

British Spitfire Class Association (BSCA)
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2016

Brightlingsea Sailing Club.

Saturday 1st October 2016

Present:

Tim Johnson	Thom White	Megan Smith
Diane Johnson	Henry White	Sam Rowell
Becki Johnson	Dave Butters	Molly Desorgher
Olly Harris	Sally Butters	Matthew McRobbie
Ben Harris	Stewart Smith	Andy McRobbie
Jack Butters	Fiona Smith	Gavin Luxton
James King	Tony Stokes	Flynn Luxton
Dan King	Will Smith	

1. Welcome and Apologies

Olly Harris chaired the meeting

Apologies received from Gary and Lynn Smith, Marcus and Abbie Wallace and Peter Boxer.

2. Approval of 2015 AGM Minutes

Proposed by Tim Johnson, seconded by Tony Stokes

3. Chairman's report

Stewart Smith summarised the main issues to be addressed at the AGM and the current status of the class:

- 2016 Dinghy show was a success with 2 boats at the show.
- We have seen some reduction in the youth side of the class, partly due to the Nacra 15
- Our main goal should be to increase adult participation whilst maintaining the youth side
- Singlehanded sailing is one way to do that (see later in the Minutes)
- Activity seems to be strong in some specific locations
- We must decide whether or not to attend the RYA dinghy show in 2017

4. Secretary's report

Olly Harris gave a report, the main points being:

Communication

- Thanks to the work of Stewart, Fiona and Sam for this year.

- We need input from sailors to the website and facebook page. Communication is essential to the success of any association.
- We do have a forum on the website, but it's not really been used yet- please us it for help and advice from other sailors.
- The website is currently hosted by someone we can't get any contact with (James Power?) Suggestions were made for contacting him. Or we need to change the hosting- Sam to investigate alternatives.
- Apologies that we had problems with reaching members via newsletters sent out from our webmail. We now have a temporary solution

Membership

- We have 26 paid members (boats) and an income slightly better than 2015, due to a small increase in subscription, despite a drop in numbers. Last year's records show 33 members, but a few were extra for crews or parents separately so not always one per boat.
- We have gained some new members throughout the year, as recently as last month, so welcome to them.
- Some boats have been sold this year, so we do have some 2016 members who no longer own boats and to avoid a drop for 2017, we need to get new owners to join.
- Keeping track of where the boats are and in touch with their owners is very important, so if you sell one, please put us in touch with the new owner, and encourage them to join the association.
- Attracting active adult members remains our biggest challenge.
- Of the 26 members, 12 are adult and about 9 of them have no involvement with youth sailing.
- The adult members we do have tend to be the ones we never see at events, but we communicate with them and are able to help them with enquiries about repairs, spares, rigging etc.
- The challenge is to get them to race at events, although some join an association just to support it and to receive support, with no intention of going to events.
- In total we are in touch with 43 boats out of about 230 built, so there are a lot out there still to find, even allowing for the ones in other countries.
- For many of the non – members, we contacted them one by one personally to ask them to join the association, but often without response. These are mainly the Eastbourne and Pevensy sailors, some of whom used to be active racing members.

Events 2016

- Series of 6 events, started very well at Datchet.
- For Minnis Bay we had only 2-3 boats planning to attend so with no handicap fleet to race in, we cancelled it.
- For Eastbourne only 2-3 thinking of going and no guarantee of more than 1 or 2 from the home club, so the event was cancelled.
- Lessons learned are NOT to do events that don't have a handicap fleet and to stay more clear of exam time (May and June) than we previously thought.
- The ECPR weekend at Marconi was a great event as usual, with 4 Spitfires and a Spitfire winning the Colne Point race.
- 7 boats at Stokes but only 3 at Weston, probably due to them being consecutive weekends.

- We've tried to make the most of free publicity from event reports on Y&Y. It just needs more input from sailors to help write those things as discussed at the AGM last year (4th place boat).

Rules and general

- The rule changes we made seem to have addressed most of the issues
- I think that the Spitfire still has a strong place going forward, for both youth and adults. Now the Nacra 15 is actually here, I am convinced that they can exist together for the overall benefit of cat sailing. The Nacra has a narrower weight range and will take time to build up as a real class, not helped by the availability of new boats. The Spitfire has the benefit of a supply of good value used boats and we should be pushing it as the ideal entry boat to fast cat racing, for a wide age and weight range, as well as a genuine F18 alternative for lighter teams.

5. Treasurer's Report

Fiona Smith summarised the main figures, based on the current accounts. The class has sold the mainsail and jib it had in stock, giving a balance today of £2128.

Key points:

- Our biggest cost was the Dinghy Show, but White Formula helped us greatly with a £250 contribution
- A new bank account has been set up, making management of the finances much easier.
- The meeting did not consider that an increase of membership fees for 2017 was needed so it remains as £20.

For the record (not discussed at the 2016 meeting but still stands: at the 2015 AGM it was decided that for anyone joining now, late in the season in order to be eligible for the winter sails discount, a proportion of this year's fee, plus next year's to be charged together, giving them membership until the end of 2017.

6. Youth Co-ordinator's report

Tim Johnson gave a report from his position as both Spitfire Youth Co-ordinator and UKCRA Youth. The main points being:

- Excellent entry of 13 boats at the RYA youth nationals
- He is working closely with the RYA who are being very supportive to youth cat sailing
- The RYA will provide a coach to several of this winter's training events
- The RYA are looking to UKCRA Youth/ BSCA to help manage the transition to the Nacra 15
- Recent "try a cat" days have generated keen new sailors and potential owners
- The Spitfire's price and availability mean that it is still often the first choice for new youth sailors
- A full training program is in place for this winter, open but likely to be mainly N15, Spitfire and N17

Discussion took place about the RYA's position concerning the boat for the RYA Youth Nationals in April 2017 as they had previously stated that this would be ONLY the Nacra 15. However, this may be affected by supply (and sales) of Nacra 15. The meeting asked Tim to discuss with Mark Nicholls at the RYA to get a clear direction

on this soon as it may have an impact on youth teams decisions and training over this winter.

7. Election of officers

The 2017 Committee was voted in by the meeting:

Chairman:	Andy McRobbie
Secretary:	Olly Harris
Treasurer:	Fiona Smith
UKCRA Coordinator:	Tim Johnson
Media & Marketing:	Sam Rowell

Formal Advisors:

Supplier:	Thom White
Technical:	Graham Eeles

8. Singlehanded Spitfire sailing

The meeting discussed the best way to encourage participation of sailors who wish to use their boat as a single hander. This is already popular with several at Grafham who want to race at the 2016 Grafham Cat Open.

It was concluded that we should add text to the Class Rules to define the configuration for Singlehanded Spitfire Sailing as being with main and spinnaker only, no jib. It was agreed that if minor rule changes are needed to help with singlehanded sailing (eg extra guide blocks), that could be reviewed.

Singlehanders to be encouraged to race with standard Spitfires, but on a "boat for boat" basis, without handicap. This may be reviewed later.

Future promotion for the boat should include the option to sail it singlehanded.

9. White Formula support and spares. Winter bulk sails offer

Sails Offer

White Formula have agreed the same excellent offer as 2015, at the same prices, on sails ordered by ONLY members of BSCA and paid to WF before 30th November 2016, for delivery in March 2017:

Mainsail	£860
Jib	£375
Spinnaker (19 sqm)	£620

Sail numbers £20 at point of order or £35 if ordered later. Delivery extra or free delivery at the Dinghy Show.

This deal to now to be advertised to all members.

Spare parts availability

Henry and Thom White explained the current parts status and the reasons for the delays in delivery of masts and rear beams this year. This is associated with the difficulties with Sirena being the supplier and these coming from France. Alternative

approaches working with Topper International are being explored including the possibility to use the Topper beam sections. The stock of small parts is good with most things available quickly. WF try to keep 1 full suit of sails plus an extra spinnaker. Beam end caps are difficult, but plastic Topaz ones are available. Masts, Beams and Sails are now in stock. BSCA advised that on this basis, it did not feel the need to buy its own sails stock in the winter sails offer.

Sam Rowell asked for a parts list and prices to be provided, to be placed on the BSCA members section of the website. WF agreed to this.

WF confirmed the 10% discount on parts for BSCA members but asked that they have access online to an updated list of paid members. BSCA will provide that. (Note that discount does NOT apply to insurance claims).

The meeting highlighted their appreciation to WF for the support they continue to provide to the class, understanding that they need to make money and that some of the profit comes back to BSCA in the form of help with the dinghy show etc...

There was a brief discussion about alternative sail suppliers and BSCA confirmed to WF that if they wished to propose one, it would be considered, but that the priority is to maintain the strict one design nature of the boat and keep costs as low as possible in line with the boat's market.

10. Events for 2017

The following general Catamaran Open events are currently planned for 2017:

March 18/19	Datchet Cat Open
May ??	Rutland Cat Open (TBC)
May ??	Minnis Bat Cat Open
July 1/2	East Coast Piers Race
Mid July 8/9 or September 23/24/ or Oct 7/8	Weston Cat Open
September 2/3	Stokes Bay Cat Open
October 21/22	Grafham Cat Open/ SPITFIRE INLANDS

The Committee will work on a proposed set of events for 2017 and asked for suggestions from members. It was felt that of the above, Rutland may be the best option to add compared to 2016, as it will have a handicap fleet and is within reach for many sailors. Grafham 9 hour race could also be put on the calendar as that may appeal as an alternative format. Venues in the South West such as Instow, Restronguet or Paington could be investigated as we have some members in that area.

Sam Rowell advised that Felixstowe Ferry could be a possibility for an event, combined with Shearwaters.

For the 2017 Nationals, the following are possibilities:

- Stokes Bay in September
- Weston in July or late September

- Combined event with F18s or Tornados, or Shearwaters. These classes to be contacted.

Thom White pointed out the potential benefits of combining with Shearwaters as WF will also build Shearwaters, with many common parts.

Henry White commented that the UKCRA Yellow boat should always be at events for people to use. This is the aim and BSCA / UKCRA will try to arrange it.

The possibility of running an event with Swedish Spitfire sailors to be explored further, with them visiting UK for training and racing in the summer.

Henry White suggested that alternative event formats should be considered, such as speed trials, slalom, cruise or raid style events. A Facebook GPS speed challenge could be a good start.

11. Dinghy Show 2016

Thom White advised that White Formula are prepared to contribute £250 to the cost of a BSCA stand for 2017, as done in 2016. Arrangement for invoicing to be agreed between WF and the Treasurer. This is very much appreciated by BSCA as it allows the association to continue to attend. On this basis, the meeting agreed that BSCA should attend. There will be no "Catamaran island" in 2017 nor Youth Cat on the RYA stand as that will have a junior focus.

Thom also pointed out that a stand may be available adjacent to their Whisper stand, allowing BSCA to share carpet and electricity costs with WF. That will now be further explored with the RYA.

Thom White pointed out the need for new video footage to be assembled ready for the dinghy show. Olly Harris asked WF whether they could fit diamond wires to the "TV" mast to make it more ready to use for the show.

Sam Rowell advised that if he has not sold it, his boat could be available, but a confirmed standby is needed. Volunteers will be needed for the stand, with possibly youth sailors on both Spitfire and N15 stands..

12. Any Other Business

Thom White advised that GJW could be a good source of assistance with funding for the dinghy show or other sponsorship opportunities, as they insure much of the fleet. A deal that offers discounts to association members or payment to the association for each policy may be possible, as with some other classes.

END OF MEETING