

NBRC response to the 2013 Measurement Group Report

General Comment: We at North Berwick Rowing Club welcome the opportunity to take part in a review of the SCRA Measurement Rules and agree that “*safety and fairness*” are clear objectives. The subjects of “*aesthetics*” and “*spirit*” are more difficult concepts as they cannot be readily measured.

The Rules should be kept simple and an annual self-Assessment Form should be available for every skiff showing detailed compliance with the Rules. The submission of this form to SCRA should be mandatory for all skiffs.

The Rules should have some permanence and should be valid for, say, four years.

It would be useful to have SCRA approved scrutineers who could inspect skiffs to an agreed standard.

The retrospective application of new Rules should be avoided.

Boat Weights: A minimum weight rule (say 150kg) without ballast or moveable items may be simple and practical. The boat should either have been weighed under SCRA supervision or have an independent weighbridge certificate. This, when combined with the specified construction details and scrutineering should give a workable standard.

The concept of lightweight skiff carrying ballast is inherently unsafe.

Keel and outer stems: The hull should be as per the kit drawings with a straight solid keel. Stem thickness should also be as per the drawings but laminated stems should be allowed. Plywood should not be allowed for keel construction due to the repeated exposure of end grain to seawater. A metal protective strip on the keel should be standard but the metal need not be specified.

Planks: “BS1088 marine ply or equivalent” seems appropriate.

The comments regarding the gerald and fairing of the plank edges with a 3mm radius at bow and stern should be adopted.

Inner stems and hog: Should be of solid or laminated wood but not plywood because of the exposure of end-grain to seawater.

Gunwales: Solid or “hollow” gunwales should be a matter of choice. Hollow gunwales are found widely on traditional boats to allow the ribs to terminate at the gunwales. The phrase “*equivalent volume of wood*” is not clear.

It would be unfair to insist that existing hollow gunwales be converted to solid.

Seats: the 10inch maximum width seems sensible and practical.

Seat Material: The seat can be made lighter by using plywood with strong framing so that the overall structural integrity of the skiff is not affected.

This type of seat construction does not affect the safety, fairness or appearance of the skiff.

Seat Spacing: NBRC has one skiff with “spread-out” seats and this is a popular innovation that does not affect any other aspect of the skiff. This should be a matter of choice.

Floorboards and Footrests: Floorboards, which may be removable for racing, are a practical compromise.

NBRC has one skiff with footrests, which have metal slides on a plywood frame. They are simple and quick to adjust for individual rowers and are a practical solution to the positioning of the foot stretcher within the altered seat spacing, without affecting any other aspect of the skiff.

Oars and Kabes: The current freedom on the oar specification has generated as much talk as action! Most Clubs are now settling down to their own preference in this and, at NBRC, we currently have a preference for solid spruce shafts with a plywood blade to the Mahon profile.

Regarding kabes, along with Ullapool, we have adopted a fabricated oarlock that pivots on a hardwood post. This is as close to the functionality of a good metal oarlock as we can get but it does seem perverse to be painstakingly making something in wood that is readily available at lower cost in metal.

We are also experimenting with the pin and plate system.

The use of commercially manufactured oars should be ruled on by SCRA. They can be costly items outwith, the financial resources of many clubs and may give an unfair rowing advantage. Buying-in expensive oars is also outwith the principles set out in para. **1.3** of the current Rules.

On the specific questions raised in the Report:

Hollow oars--	-	no objection
Spoon oars---		not supported
Feathering---		no objection
Plastic facing----		no objection
Metal thole pins.....		.not supported
Metal oarlocks-----		should be debated, may have advantages
Standard oarlocks--		should be debated, may have advantages.

Rudder: The rudder should be “fit for purpose” and Clubs can decide to opt for a large rudder for good turning ability or a smaller rudder for possible speed advantage. It may be that some clubs have different rudders or rudder blades for different events and sea conditions.

Rather like the oars issue, these decisions should be left to Clubs to fit rudders that meet local conditions but with an over-riding SCRA safety scrutiny.

Other Points re. Measurement Rules:

Para1.1 “*The boats to be raced.....*” . The boats are used for many different purposes including pleasure, picnics and fishing. Suggest deletion of “to be raced” so that the paragraph becomes.

The boats should be available to as many people as possible for recreation and racing.

Para 3.3 *“Other materials permitted in the construction of the boat are: Brass, Silicon Bronze, Stainless Steel, Gunmetal”*

Clearly the intention here is to exclude the use of exotic materials but it does not include galvanised mild steel, aluminium, and lead which are common in boat building, and it does not clearly define *“the construction of the boat”*.

An alternative paragraph might be,

Other materials used in the construction of the boat and its fittings (unless specifically excluded) shall be those that are commonly used in traditional boat building.

Para 3.4 *“The only synthetic materials permitted in the boat construction is the glue which should be of Marine Quality and will usually be Epoxy resin or polyurethane”*.

There are a wide variety of common glues available outwith that definition and it would be simpler to have

The only synthetic materials permitted in the boat construction are Marine Glue and Epoxy Resin unless specifically permitted.