



GBR IRC Committee

MINUTES of a meeting held on Tuesday 20th September 2023 at Royal Lymington Yacht Club

Present:

ST- Stephen Tudor (Chair)
JP - Jon Pegg (Vice Chair)
AP - Andrew Pearce (Poole)
MS - Mel Sharp (Falmouth)
RWF - Richard Woof (Weymouth)
RWT - Ruaridh Wright (Solent)
RM - Richard Moxey (RYA)
DM - David Murrin (Classic Yachts)
MR - Mike Richards (IRC Measurer, Performance Yachts)
DMG - David McGough (JOG)
SB - Simon Britten (Bristol Channel)
JW - Jeremy Wilton (RORC CEO)
SC - Steve Cole RORC (Racing Manager)
JETS - Jason Smithwick (Director of the Rating Office)
JH - Jenny Howells (Technical Manager)
ES - Emma Smith (Technical Team)
SM - Sally Moss (Technical Team)
AY - Andrew Yates (IRC Measurer, Consultant)
MS - Mike Street (Observer, IRC Advocate)

1. Welcome from the Chairman and introductions.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Richard Babbe (Channel Islands), Paul Jackson (East Coast), Ian Macdonald (Scotland)

3. Committee membership

There are no changes to the committee, but it was noted that MS was present as an observer, as the IRC advocate for Weymouth. Members are encouraged to suggest potential additional committee members.

4. Minutes of the meeting of the GBR IRC Committee - held on Tuesday 19 September 2022

The Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting (proposed D McGough, seconded R Moxey). There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere in the agenda.

5. GBR Rule Authority (Rating Office) Annual Report

Racing areas for Liverpool (108) and North Wales (109) will be combined for future statistics as boats may register as either racing area (NW England).

Regarding a correlation between boats no longer rating IRC but rating YTC, the Rating Office is confident that YTC has not affected IRC numbers, as it appeals to a different type of competitor and yacht.

Noted that RORC has a new Communications Manager, Louay Habib, and IRC is now mentioned more in RORC race PR; this is not only a RORC issue and we encourage more mention of IRC in event press releases generally.

A new MyIRC application portal for GBR and International applications is being developed but unfortunately will not be ready for the start of 2024.

RWF raised the subject of general structural safety and the lack of information regarding some notable incidents such as keel failures. Some new designs have surprisingly light construction considering the loads and this raises the question of the ISO standards suitability for modern builds.

JETS confirmed that the ISO standard was changed to lighten structural requirements; however, it is a minimum standard and designers should design to predicted loads for the boat in question, not to a minimum standard. WS relies on the ISO standard to issue Plan Review certificates (with independent review). It is a RORC/RYA responsibility to provide report to WS of any incidents within their jurisdiction.

DM commented that this issue should be a combination of personal/owner responsibility and structural standards.

SC reported that a review of the reasons for retirement from this year's Rolex Fastnet Race is being undertaken by the Chair of RORC Special Regs committee with WS and the RYA also involved. RORC are currently collecting data and the review is scheduled to be completed Dec 2023.

Regarding whether there should be advice on whether offshore races should be cancelled/postponed for heavy weather forecasts, the IRC Race management guidelines intentionally do not talk about wind limits or similar safety questions as these are OSR and an individual club's responsibility as they know the waters etc.

DMG reported that JOG has had positive feedback from owners getting rated for the first time about how helpful the Rating Office team is.

6. IRC Incentive and Support Schemes

IRC Advocate Scheme

<https://rorcrating.com/irc-rating/gbr-irc-racing/irc-advocates/>

ST spoke in recognition of the work MS and Weymouth SC have done in support of the IRC Advocate Scheme over the last few years. MS noted that some Weymouth SC members (mostly class 5) are likely to try out YTC and the club may try dual scoring.

Single Event Ratings (SERs)

<https://rorcrating.com/irc-rating/gbr-irc-racing/irc-single-event-rating/>

SER is still only offered to a small number of events; it was offered on a trial basis to Hamble Classics this year. DM commented that it works well for British Classic Week.

Secondary Certificates (IRC Rule 8.2.1)

This has been popular and seems to be working well. It is mostly used for inshore/offshore configurations and is a good solution to multiple amendments. In response to a question, it was confirmed that appendage/mast changes are not permitted. The limitations are shown in rule 8.2.1.

For race organisers, the primary certificate is the default if there is no declaration; there is an IRC rule change proposal for 2024 to make that clearer.

7. RYA YTC Scheme

<https://rorcrating.com/rya-ytc/>

The RYA contracts the Rating Office to run the system, this covers administration and research including a machine learning project in summer 2023. There are proposed formula changes for 2024 and development of a new online application portal which is expected to open Feb 2024.

ST said this is a good introductory system for IRC which the committee has been requesting for a long time.

JP suggested that RYA could advertise it more and it's development and ask for club feedback as there are some outlying boats. It was noted that there is a risk of e.g. VPRS coming back if YTC doesn't work.

There will be an RYA YTC webinar on 9th Nov to 'quiz the experts'.

There was concern about making YTC too good, it should remain an approximation in order to encourage people into IRC for a more accurate rating. However, it was agreed that the UK needs a free entry-level rating system and it is better for the RORC/RYA to be running this system with a link/pathway to IRC than for someone else to run one. The Rating Office may start charging for amendments, this is still to be decided. AP is looking at YTC as a way to get people away from VPRS in Poole and will be discussing this locally.

YTC is self-limiting due to the small number of parameters that are input. Also, the Rating Office now has contact details for the YTC owners which it would not have if someone else was running the system. One advantage is that RORC/RYA control the agenda for YTC, so can steer it as appropriate; the Rating Office has already made changes with the input data, such as using standard boat weight.

There was a suggestion that owners need to be an RYA member to get a YTC certificate, rather than RORC potentially charging for certificates in the future. However, this would not be straightforward as it would require a link to the RYA members' database.

RM said clubs should make sure main prizes go to IRC classes. This was agreed and ST requested that clubs should be given advice on this matter. ***ACTION***

RM welcomed the committee's comments and the feedback will be taken to the YTC committee. ***ACTION***

8. Development of IRC

IRC and UK rating systems, Club racing, Promotion and development of IRC in the UK

Any suggestions or feedback from the committee would be welcomed for ideas that are easy to administer by the rating team. Current incentives are the end of season 50% discount (new application/revalidation), SER and the Advocate scheme.

There was a discussion about course types and preferences for particular fleets for windward-leeward or round the cans racing. RWT said that the P40 class would like to see a separate windward-leeward IRC rating.

JETS pointed out that the question multiple number ratings has been debated at length and staying with single number rating is strategic as much as technical. Events using rating systems with triple number rating have been known to change the rating after the event/results due to wind speed/direction changes.

Sometimes there is pressure from powerful individuals regarding course types, and also fleets in different areas like certain types of courses. IRC should not dictate what race organisers do. However, there could be more education for race officers about varying courses. RWF suggested a race officers' seminar to discuss this issue and this was agreed as a good idea in conjunction with the RYA. ***ACTION***

DM suggested short educational videos would also be useful.

IRC presence at regattas would be welcomed, somewhere for sailors to ask questions (other than to their sailmaker). JETS confirmed that the rating office team regularly advises owners who are asking how to improve their performance to talk to their sailmaker.

MS suggested that standard certificates (i.e. not Endorsed) should only use standard weight, and if a boat is going to be weighed it must be on a RORC loadcell. JH pointed out that IRC is a self-measurement system so accepts owner declared data; supplied data is always compared with other data sources/sisterships to check it is within expected values.

9. IRC Championships 2023 & 2024

General Review of Championships, 2024 Dates and Events, UK Nationals – format and location, Guidelines and suggestions.

It was agreed that as the IRC Nationals will be at Poole in 2024, there would be no Southern Championship. Weymouth was not a suitable alternative as it tends not to get visiting boats. AP suggested discussions between Weymouth and Poole in future to co-ordinate events to get more entries.

South West: an application had been received from Plymouth. JP said that Falmouth/Dartmouth are potentials, but no applications have been received. Dartmouth Week is a very good venue/event. He suggested sending a holding reply to Plymouth pending an application from Dartmouth. ***ACTION***

East Coast - Ramsgate Week (as in recent years) or Mersea Week. Mersea has a relatively small IRC fleet currently and it was agreed that West Mersea YC should be encouraged to grow their IRC fleet during 2024 and then arrange to alternate the East Coast championships with Ramsgate from 2025 (i.e. East Coast Championship to be at Ramsgate in 2024). The committee also requested that the two clubs talk to each other to co-ordinate their event dates. **post meeting note: additional information has now been received in support of Mersea Week holding the IRC East Coast Championship in 2024 and this is being reviewed**

It was confirmed that applications for events 2 years in advance will be accepted, and we can add any known 2025 dates to the end of the 2024 list.

GBR Nationals. AP distributed posters for the 2024 event with a request to put them on club noticeboards. They want to make IP Poole Regatta a big event and specifically get more boats doing the IRC Nationals as the entries in 2023 were low; and also grow the number of visiting boats.

There was a discussion about venues for 2025 and beyond. The policy regarding moving the Nationals around the UK will be reviewed after Poole 2024; the 2025 event location also depends on RORC strategy for 2025 which includes the Admiral's Cup and RORC Centenary.

ST suggested that moving it further away from the south would help bring high level racing to different parts of the country.

SC pointed out that improved integration of events and calendars would encourage more people to attend, there are currently too many events and clubs need to communicate. It was generally agreed that it would be better to incorporate the Nationals into an existing regatta rather than have a standalone event.

DM suggested that the cost of living crisis is affecting turnout generally and this is a trend we need to accept.

There was a discussion about requiring Endorsement for the IRC Nationals; this has been considered but it would be undesirable for a boat with a standard certificate to win the Nationals. Also discussed was equipment inspection at events and the logistics of e.g. check weighing of boats. It was agreed that letting competitors know in advance that checks is conducive to compliance.

MR had recently attended an event in Ireland and found that there was still confusion about rules such as the number of spinnakers carried, and declaring new sails. It was agreed that regular, brief rule reminders on social media would be beneficial. *ACTION*

It was noted that any equipment inspection must be done by an independent third party i.e. not a measurer who is also competing in the event.

JETS suggested that for 2025 the GBR IRC Championship rules and advice document could be changed to say equipment inspection is required (not just recommended) *ACTION*

10. Rule changes to IRC <https://ircrating.org/about/irc-congress/>

JETS presented the proposed 2024 IRC Rule Changes from the IRC Technical Committee.

Item 3 (Equipment).

RWF requested more clarity on the rating of accommodation as it creates a lot of questions and arguments. In future where there is sufficient information the IRC certificate may include what is expected to be seen aboard.

Item 5 (Rating no. of headsails).

JP pointed out that with modern sail plans the OSR defined Heavy Weather Jib is not far off a normal sized jib. JETS said that there is a submission to WS and re the HWJ area being measured un-reefed.

It was clarified that spinnaker and genoa staysails are headsails for the purpose of IRC rating.

The reason for new rule was pressure/feedback from the fleet, to try and reduce the arms race, supported by sailmakers. The IRC Technical Committee will be publishing a table of approximate rating effects very soon.

ACTION

Item 6 (sail stamps/stickers).

A WS/IRC sticker has been designed but IRC does not require it to be that sticker. ORC stickers or even measurements written/signed on the sail will likely be accepted.

Item 9 (flying headsail).

There is no rating change resulting from this rule change. There was a rating reduction for flying headsails in 2023. Rating the number of headsails may make a FH a more attractive option for some boats.

11. Meetings and Submissions <https://ircrating.org/about/irc-congress/>

IRC Submissions to World Sailing

WS OSR 3.04 c) implementing RORC date 1995 or before for acceptance of SSS

WS OSR 4.27.3 a) area of Heavy Weather Jib add 'without a reef'.

See the link for Proposals from the GBR IRC Committee and any Submissions to the IRC Congress and the GBR Report to the IRC Congress.

12. Area and fleet reports

To note the reports received and any questions as necessary.

DM, representing the classic fleet, suggested that IRC has seen a subtle migration away from heavier cruising boats to modern lighter boats, and proposed that boats with anomalous hull forms should be scanned to improve hull factor as 2D hull shape doesn't give enough detail. JETS said that there no current way of

integrating 3D into HF and added that IRC currently has an issue with scow bows, but pointed out that hull scanning also does not deal with these well.

DM would like to see a designer-based team competition for classic boats.

RM asked why the uptake of IRC in Sussex, this is a result of the Sussex YC advocate scheme.

13. Proposed date of 2024 meeting

Boat show Tuesday - 17/9/2024

14. Any other business - As agreed at the beginning of the meeting

RM raised the subject of environmental issues. Should there be an age allowance for materials? JETS is looking at HF inputs for environmental materials, not to give them a benefit but rate them fairly. He also pointed out that keeping boats on the water racing is sustainable. RWF agreed that a sustainable solution is to build good boats that last well e.g. VO 65s. MR suggested that the rough Rolex Fastnet Race 2023 experience (the fact that it started in the windy conditions) has reset some thinking.

Other issues to consider are the availability of replacement parts and longevity of equipment.

The rating of the number of headsails may also help.

JETS and JH have a meeting with Sustainable Sails on 21/9/23.

The meeting finished at 1515.