



International Optimist Class Association (UK)



Committee Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 20 November 2025

Minutes of the meeting to be read in conjunction with the papers produced for the meeting.

Present

Chair – Rich Stephens (RS)
Vice Chair – Richard Bourke (RB)
Secretary - Graham Vials (GV)
Teams Officer – Suzie Holland (SH)
Deputy Teams Officer - Fan Rogers (FR)
Safety Officer - Iain Marshall (IM)
Training Officer – Nigel Evans (NE)
Technical Officer – Al Green (AG)
Marketing Officer - Sarah Ellis
Equipment Officer - Jason Foster (JF)
Volunteer Officer - Flippo Di Salle (FDS)
Development Officer - Matt Hannaby (MH)
Welfare Officer - Sarah Renard (SR)

In attendance

David Campbell-James - IOCA Chair of Selectors and John Perham - IOCA
UK Administrator.

Introduction/Welcome

1. Members Apologies

Apologies were received from Chirs Atherton - RYA.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Matters Arising from the last Committee Meeting

RB reported that work is still needed on finding new rib guardians, but the process is stalled while awaiting an insurance update from the class provider. They suggested

giving it until the end of the month, after which they would seek new guardians even without the personal usage insurance update.

RB highlighted volunteer engagement as an area they needed to continue working on.

RS felt engagement had improved, particularly in the lead-up to Winters Championships 2025 noting the benefit of having two separate days with different rib crews and increased communication around volunteering, particularly involving newer and more seasoned parents.

4. Conduct of the Committee and Decision-Making

RS addressed the "bone of contention" regarding committee conduct and decision-making, acknowledging frustration but asserting that the committee cannot always share all ongoing information, and sometimes decisions must be made in the moment.

RS requested a "bit of trust" from the committee, stating that the directors and involved parties apply logic and do not make rash decisions.

IM strongly criticized the communication regarding "significant decisions that affect so many people," stating that the committee must be informed of major decisions before expecting trust. They contrasted the significance of a recent major decision with a comparatively "low-hanging fruit" document shared for review, emphasizing a "massive issue of governance" and lack of transparency.

RB explained that many events are "reactive" to immediate needs, contrasting this with decisions like policy development, where there is time for discussion and broader input. They acknowledged the criticism that communication could have been sooner and better regarding an individual's termination but maintained that the decision-making was reactive to ensure the WPT 25 - 26 came to fruition.

5. National Coach Update

NE provided an update to the Committee around the decision to relinquish the National Coach from their role as part of the Winter Performance Training 2025 - 26.

BO was offered the opportunity to continue with the pre-agreed Regional Training but confirmed to CA that he felt it wouldn't be appropriate and politely declined.

RS confirmed writing the email to BO, confirming that between the directors and the RYA this was in agreement, thanking him for his efforts.

GV acknowledged that there are "learning lessons" but urged the group to move forward, emphasizing the need to rebuild trust with the winter performance group cohort so that the next two training sessions will be productive and attended.

Action RS - To create a poll for or against sending the summary document sent to BO and circulate the poll to all committee members.

6. Winter Performance Training Squad Plan for 2026 - 27

NE presented an update on the plan to build a comprehensive and high-quality coaching structure, intending to integrate coaches likely to be part of the 2027 teams into the structure of the WPT programme 2026 - 2027. The goal is to ensure high-quality training across six weekends in the UK, focusing on lessons learned this year such as improving communication and early preparation.

RB clarified that the three selectors for the plan are DCJ, Alan Williams, and Chris Atherton, who have the final ratification of the process of selecting team Coaches and Team Leaders.

DCJ emphasized the need to coach the coaches, stating that past coaches have not been good enough for the sailors, leading some to hire private coaches and creating a conflict of interest.

Alan Williams is mentoring and reporting back after each weekend, which will provide good knowledge for appointing international event coaches.

DCJ expressed the following views

- that coaching improvement will allow for the future appointment of all British coaches, rather than continuing to employ the best foreign coaches
- the main problem is that the RYA is ceasing support for junior sailing, with the RYA coaching manager not being involved in Optimist sailing, which is the start of the pathway
- that Optimist sailing should be recognized as the start of the pathway, citing that top Optimist sailors have gone on to the Olympics.
- that the winter coaching work, including the involvement of David Larouche, Graham, and Alan Williams, will improve British coaches.

7. Selection Policy 2026 Update

SH informed the meeting that the initial draft of the Selection Policy 2026 had been circulated, with key changes highlighted in green and yellow, and the policy is not yet ready for a final decision.

DCJ detailed a proposed change in the rolling ranking: removing sailors from the list who have not attended the last three major events (End of Season Championships, Winter Championship, and Spring Championship). This change is intended to ensure the top 60 in the ranking are those likely to accept a Team Selection Trials

invitations, with an additional five places available through discretionary request, reducing the selection size from 80 to approximately 65 sailors..

A challenge for the selection policy is that the Team Selection Trials 2026 are now earlier due to the timing of the World Championships 2026, which means juniors cannot attend both the Team Selection Trials 2C and the ET championship 2026, as they run simultaneously.

DCJ also noted that there are problems regarding the number of entries for the ET .

RB suggested ensuring the policy clarifies that the restriction only applies to entering the ETs in an Optimist, allowing them to enter in a different class.

DCJ highlighted that the main issues in the Selection Policy of 2025 related to problems with selecting the team racing squad, specifically Section 10. This was due to complexities like high costs for the Europeans in Turkey and unclear age requirements for events like Monaco TR, a team for the Europeans 25 was not selected. The new proposal for 2026 is to select the teams for Berlin TR 26 and Monaco TR 27 quickly, with applications due two weeks after the IOCA Team Racing Championship 2026, to avoid the confusion experienced previously.

SH confirmed that an IODA handbook rule states that if a person has competed for one country in an IODA event, they cannot then compete for another, unless they have gone through an exception process.

8. Rolling Ranking Policy 2026 Update

SH stated that DCJ had already mentioned the main update for the Rolling Ranking Policy 2026: adding a provision to remove sailors who accumulate three Did Not Compete (DNC) results.

IM argued that a sailor accumulating three DNCs would likely fall out of the top 60 anyway, suggesting the need for a formal declaration of departure is unnecessary.

Vote - To accept the Rolling Ranking Policy 2026 - Unanimous agreement.

9.Sailor and Sailor Support Person Code of Conduct

RS presented the Code of Conduct for Sailor Support Person, developed with the RYA legal and child welfare teams, aiming for a decision during the meeting to implement it through membership renewal acknowledgment.

MG suggested that the rule against "chanting" should be broadened to cover "any form of intimidation" and then use chanting as an example, which the RS agreed to do. SH suggested adding a section about the use of bad language to the sailor's code of conduct.

Action RS - to make the agreed changes.

Vote - To accept the Sailor Code of Conduct 2026 - Unanimous agreement.

Vote - To accept the Support Person Code of Conduct 2026 - Unanimous agreement.

10. RYA Dinghy & Watersports Show 2026

ES brought up the need to staff for the RYA Dinghy & Watersports Show on the 21st and 22nd of February 2026 and discussed the possibility of employing younger coaches.

RS suggested that if committee members are willing to commit to working a day each, this would be preferable to hiring coaches, which would save class money and ensure consistency.

JP noted that a core, fully-briefed team is essential to ensure show materials and information are properly managed and distributed to show visitors.

RS & NE stated that he would be available to “work” on the IOCA stand on Saturday.

Action All members - to contact RE if they are available to “work” on the IOCA stand at the DAWS 2026.

10. AOB

Date of the next meeting

11 December 2025 at 7.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.