



**MINUTES**  
**of a meeting held on**  
**Tuesday 17 September 2024 at**  
**Royal Lyminster Yacht Club, Lyminster, UK**

**Present:**

<b>Chair:</b> Stephen Tudor (ST)	<b>Vice-Chair:</b> Jon Pegg (JP)
Andrew Pearce (AP) - Poole	David McGough (DMG) - JOG
David Murrin (DM) - Classics	Alastair Bisson (AB) - Channel Islands
Richard Woof (RW) - Weymouth	Dominic Williams (DW) representing Simon Britten (Bristol Channel)
Mike Richards (MR) - Racing/Performance	Mel Sharp (MS) - Falmouth
Richard Moxey (RM) - RYA	Jeremy Wilton (JW) - RORC CEO
Steve Cole (SC) - RORC Director of Racing	Jason Smithwick (JETS) - Director, Rating Office
Jenny Howells (JH) - Technical Manager, Rating Office	Emma Smith (ES) - Technical Team, Rating Office
Sally Moss (SM) - Technical Team, Rating Office	Mike Street (Observer, IRC Advocate Weymouth)

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**1. Welcome and Introductions**

ST opened the meeting by welcoming all members, with introductions made for new members Alastair Bisson (Channel Islands) and Dominic Williams representing Simon Britten (Bristol Channel).

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**2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Ruaridh Wright (Solent), Paul Jackson (East Coast), and Ian Macdonald (Honorary).

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**3. Committee Membership**

MS suggested that the committee would benefit from new and younger members to bring a fresh view on racing.

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**4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record (proposed MR, seconded JP). There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

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**5. GBR Rule Authority (Rating Office) Annual Report**

**JETS presented the annual report.** In summary:

The 2024 GBR IRC Committee Rating Office Report highlights a stable year for IRC racing, with a slight decline in certificates compared to 2023 but higher than 2021 and 2022. The UK remains a significant contributor, representing 25% of the global IRC fleet. Offshore and two-handed racing saw strong participation, and there were 51 entries in the IRC Nationals at Poole. The IRC Advocate Scheme continues to thrive, aiding in certification and engagement with regional clubs.

Single Event Ratings remained steady, mostly issued for the Round the Island Race. The Rating Office continued to support specific IRC classes and offer technical advice. They are also focused on developing a next-generation

IRC application portal for improved user experience. The 2025 IRC Nationals will coincide with RORC and Royal Thames YC's centenary celebrations in Cowes, with discussions for future Nationals to be held outside the Solent.

#### Discussion:

- **Racing Trends:** Participation in inshore racing continues to decline compared to offshore racing. However, the RORC offshore racing program remains strong despite fewer people actively racing.
- **Economic Impact:** DM and DMG noted that economic factors and the increasing costs of sailing/maintenance are influencing the number of boats racing. DM suggested that the economic situation should be recognized as a natural contributor to the decline. MR observed that for large yachts, costs for IRC certificates remain minor compared to overall operational expenses.
- **Classes:** Some IRC rating classes such as the RC1000, RC900 and HP30 were no longer active. Regarding one design classes and their lifespan, DMG noted that the J/109 class had adapted so boats used the same sails for OD or IRC racing and this helped the class stay strong.
- **Laser Scanning:** DM raised the idea of laser scanning for boats to differentiate between different hull shapes; JETS explained that IRC primarily uses linear parameters so, apart from possibly bulb weight, laser scanning is not currently a useful option.
- **Fees:** DM suggested that IRC could offer an annual membership fee that was higher than the current application fee but included the issue of further certificates during the year (amendments, etc.).

#### Admiral's Cup 2025:

- There is high global enthusiasm for the event, and it is influencing on boat costs and choices.
- All sails to be used must be registered and a selection will be inspected. Boats must be weighed within 13 months of the event and bulb weight verified. RW proposed mandatory single-point weighing (i.e. single point on the boat) for new builds; JETS stated if that were agreed it would need to be included in the Notice of Race for future events.

#### Stability, and Offshore Special Regulations (OSR):

- MS questioned whether the sailing community is aware that for Category 0 and 1 the OSR no longer accept SSS; he cited the example of the AZAB race for which 75% of the fleet relies on SSS. JETS clarified that organisers can still accept SSS, though this should be done with caution as it would fall outside the OSR.
- RW inquired whether requirements for AVS (Angle of Vanishing Stability) have been downgraded; JETS was not aware of any change. JETS explained that recent changes to OSR in respect of stability requirements represent a compromise between IRC and ORC perspectives.

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#### 6. IRC Incentive and Support Schemes

These were covered by the Rating Office report (item 5.)

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#### 7. RYA YTC Scheme:

- **Growth:** The YTC rating system has expanded from 500 to 1,500 boats since the RYA took it over, and it has recently gained new sponsorship from Aera Instruments. The RYA contracts the RORC Rating Office to run the scheme, which has worked well. YTC is currently free apart from a small optional annual fee for those wishing to amend their certificates. It was intended to keep it free for as long as possible.
- **Strategic Position:** JETS emphasized the importance of maintaining YTC as an entry-level system and stressed that YTC helps introduce grassroots sailors to IRC.
- **Technical Development:** JETS reported that using machine learning had proved invaluable for research and development of the rating calculation and there will be some changes for next year. However, it was then planned to have a period of stability.

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## 8. Development of IRC, club racing, promotion and development in the UK

### Encouraging Younger Sailors:

- RM commented that many modern designs have simplified crewing, possibly reducing interest among younger sailors. Older boats and classics also help to create team coherence and increase involvement.
- DMG noted that Generation JOG, which encourages sailors under 30, has been successful. AP pointed out Poole clubs' strong youth progression from dinghies to keelboats but acknowledged that more effort is needed to transition youth into IRC racing.
- **University Links:** DW noted that university sailors do not have a clear pathway into IRC racing, and suggested strengthening RORC, JOG, and BUSA (British University Sailing Association) links.

### Race Management Guidelines

- DM suggested introducing firmer guidelines for running IRC events, including explaining better the reasons for using a mix of course types (windward/leeward, round the cans) for fairer racing. The GBR IRC Championships guidelines and requirements that go to every GBR Championship organiser already require a varied range of courses. It was agreed to review and firm up the wording in the document and that event organisers should be educated and encouraged to follow best practices. The potential to include an article in a future RYA race officers' newsletter was discussed.
- AB enquired about the possibility of multiple ratings for different courses. JETS said IRC is intentionally simple and that complicating it too much would be detrimental; also such features quickly become an optimisation tool.

### Promotion of IRC

- JETS reiterated the importance of promoting IRC in race event press releases. In a discussion about yachting press it was agreed that Seahorse is high level. JH said there had been a recent Introduction to IRC article in the "All at Sea" free paper and it was agreed that this type of publication and e.g. "Yachts & Yachting" is good for reaching grass roots sailors.

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## 9. IRC Championships 2024 & 2025

- **2024 Poole Nationals:** AP reported a successful event with a total of 150 boats, of which 51 were racing in IRC. There were some issues Equipment inspection, RORC involvement and communication with the Rating Office were highly praised.
- Equipment inspection (MR) was a definite bonus. MR said it was mainly about education; sail stamps had facilitated checking data against the certificate.
- **2025 Dates and Events:** The Committee had been sent a provisional list of events to approve. The UK Nationals in 2025 will coincide with RORC's centenary celebrations, held from 13-15 June 2025. Future events include a proposed European Championship return to Cowes Week in 2026 and potential inclusion of Dartmouth Week in 2027.

### Guidelines and suggestions:

- AP said that the Endorsement requirement for the Nationals was no issue at the recent Poole Nationals and should be retained.
- It was agreed that the Welsh and Scottish National Championship should look at having equipment inspection.
- There was a discussion about pre-event equipment inspection and post-race spot checks. It was agreed that it was important for equipment inspectors to be independent, and also be a suitable person able to engage with sailors. A checklist for inspectors would be very useful.
- It was suggested that the current IRC protest rules are complex and could be reviewed to improve clarity.
- ST suggested that the best people to police certificate compliance are the crew of the boat, and perhaps the certificate page 2 should be displayed on the boat so all crew are aware of the rated information.

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## 10. Proposed IRC Rule Changes for 2025

These are published online at <https://ircrating.org/about/irc-congress/>

- JETS explained that rule changes from the IRC Technical Committee are intended to be minor this year, firstly following the major changes in 2024 relating to headsails, and to maintain stability for major events in particular Admiral's Cup.

### **Sail Limitations (IRC rule 21.1.5 (d)) re NED submission**

- JETS noted that some events had changed IRC rule 21.1.5 (d) but the Rating Office does not agree with this. The change was generally due to pressure from some owners.
- The current rule (that sails on board shall remain the same) is simple for equipment inspectors and checks during events.
- Sails are now designed for a narrower window than 10 years ago. IRC should encourage sail designers to design sails that are more all-purpose.
- The committee agreed that allowing boats to change sails daily during an event favours those with larger sail inventories.
- The committee agreed not to support rule amendments that would allow sail changes during events as a default. It was further suggested that the permission for an NOR to change rule 21.1.5 (d) should be removed, or that a change should require approval by the IRC Rating Authority. Not to be applied to events where the NOR has already been issued.

### **Boat weight tolerance (IRC rule 9.8) re AUS submission**

- It was agreed that 5% was too high. However, RW and MR doubted whether it was possible in practical terms to achieve 1% accuracy due to e.g. wind, wet or tank conditions. It was suggested that 2% would be more appropriate.

### **Number of headsails rating**

- JP suggested that no allowance be given below a 'base' number of headsails, with a rating increase if that number was exceeded. JH noted that this would be going back to how we used to rate the number of spinnakers, this was changed to give a fairer rating to boats with only 1 or 2 spinnakers. DM commented that the current rule gives freedom to owners to make their choice of what sails they want.
- JP suggested that in the future there may be no change to no rating allowance for fewer than 2 headsails, for every boat. Currently there is no reduction for fewer than 1, i.e. if a boat opts to have a Heavy Weather Jib as the largest headsail.

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## 11. Meetings and Submissions

### **IRC submissions to World Sailing: none**

- JETS noted that there is an OSR submission regarding heavy weather and storm sails to ensure they are fit for purpose. This specifies sails must be usable in certain wind strengths and on all points of sail. It was noted that the maximum size of the OSR heavy weather jib is now not much smaller than the normal non-overlapping jibs prevalent on modern boats.

**Proposals / submissions from the GBR IRC Committee to IRC Congress: none**

**GBR Report to IRC Congress: per item 5. above**

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## 12. Area and Fleet Reports

Members' reports had been previously circulated. Additional discussion:

- **DM (Classics):** DM highlighted that IRC remains the best system for racing classic boats and suggested that it should be marketed more prominently particularly in the Mediterranean. He noted that the key

points for a successful regatta are a) cost effective, b) shorter (less than a week), c) impeccable race organisation.

- **MR** had done equipment inspection at Cork Week. He noted that they are considering reducing to 4 day long weekend. Also improving scheduling to allow boats' travelling time and making it more 'big event' based. The Cork Week programme allows for many winners and offers sailors what they want, e.g. coastal division for boats not wanting to race windward/leeward.
- **DMG (JOG)**: DMG reported a successful season for JOG and IRC continues to perform well for their fleet.
- **MS on behalf of RW (Weymouth)**: most boats are enjoying racing with only 2-3 crew but are also trying to get more youth on to IRC boats. MS suggested increasing the Advocate discount to encourage more clubs to participate in the scheme.
- **AB (CI)**: clubs are encouraging online classroom sessions on skills, compliance and safety. Any resources that could be supplied would be useful.
- **DW (Bristol)**: many boats had raced in other areas and it had been a reminder to re-measure sails especially new sails after a season's use, and to remove unnecessary weight etc.
- **JP**: Dartmouth Week entries have increased in IRC classes. Royal Western YC has introduced white sail classes which has helped participation, good racing and boats taking out new sailors.

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### 13. Any Other Business

- DMG suggested developing online resources for education and pre-regatta briefings to support sailors. The Rating Office will also look at developing checklists for owners and for equipment inspectors.
- DMG noted that within the J/109 fleet they are going to pair owners up to check each other's boats before events. The committee supported this idea.
- RW raised the idea of reviewing age allowances to encourage the purchase of cheaper, older boats. JETS noted that there are already concerns from designers that current age allowance may disadvantage new boat builds.

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### 14. Proposed Date for the Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a similar day in September 2025, to be confirmed

**Chair's Closing Remarks:** ST thanked all attendees for their participation and acknowledged the efforts of the Rating Office.

The meeting ended at 1600.

### ACTIONS

Produce reminder checklist for owners to be sent with certificates (Rating Office)

Produced equipment inspection checklist (Rating Office)

Update GBR IRC Championship guidelines and requirements document (Rating Office)

Liaison with BUSA (RORC/JOG)