

Presidents' Report 2021 OKDIA AGM

Welcome to the 2021 OKDIA AGM.

Firstly, let me say it is strange to be writing a report on the year to 31 December 2020. 2020 seems like a lifetime ago and we are almost a full year on from then.

I finished my report to last years' AGM, by saying "my fingers are crossed that I will see you all next year in Lake Garda, Italy."

The World Championships planned for Arco on Lake Garda in July this year was perhaps the most highly anticipated event in the history of OK Dinghy sailing. I hope that is not too big a statement to make, but the decision to cancel the event was all the more disappointing based on this anticipation.

The disappointment was further heightened because, as a class, we are experiencing the excitement associated with a strong growth and resurgence around the world. The decision was personally extremely disappointing, not only because I was unable to travel to Europe and sail at this iconic location, but it also represented the end of my planned four-year term as President. This should have been my last AGM as President, but as I have now missed two in person AGMs, I have agreed (with of course your permission and support) to continue on for another two-year term. This will allow me to be present in Marstrand in August next year and then in Lyme Regis in 2023.

I don't want cancelled events to define us as a class and as a community moving forward. We will bounce back and bounce back quickly as the world returns to a sense of normality.

A few things I want to cover. I would like to thank Jonas Börjesson, who is stepping down as a Vice President. I have truly valued your thoughtfulness, wisdom and support. Thanks also to Peter Robinson who has agreed to move from a Vice President position to our Treasurer. This leaves two Vice President vacancies (Sailing and Marketing) which will be voted on as part of the AGM. In addition, there are up to three Committee positions to be filled. I want to thank the Committee for their work during the past year and I look forward to working with the newly elected Committee. Of course, thank you to Robert, for holding us together; Alistair for your tireless work on the technical side of things and with World Sailing and Peter for keeping us informed as our Webmaster.

As I wrote in the Newsletter earlier this year, we are now due for a review of the Road Map for the Class for the next step in our development. I would like this to be an inclusive and participatory process as to how we continue to grow and develop; how we remain relevant for many years to come and retain and celebrate the rich history of the class of over 60 years. We will reach out to you as to how you can be involved.

I finally wanted to raise what I think will be an issue in the next few years as to how we promote participation in the class across the world. We are currently experiencing a global shipping crisis. For many years Australians and New Zealanders in particular have been able to travel to Europe for World Championships and major events at relatively low cost, due to cheap airfares and cheap shipping. We have also held successful events outside of Europe in the past decade in Thailand, Australia, Barbados and New Zealand.

While we expect airfares to return to a reasonable level within a short period, it looks like global shipping may continue to be a problem for some years, making participation of Australians and New Zealanders, in particular in Europe in 2022 and 2023, a problem. Similarly, shipping to the Worlds in Brisbane in early 2024 is only just over two years away, and I fear the shipping difficulties may not be resolved before then.

I think as a class we should think laterally and look to find a solution to this problem. Certainly, for the Finn Class, large numbers of private and commercial charters are generally available across Europe for many events, meaning large numbers can participate relatively easily. I am reaching out to see if we can find a solution. We have a number of excellent boat builders and equipment manufacturers. Maybe one solution is a new boat charter and post regatta sale arrangement for major events. I don't have the answer, but collectively we will find one.

Mark Jackson
President OKDIA
24 October 2021