

Fireball Executive meeting of January 07, 2024; 09:00 UCT

Minutes

Attendees

- Nick Rees (Commodore)
- Olivier Burgaud (Secretary)
- Guy Newson (Treasurer)
- Evelyn Chisholm (Rear Commodore North America)
- Heather Macfarlane (Rear Commodore Australia)
- Cormac Bradley (Rear Commodore Western Europe)
- Dave Hall (Technical Committee Chair)
- Ruedi Moser (Website and Publicity)
- Mianne Erne (Minutes Secretary)
- Christina Haerdi-Landerer (Past Commodore)
- Eveline Schotte (observer)

Purpose

Initial meeting of the new FI Executive to define ways of working and current issues.

Agenda

1. Governance
2. 2024 Plans and Budget
3. 2024 Worlds
4. Review of future events
5. Promoting strong Fireball fleets
6. AOB

Minutes

1. Governance

- Executive meetings

Decision: a meeting every three months (at least for as long as design changes are discussed)

Format as before (attendees: members of the executive, observers as needed; decision making by consensus)

- Council Meetings

Format as before: Council meetings in person held at Worlds or Europeans, in between there will be correspondence (including voting) by email

The Council Meetings at Worlds or Europeans will be conducted as AGMs

Decision: At Geelong, we'll have an Open Forum during the Australian Nationals and an AGM during the Worlds, including the possibility of Zoom attendance.

Discussion as to what counts as an AGM, who is a member of FI (this is not clearly defined in the constitution, but it has in the past been understood that the members of FI are the NCAs, not the individual teams or boat owners – several NCA representatives have clearly stated that FI is not to address individual sailors directly). If AGMs are held at Worlds or Europeans, we need to keep in mind that a) not everyone is present, and b) not everyone understands all the details presented right away. This is why important council decisions have been reached by online voting in recent years.

Getting/Keeping mailing lists of individual members is a touchy subject; on the other hand, WhatsApp groups let individuals join and/or leave at their own will.

Most important point to keep in mind: members should be happy with decisions made by FI.

- Investigate Charitable Status

Nick proposes to investigate registering FI as a UK Charity whose “charitable purpose” is “the advancement of amateur sport”.

Problem: since FI is an international association, there is no authority we pay taxes to and so there is probably nowhere we could apply for Charitable Status.

Guy and Nick have a closer look at the idea of applying for charitable status in the UK.

- Information management

Nick proposes to get a Google Workspace account for storing FI information in a fixed central location to be used by the Executive and Council members for internal information that is not on the website, such as e-mails or any work in progress.

This might make it easier to store information centrally, and therefore more easily accessible.

The Website needs to be looked at, the system is outdated and might be vulnerable to hackers.

Heather and Nick look into alternative website solutions.

2. 2024 Plans and Budget

- Finances

2023 was an expensive year, due to expenditures for the international measurer and subsidies for containers to Australia. There used to be an event fee per boat at international events, this should be re-instated even though there is still a healthy balance in bank accounts.

Heather will check if the fee was included in the Geelong budget (as per decision in Executive meeting of 15 Feb 2023).

- Plans for new boat design (as explained at Europeans in Portoroz: modernized design without change in performance)

The main plans are to simplify some rules so as to make building easier and less expensive, and to modernize deck design.

Self-draining features: there hasn't been a chance yet to try out how high the floor would have to be. Such trials are crucial to see if the change is acceptable/feasible.

The question is raised about who pays for the process of changing the design. If the builders pay, they could claim rights to the new design, if FI pays, the rights to the building plans belong to FI and can be made available to any interested builders.

Complete costs for a new design, including molds: £23,000 – £25,000

Decision: set aside £5,000 towards the development of new design.

3. 2024 Worlds

- Suez Crisis

While the Swiss container passed through the Suez Canal before the crisis had fully developed, both the GBR and CZE containers were re-directed around the Cape of Good Hope, which means a much later arrival in Australia. Especially the CZE container is not expected to arrive in time for the International Week / Australian Nationals, possibly the arrivals of the boats at RGYC will even be late for the Worlds.

The organizing committee suggest several possible schedules with race days pushed back to later dates, dropping lay-days and the gap day between Australian Nationals and Worlds. The final day (16 Feb) is non-negotiable.

Decision: What really counts is the Worlds, keep that event intact, if possible with a reserve day.

If the boats have arrived, keep the schedule of race dates as published in the NOR (first races on 11 Feb), keeping the reserve day. Only if boats aren't able to make the first day, move the race days back and drop the reserve day. Measurements should be kept practical, late arrivals shall be given a chance to measure boats after completing their first races.

- Unloading Swiss container

Heather will check if it is possible to unload the Swiss container on 3 Feb (Saturday, customs people might not be available)

4. Review of future events

- Worlds 2025 at Riva di Garda, Italy

Worlds 2025 are planned to take place in September. For a lot of GBR boats, this is bad timing as it is after school holidays. Christina checks with organizers of 2025 Worlds if a date between mid-July and end of August would be possible.

- Worlds 2026

We have an invitation by Kenya to hold it on Zanzibar. Problem: Worlds outside Europe usually have few participants. The main fleet is located in Europe, with recent crises, as well as raised awareness concerning carbon footprints etc., it is questionable if we should keep shipping large numbers of boats every second year.

Decision: see if the invitation to Kenya can be postponed to a year or two later and change the cycle to two in Europe then one outside Europe. This will have to be discussed at the AGM in Geelong, Nick to add the discussion on the cycle of championships to the AGM agenda and send out the agenda.

Dave to look into possibilities of holding a Worlds in the UK in 2026.

5. Promoting strong Fireball fleets

- How to promote strong Fireball fleets around the world
Developing a new design is one measure to promote class growth, but it can't be the only one. Good event at an international level, but also supporting local and national fleets, are important factors.

Nick aims to personally talk to NCAs to see what their issues are.

For GBR sailors, international events in holiday destinations are important. The event locations should offer something for non-sailors as well, and sailors who come in 99th place should have as good a time as the ones who sail at the top of the fleet.

Olivier will look into possibilities to have a Europeans or a Worlds in the South of France. This should not become a deterrent for sailors to travel to the Worlds in 2025. There is also the format of "Grand National", a regular National championship event that is upgraded to attract more international sailors.

On a national or regional level, we need to build on the strength of the class. There are still a lot of good second-hand boats around that can be bought for a good price. In Cork, Ireland, a group of young sailors have recently started sailing older boats, they manage to get 10 boats on the water. – Other important features are the fact that Fireballs suit mixed teams, and they are great on a three--sail reach.

6. AOB

- Christina has scanned some documents, e.g guidelines for organizing international events – she will send them to Nick.
- To alert people of new content uploaded to the FI website, the Facebook page has often been used, but it might work better if done through WhatsApp groups. Several NGAs have national WhatsApp groups already, Nick will try to unite them in a FI WhatsApp community.
- Next Executive Meeting: 7 April 2024, time to be communicated.

End of meeting: 10:10 UCT

Aarau, 14 January 2024



Mianne Erne