

17 March 2020

Dear Paddling Ohana,

The situation is changing rapidly around COVID-19 and we are monitoring guidance provided by the WHO and the government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>).

Our aim is to minimise the risk of any spread of the virus by or within our community. We also want to ensure that our Ohana do not feel forced into a situation or decision that they feel uncomfortable with. People's physical and mental health is paramount.

There are two GBOCA-sanctioned events taking place before April 30th: The Three River Serpents Equinox event on March 28th and the Dorney Sprints on April 18th. The government has issued clear guidance that 'everyone in the UK should now avoid "non-essential" travel and contact with others to fight coronavirus'.

While the situation is changing daily, we have taken the decision to postpone all GBOCA-sanctioned events up to the end of April and we will look for an alternate date for both events in the British Outrigger calendar.

GB National Team

At this time, the International Va'a Federation World Championships is going ahead in August. We want to ensure that GB Outrigger fields a strong and healthy team, but we are also conscious that it would not be sensible to hold GB training sessions or time trials, at least until the end of April.

Physical Distancing

One of the most important recommendations from the government is to practice proper physical distancing, both to protect ourselves and others that are vulnerable. Following this guidance, we do not recommend training in groups, at least until further guidance is issued by the government. In particular, it is worth noting that the seats of an OC6 and OC2 are very close in distance between paddlers. In the exceptional case where you feel you must train in an OC1 or V1, please ensure you take the following precautions:

- Wash with soap and water, **all paddles** (especially the handle and shaft) before and after each training session.
- Wash with soap and water, **boats and other equipment**, before and after each training session.

- Wash your hands using the advised technique and do not touch your face during training.

Adhering to **NHS recommendations** (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>) will help protect you and others so please encourage friends, family and fellow paddlers to follow this advice.

Your Well Being

Please know that this is a particularly stressful time for many people and you may find that you are struggling. Please take care of your mental health. You may find this resource on recognising and reducing stress useful: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

These are unique, difficult and unprecedented times, but at the core of our paddling community is the Aloha Spirit and it is clear everyone is pulling together and supporting each other. Any ideas you may have for ways we as a community might offer help would be gratefully received.

Kindest regards,
GBOCA Executive

The above information is correct at time of circulation but as and when the Government and WHO advice is updated, we will provide an update.