ENGLAND TALENT
CANOE SPRINT PLAN
2019-2025
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Section 1. Introduction

Further to the recent consultation, this document sets out the strategy for the England Talent Canoe Sprint Plan through to 2025. Its delivery will of course be reliant on the continued support from the key stakeholders including Sport England and the clubs within British Canoeing.

The Purpose
‘To support talented athletes to be the best they can be and to prepare them for entry to the Olympic and Paralympic World Class Programmes’

The Vision
‘To become a world leading talent programme, built on an exceptional club structure, contributing to Great Britain becoming one of the best nations in the world by 2028’

The Values
This programme will be delivered in line with the Values of British Canoeing;

• Every Person Matters
• Striving for Excellence
• Always with Integrity
• Enjoying the Journey
• Individually Committed
• Stronger Together
The drivers for change.

This strategy marks a significant change in direction, with British Canoeing investing more resources to support clubs to develop talented junior paddlers and reducing their investment in regional squads. This direction was established with the introduction of the Talent Club Partnership Programme, which seeks to further strengthen the talent environments within clubs as an integral and fundamental part of the athlete talent pathway within Sprint Racing.

The removal of the Super Regional Squads tier of the current pathway structure from October 2019, will enable increased investment and support to be made available to clubs and club coaches who are working with talented junior paddlers.

This talent system which will be more embedded in clubs will also align better with Sport England’s objectives around diversity and community engagement within the talent pathway.

The principles behind the programme.

The feedback received through the consultation has guided the design of this strategy and the formulation of six underpinning principles which will help steer the implementation and ongoing development of this strategy over the next 6 years.

**Athlete Safety and Enjoyment**

Athletes who enjoy their sport are more likely to spend more time in their sport. Development is a long term process and for any athlete to realise their potential, they will need to invest and commit time and energy to it. Creating positive, safe and enjoyable environments for young people is an essential aspect of this programme. Encouraging groups of young people to come into clubs, make friends, enjoy activities together around their paddling are all essential ingredients to success.

Our strategy will support and encourage a pathway in which participants at every level are thriving, safe and supported whilst being appropriately challenged and stretched in order to progress and achieve their potential.

Our talent club and squad environments will be safe places for young paddlers, where the highest standards of safeguarding are understood and observed by athletes, parents, coaches and volunteers.
Athlete Development
This programme will be athlete centred and recognise that athlete development and progression is nonlinear and that athletes can be late developers or late adopters of the sport and that they will have other commitments in their life. Our Talent Club and Squad pathway will cater and meet the individual needs of the athlete.

Every Person Matters
Participation at every level presents opportunities and challenges that can have a long term and positive impact on young people.

The responsibility of all those involved in the pathway is not only identifying and nurturing promising athletes, but also to make the experience positive and rewarding for all. It is hoped that some paddlers will become world class performers, however, for those who do not, we hope that in supporting their development we will help them to find a sport for life.

Gender Balance
The aim of the England Sprint Talent Programme is to develop a pathway that supports and develops talented athletes to compete in all Olympic and Paralympic classes of the World Class Programme.

Our strategy will help to support the recruitment and retention of those classes that are less well represented than currently.

As this next cycle progresses it is the planned to achieve a better gender balance in the programme and to recruit more girls and young women to the programme.

Club Network
This strategy aims to support the further development of clubs that provide opportunities to athletes and coaches to become as good as they can be. It will encourage better networking in order to foster a community of best practice amongst coaches, athletes and parents.

Great Coaches
A thriving pathway is built on great coaching. Athletes have the greatest amount of contact time and exposure to their club coaches. This strategy aims to support the development of these club coaches to help them provide the best provision possible for their athlete.
Section 2.

Clarity in the England Talent Pathway

The consultation process illustrated that there is still quite a lot of misunderstanding, even within the community most involved in talent development, about how this programme is funded, where it sits within British Canoeing and how it relates to the other National Associations.

British Canoeing manages the World Class Programme in Sprint, Slalom and Paracanoe. This programme is UK wide and is wholly funded by UK Sport. The World Class Programme aims to develop and support athletes to win medals on the world stage and every four years in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The England Talent Programme is separate to, but is aligned to and sits beneath the World Class Programme (WCP).

The England Talent Programme is almost wholly funded through grant aid received from Sport England.

There are similar programmes in each of the other National Associations (Home Nations) that manage the development of athletes within their own countries, each supported by their respective Sports Council.

British Canoeing does not have the responsibility for the development of talented juniors within Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, but does tend to lead the process to ensure these talent programmes are as joined up as possible.
There are several targets and measures which are agreed with Sport England as part of the funding agreement for England Talent. These include;

- The number of athletes on the programme
- The number of English boats qualifying for the Junior or U23 GB team
- The number of English talent athletes that qualify for the WCP
- The results at Junior and U23 World Championships
Section 3. England Talent Canoe Sprint Plan

The England Talent Canoe Sprint Plan consists of 5 programmes impacting on 3 pathways, the Athlete, Coach and Club Pathway. These programmes are introduced below and then explained more fully in the following pages.

Athlete Pathway.
Programme 1 - Athlete Development Framework (“What It Takes To Progress”)
This is a sprint specific Athlete Development Framework and will be developed as part of this Plan. It has been requested by some coaches working in clubs. It explores the development areas critical for long term success. It is aligned to the What It Takes to Win Model within the World Class Programme. It will aim to present and share what ‘internationally successful senior athletes need to be doing at each age/stage of development.’

Programme 2 - Canoe Development Programme
This intervention programme will work with clubs and at Holme Pierrepont, to strengthen the talent pool of athletes who participate within the Canoe classes.

Programme 3 - National Squad Programme
The Plan also includes the provision of National Teams at Junior and U23 level and National Training Squads for a wider group of athletes showing the potential to compete internationally.

Coach Pathway.
Programme 4 - Talent Coach Learning and Development
This programme will support the development of club coaches in Olympic and Paralympic disciplines to help them become qualified and to improve as coaches, to align their delivery to the WITTP model and to connect with other coaches in the programme. This programme will be coordinated by the Coach Developer within British Canoeing.

Club Pathway.
Programme 5 - Talent Club Development Programme
This programme will provide direct investment into clubs (via the Talent Club Partnership programme) to support clubs to develop their performance environments. This programme will be supported and coordinated by the Talent Club Partnership Manager within British Canoeing.
Start with the end in mind
The What It Takes To Win (WITTW) model outlines the critical success factors of a winning performance at senior World level. The reception to establishing a WITTP model has been positive with clubs and coaches looking for more clarity about the desirable characteristics and attributes of athletes as they enter the World Class Programme and how this impacts at the various ages and stages of a developing athlete within a club.

What It Takes to Progress (WITTP)
The WITTP will act as a golden thread running through the core of all activity within the England Talent Sprint Programme

The WITTP will:
• Identify the key components that underpin the potential to be successful at senior level including - technical, physical, psychological, behavioural
• Present information about the ranges in each of these areas for all classes and at each age and stage for both genders
• Be shared widely with coaches in clubs
• Addresses the issues of specialisation
• Be continually updated to ensure it reflects emerging trends
• Be evidence based
• Be aligned to the coaching award framework and be embedded as part of the learning outcomes of the coaching awards

The WITTP model will provide for a development framework for each gender (Male/Female), class (Kayak/Canoe) and age/stage development detailing technical competencies, racing experience, physical measures, psychological characteristics and behaviours.
The framework will be developmentally appropriate and account for progress that is individually unique and based on a constantly changing base, not just limited solely to the variation of normal physical growth but also considering biological maturation and behavioural development. The framework will be informed by the development trajectory of past and current elite athlete development histories.

The WITTP model will highlight key critical benchmarks and capacities at each of the levels and the acceptable ranges taking into account the varied rate of individuals’ progress depending on the age/stage and variation of the athletes.

The WITTP will be developed in conjunction through an advisory group which will include experienced club coaches. It will be critical to the success of the Plan, that the WITTP is applicable and relevant to clubs and athletes and is widely used.

The WITTP will be presented as a suite of resources including; e-learning, resource booklets, videos, session templates, benchmarks, testing protocols, case studies and periodic presentations from UK programme coaches.

Programme 2.

Canoe Development Programme
It is recognised that Sprint Canoe classes lack strength and depth and the national teams are currently dependent on intensive externally driven Talent Transfer programmes that mask the talent being developed from within the sport.

This programme seeks to encourage that a greater emphasis is placed on upskilling coaches and athletes to develop a stronger pool of canoe athletes within the clubs. Strategically the development of both male and female classes is important as both genders suffer from gaps in breadth and depth across the classes.

The Canoe Development Programme will establish an intensive development programme in Holme Pierrepont (HPP) and coordinate support for those clubs who are investing in Canoe groups and development.
The Canoe Development programme will:

- Directly identify and develop Canoe athletes local to HPP and supporting their development as Canoe Group. The programme will engage in regular talent searches at local canoe clubs, schools, other sporting clubs (swimming, gymnastic clubs etc.) in order to identify regular athletes with the ability and desire to progress within the Canoe class.

- Help to support the creation of three Canoe club hubs, where they are committed to developing their Canoe specific expertise. This provision will be supplemented or facilitated by the National Talent Squad Coaches where appropriate/possible.

- Work closely with the WCP Canoe coaches in order to facilitate the sharing and cascade of expertise and experience through appropriately timed workshops/camps targeted at club coaches.

- Lead and update the Canoe specific elements of the WITTP model

Programme 3

National Squad Structure
A National Squad structure will continue to exist within the pathway.

The purpose of the National Squad is to support the development of those athletes that are the best in their age group, by bringing them all together on occasions with their club coaches.

The National Teams which compete at Junior and U23 level are likely to be drawn largely from the National Squads and these international competition opportunities are of course a further ingredient to the athlete development.

The England National Talent Squad (ENTS) programme will facilitate the tailoring of individual athlete development plans and provide appropriate Sport Science interventions (Strength and Conditioning, Physio, Psychology etc.) for athletes. Opportunities will also be created to support the development of the athlete’s club coach.

The National Squad will be split into 3 tiers to provide additional support and opportunities to athletes each level within the pathway.

Retaining these levels was a consistent theme within the consultation feedback, but this needs to be accommodated without retaining the SRS and the costs associated with the SRS staffing.
The three tiers of squad support are outlined below;

**Tier 1 - England Development Squad (EDS)**

Focused on supporting athletes and their coaches who are progressing towards the top of the national racing structure and who may be challenging for the GB Junior team in the next 2-3 years. The Squad structure will help to identify and support emerging club based athletes, who are probably the best in their club group and who will benefit from training with other better athletes.

The Development squad will come together for circa 4 camps a year at regional locations (perhaps based out of host clubs). Dates and themes for these camps will be published for the year in advance.

Athletes will be able to apply to attend these events and the attendance with their club coach will be strongly encouraged. These opportunities will be taken to further support the development of the coaches and provide coach development opportunities. Camps will be themed (perhaps K4/K2 camps), planned in order to support the WITTP in practice and will be supported by periodic attendance from WCP discipline coaches.

Athlete and coach inclusion will be rolling, allowing for a flexibility to bring athletes into the squads sessions as they develop.

The camps will be coordinated by the England National Talent Squad (ENTS) coaches and Coach Development coach. There will be additional support and provision at this tier (around an extra 4 camps) to help address the current gap in the female classes.

**Tier 2 - England National Talent Squad (ENTS)**

This squad will be focused on supporting those athletes and their coaches who are currently challenging for GB Junior team inclusion. Athletes will be named onto this programme for a year. Selection will be based on performance results, rate of progression and performance behaviours. Spaces will be limited up to 20 athletes. It is a stated ambition to have a gender and class balance within ENTS as performance levels rise in the weaker classes.

**Tier 3 - England Performance Squad (EPS)**

This squad will provide support to those athletes who have been selected for, or have a realistic chance of selection to the GB U23 Team and subsequent progression to the WCP within two years. Spaces are limited up to 8 athletes and qualification is dependent on a performance outcome measure. Again, it is the long term ambition to have a gender and class balance within EPS.
Talent Coach Learning and Development

Supporting the development of all coaches including the club coaches working within the Talent Pathway is a key ingredient for success in this Plan. Whilst the initial focus will be on coaches working with squads and in the Talent Club programme, this will be extended to support coaches more widely in the development of Sprint within clubs.

The Talent Coach Learning and Development programme will be focused primarily on the development of the coaching practice of current coaches, which will include supporting coaches to obtain and update their qualifications.

The Talent Coach Learning and Development Programme will:

- Engage and enhance coaching practice and expertise in club based coaches
- Develop a sustainable community of coaching practice in clubs in the long term.
- Be aligned to the awarding body
- Be aligned to WITTP model
- Be managed by the Talent Coach Development Officer

Provision will be via a varied mix of delivery including; live coaching sessions, web based contact, regional/centralised days (hosted at clubs).

As a result of engaging with this development programme ‘graduate’ coaches will:

- Display excellent coaching behaviours based on an athlete focussed approach
- Be better reflectors and have increased levels of self-awareness
- Have increased levels of sport specific knowledge
- Ensure development is long term focused (age and stage appropriate)
- Each coach will be encouraged to have a clear and relevant personal development plan based on their development needs.
Programme 5.

Talent Club Development Programme

The initial focus will be around the 12 Sprint and 4 Slalom Clubs who have been identified as Talent Club Partners.

The aim will be to develop an excellent club infrastructure which provides a vibrant talent pathway for all paddlers and which supports the very best young athletes to fulfil their potential on the world stage.

The Talent Club Partnership will be coordinated by the Talent Club Partnership Manager through a mix of bespoke support, onsite visits/remote support, facilitated centralised workshops, regional workshops and resource development.

As this develops, models of good practice around developing a successful Talent Club will be captured, shared and promoted.

The Talent Club Development Programme will:

- Create appropriate links with the British Canoeing Quality Mark
- Encourage and require clubs to align with the relevant NGB frameworks and policies including; good governance, safeguarding, event safety etc.
- Provide a suite of resources to support clubs to develop their club action plan

The Talent Club Development programme will be informed by an advisory group made up of representative and experienced club coaches and volunteers.

The Talent Club Development Programme will provide a self-evaluation tool for clubs to monitor and measure their progress and to develop and refresh their actions plans.
The development plans will be encouraged to have a focus in some or all of the following areas and the following types of resources are being considered or developed;

**Recruitment of Athletes**
Recruitment pack to include; Talent Identification and Development (TID) screening templates, template letters for schools, presentations, leaflets, taster session structures etc.

**Coach Management and Development**
Support around succession planning, coach recruitment, coach contracts, coach management, identification and training of future coaches etc.

**Appointment of Volunteers and paid Staff**
Advice and support around volunteer recruitment, coach recruitment, coach employment or contracts

**Safety/Welfare- Athlete Enjoyment**
Advice and guidance around athlete welfare, elite youth training environments, education and lifestyle management. Guidance developed by the British Canoeing Performance Wellbeing Group will help inform and support club based athlete welfare and support. This support will also advise clubs and coaches around good practice in safeguarding.

**Facilities**
Support will be provided to help clubs consider and design the best daily training environment within their programme. This will clearly vary from club to club as each will have its own location based challenges, strengths and opportunities.

**Competition delivery**
This support will encourage clubs, coaches and athletes to consider the competitions that are delivered and offered by the club to support the needs of athletes within their programmes

**Programme planning/athlete development**
Advice and sharing of information around the detail of a successful programme; how groups are structured, how athlete development is driven and reviewed, pathway planners, goal setting templates etc.

**Funding**
Support to consider how clubs can develop more sustainable funding for talent programmes

**Governance.**
Support to ensure that clubs have the committee structures and decision making processes established and are operating with the best policies and procedures in place and up to date.