

Weston Sailing Club

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(Charity registration number: 1170017)



Cancellation Guidance (due to Weather)

Background

On the rare occasions when the weather forecast is so bad that it is clear that racing or social sailing will not be possible, we should aim to cancel in advance. Well forecasted storms and snow have made this occasionally necessary over the last few years. To get the most out of the available member duties and avoid unnecessary travel, it makes sense to cancel promptly within a framework that everyone understands, giving people time to do other things with their time.

More often it only becomes clear that a sailing event will not be possible on the day. Again, it makes sense to cancel promptly, if this becomes clear.

The Sailing Committee agreed that we should define how cancellation should happen, so we are all aware of the decision making process. We should define **when** we should call off a sailing event, based on **which** forecast, **how** we should communicate cancellation and **who** should make this final decision.

RYA comments on the “decision to race”

“If it is possible to race with the wind at the time then racing should commence. It is unfair to some competitors to wait for ‘better’ conditions. Most boats can sail well enough to race in 4 knots of wind and start to get into trouble in winds of 25 knots or more. There are, of course, exceptions to this. Tide and current will influence bottom end wind speeds in that in strong currents a higher wind speed is necessary to achieve fair racing.

In general, it is not considered to be best practice to run racing ahead of schedule. When it is believed that the weather will be un-sailable the next day, heavy wind sailors may be disadvantaged should racing be possible. For similar reasons, racing should not be postponed for the day too early.

Don’t be afraid to start in shifty conditions. This is part of racing and the sailors enjoy it. Be aware, however, that if the course becomes unmanageable once started, abandonment or shortening course are tools to be used to ensure fairness.”

Weston considerations

In the context of a sailing event at Weston, the following additional considerations are relevant.

- We are unlikely to cancel an event in advance of the day due to a light wind forecast, as the actual wind on the day may be sufficient to sail. For example, it is not unusual for a thermal wind to appear on a sunny day. Racing is though likely to be cancelled by the RO on the day if the wind is below 4 knots (ie Force 0-1), not forecast to rise during the racing window, and the experienced Weston members present consider there is little prospect of an improvement. Similar considerations apply to Social Sailing, where a GPC or SC member at the club would make the call on the day, as social sailors may find they are unable to return to the Club due to the tide, and where possible it is best to avoid a situation where a Patrol Boat must tow them in.

- If strong winds are forecast, the time of year, wind direction, gustiness of the wind and the experience of PB crews also need to be considered:
 - In winter and early spring, we need to be more cautious, due to the lower water and air temperature, which means that competitors and PB crews are more at risk of hyperthermia or other cold weather injuries.
 - If the wind is **directly** onshore, the wind direction coupled with the large waves on the slipway mean that launching and retrieving boats can be more difficult and more dangerous. Alternatively, if the wind is offshore there is more of a risk of capsized boats being blown into the main shipping channel.
 - Winds gusting to 30 knots (Force 7- “Near gale”) or more can be problematic for boats, even if the average wind speed is much lower.
 - Inexperienced RIB crews may have difficulties in driving at speed through waves or rendering assistance to crew in the water or capsized boats in a Force 5 or above.

Weston cancellation process

Before the event day:

1. For racing, RO to consult the “windy” forecast (may be viewed at the foot of the member homepage <https://members.weston.org.uk/>) **48 hrs** before the first race start time to review the situation. If they feel there is a chance of cancellation due to the “windy” forecast or other weather issues forecast by the MET Office (eg snow) inform the Sailing Secretary (Nick Curry) of their concerns.
2. A final decision to be made for racing by the RO in consultation with the Sailing Secretary, or for social sailing by the Sailing Secretary, **24hrs** before the event based on the latest “windy” or MET Office forecast (as applicable), maybe also taking other weather forecasts into consideration if they vary. If the “windy” forecast is above the wind speed cancellation point, but other forecasts are below or close to the cancellation point, a decision may be made not to cancel in advance.
3. For **racing**, the current wind speed cancellation point is an **average wind speed over 24 knots** (ie over the mean wind speed of a Force 6). A lower cancellation point may be agreed if one or more of the Weston considerations mentioned above apply.
4. For **social sailing**, the current wind speed cancellation point is the same as for racing.
5. It should be noted that if racing or social sailing are cancelled, then “free sailing” at a member’s risk will remain available, but there will be no PB cover.
6. For cancellations ahead of event day, the final decision sits with the Sailing Secretary.
7. When agreement to cancel ahead of event day is reached, the Sailing Secretary announces the decision via Club e-mail and the WSC Facebook Page (remember to share with the WSC Facebook Group) stating the reason and giving instructions for volunteers.
8. The roster for the day will be cancelled and affected members invited to volunteer for roles later in the year. If the roster for the remainder of the year is filled, the members will be added to a reserve list.

On the event day:

9. For cancellations on a race day, the final decision sits with the RO, as the RO is responsible for safety. We recommend that the wind strength and direction are monitored using (<https://www.sotonmet.co.uk/>) or if the decision is finally balanced by sending out a PB with a wind gauge. The recommended wind speed cancellation points are as set out above. The abandonment of racing should be signalled by the RO from the Race Box in the usual way.
10. For cancellations on a social sailing day, a GPC or SC member at the club will make the call on the day following a similar process to the above but bearing in mind the lower cancellation points.
11. As volunteers will have driven to the Club, and may have spent some time at the Club awaiting a decision on cancellation, the roster for the day will be counted as completed.