

Is the strategy final?

No, the draft strategy that has been circulated is for consultation. We want to hear from clubs and rowers alike on their thoughts. This feedback will then be taken on board and fed into a new version which again will be circulated for feedback before a proposal is put before all member clubs of the CPGA to vote on (at an 'extraordinary general meeting' all necessary time scales will be followed for an EGM). No new plan can be adopted without the CPGA member clubs voting for it – the decision is in the hands of the clubs.

Why is the strategy being proposed now? Is a pandemic the right time to be introducing changes and costs? Will this deter rowers from re-entering the sport?

In June 2019 representatives from the CPGA presented a manifesto to Cornwall Council which highlighted the challenges and opportunities faced by the sport. As a result of this work Cornwall Council and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership provided funding to the CPGA to develop a business strategy and this work began in February 2020. After the onset of the pandemic, the CPGA pushed ahead with the work because the investment from funders was time restricted.

We have heard many clubs saying that the pandemic has put extra pressure on them with some concerned about finances and retaining members. Taking this on board, there is now no intention to propose any changes take effect until 2022 at the earliest. The aim of developing a plan is to support the sport and it shouldn't threaten it in any way.

Why do we need a strategy at all?

The rapid expansion of the sport, which now numbers 86 clubs (6 new clubs deciding to join in January 2021 despite the pandemic), has stretched the volunteers at the CPGA and it is no longer possible to manage it without the support of paid staff. As with any growing grassroots sport or movement there comes a point where leaving the workload in the hands of volunteers (who have to juggle other commitments) becomes a risk to its good running and future. Simply communicating with 86 clubs takes up a lot of time.

Having a proper plan for the sport would:

- *identify how money should be raised to fund the sport and the staff needed to help manage it*
- *reflect what the CPGA member clubs see as the future for the sport – what the priorities should be*
- *give the CPGA a mandate to advocate for these priorities e.g. help lever investment into the sport through grant funding, sponsorship and trading*
- *trigger a governance review to make sure that issues like regional representation are addressed within the structures of the CPGA.*

Clubs were asked to share their views and needs through an extensive survey last year and the findings have inspired and shaped the current draft strategy.

The strategy is a 5-year plan designed to help secure the sport for the future as well as recover from the pandemic. As we do not know the ongoing impact of Covid we anticipate that any adopted strategy will need to be flexible and responsive to further challenges relating to the pandemic. It is the hope of the CPGA that our sport will be able to use the strategy to take advantage of covid recovery funds and other opportunities.

There is also hope that clubs looking to increase their membership (not all are) may see an increase in interest from people keen to try rowing for the first time who looking for social and sporting opportunities after social distancing restrictions are lifted.

How much will individual membership cost?

Currently, the draft business strategy proposes an adult membership for all members of the gig rowing community of £30 per year. This will be reviewed based on club and rower feedback. Membership would be free for U18's. A student rate would be available. Through the consultation with clubs, we have received really useful feedback and suggestions such as 'newcomers to the sport should have subsidised or free membership in the first year to support recruitment'. All feedback and ideas submitted are being considered by the CPGA volunteer team for input into a revised strategy.

Why is the cost so steep? Can it be stepped in some way?

The CPGA has not kept pace with the growth of the sport and to provide all the services the clubs said they wanted in last year's survey the CPGA would need to raise considerable funds, equivalent to £30 per rower. Clubs have been feeding back ideas for a more gradual introduction of fees. All these are being considered.

Will all club members have to become individual members of the CPGA? What is the thinking behind all rowers, including social rowers requiring a membership?

Under the current proposal a constitutional change would require clubs to ensure that their members are also members of the CPGA. It has been suggested that clubs could apply to waive CPGA membership (through a Waiver Form) for some members based on extraordinary circumstances (to be determined). The CPGA collected the views of clubs and rowers on an earlier draft of the plan which featured a paid-for racing license model for competitive rowers. In the feedback clubs expressed concerns around models that could divide our community into those rowing competitively and those rowing socially. These concerns shaped the proposed individual membership model. The core purposes of the CPGA are around maximising the health and wellbeing benefits for everyone participating in the sport of gig rowing. Everyone participating in the sport benefits from the membership services, welfare and safety established and maintained by the CPGA.

Is an individual CPGA membership definitely being introduced? When would this happen and how?

The decision has not yet been made. An extensive consultation is taking place through an individual survey and club question and answer sessions. Feedback gathered through the consultation phase will be considered before a new proposal is developed and clubs will be given plenty of time to examine the new proposal, ask questions and prepare how they want to vote. Ultimately the decision rests with the member clubs of the CPGA who will vote on a proposal at an EGM later this year (not before June). Every club has one vote.

The business strategy voted on at the EGM could be different to current the proposed individual membership model. If a motion is passed, any new fees would not be collected until 2022 at the earliest. There has been no decision yet about how money would be collected but clubs will be fully consulted on the best way to do this before the EGM.

What will happen if the business strategy is not adopted by the membership? Is there a plan B?

The purpose of this extensive consultation phase is to work with clubs to develop a motion and strategy that best fits the sport. Initial drafts have already been amended as a result of member feedback. If the current Business Strategy 2021-2026 is amended in the light of feedback and still not adopted by the membership then another piece of work will need to be done either amending or replacing the Business Strategy to ensure that the issues facing the sport are addressed and an alternative way of securing the sport is agreed. It is important that 75% of clubs are in favour of changes so that it is clearly the will of the majority of the member clubs.

What will happen next?

The individual survey closes on the 5th of April. The results will be shared with clubs. Feedback from the survey and clubs will be fully considered before a new draft is circulated for consultation. After this has completed and feedback taken on board, an EGM will be called (date to be decided (no earlier than June)) to vote on the proposal.

Aside from the common questions above other questions proposed by clubs included the following topics.

Affordability: some clubs raised concerns about the affordability of fees both for new and small clubs and also for deprived communities. Payment plans, subsidies, waivers and other ideas were put forward and these will be fully considered.

Services: some clubs said they did not want all the services outlined in the Business Strategy whilst others wanted additional services that had not been listed. The strategy has been shaped by the survey responses from clubs and will not fit the requirements of all. It is hoped though that clubs will take the wide view and realise that when other clubs benefit, they will see indirect benefits. For example, if recruitment support to help clubs increase their membership numbers does not benefit a club (because they already have a waiting list) that the same club will instead benefit indirectly from an increase in whole sport participation, which will result in increased investment in the whole sport.

Diverse membership structures: some clubs raised issues around their membership models. For instance, some clubs deliver more than one sport and not all members are involved in gig rowing. Some clubs have a large proportion of life members who are no longer active in the sport etc. These different structures are being considered and will be accommodated within the revised proposals.

British Rowing: some clubs asked about the relationship with British Rowing. The CPGA has been in negotiation with British Rowing since 2016 when it became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and service provision ceased. These talks are ongoing.

Funding: some clubs expressed concerns that the CPGA should not become dependent on grant funding. This concern is shared by the CPGA volunteer team, hence why the rowing community is being asked to provide the core income that the CPGA needs to run the sport. This will make the sport independent, so we do not need to wait for or appease third parties in order to operate effectively. This stable core income would also make it easier to secure grant funding for projects and lever investment into the sport when appropriate.

Governance: some clubs expressed concern about the existing governance structure. A full governance review is a priority activity in the proposed Business Strategy which will implement changes to ensure the transparent and equitable running of the sport. This will impact every level of the sport including the proposed professional staff who will be openly recruited.

Volunteers: some clubs wanted to know why the CPGA could not simply recruit more volunteers to run the sport. During the delivery of the 'Pulling Together The Past' project, nearly 50 volunteers participated. These volunteers were recruited, trained and managed by a paid project officer. The recruitment of professional staff would facilitate the involvement of a large body of volunteers which the existing structure cannot support. Recruitment and retention of volunteers has proved challenging for the organisation.