



Notts County Sailing Club 2021– Survey Report

Introduction

In autumn 2021 a survey was undertaken to find out what members thought about Notts County Sailing Club (NCSC). The aim was to establish what they liked, what they didn't like and what changes they would like to see going forward.

The survey was emailed to all of the membership (a total of around 450) and from that 123 (27%) responses were received. Of these 50.8% were family members, 35.2% single members, 9.8% social members and the rest youth/junior members.

Whilst some of the responses were somewhat concerning in terms of their negativity, there were some clear messages which did emerge. We propose to take on board some of the key issues which arose from the survey and these will form part of the club's future development plan.

From the survey responses we have extracted the key comments and issues from the majority of respondents. A summary of the survey and key areas for the club's future development is given below.

Questions and responses

1. Why did you choose to be a member of the club?

Not surprisingly the majority (70%) said that it was the locality. A friendly atmosphere and the actual water we sailed on was also given as a reason for joining the club (63%). Other reasons included: competitive sailing / clubhouse facilities / training and safety.

2. Awareness – knowing who does what

The majority (66%) said they would know who to contact if they had a problem and over 50% of respondents said that they knew the make-up of the club and who their fleet captains were. Only a few people, generally new members, seemed to have a problem knowing who does what at the club.

3. Club activities – which activities should the club encourage?

As NCSC is a sailing club it is not surprising that 76% felt that dinghy racing should be encouraged. This was followed very closely by Youth Sailing and Development (74%) and Dinghy RYA Training (71%).

Other activities to be encouraged, which received over 60% of responses, included: windsurfer racing and cruising / dinghy cruising / Sailability and all areas of training.

Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP), University sailing, Open Water Swimming and Community Engagement were all supported by 50% of the respondents as they were felt to give greater accessibility to the club.

4. Sailability

NCSC is a Sailability club and therefore we wish to enhance this aspect. 9% of respondents indicated that they had a disability as defined by the UK Equality Act 2010. When asked if there would be interest in taking part in Sailability activities as a sailor / volunteer 35.5% of respondents said that they would consider it and 16.5% said that they definitely would.

5. Volunteering

The club is managed through a committee structure of volunteers from the membership. The question was asked "*Under what circumstances would you consider volunteering for a role at the club?*"

It was clear from the number of comments in the survey that this is a key issue that needs to be addressed. Many barriers to volunteering were given by respondents including: lack of time due to other commitments – particularly work and family. Some felt that they were too old or did enough already and some respondents categorically said no they wouldn't volunteer or had done so in the past and didn't want to do it again.

As the club is run by volunteer members for members it is vital that all members play some part in the running of the club no matter how small. If people do not volunteer then the club will not be able to function.

6. Dinghy racing and club activities

Due to the terms of the lease agreement the club is open to organized racing between March and December. 78% of respondents felt that this was just right whilst 11% felt it was insufficient and 11% felt it excessive.

When asked what additional activities the club should offer this was wide ranging from: "no suggestions because the calendar seems to be pretty full," to "more SUP activities / kayaking / windsurfing as well as model boat sailing, more power boat and race training, extending the Saturday club, wildlife activities, non-competitive sailing days, off-water activities such as a boot camps, country walks, triathlon and more youth training courses".

7. Social activities and events

Over the past couple of years, due to Covid restrictions, social events at the club have been seriously impacted. It is hoped that in the coming year we shall be able to open the bar more regularly and run events to improve communication and socialization between members. This will also depend on whether a new Social secretary can be found to organize and run a social events programme.

To do this we sought to find out how often members attended social events. 33% of respondents said that they attended between one and three events a year, whilst 25% said they attended one a year and a further 22% said that they never attended a social event.

However, when asked what kind of social events people would like to see suggestions included: exercise classes for social members / quiz night / summer BBQ or hog roast / Live music / kids open day / talks relevant to activities / themed evening with different foods e.g. Italian / Indian / fondue / Mexican etc.

Annual awards evening

Regarding the annual Awards evening respondents felt the timing was right and pricing was not a big issue for the majority however, the format needed changing. An informal event at the club was not favoured but changing the venue each year and making it more prestigious was not supported. A small number said they were not interested in attending an Awards Evening regardless.

8. Roles at the Club

Being a club run by volunteer members it is vital that the Executive Committee has members willing to take up Flag Officer roles to ensure the future running of the club.

In recent years the term of office for flag officers has been two years as Rear Commodore followed by two years as Vice Commodore and two years as Commodore.

In the survey it was asked if the term of office was shorter would members be more likely to volunteer as a Flag Officer over 62 % said no, 28% said maybe and only 10% said yes.

9. Communication

With modern technology there are many vehicles that can be used to communicate with people, but success at “getting the message across” depends on the format preferred by the majority of individuals. If people are on several different platforms they may feel bombarded with the same message. However, it seems that we have got this about right.

In the survey the majority of members felt that the way the club communicated to them was just right in terms of the frequency and that they didn’t want any more media mechanisms.

In the comments on communication, the club website was highlighted as being poor, clumsy and amateurish and in urgent need of reorganizing. Site navigation needed to improve so information could be found more easily and the website needed to be the “go-to place” for members to find news and information. Noticeboards in the club house needed to be kept current and relevant. Email communication was favoured over Facebook which was not used by a number of members.

10. Future activities and club development

As a members' club it is important that members have a say in the future development of the club and that the club offers them what they are looking for. This part of the survey asked members what they felt needed to be maintained and developed to ensure the club's sound future.

Nearly 80% said attracting and retaining new members was important followed closely by competitive sailing (74%), friendly atmosphere (75%), clubhouse facilities (52%), sailability offering (41%), water based non-sailing activities (38%) and a broad range of social events (25%). Comments also included the need for the club to be more inclusive, sustainable and with a strong junior and youth development strategy.

We also asked members what, apart from the clubhouse roof, they felt were the top 3 items for improvement / update at the club. The responses included: the driveway (44%), improving safety boats and committee boat (42%), race equipment and recording equipment (31%), upgraded and enlarged changing facilities (27%), Slipways and pontoons (24%), water's edge clearance and playpark (18%). People also commented that they felt the clubhouse furnishings were uninviting and uncomfortable, that there should be a separate junior changing area.

Summary of findings and key areas to address for the development of NCSC.

With a quarter of the membership responding to the survey we feel we have a fair idea on the feelings and concerns about the club and the future direction that we should be heading. Whilst there were some very positive comments it was concerning to find some members were unhappy with certain aspects of the club. It did also appear that there were some clashes of personalities which have generated an undercurrent of disquiet.

Whilst it would be nice to address all the issues raised from the survey realistically this is unlikely to happen in the short term. However, four key areas emerged which we feel should be taken forward, included in the Development Plan and actioned. These are:

Volunteering – we need to better understand the barriers to volunteering and how we can encourage members to play their role in the running of their club. Even small tasks such as helping out behind the bar for a few sessions, helping on one of the work party days, committing to the expected race day duties, all help towards the smooth running of the club. There are currently some gaps in the committee structure that need to be filled and we will endeavour to fill these as soon as possible in 2022. These include a rear commodore and social secretary. Better to volunteer than be volunteered.

Communication – Whilst online communication was felt by the majority of respondents to be OK, there was an overwhelming need for improvement of the NCSC website. This is a project that has already started and will be completed in 2022. In addition, more concise (and proof-read) messaging and improvement on keeping fleet noticeboards up-to-date will be looked at.

More importantly, face-to-face communication is vital for new members as well as for existing members to raise issues with the exec committee and flag officers. Although Covid has had a major impact on meeting up and discussing things at the club it is hoped that 2022 will see a reconnection of people and the opportunity for NCSC to return to being a friendly welcoming club both to new members, visitors from other clubs and to current members of all ages. We can all play a part here.

On Water Activities and Training – as a sailing club, racing and non-competitive sailing / windsurfing and training at all levels forms the backbone of the club. As such they are fundamental to the club's ethos and vital to maintaining and sustaining membership in the future. We need to ensure that we tailor our current offerings to the needs of the membership. Whether it be in Youth Squad Training, fleet training sessions or beginners windsurfing.

Social scene

Whilst some people are obviously keen to be members just for the sailing we do have a wonderful location at Hoveringham and a great clubhouse – ideal for people to get together and socialize. We have the facilities we have some ideas so hopefully we can regenerate some interest in 2022 for a few good social events. At present we are lacking a Social secretary to organize and run events and a rear commodore to organize the bar and this we hope to address early in 2022.

Thanks to all members who completed the survey and we look forward to taking the club forward in a positive way in 2022.

**Prepared by:
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