

TSC Members' Questionnaire May 2011

Analysis and report

54 members responded to the questionnaire. Although a small proportion of the total membership, this is a high proportion of the active membership, and of the average number of people participating in dinghy races, and so is a substantial response. The questionnaire race prize goes to Jeremy Warren who responded in full 10 minutes after the questionnaire was e-mailed to members 😊. Others preferred cruising 😊.

Points which emerged strongly from the response included

- a universal high rating for the friendly nature of the club
- an interest in dinghy cruising, free sailing and practice events with safety boat cover

1 Dinghy sailing

The detailed responses to the suggestions previously discussed were :

What is your view of the suggestions made so far?	Agree	Disagree
Less accomplished sailors are deterred by the expert fleet focus?	22	19
Expert sailors are discouraged by the lack of expert fleet focus?	15	15
Define two fleets according to a windward/leeward course and a standard course	15	11
Define two fleets according to expert or standard competence	6	30
Defined two fleets according to racing or non racing sailing	12	21
Define specific events according to racing or non racing sailing	28	11
Separate non-overlapping courses for fast dinghies, slow dinghies and cruisers	9	23
Offer advice on which boat is best to sail, how it is best rigged, what conditions to tackle etc	34	5
Schedule fewer racing series	9	23
and/or schedule more long distance or pursuit races	19	11
Schedule more free sailing/practice opportunities with safety boat cover	39	3
Introduce a personal handicap system	16	21
Adopt specific class fleets?	16	17
Please add any further suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinstate novice races • Integrate later sail training into races • Offer mentor/buddy support • Fix more buoys • Reduce focus on racing • Increase focus on racing • Midweek dinghy cruising fleet • Reduce dedicated sail training times • Limit cruiser size allowed to race • Pay to camp on site • More family cruising • A non racing area • ?time lost to sail training • ?effectiveness of sail training → joining • Sunday only racing was well supported • Fleet captains • Post race discussion • Shorter series, not on both weekend days 	

Participation rates ranged through never, rarely, 12-20 times/year up to 30 times/year.

The **reasons for lower participation** were time, busy lifestyle, family commitment, lack of regular crew, lack of confidence and a preference for dinghy cruising.

The **suggestions for actions** to encourage greater participation included safety support for non racing sailing (some feeling hesitant, nervous, unsafe to try), reduced duties, and a dog shelter!

An overall reading of the responses is that catering for differences in competence and differences in interest between racing and cruising are important issues for many people, though not for everyone.

There was majority support (55%) for defining specific events as either racing or non racing, but against defining fleets by competence (60% against), or racing vs cruising (40% against). Differentiating courses for asymmetric boats had some support.

The majority (45%) did not want to reduce the racing series, but 37% did want more long distance or pursuit races.

An overwhelming majority (76%) wanted more free sailing or practice events with safety boat cover. The response was marginally against a personal handicap system and class fleets.

- 10% of respondents wanted to maintain or increase a focus on competitive racing
- 55% of respondents asked for scheduled non racing events
- 76% asked for free sailing and practice events
- 40% favoured more long distance or pursuit races

2 Facilities

The count of responses on the subject of the club's facilities showed that most respondents were happy with the current facilities. Several people suggested improvements to the galley and to menus. Others asked for improvement to the men's changing room. A substantial number suggested improved viewing areas whether a balcony, outside decking, interior viewing benches. One suggested sofas to create a more cosy atmosphere.

Should we improve?	Yes	No	Comment
Galley Area	9	27	Several respondents suggested a refit of the galley
Food available	9	28	Suggestions included members pre-ordering before sailing, vegetarian options, better menus, more quantity, a dedicated galley team.
Changing rooms	9	27	Several respondents wanted to see the men's changing room refurbished.
Viewing areas	18	18	Almost half the respondents asked for better viewing facilities whether external balcony or internal benches, sofas etc. Some noted this was identified previously. Some care is required interpreting the no responses ie probably meaning 'satisfied' rather than 'don't want'
Other	10	4	<p>Suggestions included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar open more regularly including on an honesty basis • New clubhouse • New sailing office box • Larger youth hut • Children's play equipment • Larger car park • Easier gate lock to entrance drive • Dedicated kit washing area • Wider slipway • Wind speed report via Internet • Internet web cam of slipway • Better signs • Better cruiser berthing • Redirect pill sewage disposal • Wind turbines for power

3 General issues

A summary of responses to each question is

What do you like most about the club?

- Friendliness
- Informality
- Value for money
- People
- Diversity
- Inclusiveness
- Safety
- Food
- Facilities

What don't you like about the club?

- Concentration on racing
- Lack of competitive racing
- 'Only racing is important'
- Lack of transparency
- Obscure decision making process
- Resistance to change
- Politics, traditionalism
- Tatty, not family oriented
- Difficult for new nervous members to break in and integrate
- Drive padlock
- Lack of development
- Resistance to change
- Inconsistent race management
- Same people help launch, same people on water first
- Sail training → joining not effective
- Cruiser mooring dominates Pill / reduces safe sailing area for dinghies
- 'Empire building'
- 'Disconnect' between 'elite' and casual sailors

How can we best improve the club?

- Weed out lapsed members and boats
- Mix and match crews
- Re-turf area in front of club house
- Tying clamps in dinghy park
- Build balcony, new clubhouse, BBQ area
- Update and improve web site
- Friday social
- Create a lagoon for any time sailing
- Recognition for helpers eg no duties for lifting team, Wednesday group
- Install large windsock
- Better youth facilities
- Introduce dinghy cruises and non racing sailing

- Greater transparency
- Wider ramp (replace old mooring platform)
- Develop unused land for wildlife

How can we attract more members < 20 years of age?

- Interact with and present to schools, scouts/guides, Bristol dock sailing
- Establish dedicated junior section of club, junior championship, junior member of committee
- Use web site, You Tube videos, Facebook adverts
- Make entry to membership easier
- Open days, try sailing events, schedule more less competitive events
- Offer crewing opportunities on faster more exciting boats

How can we attract more adult members?

- Open days
- Offer short term introductory membership

Do you attend the club monthly general meeting regularly?

- 26 respondents do not attend, 9 do, others didn't say.

Is there anything that would encourage you to attend more often?

- Several respondents questioned the purpose of the general meeting. Some felt it repeated the committee meeting, others suggested that committee meeting agendas and minutes could be on-line and an information meeting was then not necessary. One said the meeting was pointless and outdated. Others suggested turning it into a more social event. Better agendas, earlier starts, e-mail reminders were also suggested. Others highlighted Thursday as difficult, one suggested holding the meeting after a sailing event, and another didn't know about the meeting and that they were able to come.

What social activities do you enjoy, and do you have any suggestions for other events?

- Club week and the regatta were highly rated.
- Other suggestions included a down river dinghy cruise, casual sailing, pot luck supper, 2 day sail with overnight camp.
- Encouragement of member camping / BBQ's

Summary Statement

This survey was initially prompted by concern about falling participation in dinghy racing particularly in the 'fast fleet'. Whilst there was no comment about this specific issue, there is strong positive support for more non-racing sailing opportunities and assistance for improvers.

Most people are happy with the club – but there are two distinct views of dinghy sailing at TSC. One view holds that there should be a focus on racing and skills development (some query the value of sail training for novices); the other view is to broaden participation by making sailing more convenient, making the club more family oriented, more of a social destination.

In some respects these two views are incompatible – for example 80% of respondents want more free sailing/cruising opportunities with safety cover – which would entail reduction of racing opportunities.

Members did respond that they have various limits on how often they can sail. Even within the racing events this creates a trade off.

For example if members can manage to come for 750 boat race events (ie number of boats per race times the number of races over the whole year's programme), then if 50 events are scheduled, 15 boats will come, minus 6 people to operate the race, leaving 9 boats racing. However if 20 events are scheduled, then 37 boats will come, minus 6 people to operate the race, leaving 30 boats racing. This calculation is not exact for several reasons, but it does show the correct trade off between number of races and numbers participating in each race.

There is therefore a case to be considered for reducing the number of races into fewer more concentrated races with more people racing at each event, and using the slots released to provide the increased non racing events requested by others in the club?

Similarly, more people want to see improvements to non-sailing facilities such as a better viewing platform, BBQ area than say, an improved race officer box.

There were lots of ideas offered for attracting new participants (adult and youth) to sailing at TSC but also observations that much of the current effort/responsibility of running the club is carried out by a small number of enthusiasts. Resources would have to be found to run Open Days, Taster Days, liaise with schools, Sea Scouts, report racing results to Gazette etc.

It's not clear what proportion of respondents were <20 yrs of age and some further research might usefully be done to test ideas with the current young membership.

Geoff, Gary and Linda
June 2011