



GBR IRC Committee

**Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 15th September 2026 at Hello Outdoors, Lymington**

Present:

ST- Stephen Tudor (Chair)
JP - Jon Pegg (Vice Chair)
AP - Andrew Pearce (Poole)
DMG – David McGough (JOG)
DM - David Murrin (Classics)
RWT – Ruaridh Wright (Solent)
RW - Richard Woof (Weymouth)
SB – Simon Britten (Bristol Channel)
MR - Mike Richards (Racing/performance)
CH - Chris Hawkes (Sussex Yacht Club IRC Advocate)
BW – Ben Willows (RORC Sporting Director)
APY – Adam Parry (RYA Technical Manager)
JS - Jason Smithwick (Director of the Rating Office)
RT – Rob Taylor (Deputy Director)
JH - Jenny Howells (Technical Manager)
ES - Emma Smith (Technical Team)
SM - Sally Moss (Technical Team)
AY – Andrew Yates (Technical Consultant)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. He announced his retirement, noting his involvement since 2015 and service as Chair since 2021, while confirming that he would attend the 2026 IRC Congress.

He reflected on IRC's successes during his chairmanship and on the introduction of YTC as a route to bring more people into sailing. He stressed the importance of events identifying and promoting the use of IRC ratings in event documentation and reporting.

JS thanked ST for his contribution, friendship and support of IRC.

BW and RT were welcomed as new members of the committee.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were noted from Barrie Martin (Classics) and Steve Cole (Cowes Week) and Hon. Members John Stewart, Ian Macdonald and Peter Wykeham-Martin.

3. Committee Membership

Peter Dunlop was proposed by ST as the new North Wales representative. The appointment was approved by the committee.

Alastair Bisson (CI) has stood down from the committee and will advise regarding a replacement.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 18 September 2025, were approved, proposed by MR and seconded by JP. Actions from that meeting had been completed and details circulated with the agenda. There were no other matters arising not already covered by the agenda.

5. GBR Rule Authority (Rating Office) Annual Report

The committee received the Rating Office annual report, which will also be sent to IRC Congress.

The Rating Office reported a positive and broadly stable year for IRC in the UK, with certificate numbers only slightly below 2025 and encouraging interest from returning owners and those moving from YTC. The Advocate and secondary certificate schemes continue to perform well, supported by strong relationships with clubs, while the national championship programme and major events attracted healthy entries. Measurement activity and general enquiries remain high, and the successful introduction of online forms is improving efficiency and supporting the forthcoming IRC Application Portal. Compliance initiatives were also well received, and the appointment of a new Deputy Director has further strengthened the Rating Office team.

Discussion covered the difficulty of balancing the national racing calendar, and the benefit of holding the GBR IRC Nationals outside the Solent in a non-Admiral's Cup year; this can also help attract boats from around the UK and overseas. It was agreed that it was important to incorporate the championship to an already established event.

JH confirmed that 'area' in certificate statistics is allocated by sailing area rather than owners' home addresses. Wales and Liverpool have significant crossover of boats competing, but the committee agreed that the existing separate areas should be retained.

Single Event Ratings are used mainly for the Round the Island Race; it was noted that they require the same processing time as a full IRC certificate.

The benefits of tighter rating bands, and the challenges presented by wider bands at some events, were discussed.

RT reported positively on the trial equipment-inspection checklist at the Nationals. The combination of owner declaration and event inspection was considered practical for events with limited resources. Visible and approachable inspectors were considered valuable, both for compliance and for allowing owners to ask questions. Furniture, doors, sail measurement stickers, misunderstood sail measurements and inadequate spar measurement bands were identified as recurring issues.

The committee agreed that the equipment inspection checklist should be promoted to event organisers, and used as an educational tool for competitors, including consideration of sending it with certificates at the start of the year. RT will make further developments following the Dartmouth trial, and the Rating Office will consider adding more equipment inspection guidance to race management guidelines. Brief annual guidance highlighting common compliance failures was also discussed. It was noted that major events may require a higher level of post-race scrutiny, including boat escorts from the race area where appropriate.

Safety equipment, including lifejackets, was discussed. The committee agreed that safety equipment should not be included in IRC inspection checklists, as maintaining and servicing in accordance with guidance and regulations remains the responsibility of the boat owner and checking at events remains the responsibility of the organising authority.

ES summarised the different load cells owned by the Rating Office, and it was confirmed that these are calibrated at least once a year. Planeweigh (pressure pads) use was also discussed as an alternative for larger yachts.

The intended launch of MyIRC v2 in September was noted. The new application process is intended to be more intuitive and to request only information relevant to the applicant's boat.

AP formally recorded his thanks to the Rating Office team for the team's help with ensuring that boats entered for the IRC European Championship in Poole all had valid Endorsed certificates. ST added that feedback he receives about correspondence with the Rating Office has been very positive.

6. IRC Incentive and Support Schemes

SM updated the committee on the IRC Advocate Scheme, which currently has five regular clubs. The committee discussed how to increase club participation.

CH, attending as an IRC Advocate, described the Sussex YC experience: simplifying mixed rating/handicap arrangements, helping owners with forms, running fair racing and taking a joined-up approach to race length and organisation. Dual scoring with another handicap system was also discussed.

APY noted that the RYA now promotes YTC rather than NHC and described their Regional Connected Conferences, where clubs are increasingly asking how to grow keelboat and yacht racing. APY will consider promoting the Advocate Scheme as a progression route from YTC. The committee agreed that introducing IRC alone is not sufficient to grow participation; successful schemes also require clear communication, assistance for owners and well-organised racing. The Advocate Scheme was seen as part of a progression from YTC and entry-level club racing towards fuller participation in IRC.

7. IRC Championships 2026 & 2027

The Dartmouth IRC Nationals were successful, despite challenging weather, and attracted boats from the Solent, South West, Portishead, Cardiff, North Wales and Poole.

The IRC European Championship at Poole attracted 52 entries, comprising 42 UK and 10 northern European boats. Despite light winds affecting the event, it received positive feedback for its racing, organisation and post-race programme.

Calendar clashes, late entries, class composition and race-management resources were discussed. The committee confirmed that championships should include a varied mix of course types to test all-round performance. It was suggested that championship guidance should be strengthened to help race officers understand the effects of course type on different boats, but should remain non-binding to allow for weather, tide, geography and commercial traffic.

The Rating Office will consider adding examples of optimum course structures to the Championship guidance and requirements. APY will raise race-officer education and support with the RYA Race Management Committee. The committee noted the limited development pathway for keelboat and offshore race officers and the need for more specialist education in IRC fleet characteristics, course design and type-forming. The potential role of the RORC Griffin programme in encouraging younger race officials was also discussed.

AI and technology

The committee discussed potentially significant uses of AI and data analysis. Ideas included combining race results, course geometry, weather data and boat performance information to identify systematic rating or course-design anomalies. AI might eventually help race officers design courses that better balance different boat characteristics. Members reported early experiments where software-generated course recommendations were already surprisingly close to experienced human decisions.

There was also discussion of whether IRC could provide simplified information describing whether particular boats tend to favour reaching, running or beating. However, the committee was cautious about adding complexity or moving toward a multi-number rating system. There was little enthusiasm for multiple IRC ratings for different course types. IRC's single-number simplicity remains one of its important advantages.

The proposed GBR IRC Championships for 2027 were presented and approved.

The committee agreed that Scotland should be approached about titling the Scottish Championship as the Scottish National Championship to help encourage entries. The Welsh National Championship dates of 3-5 September were noted. A Southern IRC Championship in Poole for 2028 was agreed; there will be no Southern IRC Championship in 2027.

JS confirmed that Ramsgate Week is planned to host the IRC Nationals in 2028, which could also attract Belgian and Dutch competitors.

8. RYA YTC Scheme

The YTC system has rated 2,063 boats so far this year, up from 1,800 in 2025. 70–80% of YTC certificates are issued automatically, using regression/AI techniques to check whether submitted boat data falls within expected ranges. Cases outside the confidence threshold are referred to staff for manual review.

JS reported that YTC generally serves a different type of boat from IRC and that most of its growth appears to represent additional participation rather than migration from IRC. Some boats are dual-scored. Development work includes making data entry easier for twin-masted boats.

YTC is an important entry-level system with the potential to lead sailors towards IRC. Voluntary payments have been made by 330 users this year, at £16.25, which includes free amendments during the year.

APY confirmed the RYA's continued support for YTC and noted that it is beginning to see a reduction in the use of some local handicap systems due to the implementation of YTC. The possible use of non-spinnaker YTC classes was discussed as a means of making racing more accessible to inexperienced crews and boats with limited crew numbers.

9. Development of IRC

JS introduced the new initiative of an IRC Grand Prix (IRC GP) framework. This would not be a separate rating formula: the core IRC rating engine would remain the same. IRC GP would introduce a much higher level of measurement, verification and scrutiny for events such as the Admiral's Cup, Sardinia Cup and Maxi racing.

IRC GP will address sophisticated features such as rotating rigs, interceptors, unusual appendages, movable ballast and other technologies increasingly appearing on top-end boats, with more detailed declarations and stricter weighing and measurement requirements.

The intention is to restrict IRC GP to designated events and, subject to development, announce it after AC2027. The framework could allow issues arising from specialist technology to be addressed more quickly without changing standard IRC during the season.

The committee hopes this distinction may also help counter the perception that IRC itself has become exclusively a Grand Prix system, making standard IRC feel more approachable to club sailors.

JP asked whether rating incentives could encourage lower-cost equipment and wider participation. The risk of abuse by well-funded competitors was noted. Dry sailing, sail materials, sustainability and class splits were discussed.

JS suggested a possible 'club rule' framework under which a class could impose restrictions such as sail materials or dry sailing, with enforcement by the club. The Rating Office will consider providing such a framework.

10. Proposed 2027 IRC Rule Changes - details here: <https://ircrating.org/irc-rule/>

RT presented the draft 2027 IRC rule changes and outlined topics being considered by the IRC Technical Committee. Most proposed changes are clarifications rather than fundamental alterations.

They include updating wording around the setting and sheeting of sails and recognising relevant Offshore Special Regulations; clarifying stored-power provisions relating to movable/variable ballast and appendages; and making a change in hull beam a trigger for resetting a boat's age date.

There was extensive discussion about a new definition of "tack point", intended to distinguish the attachment point on the boat from the tack corner of the sail and simplify definitions such as STL. Several members thought the proposed wording was still unnecessarily complicated and suggested that diagrams would make the rules much easier for owners to understand.

Further clarification is proposed for two-masted boats, including which mast is relevant to aft rigging and how additional sails should be treated. Only a relatively small number of boats are affected.

More broadly, members suggested that IRC documentation needs to become easier for ordinary owners to understand, perhaps through diagrams, simplified guides or an expanded measurement manual.

Rating development and technology

The IRC Technical Committee continues to study emerging design trends including scow bows, water ballast, canting keels, twin rudders versus a single rudder, minimum headsail area and age allowance.

There was considerable discussion of modern Maxi and high-performance designs. Designers are experimenting with combinations of water ballast, canting keels, rudders and other systems to reduce drag and optimise righting moment. The committee is monitoring these developments in relation to the IRC formulation, rather than assuming that unusual configurations automatically require a rating change.

Age allowance was discussed in relation to extensively rebuilt older boats as they can potentially retain benefits associated with their original age even after major upgrades. Members recognised the potential for exploitation but also noted how difficult it is to create an objective rule distinguishing normal maintenance from a sufficiently substantial rebuild to reset age.

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

The Rating Office continues to support stability calculations and is working to address OSR requirements which can make entry to Cat 1 events unnecessarily difficult, particularly where individual stability assessments are required despite suitable data already existing. JS noted that there will be a submission to World Sailing concerning OSR Cat 1 stability requirements.

There were no submissions from the GBR IRC Committee to IRC Congress or World Sailing.

12. Area and Fleet Reports

The overall picture remains highly encouraging. Participation growth is being achieved where clubs provide clear entry pathways and active fleet management, with JOG standing out as a particularly strong example. The reports also highlight an important opportunity to reinforce the message that IRC is not only a successful championship-level rule, but also a welcoming and effective framework for club racers, younger sailors and owners of affordable boats. Several regions note that concerns attributed to ratings are often linked to racecourse factors, underlining the value of good event management and course design. Finally, the committee should be encouraged that compliance standards continue to improve across the sport.

DMG (JOG) reported approximately 30% growth in race entries in a non-Fastnet year. 'Generation JOG', improved web and social-media activity, destination racing and initiatives encouraging younger sailors and women were all reported positively. A category and separate prizes for boats with 40% or more female crew had been successful.

Other clubs reported similar experiences: once women and younger sailors become established within fleets, the culture becomes more welcoming, crews exchange people between boats, WhatsApp networks develop, and participation can become self-sustaining. The committee viewed the social experience ashore as almost as important as the racing itself in retaining participants.

Family-oriented events and social programmes were discussed as ways to support participation. AP (Poole) reported that its growing Sonata fleet was attracting dinghy sailing families, while RW (Weymouth) described the use of affordable SB20s as a route into yacht racing. CH (Sussex) highlighted the need for structured pathways from training into active crewing and racing.

ST (North Wales) reported a busy calendar with significant crossover with Irish events, while IRC remains the only rating used locally. It was noted that crew number rules can materially affect whether travelling teams can afford accommodation and participate.

RWT (Solent) report highlighted the success of the P40 and P30 Classes, and the challenge of coordinating a crowded calendar. The Rating Office confirmed that it can support Classes with media activity where content is supplied.

DM (Classics) reported a healthy fleet of around 42 boats, with increasingly serious investment and competition. However, classic yachts present particular rating challenges because of their highly diverse hull forms, displacement and design eras.

Modern 3D laser scanning was proposed as a possible way of capturing hull geometry more accurately. Scanning itself is becoming relatively inexpensive, but converting raw scans into useful hydrostatic/VPP models requires substantial specialist processing and naval-architecture resources.

The idea was therefore regarded as aspiration rather than something IRC can immediately implement. DM intends to experiment with scanning his own boat and will report back on the practical cost and workload.

Ben Willows reported an expectation of 11-13 teams, possibly more, for Admiral's Cup 2027.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on a similar date in 2027. The committee agreed that there was no need to retain a link with the Southampton International Boat Show.

14. Any Other Business

DMG described the failure of a J/109 rudder stock five days after inspection. The discussion highlighted that visual inspection may not reveal long-term fatigue, particularly around sleeves fitted to alloy stocks. Non-destructive testing, including crack or dye-penetration testing where appropriate, were discussed as a more reliable means of identifying defects not visible during routine inspection. It was noted that such failures were not limited to alloy stocks.

Stephen Tudor closed the meeting by thanking the committee and Rating Office and emphasising the importance of feeding information into the committee. The meeting closed at 15:25.

Actions Agreed

Rating Office

- Further develop and promote equipment-inspection checklist, supported by guidance and educational material. Consider sending the equipment-inspection checklist with IRC certificates.
- Strengthen Championship guidance around varied course types
- Consider an IRC club level racing framework that clubs could implement.

Adam Parry / RYA

- Promote the IRC Advocate Scheme through the RYA Regional Connected Conferences as a progression route from YTC.
- Raise race-officer education/support for yacht and keelboat racing with the RYA Race Management Committee.

Other

- Stephen Tudor to suggest Scottish regional championship becomes Scottish National Championship. Emma Smith will provide the appropriate contact details.
- David Murrin to investigate the practical and post-scan data processing costs and other associated requirements of 3D hull scanning for classic yachts and report back to the committee.