

Lee Pooley 00:15

Hi everyone and welcome to the British Canoeing Awarding Body Coaching Podcast. My name is Lee Pooley. I'm the Director of Coaching and Qualifications, and today I am joined by Tony from Teignbridge Canoe Club. And yeah. Thanks very much for making the time to come and talk to us today.

Tony Smith 00:33

I was a great pleasure to be on air so to speak Lee.

Lee Pooley 00:35

Yeah, Brilliant. Tony, we've had a lot of correspondence over the last couple of years and met up for coffees and had lots of email exchanges, etc. And just felt that it was a real good opportunity to probably broadcast our conversations a little bit further and to be able to share some of the great things that are going on within your aspect of your very successful club. So would you mind giving us a bit of an intro about yourself and who you are and what you do? And then we'll get on with the subject, which is basically your club and how you how you treat learning development within the club.

Tony Smith 01:23

Yeah, sure. So from my own perspective. I'm Whitewater Leader. I'm currently in the Performance Coach Programme, and so I'm a keen recreational kayaker like I'm sure many of your listeners. And then I also am the current chair of Teignbridge Canoe Club. And there within that role, I also sit in terms of trying to steer our training program and oversight with regards to safety as well.

Lee Pooley 01:52

Brilliant. And to give listeners a bit of a feel of the club - I think that's really important - is what is the club? Where is it? I know it really well because I've travel past it quite often. Give us a bit of a flavour of it: the types of activities you do. And then we'll delve in a little bit further.

Tony Smith 02:13

Yeah sure. So we're based very nicely down on Teignmouth seafront. And Lee you've never popped in. Although we might not have been there. But our clubhouse is right on the sea front, at Teignmouth. So we're really lucky because essentially, we've got our six monthly season up on Dartmoor and on local rivers for whitewater. And then, we've got our, you know, the other half of the year to be able to enjoy the sea. So, we're in an absolutely perfect position to be able to enjoy so much that's available within the sport, just because of where we're located.

Most of our members are in the local area, but also we have members who join us from nearly as far as Bristol and down towards Cornwall. So actually our reach is it's surprisingly extensive as well. We reached a membership of just about 120 at our AGM at October last year. Growing quite quickly and recovering quickly following Covid. And we're at a level now, which is sort of parallel with where we have been as a club over the last 30 years, in terms of its peak numbers. But we're still growing. We're receiving inquiries, every month. And that's absolutely fantastic and exciting as well. In terms of ... We have our Standard committee and then we've also got other subgroups. We've got our leadership group. We've got a new She-Paddles group. We've got our Clear Access, Clear Waters group. So within that umbrella of our club, we've got lots of subgroups who are doing their great

work as well. We reached BC Quality Club a couple of years ago and then last year we were given a Talent Champion Club status and also the Clear Access, Clear Waters. So, you know, we've really tried to move things forward in a really positive direction.

Lee Pooley 04:06

It sounds a really thriving and a busy club. And you talk about, you know, that that geographical wide spread in terms of all the way from Bristol. I mean that's a, that's a heck of a drive to join in the paddle. But what about the demographics of the membership, you know, could you give us a bit of flavour on that as well?

Tony Smith

Yeah. So in terms of demographics, we are generally of the more mature age range. And I say that smilingly because I'm definitely one of those in my mid 50s. Yeah, I would say we're, I mean, without looking at the stats, so, I've got them right to hand right now. But we're generally 40 years and above. We have got some junior paddlers who are coming along with their parents, which is fantastic. Mum and Dad can like to paddle and bring along their junior as well. And so, we've got a small group of juniors there. We're in terms of male/female with 40% female and 50% men. So we've got a great, you know, active involvement there from the ladies and looking to grow that our local area is 50/50 in terms of male/females, so our club, well our club I think should reflect that as well. So our demographic, you know, we would like to grow the junior and the younger age groups.

It's always been difficult, it requires a lot of resource, a lot of support, but it does seem to work particularly well, where family membership, definitely is an active way of both juniors and the adults - the parents coming along at the same time. That works really, really well.

Lee Pooley 05:45

And in terms of – you know, you're on the committee, you're actively involved, you do hell of a lot for the club, Tony – is, you know, what, what do you believe is a members expectation when they take part in a paddlesport activity with the club?

Tony Smith 06:05

Yes, it's interesting that. You know, you sent me a couple of questions just to think about and I know you're gonna ask some others as well. But, you know, what do our paddlers expect? We could easily say what people want to have fun. They want to paddle. They want to explore their skills, improve and enjoy that amazing local environment, as well as having that that community around the club in terms of people and a society where people can have a beer after they've paddled and chat and have a good time.

We a couple years ago in fact, three years ago when I became chair, we wrote our own vision and we create that vision out of saying – and this was from the committee members at the time – so what are the values that you'd like our club to behold and what are the behaviours that bring those values to life? So let me just share this with you.

So, our vision is Teignbridge Canoe Club believes in respect – for our members, our community, and our environment – that every member can be themselves, grow and develop as they wish. To be inspired to find their adventure, to progress their skills where our sport is accessible for all in a safe, supportive and fun club community. This is our club. Now you can say yes but you know that that's a vision. Anybody can have those words come from existing members. And I think, is that what people expect? I would hope so. And certainly something I'm passionate about is that whatever that level of challenge somebody wants to challenge themselves with is that, hey, that's their challenge. Let's help our club members reach that personal challenge and maybe that challenge that level of challenge may change as people get more competent or feel braver.

But our job, I feel is to help people do that. And if we do that in a really rich way, people will stay with the club. And then we haven't even stronger community. So we will hopefully see less of a churn of members joining for a year and stepping away but maybe they'll join and grow. even if they start to paddle less, they enjoy the environment of the club. And that is what creates that strong foundation for that club to stay solid through difficult times such as a prime example is COVID.

And from which we can grow succession. And, you know, if I finish as Chair, when I do at some point, I'm only there for a period of time. My legacy really is leaving the club on a strong place for somebody else to step into my shoes. That's the way I see. It is not about me. And the club at this moment in time. It's about actually what are we trying to deliver for the future for that club for those members and for me to, to enjoy it. Yeah.

Lee Pooley 09:01

Tony, you mentioned within that agreed to sort philosophy really for the club is you mentioned the word safe. And, in terms of ... a lot of people when they join clubs – and rightly so – they probably take a leap of faith, don't they? That they are going to be safe, you know? And we can put it in ... if we wanted to use three [unclear] areas is safeguarding, safety and well-being. How do you as a How do you as a chair as a committee ensure that those three areas are being I've been delivered? Because we all have an expectation. We just expect it's going to be when we join something or we are told to do something. We take a leap of faith that that's going to be there, isn't it?

Tony Smith 09:58

Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, when we go along to an outdoor centre or a club, we want to have a great safe time, don't we? And so should we be able to do that! I think for a club or any organization actually you have to have a culture of safety. Now, you might walk on to that building site that construction site and it says, you know, 'Safe home every day', you know, 'safety first'. But that's a sign. You have to bring it to life. You have to live it. And one person, you know, saying that all the time doesn't work. You have to have that culture from, you know, all the paddlers through their various levels of safety through to coaches and leaders and an arriving at the committee.

So I think that cultural ... that culture of safety is absolutely paramount and then we can build on the details about how we bring that to life. So, yes, we should look out for each other. We should encourage that, and that can work well. We've got our leaders and coaches, but we've been assigning assistants to help them. So, those people develop and grow and notice how it is to lead a pod, how it is to help somebody onto the water, to coach them so that we are constantly creating that culture.

In terms of that safety, there's lots of things that we've been doing that do reflect organizations. So for example, our competency framework – for all of our qualified paddlers and knows that we as a committee have agreed to sign off. What is our framework? And what we've done is make sure that mirrors what BC would expect. So that is that you've got your CPD points in line. Your first day, three-year ticket, your safeguarding ticket.

And if that person hasn't as yet qualified, if they are of sufficient competence that also, we can tick that box in terms of their competence, their individual skills, their group skills, their rescue skills, their incident management skills. The same modular framework that you have when you sign somebody off at an assessment for a qualifications. So that safety has been built in there.

The equipment. We've agreed as a club now that all safety equipment must be churned. Must be changed with no more than five years on its label. So helmets, pfd's – no argument, they get changed. And the guys did their equipment audit, only a couple of weeks ago and there are buckets there, ready to go to the dump.

It's pretty harsh. It's half that's money that the club spent, but that is the level of safety that we know is ... There's our line. There's volunteers or is the workforce in the club. We don't need to worry about that. It's five years, it's moved. Buy the new kit. That's what we're doing actually this weekend. And in terms of having that safety framework, the risk assessments. You know, when we go on the water, we need to make sure we've got a level of competence that we can trust amongst all of our leaders when they go out. So we've got a very good risk assessment process but we are exploring an on your phone format, which means that actually we can be even better.

And that actually, brings us into safeguarding because we can do our risk assessment but actually we want to record our safeguarding at the same time. Who are we taking on the water? Where's the parent? Is the parent being engaged with in terms of knowing exactly what's going to be going on? Where is the parent, if we need that parent? Those in-case-of-emergency contact details. And we need to record that. So that new risk assessment that we're trialling. We're going to trial it up into the first of September. So for every trip, all the leaders are, trying it out, is that that then records, our risk assessment, which means we're safe on the water, our safeguarding, which means that that's recorded automatically, and also that any reporting is brought into that, and first aid near misses.

But actually, since we last spoke, I've now put in an extra filter, which is to do with, you know, notable events, whatever that might be. So we've added that in because of our conversation. So lots of layers for safety in terms of practically when we paddle as part of the infrastructure. But I'm slightly, you know, I'm not being particularly clear here in some respects but that culture also starts with our training. So each year for the last couple of years, we've put a group of people through FSRT. That will now be the new version, the new course.

Those people, hopefully, will then go on to be future, Assistant Leaders potentially Paddlesport Leaders as well. So we're creating that body of people who can assist the leaders of getting in and out at a difficult access or just assisting with a casualty in the water, while that leader gets the group together. But we're building that depth of Safety cover within the club as well. And that just builds more and more safety. So we got safety in terms of our organization. We've got safety, when the leader gets on the water and we've got safety in terms of that depth of help within the club as well. So that's how I see it coming together. And that's all before we can start thinking about training people to be leaders or training people in paddle skills. All that safety net has to be brought together first.

And I do think this is where it's a really, really difficult area for clubs, but safeguarding, you know. We've agreed that nobody can coach or assist coaching if the safeguarding ticket isn't in place. Of course, you can't excuse that. That is where we have to be. We've agreed that as peer paddles for peer paddles are really active part of the sport that we would say members go off and enjoy a peer paddles but you can't promote that event on a club official channel. That's your peer-to-peer paddle elsewhere. Have fun, be safe, and come back, and join a club trip.

Our club trips are put into a programme, they're also put on our Google calendar. They're promoted. Then when people are interested, they join the connect with the leader. We have a Whatsapp group where all the discussion goes on about the trip and the conditions and what to take and how exciting it's going to be and how many penguins we're gonna see and how many seals we're going to see. And it's that fun stuff that also comes into that. So all of that works. But these are, these can be difficult discussions within a club. but I think – when in fact, I know – we have to get these things aligned so that our club members not only feel safe, but are safe, as far as we possibly can create that safe situation in a, you know, in an outdoor environment.

Lee Pooley 16:58

That absolutely sounds like, you know, the club has gone through a significant change and in terms of the, you know, getting processes and procedures in place. I think. What, I'd like to be able to sort of you sort of delve into a little bit is you talk about leaders and coaches and you make reference to British Canoeing Awarding Body qualifications. Can you give us a bit of flavour of how you use qualifications within the club.

Tony Smith 17:30

Yes. So I mean this is evolving it's fair to say for us as a club. So when newer paddlers start with those were less experienced, we start off with a taster session, then an induction and then we step into the BC framework. So we Start and then Discover and Explore. So essentially those are really focused on during the summer months, when we're on our sea fronts location trying to build those skills. And we'll build in rescue skills into that for the more advanced as well as those that are stepping from just Discover onto Explore. So the whole objective there is building that competency, that confidence, being able to have fun and relax on the water.

From that if we know that somebody is of an Explore level, then we know that they can probably paddle in a sensible light or low seas state for a sensible period of time. So those paddlers can then start to enjoy the club trips that we have organized every single weekend. So that's the first part of the framework.

The second part of the framework is that whilst those people are building competence, they then can be ready to step into the first stages of leadership. And I actually see what was FSRT and now the Paddlesport Safety and Rescues is a place where people starts to feel responsible, starts to think about the environment more so. So what we've done, for example, last year's six paddlers, went on to FSRT. And now, I'm hoping that they are feeling ready to step on into paddlesport leader training this summer. If we then go back a step, those that are going to reach Explore standard this summer will then step into that new equivalent of FSRT. And then next year, we'll hopefully be stepping into Paddlesport Leader.

The following year if people aren't quite ready, let that learning and training bed in. Hopefully they then are ready for Paddlesport Leader assessment. And so that, that's how I see that, that using the framework that's logical, that's clear, that's been all thought out for us by you guys, to then step through succession. So that we build and build, and build this stronger club that's got competency and safety at his heart. Coming right the way back to your first point.

And then in time, hopefully some of those paddlesport leaders can step into slightly more advanced leading or maybe level one coaching, etc. So that's then that step. But it's not quite as clear. I mean that's the structure but finding the right people, and those people volunteering as well, that's also an issue in a way because we need those people to come through. And that loops all the way back around having a strong club because if we've got a strong club of 120 people, we're more likely to find those people that will work the way through in time to Whitewater Leader or Sea Kayak Leader. It takes time, doesn't it? But if we only have a club of let's say 40 people and on our club is not growing, or there aren't new people coming in, and that's something really difficult to grow that succession within that club. So I think it's gonna be more difficult. We're gonna be more reliant on a few, aren't you?

So that's how we're using the framework, and then around that framework, we've got the CPD points that we're brought in to help those current leaders. Even if they qualified a while ago to keep in ticket to be able to share their knowledge and experience which is vast and that helps the club growth and step forward. Yeah. Go on, Lee.

Lee Pooley 21:29

So yeah Tony, that's what I wanted to ... I mean this is great. And what I wanted to explore in a lot more depth, is either your CPD program because as listeners might be aware, several years ago, quite a few years ago now, is that we created more CPD opportunities for people, for coaches, leaders and instructors to go. To keep revalidated they need to have 20 CPD points, but they are in a better position to choose what they need. And for clubs they can create their own CPD programs and you've really embraced this, you know, and I remember meeting up for a chat with you and you know you just getting to grips with it. Could you explain how you go about this CPD process?

Tony Smith 22:29

Yeah. It's taken a while to shape but hopefully, you know, this podcast can show that actually it is actually really straightforward. So we as a club, I think, for something like 30 years we've had our whitewater safety day. We do that up on the Dart and lots of other clubs do very, very similar, if not pretty much identical. It works brilliantly well. Morning session on dry land and afternoon session jumping in the water and practising rescue lines. So in fact, the club had a course that was there. But to meet the CPD Point requirement I felt that for us to be able to award those points, we really wanted to make sure it was validated, that it was credible in the eyes of BC so that if British Canoeing you say 'Look we're coming down to actually look at the courses you've been delivering', I want you to go. 'Wow, that's really good and that is delivering real value'. And also to be credible in the eyes of our club members that are coming along, particularly those who are experienced. So, essentially, we took that whitewater safety day. Just really didn't change anything but just mapped it out as a proper lesson plan. So that it ticked those boxes in terms of reflective practice, the content,

sharing of information, peer review, and that both the providers from within the club were also reflecting on what they were going to deliver that session as well as those receiving that information were able to reflect on that, challenge back, ask more questions, and share and open up that discussion with other club members.

Now that worked really, really well. The first time we did that I didn't feel it was still quite ready to be turned into those specific points. So I was a bit frustrated if I'm honest at the time because on the website it says you can get this amount of points. But I was being a bit pedantic and I wanted it really, really honed down. So I went to Darryll Shaw. Darryll was amazingly patient. Really, really helpful. I sent him the course that we'd delivered and he said 'Well okay, that that's worth 15 points. The even-better-if is if you added in some notes to reflect on and review before people arrived and we did the same follow-up notes afterwards and we just honed a couple of little points there, then actually we can turn that into being 20 points'. So the following year, we actually delivered a seasea kayak safety day which was new, I believe to the club. Mirrored, really, and based on the white water course, the sea kayak course, was only dry land. It's in April, it's difficult to do, you know, practise in the water at that time. It can be very cold and unpredictable the weather. But anyway, we put together a course using that structure I discussed with Darryll and yes, that was, that was signed off. So that's now our template. So we tick those boxes of notes sent out, or video links before the course. We've got a course structure which covers elements of input and content as well as reflective practice as well and allowing time for that and we add in content which refers to demos, or practical sessions as well, and then we send those follow-up notes as well. So there's our structure. I know that BC effectively sign that off and say 'Yeah, that's good work' so we can continue delivering that.

After each course each individual that attended gets a certificate with a unique certificate number on it, with the modules that we covered on that course. And then those leaders that need to submit that simply upload them. So, we did a survey yesterday before coming on onto this podcast. And we said, you know, how do people, how do leaders and coaches feel about those sessions and essentially, what came back was that – and I just need to find actually Yeah, so of the 12 leaders, we got 14 active leaders in the club. 19 in total are engaged with leading because some are aspiring to be leaders and going through the training process at the moment. But the question was is providing CPD points for club training a good thing? 12 Out of 12 said, Yes. Do these points help keep you in ticket as a qualified coach or leader with the CPD requirement to 20 points every three years? So ten said yes. And would you recommend our club training to other club members who may not have attended as yet? So 10 out of 12 there. So, overall, we've got a really strong level of feedback on those CPD points being of value to existing leaders or coaches. So,

Lee Pooley: 27:43

Sorry, Tony. I think that's great. So you've got a model. Have you got anything up your sleeve? Are you designing something else for the club in terms of the next CPD points?

Tony Smith

Oh, don't start coming up with ideas, Lee! So what we did do something really which was really different. We started with our winter pool sessions this autumn and they came up with the idea.

Well, there's about 10 of us that are helping people learn to roll. And we've all got our own different styles. And so we asked Lindsay McPhee of LM Coaching to come along to coach the trainers to coach the coaches as to how to roll. And actually, from that two-hour session in the pool, we were able to award some CPD points for that as well. And some of the leaders really liked an external provider coming in to coach us on, you know, a specific skills aspect to earn their points.

And I think that's that is if we look at these CPD points and say 'OK, we've got a great framework, it's working really, really well and what could make it even better?' And I think external providers or professional providers, you know, are superb at what they do – up to date, they challenge us in that training. They inspire us in that training. That's how I feel anyway. And so we could certainly bring that in to some of our CPD training at without question.

I mean, one of the issues with that is, well, how do we fund that? But there are other ways around that if a leader really wants that training, maybe we can all contribute some money into that pot. But it's also as was the case with Lindsay, the club decided to invest that money in the coaches because it's a really important part of our club's development which is helping people learn to roll. So you know it's good to try things and that could be one area where we could bring in external providers into that. We also though have been trying to bring in and use the CPD point sessions in another way, which is helping those who are developing their leadership and coaching skills to be able to hone their skills with their live audience, in sharing their information. Because we've seen this with two of the guys in particular but going away and investing that in that preparation time is a really valuable exercise to then share with the club. I think it's just you know a fantastic way of looking that CPD points isn't just about points. There's about how can you use it to help people grow. So it gives a chance for as I said, for those people who are growing to grow even more and it also gives that chance to bring in external experts, which we haven't done really as yet for our CPD programme. But it's definitely something we could do.

In terms of where do we go next with CPDs, I think - Just having done survey. So it's interesting just some of the feedback that came back from the general club. And the general club really, really warms to what we're doing. I mean, you know, fantastically well but how can we actually take that further? So what do points mean to the person that isn't looking to get qualified? Why do I need points? Well, you don't. That's the bottom line. So how does that work? And I think I need to personally explore that a little bit more that is the value of a certificate is it of high value to somebody to say I attended a really good course and look I got a bit of paper that says 'Well done'. Hopefully, for some that will feel really good. For others it will mean that, if you're going along to expect, to get points, then actually that also means that as individuals delivering that course, we need to make sure we've upped our game and we're delivering a good course. You know, so that ups our game.

But also, for the leader, once you've got your 20 points, what you do next? Do I have to keep working at it? If you want it to be continual professional development, we want it to be continual. We want our leaders coming along to each of these sessions contributing but also, you know, and sharing, but also learning maybe hopefully a thing or two. So once they've got those points, where's the incentive? And there's something, I know I mentioned to you as well is 20 points too little or is there another way where we can show that record to people, which is like, 'Yeah, I've invested this amount of time and I've learned this amount'? I don't know the answer to that but that's something also, I need to think about. I think if the learning environment is rich enough, the points just come as as an additional benefit.

So maybe this is something I need to think about. We as a team need to think about is how do we create a really learning rich environment that people just go, 'Yeah. Do you know what? That course is good every time. I've been to three of these and this course was different again. How do they keep doing that?'

Lee Pooley 33:12

I mean it definitely ... For everyone listening I mean it sounds such a vibrant club, it sounds like you've put a huge amount of time into policies and processes that it's almost like – it probably is not the what not the word that people like to hear – but you've had to sort almost develop the governance to be able to then move into the next phase which is obviously come into fruition now. And it most certainly feels like it's doing that in that particular way. And so I really appreciate Tony, you know, your time to just to you to amplify what you do at the club, what other people do with the club and the focus on learning and development in terms of that created almost a culture of safety. I mean, is it's really phenomenal. What you've done and

So yeah. So thank you Tony. I've got more of personal question because it just sounds like 'Wow you're just doing loads in terms of for the' Do you actually get out paddling club? Do you do you run sessions? It just nice to hear what you know because doing huge amounts in terms of processes and making sure everyone is all ticking along. What do you do?

Tony Smith

Well, the first thing I'd say is, it's not a one-man team, you know. It's a really strong committee. Other guys and girls put loads of effort in. And then we've got all the other people around who are doing, you know, lots of other work, assisting, helping, and actually, just taking part. So if you don't have that, one person can't do it. And it's certainly not just me. I'm just coming up with ideas and and we're shaping them as we go along. So you know, that's been the first point. In terms of me, yeah, I think I go on almost every single club paddle there is if I can. So last Saturday, we were on the River Exe. We're about that Exe canals. Lovely sheltered paddles. Beautiful sunshine. And a pub at the end point and halfway back, so that wasn't bad, was it? We had about 14 people on that. What are we doing this weekend? This weekend is a bit different because it's April. April is a bit of a difficult month. So the committee plus a few other people were going down to AF Watersports. Bit of a plug for them because they are great. But we're going to try out some different sea kayaks for the club. And then we're having a bit of a demo from one of our leaders, on how to pack a sea kayak, because we're going to be paddling the Great Glen. I think there's quite a sizable group of us paddling from Fort William to Inverness in May. So I'm on that one. I've got my hair net for the bugs and beetles up there. The midges - that's the one.

So, yeah. For me, I actually, I just love seeing everybody enjoying themselves. So for me, it's no matter whether it's white, water, sea kayaking, surf, or sheltered water. And I like to get out there. In fact, we chatted a bit before we came on air, didn't we about paddling? For me that's the time when I get my headspace. That's the time when I get my therapy away from my day job and it's really, really important. Really important. And you actually mentioned that question about well-being, didn't you? And it's easier to think about the wellbeing of others and to forget yourself.

Yeah, there's times when I get, you know, really probably over consumed with club work on top of my business life but that's what I think we're going to be really aware of is saying. 'Look this is ... it's a club. We're passionate about doing a great job, but also we need to balance that with making sure we have fun as well. And it's really, really important. Plus also, you know what? I need to keep fit,

and I've been eating too many pub meals recently, so, you know, I need to get out and, and have that fun as well. Yeah.

Lee Pooley 37:21

Tony. I mean I know you're a very humble person but you know listening to you you're an absolute inspiration for lots of people to, you know, the energy and the enthusiasm you have and the amount of time and capacity you put into your club – and I know there is others. But yes, it's absolutely fantastic to talk to you today. So I'll leave you to it because you've probably got something else to do in your busy life. Thanks very much for your time and take care.

Tony Smith 37:52

Thank you, Lee.