

President's Report OKDIA AGM 2022

It is wonderful to be in Sweden, at Mastrand on the eve of the OK Dinghy World Championships. It is a relief after 3 years to be able to say these words.

The raison d'être of the Ok Dinghy Class is to come together, sail, socialise, have a drink with friends and enjoy being together at regattas. While we have been mostly able to sail on a country and continental basis without any great restrictions, sadly full international competition was not possible in 2021.

Hopefully with the worst of the pandemic now behind us, at least in terms of restrictions to travel and movement, we can plan to resume and continue our class calendar and traditions unimpeded from now on.

Let me first thank the Committee who were elected to office at the AGM held via Zoom late last year. This is now the first term where newly elected officials were elected into their individual portfolios;

- Vice President -Sailing Andreas Pich
- Vice President – Marketing Pontus Gäbel
- Vice President – Development Mike Wilde
- Secretary – Robert Deaves
- Treasurer– Peter Robinson
- Chair of TC – Alistair Deaves
- Committee – filled by current Webmaster Peter Scheuerl

The purpose of the individual areas of focus for the committee roles is to work with the Secretary to effectively run the major association tasks, with collective responsibility then taken by the whole committee. We are now starting to see the benefits of these major constitutional changes taken in 2018 and 2019.

This has translated into new countries joining OKDIA, new boats being built across all continents and the beginnings of real changes to the OK Class across the world for the first time in many years. I extend a very warm welcome to all the new countries to OKDIA.

It also means the association continues to be run to a high level of professionalism and is in a very healthy state. I would like to personally thank Robert, Alistair, Peter Scheuerl and Peter Robinson in this respect. Their efforts are not only recognised internally within OKDIA but externally with World Sailing.

Looking forward, I think the class is at a bit of a crossroad. My sense was this was always coming but has been brought on sooner due to the pandemic. Many people have been around and about the OK Class for a long time, but I think we are seeing a shift, not necessarily a generational shift to a younger cohort, but people trying the class to see if it is for them. We have done the hard work to 'attract' them, now we need to 'retain' them to participate and travel to events.

What this shift means for the class, I am not quite sure. My opinion is anecdotal, with some facts and statistics. I think we need more evidence both quantitative and qualitative. My sense is that World Championships will start to look different. In some areas we will attract large numbers of local sailors relatively new to the class. However, those people may not travel, so large regattas will be dominated by locals and new or exotic events may be small in numbers.

What is best for the class? I am not sure. 100 to 150 boats made up mostly of locals sailing in traditional European venues, or small fleets 50 to 60 boats, sailing in newer or exotic venues. So, we have some big questions around events moving forward. This will put a lot of pressure and strain on OKDIA resources as we look to take the class on the right path. Having said that, we understand that the world has changed and meanwhile we have our major regattas set until 2025. I anticipate in the next 2 to 3 years, travel will continue to be expensive. The world is moving into recession. Shipping is very difficult and travel between the UK and Europe has its challenges.

Finally, I wanted to make mention of the OKDIA Strategic Road Map. This continues to be the guiding path with some on the plans now implemented and others will need a refresh, so over the next 12 months, we will get on with this work as to, what does the next 10 years look like? What are our priorities and goals?

Mark Jackson
President OKDIA
6 August 2022