



GBR IRC Committee

**Minutes of a meeting held on
Thursday 18th September 2025 at Lymington Town Sailing Club**

Present:

ST- Stephen Tudor (Chair)
JP - Jon Pegg (Vice Chair)
AP - Andrew Pearce (Poole)
DM - David Murrin (Classics)
AB – Alastair Bisson (Channel Islands)
RWT – Ruairidh Wright (Solent)
RW - Richard Woof (Weymouth)
MR - Mike Richards (Racing/performance)
MS - Mel Sharp (Hon member)
JW - Jeremy Wilton (RORC CEO)
SC - Steve Cole RORC (Director of Racing)
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 (Technical Consultant)
IW – Ian Walker (Observer: GBR IRC Championship Sponsor – North Sails)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Stephen Tudor, opened the meeting, welcomed all attendees, and introduced the agenda.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from David McGough, Barrie Martin, Des Balmforth, Simon Britten, and Ian Macdonald.

3. Committee Membership

It was agreed that more, younger representatives would particularly be welcomed, and members were invited to put forward suggestions for additional members to ES.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 17 September 2024, were approved (proposed JP, seconded MR). There were no matters arising not already included on the current agenda.

5. GBR Rule Authority (Rating Office) Annual Report

The committee received the Rating Office report; this report will also be sent to IRC Congress. It was noted that the largest IRC fleets continue to be in GBR, FRA, IRL, AUS, and JPN, with a slight decline in the number of boats but a general sense of stability. It was confirmed that IRC Area denotes the boat's primary racing area, not the owner's address.

The Rating Office team has been under significant pressure this year due to the addition of Admiral's Cup, and the increase in YTC ratings. JETS thanked the team for their work.

Measurement activity related to Admiral's Cup had played an important role in boosting confidence among sailors, with members agreeing that equipment inspection at more events would be valuable. Poole Regatta invested in this for the IRC Nationals (2024) and will do for the IRC Europeans (2026).

Concerns were raised about consistency in sail measurement particularly relating to In-House Certification (IHC), and sails being pushed to the limits; it was noted that the lofts will build what the owner requests and sometimes this includes allowance for shrinkage. In the UK we rely on the RYA course for training; ES noted that very few RORC measurers do sail measurement as we rely on IHC and RYA sail measurers.

JETS confirmed that a new MyIRC application system is in development for planned release in January. A number of other online forms have been developed e.g. sail measurement inputs, sail area calculation.

In terms of wider involvement, JH continues to serve on the RYA Technical Committee, while both she and JETS are members of a new World Sailing Stability Working Party. JETS also remains active in the Universal Measurement System (UMS) alongside contributions to several other committees. It was noted that further items raised in the Rating Office report would be dealt with under later agenda headings.

Andrew Pearce requested a list of Dorset boats to identify the increase in regional activity.

6. IRC Incentive and Support Schemes

The committee heard an update on the Advocate Scheme. Two new Advocates have been appointed this year, and feedback has been positive, particularly regarding the simplified administrative processes developed by the Rating Office.

The Single Event Rating (SER) scheme continues to be used successfully for the Round the Island Race and classic yacht regattas, but will not be extended to other events.

7. IRC Championships 2025 & 2026

Discussion was held on the general success of recent championships with good attendance. In the Solent this was boosted by the participation of Admiral's Cup boats.

JETS reminded the committee of the generous prizes for GBR IRC Championships from North Sails.

RWT praised the shorter four-day format used by the Royal Thames for the IRC Nationals which was an excellent event. The 2026 IRC Nationals were confirmed for Dartmouth, in line with the strategy of alternating between Solent and non-Solent venues depending on the Admiral's Cup

cycle. Suggestions for the 2028 IRC Nationals were invited with a possible suggestion of Ramsgate. JETS thought this was a good idea and the team will contact them.

ST noted that the 2026 Welsh National Championship has moved from May to Sept as many boats intend to compete at the IRC Europeans in Poole in May. He also explained Celtic Sea Cup which consists of 4 events: Welsh IRC Nationals, Dublin Bay regatta, NI IRC Championship and Scottish Series/IRC Championship. This had been successful and would be repeated in 2026.

It was noted that the NI Championship will be Carrickfergus in 2026 and this will alternate each year with Royal Ulster YC. JP agreed to follow up with Torbay regarding an application for the South West Championships.

A recurring theme of the discussion was the overcrowding of the racing calendar, which members felt diluted entries and reduced participation. While regional regattas were praised for their quality, there was agreement that better coordination of dates across clubs would benefit participation.

A lengthy discussion was held about rules regarding daily sail changes. Some members argued that allowing daily changes gave wealthier teams undue advantages, while others noted that flexibility can help owners preserve their sails. The majority view was that rules should be clear and consistent, with strict limits preferred to avoid unnecessary complexity.

It was agreed that a Notice of Race could allow a spare mainsail in exceptional cases, but otherwise changes should not be permitted; an action was agreed to add guidance to Race Management regarding the allowance of a spare mainsail (IRC rule 21.1.5), while maintaining strict rules for headsails and spinnakers.

Classics

DM raised again the proposal of scanning hulls to improve rating accuracy for classic boats. A rule change allowing boats to rate without lifelines and add them when required without an IRC certificate change, was welcomed as a solution to ongoing issues. The treatment of schooners was discussed regarding their sail configuration. It was noted that closer collaboration with CIM racing could encourage movement of boats between IRC and CIM regattas.

8. RYA YTC Scheme

The YTC rating system has rated nearly 1900 boats this year, up from 1500 in 2024. YTC has largely replaced NHC and some local systems such as Byron and Clyde Handicap. Concerns were raised about long-term funding if RYA support were withdrawn, with some discussion of alternative cost models.

While YTC has succeeded in bringing more boats onto the water, it was agreed that it should be more actively promoted as a pathway to IRC. Members also considered whether newsletters and direct communication with YTC owners could encourage progression.

9. Development of IRC

The committee discussed ways to develop and promote IRC. It was agreed that high-quality race reports that mention IRC rating were integral to visibility. Members also stressed the value of IRC representatives being present at regattas to engage with sailors and build enthusiasm.

Education was highlighted as another area for development relating to certificate compliance; MR suggested a simple regatta checklist for owners to accompany Notices of Race. This was noted as an action to be explored.

ST noted that some Irish events had been approached by ORC to dual score; JETS confirmed that he is in discussions with ISA about rating systems in Ireland.

JETS shared the recent news that in major regattas in the Caribbean will dual score CSA / IRC from 2026. It is hoped that this may also be a start to reintroducing IRC into the USA.

10. Proposed 2026 IRC Rule Changes - details here: <https://ircrating.org/irc-rule/>

Jason Smithwick presented the draft IRC rule changes for 2026 and outlined the subjects that the IRC Technical Committee are working on. The balance between stability and responsiveness in the rule was considered, with some members calling for more advance notice of changes and hull factor reviews.

Discussion covered interceptors (a wedge or vertical lip on the hull at the transom), water ballast, scow bows, and 'code boost' sails. Automation and the potential use of advanced systems were also debated, with concerns expressed about fairness across the fleet.

IW suggested that the rules around IRC age allowance were reducing the incentive to build new boats. RW raised concerns about scrutiny of modifications on older boats, JETS confirmed that changes that have been declared are closely scrutinised and rated accordingly. In answer to a suggestion that significant changes to appendages or structure should affect the age date, JETS noted that these do not currently alter the age date as it only changes for hull shell modifications.

JETS suggested a potential 'IRC GP' level incorporating more information on water ballast transfer speeds, rudder toe-in, automatic systems, different age allowance calculation etc. JW noted that RORC is currently reviewing automatic systems and collecting data to review what should be allowed in RORC races.

11. Regulations, Meetings and Submissions (World Sailing, IRC Congress)

SC raised the subject of the costs associated with Offshore Special Regulations (OSR) Plan Reviews, applicable to boats with series date 2010 or later. RW noted that these costs were acting as a barrier to new builds. Boats with series date 2009 or earlier do not need Plan Review so are advantaged by being able to modify without this additional cost.

Stability requirements were also discussed, with concern that proposals for more onerous measurement requirements would hinder participation in major offshore events. JETS said that RORC and IRC are working very hard to prevent OSR changes in this direction.

Submissions to World Sailing

Storm Jibs: Following concerns about the design of storm jibs since IRC started rating the number of headsails carried, to make them a more mainstream use headsail, a submission to prevent battens in OSR Storm Jibs has been submitted jointly by IRC and ORC. IW confirmed that if this submission was accepted it would lead to storm jibs being designed with concave leeches.

JETS noted that WS submissions can be made any time of year and be discussed at various WS meetings during the year. We cannot therefore always attend to present our submission in person.

It was noted that safety remains the prime objective in IRC submissions to World Sailing.

Submissions to IRC Congress from GBR IRC Committee

None

13. Area and Fleet Reports

Regional reports were received from members. Notable comments in the meeting were: In the South West regattas remain strong, with suggestions of a three-regatta championship across Torbay, Falmouth, and Plymouth. Weymouth reported growth in short-handed sailing, while Poole continues to have a very active scene with strong interest already for the 2026 IRC Europeans. In the Channel Islands, rising costs and limited youth participation remain challenges.

In response to a question from AP about full crewed or 2-handed sistership ratings, JETS noted that boats are often specifically optimised for 2-handed racing. It is very event/course specific whether 2-handed boats should be higher or lower rated.

RWT suggested two different IRC ratings for windward-leeward racing or offshore racing. JETS argued that this would require knowledge of a boat's full sail inventory, and would also increase complexity for race organisers.

A recurring theme across the reports was the issue of calendar congestion, with too many events leading to diluted fleets and small entries.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a similar date in 2026.

15. Any Other Business

No additional business was raised.

The meeting closed at 15:20.

Actions Agreed:

- Andrew Pearce - list of Dorset boats.
- Guidance on spare mainsail use to be added to Race Management.
- Members to suggest new committee representatives to Emma Smith.
- Jon Pegg to follow up with Torbay regarding South West Championship.
- Development of a regatta checklist for owners to be explored.