

To: **CANI Council** (Canoe Association of Northern Ireland)
c/o Ashley Hunter, Development Manager, CANI

From: John Watson, Interim Chairman, World Surf Kayak Association (WSKA)
john@skernlodge.co.uk 07977 259642

Date: 29 April 2016

Re: **2017 World Surf Kayak Championships**

To members of the CANI Council,

Thank you for your patience in postponing the decision on whether to host the 2017 surf kayak world championships until WSKA could resolve its problems. I am now in a position to update you on our current position, and ask you to consider your decision at the next Council meeting, which I understand is 11th May.

Points and paragraphs which follow are numbered simply for ease of reference:

1. The Countries of the WSKA are now back together working as one organization.
2. The vacancy of WSKA Interim Chairman was advertised to every participant in the WSKA's organizational communications over the past 7 months. John Watson was appointed. An election for Chairman will take place at the 2017 World Championships.
3. There are 12 Countries entitled to vote within WSKA (these are the countries which have entered Teams in any of the past 3 World Championships, and so also have the larger number of individual competitors). 11 of the 12 countries have expressed support for how WSKA is progressing now, and for the Interim Chairman John Watson. One country currently has no agreed Representative, so is unable to respond effectively - we are in touch to try to help them resolve this.
4. The countries worldwide which have previously had smaller numbers of 1 to 5 competitors at previous World Championships are important too. Some already have Country Representatives, several of whom have offered their support for current progress in WSKA and for the Interim Chairman. We are working to establish a Representative for each country which has competitive surf kayakers, so we can communicate news of World events effectively.
5. The issue which caused such problems for WSKA between August 2015 and March 2016 was that there was a vote of no confidence in the Chairman, he declined to step down and this resulted in difficulty for anyone trying to progress the WSKA - one group were trying to manage a new election, whilst another group continued to support the previous Chairman. Since the previous Chairman declared he was out of WSKA at the end of February, this resolved the main problem and left all countries wanting to bring WSKA together again.
6. Whilst Members and Countries were supporting different viewpoints in the past 7 months, it became apparent that WSKA needed to be more effective and transparent in describing, documenting and publishing its working practices and its structure. This prompts a review of the WSKA structure, which must recognize the contributions of volunteers during the past 10 World Championships and benefit from their experience, whilst also enabling opportunities for new people to contribute, and create an effective structure for today.

7. WSKA is a democracy. Its structure cannot be changed by an individual or small group. The current structure exists until the democracy reviews and agrees any changes. After the period of disruption we have experienced, time and attention is now being spent bringing all parties together in co-operation. This takes time and is important to be in place first. The next step is to establish effective communication channels for members to share and discuss views. And then we will be in a position to deal with the topics identified, which include reviewing the judging criterion, the Team composition, guidance for world championship bids and host countries, and the WSKA structure and constitution. These will all be improvements – however, it is worth saying that if a World Championships were to happen tomorrow, WSKA is fit for purpose and the sport is established sufficiently for a host organiser to run an event successfully.
8. WSKA is keeping a record of any voting and decisions made, for its own reference and for CANI's information. Based on the description of WSKA given in a message to all interested parties (see extract of message at end of this document), the following questions were asked of each of the 12 voting countries, giving time for consideration, and requesting a written reply:

A “Do you support the process posted on 17 April 2016 to elect an Interim Chairman to co-ordinate the WSKA?”

Replies:

Yes – 11 (Wales, Scotland, Australia, US West, US East, England, Jersey, Ireland, N. Ireland, Basque Country, Galicia)

No – 0

Pending – 1 (two replies were received from Portugal – the first was from the previous Country Representative who replied “Yes”, the second was from the recent, unelected WSKA vice-chairman who advised that all matters should be addressed to the Portuguese Canoe Federation. We are following this up to help resolve the matter.)

B “Do you support the 2017 Worlds being held in Northern Ireland?”

Yes – 11 (Wales, Scotland, Australia, US West, US East, England, Jersey, Ireland, Basque Country, N. Ireland, Galicia)

No – 0

Pending – 1 (Portugal, details as above)

C “There was one applicant to fulfil the role of Interim Chairman. Do you support John Watson in this role?”

Yes – 11 (Wales, Scotland, Australia, US West, US East, England, Jersey, Ireland, N. Ireland, Basque Country, Galicia)

No – 0

Pending – 1 (Portugal, details as above)

The countries with smaller active numbers attending World Championships are also important. Several countries with smaller numbers replied and volunteered their support to the WSKA, to the Interim Chairman and to Northern Ireland as 2017 hosts.

9. Events of the past 8 months made contributing to the WSKA very difficult, and since we now have the opportunity for a fresh start, we recently went through the process of clarifying who is on the committee.

The Committee of the WSKA is an open committee comprised of people who have volunteered to help run the WSKA and meet its goals. With no paid officials, and everyone volunteering their time amongst work and home commitments, this open committee means people from all countries can contribute their skills and views, whilst not needing to be involved in every aspect.

Where it is clearly in the WSKA interests, the committee will make decisions on behalf of the organisation. Where a topic needs debating and voting on, the committee will prepare the topic, and the voting countries will make a decision, as they are more proportionate to and representative of the membership.

A WSKA committee member needs to:

- ✓ want to contribute to the future and success of the WSKA, its goals and the sport of surf kayaking worldwide;
- ✓ be willing to take an active part in a reasonable number of topics and discussions to run the WSKA and improve it;
- ✓ act and communicate in a constructive and positive manner; we don't expect people to always agree, but we do expect people to listen to others' viewpoints and respond with respect.

This invitation was sent to all the people who had some correspondence regarding WSKA in the last 8 months – ie the WSKA committee already established, all Country Reps, and all the people who were contacted directly by the previous Chairman. This was to ensure that the WSKA from now is as representative of the worldwide surf kayak community as possible.

10. The WSKA Committee is confirmed as:

John Watson, Interim Chairman
Darren Bason
Denzil Pearce
Edu Etxeberria
Joey Hall
Jose Pineiro
Liam Thierens
Malcolm Pearcey
Mat Hoff
Neil Baxter
Peter Blenkinsop
Rusty Sage
Stuart McGlinchey
Tim Thomas
Xabi Olano

Committee members are asked to fulfill their duties on behalf of all the members and countries of WSKA, and not specifically their own nationality.

This committee includes people who have contributed significantly to the success of World Championships over many years, as well as 6 new people since immediately before the last World Championships.

Stuart McGlinchey also fulfills the role of Treasurer. A vacancy exists for the Secretary/Vice-Chairman within the current structure – this will be addressed soon.

It is usual practice for a representative of the host country organising the next World Championships to be invited to join the WSKA committee for the obvious reasons of communication and preparation. If CANI confirm their decision to host 2017, I understand this would be Ashley Hunter. Ashley would focus on delivery of the championships, and would be free to choose whether or not to engage in non- World Championship related subjects.

11. The WSKA Country Representatives are confirmed as:

- * Australia – Liam Thierens

- * Basque – Edu Etxeberria
- Canada – Ted Morris
- Costa Rica – Toca, Alvaro Gonzales
- Denmark – to be confirmed
- * England – John Watson, until a new appointment is made
- * Galicia – Jose Pineiro
- Italy – to be confirmed
- * Ireland – Mike Barry
- Japan – Shota
- * Jersey – Stuart McGlinchey
- * Northern Ireland – Andy McClelland
- * Portugal – awaiting their appointment
- * Scotland – Ian Sherrington
- * US East – Joey Hall
- * US West – Mat Hoff
- * Wales – Tim Thomas

* denotes that these countries have entered a Team in any of the last three world championships and so are entitled to vote in WSKA matters.

12. Committee members and Country Representatives are in different time zones around the world, and the current structure does not enable a manageable small group to legitimately make decisions on behalf of the whole. Therefore, communication has always been by email and with meetings at World events. This is being developed by preparing an online forum and support for members' communication. This is considered the most suitable way for WSKA committee members and country representatives to "meet" and exchange views. The process requires time and some clear organization, and this is under way.

Thank you for presenting a bid at Galicia in July 2015 to host the 2017 World Championships. I confirm that WSKA allocated the World Championships to Northern Ireland for 2017, and there is no change in this decision.

Thank you also for your time considering this update now. You will see that time needs to be spent with care to strengthen the WSKA, but members and countries are together in wanting to meet in Northern Ireland in 2017.

Since its formation, the primary goals of the WSKA have always been to:

- Promote goodwill and cultural interchange among people who surf kayaks in different countries in the world.
- Provide a world organization to help guide the development of surf kayaking.
- Share ideas about boat design and surfing moves, and expand the skill level of people involved in surf kayaking.
- Increase the number of people and countries involved in surf kayaking.
- Increase the number of juniors and women involved in surf kayaking.
- Promote friendly competition among surf kayakers.
- Hold a world championship of surf kayaking every two years.

I hope that CANI will be able to help us meet those goals by hosting the 2017 event, and providing a location and welcome to the worldwide surf kayak community.

Yours faithfully,

John Watson, WSKA Interim Chairman

Extract from a message to all interested parties in WSKA, for your information:

“The only place we can start is how the WSKA is currently organised. If it isn't perfect, we can make changes and improvements through the normal democratic process. The WSKA exists for all surf kayakers worldwide, and is in the hands of the Members, Countries and Committee. We have had difficulties recently. As we get going again, we should make sure the starting point is good. We should ensure that all volunteers are involved, agreements are found, decisions are made correctly, and that there is good worldwide support. When we have unity and good support, we can get on with looking at surf kayaking topics - such as judging, boat specs, team event, etc.

1. The WSKA is currently an organisation in which:
 - a) the **Members** are the participants at the last Worlds, having paid 10 euros each. There is an understanding that surf kayakers who were not able to be present at the last Worlds also have an interest.
 - b) a **Country Representative** is appointed by each interested country. This is as a communication channel between the surf kayakers of that country, and the WSKA.
 - c) the **Committee** are volunteers who have offered to help in the organisation and development of the sport. They are active in discussing and shaping any topics and ideas. It is possible to be both a Committee member and a Country Representative.
 - d) the **Chairman** has the role of organising and co-ordinating the Committee and Country Reps, to meet the WSKA published goals (see end of this email).
 - e) the **Treasurer** and **Secretary/Vice-Chairman** are other specific roles on the Committee.
 - f) **decision-making** on significant matters at World Championships may be done by voting of Members or Country Reps, whichever is most suitable and practical. **Decision-making** on significant matters between Worlds is made by voting of the countries with the most involvement in the sport - this is currently described as any country which has entered a Team at any of the last three Worlds, and the host of the next Worlds. Proposals for significant decision-making are discussed and shaped by the Committee. **Decision-making** on obvious topics in the interests of the sport and the smooth running of the Worlds, are made by the Committee with the Chairman.
2. The organisation of the WSKA may be changed by the democratic process of consideration by the committee, and voting by Members or Country Reps.
3. An election for the WSKA Chairman will take place at the 2017 Worlds. “

end