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Corporate Plan Output: Special Events	

The purpose of this report is to provide further information to Councillors on the proposed "Great Brittan Boat Race" event which was presented to the Parks and Recreation Committee March 1999 meeting by Mr Blair Anderson. At the meeting Mr Anderson sought Council endorsement of his event.

BACKGROUND

Mr W G Brittan, a prominent Canterbury citizen in the mid 1800s, was a keen supporter of 'bumps' racing on the Avon River. Racing took place in the "Willows" area of the river between Fitzgerald Avenue and the Stanmore Bridge.

WHAT IS BUMPS RACING?

Bumps racing is processional in that it is undertaken with all boats in single file. It is done in divisions of eighteen boats at a time, each separated by 1½ boat lengths. All the crews are started at the same time, usually by means of a canon. The object of the race is to catch and touch or 'bump' the crew in front, without being bumped by the crew behind. If one crew catches the one in front and bumps, the two crews pull into the side of the river whilst the others continue until they have crossed the finish line.

Bumps racing is similar to watching rowing, except there are more crews in a race and spectacular crashes. Also, supporters follow the crews down the river on bikes, signaling by means of whistles, bells and hooters to their crew to tell them how close they are to bumping the crew ahead.

RE-STAGING BUMPS RACING AND 'THE GREAT BRITTAN BOAT RACE'

Mr Blair Anderson wants to rejuvenate 'bumps' racing on the Avon River.

While no confirmed event details have been provided at this stage, his proposal entails concepts such as:

1. Kidsbumps

Proposed to commence December 1999, with further events in May and December 2000.

These races would be open to 8-12 year olds and will utilise inflatable boats. The proposed starting point is Victoria Square, finishing at Manchester Street.

2. Secondary School Bumps

Proposed to commence December 1999, with further events in May and December 2000.

These races will use two-seater canoes (currently Mr Anderson has twelve boats available). The proposed starting point is the area beside the Thomas Edmonds

Restaurant (Band Rotunda), finishing at the Avonside Drive/Fitzgerald Avenue corner.

3. Millennium Bumps

Proposed to run in December 2000, this would be the highlight event featuring two events:

- (a) New Zealand versus the United Kingdom and
- (b) "The Great Brittan Boat Race".

While the "New Zealand versus the United Kingdom" race would use two boats, "The Great Brittan Boat Race" would use 12-18 two seater craft. The proposed courses for these events have not been provided.

In addition Mr Anderson has several other concepts, including "Inter-Ward Bumps" (which involves the six wards competing), an inter rowing club competition, punt racing, celebrity racing etc.

ISSUES

At the time of writing Mr Anderson has not confirmed the specific dates for any of his events; the number, duration and type of events he proposes to stage (beyond the above concept material); proposed entry and exit sites for boats; confirmed routes for each race; proposed parking and crowd control; riverside resident communication and an indication of any funding requested from Council.

It is therefore extremely difficult to comment on the feasibility of the proposed events, beyond drawing the Committee's attention to the ecological and event management issues which will need to be considered before any endorsement by Council could be given:

1. Impacts on Avon River

As the Avon River has no designated boat launching ramps suitable for launching a number of boats except Kerrs Reach, impacts on areas of planting along the river by both spectators and competitors launching and exiting their boats would need to be closely controlled.

Above Kerrs Reach the Avon is narrower and shallower, thus intensifying damage and disturbance and creating issues with the depth of water, and the possible need to undertake weed cutting before boats could successfully use this stretch of the river.

2. Impacts on Wildlife

Andrew Crossland, the Ornithologist, Waterways and Wetlands Section, Water Services Unit, advises that from August to January is nesting season on the river and the time during which young birds are not yet able to fly.

Because of damage to nesting sites and disturbance to nesting and brooding birds during this time, boats would need to be launched from a designated launch site and removed from the water at Kerrs Reach or designated exit points.

Therefore the best time for such an event would be from February to July inclusive.

The Avon at Kerrs Reach and below has a large amount of canoe traffic and the birdlife has partly adapted to this by moving to the edges of the river as canoes pass by. However for any events it would therefore be necessary to provide some areas along the riverbanks which were not accessible to human spectators, for birds to shelter in.

3. Parking and Traffic Flow

Methods of transportation , traffic patterns and density of housing in Christchurch have changed immensely since the 1800s and may mean that routes and spectator areas used for the original races cannot now be used.

Presumably such a series of events will attract a large number of spectators and supporters. This will create difficulties with parking and traffic at the launch and exit areas so far specified by Mr Anderson, particularly the Fitzgerald Avenue/Avonside Drive intersection.

The Parking Unit would not support a launch site for the races above the stretch of river located alongside Avonside Girls' High School.

Issues such as parking on grass berms will need to be carefully controlled.

4. Crowd Control

The events propose a moving crowd on foot and bicycle which follows the race, as well as issues around a large crowd at the beginning and end of a race as specified in No. 3 above. This will create a unique crowd control issue, particularly where the river is too narrow to accommodate spectators.

5. Launch/Exit Area

Impacts on the riverbank and wildlife with any launch/exit areas except Kerrs Reach have already been detailed. In addition, because much of the Avon riverbanks have now been strengthened and built up there are very limited launch areas available along the river.

6. Impacts on Other Users of the River

If the proposed events run for more than one day and more than once a year, the races will impact on other casual and rowing club river users and this would need to be taken into account.

The organiser would need to work closely with both the rowing clubs based at Kerrs Reach and the Canterbury Rowing Association to ensure races did not clash with rowing events.

7. Pre-Event Training

A new sport as proposed with “bump racing” will require group pre-event practice and training and impacts on the river and its users would need to be closely monitored and parameters set. This would need to be co-ordinated with other river activity, particularly training sessions at Kerrs Reach.

CONCLUSION

Given the lack of specific event detail provided at this stage it is not possible to recommend that Council endorse “The Great Brittan Boat Race” and its associated races at this time.

It is suggested that if Mr Anderson seeks endorsement that he submit detailed event plans, budgets and proposals for any Council endorsement for each race or series of races, to the Council 1999/2000 Annual Plan submission process so that a more accurate assessment of and recommendation on the feasibility of the events can be undertaken. His detailed event submission should also include sources of funding/sponsorship. It should not be assumed that Council endorsement implies funding support. On receipt of professional and detailed event plans objective evaluation can be carried out by Leisure Unit staff.

Recommendation: That the Council does not endorse “The Great Brittan Boat Race”.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.