: June annually 3 star training/assess. in sea/open/WW: annually	Coaching Group to organise Club coaches to deliver	Apr/May 2015 dates set
Arrange winter pool programme, including coached sessions	October-March, annually	Committee to organise Club coaches and volunteers to support	
Provide support for coaches and leaders	Establish coaching group to support coaching officer(s)	Coaching leads, president, vice-president and coaches	(AGM 2015)
Produce coaching plan/budget	Update annually by May each year	Committee & Coaching Group	
Arrange coach/leader training	Level 1 Coach Award training: annually First Aid training: at least annually	Committee & Coaching Group	May 2015 dates set Jan 2015
Establish regular calendar of club trips (not all to be coach led)	At least monthly river/open trips; sea kayak calendar as usual Sea/River calendar meetings: early spring each year	Members to organise and lead trips. Sea/river/open leads to oversee	Feb/Mar2015 dates set
Facilitate peer paddling	FSRT: annually WWSRT: annually Incident management: various dates annually	Coaching group and sea/ river/open leads to organise	May 2015 dates set May 2015 dates TBC

Action	Timing	Who	Date Completed
Facilitate family paddling opportunities	Family friendly events: various dates during summer annually	Members with families, supported by events officer	
	Childrens paddling course: summer annually		
Pursue new shared premises with Muirtown Scouts	Ongoing	Committee	
Develop reserve option for Club base	Spring 2015	Committee	
Produce fleet replacement plan/budget	Annually, update for end April each year	Committee, led by fleet manager/treasurer	
Purchase trailer	2015, following agreement on storage	Fleet manager to lead	
Hold stakeholder discussions over slalom course	Spring 2015	President/access officer	
Maintain website and event planning tool	Ongoing	Webmaster/ membership secretary to oversee	
	Appoint Social Media Manager	Volunteer please!	(AGM 2015)
	Appoint Content editor	Volunteer please!	(AGM 2015)
Promote the Club	Establish framework and set objectives	Publicity officer to lead	
	Open Day: annually in autumn	Committee, plus volunteers	
Grow the 'volunteering' ethic in the Club	Ongoing	Everyone!!!	
Produce an annual budget, including a 'reserves policy'	Update annually by end April each year	Treasurer to lead	
Review subscriptions	Prior to AGM, February 2016	Committee	
Develop succession to committee	Over 2015/16	Committee	