

There was a meeting initiated by the SRC after a request to re-evaluate the viability of the Lightning Kayaks. This took place on 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> June 2017 to discuss the development of Under 12 Youth Racing with MRC after a survey with clubs had been carried out.

Present: Louise Clive (SRC) Ann Hoile (SRC) Kat Wilson (MRC) & Mick Nadal (MRC)

The aim of the meeting was to coordinate future development of U12 racing with particular reference to Lightning Classes. We discovered we have a common aim to advance U12 into lighter weight kayaks as soon as sensibly possible to give a greater sense of achievement by easing these paddlers into the “mainstream” system of each discipline.

There was agreement between Marathon and Sprint representatives that it was desirable to respect the wishes of the majority of the clubs that had responded to the questionnaire about the future of Under 12 youth racing.

This therefore involves the retention of the Lightning competitions and the associated trophies. One of the key reasons given by clubs was the maintenance of “a level playing field” offered by the single design. Other key reasons given were low cost to clubs who mostly have a fleet of Lightnings which are very easy and cheap to maintain.

However, with the need to make progress that automatically moves U12 paddlers into the general “mainstream” of the two disciplines, it was agreed to retain the Lightning Classes but modify the rules for both sprint and marathon to ensure that the natural progressions is achieved.

It was agreed that for Sprint this would happen at the start of 2018 season and it would be in September 2018 for Marathon. Information on the events will be incorporated into the 2018 Racing Handbook.

### Sprint

**Ideas** on how to introduce the U12 Open were based on distance and type of event whilst being aware of the constraints of an already crowded National Regatta timetable. Both 200m and 500m distances were put forward and the SRC agreed that the 500m distance was in line with existing junior paddler distances. Two ideas for running the event were also put forward:

1. An international approach with an approximate maximum of 26 paddlers across the course paddling down at once with eliminations followed by a re-runs until a final group of the fastest remained. This would have been run over a 200m course and was thought to be a relaxed, fun idea, although it was felt that young paddlers would find the continued paddle down and return tiring, this of course would depend on the number of entries. It would also take a fair amount of time and there would be safety concerns if the course was very windy. Regatta boatmen are extremely conscientious about the safety of all paddlers.

2. This second approach considered was of running heats and finals, over a 500m course. It would reflect the idea of the regatta, safety would be easier to monitor and it would have an accurate recording of times achieved which would secure promotion to D Class. However, this would not necessarily be as relaxed or as much fun.

**The Outcome**

**It is proposed to introduce a mixed male/female Open U12 event.** This will be an additional event at each regatta run over a 500m course with heats and finals. The paddlers would use kayaks or canoes of their own choice other than the Lightning. The intention is that this will allow Under 12 paddlers not only to gain experience and confidence on the HPP water in less stable kayaks but to give them a natural progression to D class should they achieve, a comparative time.

The Lightning Classes LTA and LTB along with the Marsport Club Trophy Series will continue to be run and remain with no changes to the existing rules.

Those who choose to paddle in the U12 Open would also be able to paddle in their Lightning groups to continue to accumulate individual and club points until they have achieved the D Class time when they will be automatically promoted. The points they have gained in their Lightning events will be added to their club total for the Marsport Trophy.

The Under 12 Open event would score points in the McGregor Regatta

Louise Clive and Ann Hoile