

INTERNAL:

British Canoeing confirms its athletes will not compete internationally in 2020.

British Canoeing has confirmed that it will not be sending its world class performance and English talent athletes to international competitions for the remainder of the 2020 competition season.

We recognise that within the consultation with athletes, coaches and WCP staff there was some support for attending the competitions, especially regarding our J18 and U23 athletes, however the logistical issues and health and safety risks associated with attending international events were also widely acknowledged.

With the ongoing health concerns associated with COVID-19 and the subsequent logistical issues, it was deemed that there was still an unacceptable level of risk associated with overseas travel and the decision was confirmed by the British Canoeing Board on Sunday 28 June.

Performance Director, Paul Ratcliffe, said: “Thank you to those who fed in to the decision making process and we very much appreciate the considered comments, ideas, and feelings that have been articulated.

“Unfortunately, we have been unable to resolve many of the complex issues associated with international competition at this time. We believe that the risks to athletes and staff health through travelling and competing are too high and our priority must be the health, safety, and wellbeing of athletes, staff and volunteers.

“We know that this news will be extremely disappointing to everyone who will be affected by it given all the hard work put into preparing for the season.

“It’s clear that amongst athletes and staff there was a desire to compete and therefore we will continue to explore with the discipline committees the possibility of holding domestic races later this year, depending on what can be delivered safely and responsibly.

“We will then aim to start a fresh with International competitions in 2021 and use the opportunity until then to maximise our preparations.

“We hope that providing clarity around international events in 2020 gives an element of certainty to athletes. We believe such clarity is preferred over an extended period of uncertainty, at the end of which international competitions are still likely to be deemed an unacceptable level of risk.

“We must commend the actions and behaviour of all athletes, staff and volunteers throughout this difficult period. We have had to adapt significantly, and have done so admirably. We have taken the threat of the virus seriously, and as a result, contributed to the national effort to save lives.

“It’s great to see many athletes back on the water, in some form, whilst abiding by the important guidelines set by the Government and British Canoeing in order to minimise the risks. We will continue to work towards getting as many athletes back to their normal training environments as possible, as and when it is safe to do so. “

Some of the factors which influenced the decision included:

- Athletes will require a solid training block ahead of team selection and international competition and it appears highly unlikely that this can be achieved by those athletes seeking selection for international teams
- There will be some inequity in the Olympic and Paralympic disciplines in particular with the lottery funded athletes being able to train sooner and more easily than those based in clubs, due to dispensation provided by DCMS. Even these athletes are unlikely to be able to train to a normal training regime for the foreseeable future as weight rooms remain closed
- The 4 Home Nations have all had different restrictions and the return to training has been at different times and speeds, which provides an unfair basis for team selection
- It is highly unlikely that even if international competition recommences in September, that government guidelines in the UK will enable us to hold selection races with appropriate notice and sufficient time ahead to make arrangements
- Even if international competitions go ahead, the practicalities and risks involved with transporting boats across multiple borders and the wellbeing of drivers may make it impossible
- In risk assessing each trip, there are so many aspects that will flag an increased risk which will be difficult to mitigate against, that it is likely that even if there was a desire to attend, the risk may conclude as being too high
- Even if limited international races do occur, the races and results will not be truly reflective, as different countries have had different disruptions and have returned to training at different times
- Those attending international competition in some countries may be required to quarantine on return and even if no formal quarantine is required, it is most likely that we would implement a quarantine to protect other team members who have remained in a more controlled environment
- With regards to the Olympic and Paralympic disciplines no international races in 2020 will have any bearing on Olympic/Paralympic qualification as all processes are delayed to 2021 and slalom World ranking is suspended from March 2020 - Jan 2021
- For those athletes with Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic ambitions, long term preparation for 2021 and beyond should be prioritised ahead of possible 2020 International race(s)