

Co Antrim Paddle Sports (CAPS) Chairperson's Report 2023

Introduction

It is with great pride that I present the Chairperson's report for Co Antrim Paddle Sports (CAPS) for the year 2023. Our club is governed by a dedicated voluntary Committee, supported by a Board of Trustees who have guided the development plans, policies, and financial procedures of CAPS. As an affiliate of the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI), we remain committed to upholding their rules and regulations.

The primary aim of our club continues to be providing accessible opportunities for participation in paddle sports, alongside the development of skilled coaches and leaders.

2023 in Review

February

Our year commenced with a series of well-attended pool sessions at Antrim Forum, beginning in February. These sessions were invaluable in enhancing members' rescue skills within a controlled environment. Additionally, a coach refresher course was organized at Moira Lakes on February 19th, ensuring our coaches remained up-to-date with best practices.

This month also saw a focus on leader development, with regular trips along the lower Six Mile River. We celebrated a significant milestone with three of our members—Aidan, Kieran, and Martin—successfully attaining their Paddle Sport Touring Leader awards. A fantastic achievement for all involved.

March

In March, the club was struck by the sudden and tragic loss of our esteemed chairperson, James Birrell. James was not only passionate about our club, but he had recently achieved his White Water Canoe Award. His absence is deeply felt, and his contributions will be long remembered by all who knew him.

Despite this loss, there were reasons to celebrate, as we congratulate Sarah on achieving her Paddle Sport Instructor award during the same month.

April

Following James Birrell's passing, an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) was held on April 19th. This meeting was essential in appointing key committee members to ensure the club's continued strength and stability.

May – June

Our club paddles carried on through May and June, with various outings to locations including Newferry, Antrim Lough Shore, Moira Lakes, and the lower Six Mile River. Unfortunately, the arrival of a blue-green algae bloom had a severe impact on our activities, and we were advised by the relevant authorities to avoid the water for safety reasons.

As a result, our flagship event, the Big Bann Canoe Challenge, had to be canceled—a difficult decision, but one made in the interest of public safety.

August

In August, we managed to hold a few paddle sessions at Waterfoot Beach, but logistical challenges and shorter daylight hours made these sessions unsustainable. Nevertheless, we were fortunate to be hosted by Moira Lakes for a Family & Friends Weekend, where our members were invited to use their facilities free of charge. We extend our sincere thanks to Moira Lakes for their continued support.

October

October was a productive month, with four additional pool sessions providing our members with further opportunities to develop their skills. On October 18th, we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) at ASDA in Antrim, where key officers were elected. Our gratitude goes to ASDA for offering a suitable venue for this important meeting.

November

November was marked by further achievements, with seven members successfully completing their Paddle Sport Safety & Rescue Training at Moira Lakes. This training is critical in maintaining high standards of safety within our club, and we commend those who took part.

December

As we closed out the year in December, it was a pleasure to recognize the accomplishments of Annie, Emma, and Mark, who earned their SUP Sheltered Awards. Congratulations to each of them on this well-deserved recognition.

Conclusion

2023 has been a year of both triumph and challenge for Co Antrim Paddle Sports. We have made considerable progress in developing our coaching and leadership capacity, with numerous members attaining important qualifications. Our collective efforts have positioned us for continued growth in 2024.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all members, volunteers, and partner organizations—particularly Moira Lakes—for their unwavering support throughout the year. Together, we have strengthened our club and are well-prepared to face the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Let us look forward to another successful year in 2024.