

## The Racing Levy

### *How marathon races help young talent and the development of the sport*

Whenever you enter a regional or national marathon race – be it a Hasler, a Waterside or other marathon listed in the racing calendar – part of the entry fee you pay is collected by the race organiser on behalf of the Marathon Racing Committee.

Currently, the amount collected is £3 per seat for seniors and veterans, and £2 per seat for juniors, except for the Geoff Sanders series where no levy is collected. The levy is only collected on what we call “Class A” races – Haslers, the major championships, and major races that appear in the Calendar like the Watersides. This system relies on the goodwill and efforts of our race organisers, who take part because they share our aim of developing the sport.

In a “normal” year, the levy raises up to £30,000 towards the development and organisation of marathon. Money from the levy is added to an amount given to marathon by British Canoeing, and in every normal year the full amount is spent. But what does the racing community get in return?

**This money ensures that the MRC can continue to provide effective marathon competition. And for aspiring and current international paddlers, it ensures that representing their country is something that is not dependent on their ability to pay.**

It’s important to note that like with the other discipline committees, none of it goes on paid staff or expenses. The MRC is run entirely by volunteers, and while expenses may be claimed they rarely are.

The MRC does a lot of work for the sport week in, week out, with most value coming from volunteer time. For example, deciding and reviewing the rules that run the sport, promoting and demoting, updating the ranking list every week, publishing results, developing software to enter and run races. We organise the racing calendar, checking the risk assessment of every race published and supporting race organisers where required. With our Regional Marathon Advisors, we oversee the Hasler competition and Final. Some of these require investment, and we can’t rely on British Canoeing to fund all of it.

Things we have spent some of the levy on domestically in recent years include a bursary for race coach courses, where people can claim £100 towards a core or race coach qualification. Our investment was matched equally by the Sprint Racing Committee. 62 course places were subsidised in 2019, allowing a good number of club volunteers to become qualified.

We commissioned Will Abson at Richmond to develop his race entry software for use across all marathon (and indeed other) race types – this is now freely available for all race organisers to use, hugely reducing their admin. We are extending this agreement to develop post-race results processing, to ensure that rankings and club points are always updated in time for the following weekend.

The MRC has also run fun, learning based Junior Development Squad days in recent years.

We provide the all the trophies and medals for the Hasler Final and Nationals, and will soon be buying changing tents to help with limited women's and junior changing rooms at some race venues.

If you have ideas on how more money can be spent domestically, we want to hear them. Or you can stand for election to the MRC, and help make those decisions directly.

The majority of our expenditure goes on major events and development international trips. Typically, we would fund up to 75 athlete places per year for a range of races from the French Nationals for under 16s, to the World and European Championships.

These trips cost a huge amount of money, and in the case of marathon, the levy means the paddlers selected only have to pay a contribution, not cover all the costs. For the Marathon Worlds, athletes contribute £200 each which covers all of their costs for a whole week.

The Sprint Racing and WWR committees are also limited in the money they receive from British Canoeing, and without levy revenue this means that the cost of a non-programme athlete taking up a GB team selection in these disciplines can be between four and ten times higher than it is for marathon.

So the next time you enter a marathon race, remember that while the organising club is raising funds, a very important amount of your entry fee is going towards supporting and developing our sport and our top young paddlers.