

ENGLAND CANOE SLALOM TALENT PROGRAMME STRATEGY

2021-2025



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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to share this England Canoe Slalom Talent Programme Strategy for 2021-2025. It presents the programme's direction and focus over the next 4 years.

Why do we need this strategy?

The England Slalom Talent Programme in its current structure was established in 2013 and has supported countless athletes to attain personal, domestic and international success. The programme has supported English athletes in achieving World and European Championship finals, team World and European championship medals, a European Championship title and ECA Junior Series Cup medals. In the Tokyo Olympic cycle the programme has transitioned a total of 11 athletes to the World Class Programme (WCP). Our ambition is to sustain this success and continue to play a key role in establishing Great Britain as a leading Canoe Slalom nation across all age range championships.

In order to maintain this momentum, the programme, its structure and provision, needs to adapt and respond to external pressures within the sport (both domestically and internationally) and also wider influences from society.

Key factors that this strategy has been developed to respond include:

- The need to better support clubs and their coaches with development opportunities and resources.
- The need to better support clubs to achieve gender and event class balance, to recruit paddlers and coaches from all sections of society and promote the sport widely in different communities.
- The need to support communities of coaches coming together more often to share knowledge, ideas and ways of working.
- The unknown impact that Covid-19 has had on Slalom recruitment, participation and retention at all levels of the pathway.
- A new funding cycle presenting challenges to the continuation of investment levels that the programme has experienced previously.
- The developing trends and patterns of slalom development within England.
- A need to better enable the sport to realise the potential of athletes at an earlier age.
- The need to maximise and ensure ongoing gated, slalom specific access at white water venues for the benefit of the wider sport as a whole.
- The introduction of Extreme Slalom at the Paris Olympics and the possibility of further inclusion at the LA Olympics in 2028.

Feedback from the initial draft strategy

Feedback from the consultation process on the draft Slalom Talent Strategy suggested there was broad approval and encouragement for the general ambitions and proposed action plans, with a number of helpful suggestions and adjustments to be carried forward or clarified within this final strategy.

We are grateful to all those that took the time to feed in and respond to the Slalom Talent Strategy, a summary of the feedback is captured [HERE](#).

Funding

The England Talent pathway is largely funded by Sport England and the proposals detailed within this document are subject to the continuation of this support. Funding is in place until March 2022 and we will be bidding for additional funds for the 2022-2025. This strategy is therefore subject to additional funding being available beyond April 2022.

SECTION TWO: OUR 2021-2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & AMBITIONS

Our strategy will focus work in 5 key priorities:

1. Increase the quality and quantity of athletes within the pathway.
2. Developing and equipping the pathway to better support athlete development.
3. Supporting the development of excellent and inclusive club infrastructures.
4. Supporting coach development at all levels.
5. Optimising a pathway for all, enhancing the psychological safety and protecting the mental health and wellbeing for all athletes.

These 5 priorities will help us to achieve the following ambitions by 2025:

- English athletes consistently achieving GB Junior team places and reserve standards.
- English athletes consistently achieving age range World Championship finals across all Olympic classes.
- To have retained programme squad provision at LV and HPP providing for quality coaching on quality gated white water.
- Retained regional squad provision based throughout the Northern region catering for the varied slalom development locations in the North.
- To have retained a national junior squad, based out of LV and HPP to maximise coaching on quality gated white water, supporting the development of those athletes that are the best in their age group, preparing them to deliver Junior World Championship final performances.
- Provided appropriate support for U23 athletes and those dual career athletes, supporting development opportunities for study and sporting progression beyond the junior age categories.
- Created and implemented an athlete development framework with clear technical development models and supportive resources throughout the pathway.
- Established and better recognise clubs as the foundation and supporter of athletes at all levels within the pathway regardless of their programme status.
- Engaged more club coaches in coach education with informal development through national programme support and coach qualification opportunities.
- Established a network of Talent Club Partnerships (TCPs) that systematically recruited junior members (in school years 5 and 6) and developed them in line with the athlete development framework.
- Better supported clubs recruiting paddlers from all sections of society, promoting the sport widely in different communities.
- Achieved an increased gender and class balance in all events.
- Improved the gender balance and diversity within the coaching workforce.

SECTION THREE: THE ACTION PLANS

There are a number of key actions required of the programme in 2021 to allow the pathway to be better able to achieve our ambitions:

3.1. Restructuring of the Regional Talent Academy and replacing it with Slalom Schools

From May 2021 the programme will begin the transition from its current Regional Talent Academy (RTA) provision to the Slalom Schools programme.

Slalom Schools will support both athlete and coach development through inclusive training camps and events at various white water venues. A programme of development will be provided in order to drive progression in between camp events. This programme would be aligned to the athlete development framework detailed in section 3.6.

There would be approximately 10 camps per year, with half term camps and a potential international camp or appropriate race opportunities in the summer. Slalom School provision will be supported by programme contracted coaches. Athlete attendance will incur a charge. Fees will be reinvested back into Slalom Schools and this will help to cover costs or recruit additional coaches to reduce coaching ratios.

Eligibility criteria and event dates and locations will be released before the first race of the 2021 season. Athletes will not need to qualify annually to Slalom Schools and may join part way through a season as they are promoted. Access would primarily be open to Junior 12/13 athletes ranked in Div 2 or Junior 14 athletes ranked in Div 1. There would be a level of dispensation initially in 2021 to support both the transition from RTA to the Slalom School programme and also to take account of the potential impact of Covid-19 in 2020. Slalom School events will be open to any active slalom coach that wished to attend.

3.2 Increase the funding and support to the Talent Club Partnership Programme

The Talent Club Partnership (TCP) is striving to build stronger clubs with more paid coaching positions and better links across the pathway. The objective is for clubs and the England Talent Programme to work more collaboratively to enable the sport as a whole to grow and continue to be successful on the world stage. The first phase of the Programme comes to an end on the 31st March 2021. The aim in the next phase is to increase the amount of funding and the breath of support available to clubs. This will commence in April 2021 in order to maintain the support for any TCP clubs that continue from the original phase of the TCP programme into this new phase.

Full programme details can be found [HERE](#).

The support to clubs will be a mix of direct funding and club/coach development opportunities. The programme has two tiers of support (Talent Club Champion and Talent Club Partner) to account for the varying and unique needs of clubs, their scale, context and their overall ambitions.

Funding of up to £20,000 per club over four years is available for up to four clubs as Talent Club Partners to support the cost of a part time paid coach focused on athlete recruitment and development. Club development and progression will be supported by the Talent Club Partnership Manager, Pathway Strength and Conditioning Coach, Talent Coach Developer and Programme Coaches. Support will be tailored to the individual context of each club and the overall areas of focus and development will be agreed in collaboration with each club in line with the overall outcomes of the TCP programme.

Grant funding will be primarily focused on supporting those clubs based outside of LV and HPP.

The outcomes from the Talent Club Partnership programme will be:

- To increase the systematic recruitment and retention of junior members (those in school years 5 and 6) active in their clubs.
- To create greater clarity and understanding of the talent pool depth by having more regular and robust monitoring measures.
- To create paid professional coaching roles in clubs to deliver a high quality experience to its members.
- To increase the number of appropriately qualified coaches operating regularly in a club environment and to engage with more coaches in coach development opportunities.
- To support more clubs to offer quality developmental environments for young people to flourish within.
- To assist clubs to implement a long term business plan which can underpin and maintain a paid professional coach model.
- To improve the collaboration and engagement between clubs locally and develop greater relationships between clubs and British Canoeing.

3.3 Refocus and rename Talent Identification and Development coaching roles to support athlete and club development at white water venues

Talent Identification and Development (TID) coaching roles will be renamed to Regional Pathway Coaches. These posts will be refocused to work alongside club activity, establishing sustainable community based athlete pipelines and supporting club coach development. These roles will also target the development of under represented Canoe classes across both genders.

The roles will support the provision of activity at white water venues. Specifically at LV the role will help ensure the availability of water access for slalom training beyond that which is provided by the England Talent Programme or WCP.

3.4 Support for U23 athletes

Currently the England Performance Squad (EPS) supports U23 athletes with the assistance of WCP coaches. From May 31st 2021 this coaching provision will be restructured and repositioned in LV. Currently within the sport the opportunity for development and the progression onto the WCP beyond the age of 20 narrows significantly. However, the ambition of the England Programme is to create a pathway that allows for multiple, unique and varied athlete development journeys. A number of opportunities have been explored and developed through working in partnership across various bodies.

Moving forward, support for U23 athletes will come through broadening the support of the England National Talent Squad (ENTS). Squad capacity will be increased and the age range of support will extend from J18 to U23. Provision will commence after the 2021 GB Junior and U23 Selection events.

Qualification will be based on 2021 U23 selection performances (a qualification criteria will be published prior to the selection event) and there will be support for up to 4 athletes in LV and up to 4 athletes in HPP (up to 8 total).

As with all athletes that access LV water on a weekly basis, there will be a water charge payable by athletes in order to help contribute to the overall cost of programme water. It is recognised that one of the biggest challenges in LV is consistent and regular access to water slots. In the long term the intent is to establish increased club provided water access and this is one of the key drivers for the refocusing of the existing TID post in LV (Action Plan 3.3).

Home Nation Transition Coach

As outlined in the initial draft document, conversations have been taking place for a number of months to establish a partnership with the other Home Nations to co-fund the cost of a part time coaching role in Nottingham for U23 athletes.

Although supportive of the ambition and aspiration to work closer together for the good of athlete provision, collectively it was decided that investment in this role at this point wasn't the best use of available funding. It has been agreed to review and explore this concept at a point later in the cycle.

Other sources of U23 Support

In order to create a pathway that allows and supports multiple, unique and varied athlete development journeys we are seeking further partnerships with universities in an effort to provide more opportunities for U23 athletes not reliant solely on programme funding. More detail is contained below, along with the recently launched World Class Prospect Support tier available from the World Class Programme.

University Performance Coach Provision

Partnerships with local Universities are currently being explored in order to establish part time paid coaching roles providing support to the Universities student athletes. It is intended that the University Performance Coach will support athlete preparation and delivery at U23 GB team selection events and also support University performances at BUCS Slalom and Wild Water Racing events.

It is anticipated that the support available will be confirmed in May 2021 and that this will commence in September 2021, qualification to this support will be subject to the Universities own eligibility criteria.

This provision is not exclusive to English athletes but is included within this English Slalom Talent Strategy document to reflect the potential support available to English athletes and to recognise the investment of the England Talent Programme in facilitating this partnership and opportunity for U23 athletes within the pathway.

The University Performance Coach role will establish a precedent and funding model which it is hoped could be applied at other universities local to white water venues and expand further opportunities for athletes at this stage in the pathway.

WCP U23 Support

The World Class Programme Prospect Support provides provision at LV to a small number of talented athletes who are close to qualifying for the WCP. The full detail can be found [HERE](#).

3.5 Retain a regional squad structure and England National Talent Squad (ENTS) structure

The Super Regional Squad (SRS) structure is a critical part of the England Talent pathway and will be renamed to Regional Development Squad (RDS) in order to better reflect their development focus.

The purpose and focus of these squads will remain unchanged into 2021. There will be three RDS's, one in the Southern Region based out of LV, one in the Central Region based out of HPP and one in the North servicing the region as a whole. Athletes will have to achieve a qualification criteria and will be named to a squad for a season. Each squad will aim to support the best sixteen Junior athletes, within each region and within each class, and will focus on preparing athletes to make the step to ENTS, delivering them as a J16 in the top half of the Premier division.

The ENTS squad will focus on preparing Juniors and U23 athletes to qualify onto the GB teams with the potential to achieve Junior and U23 World Championship finals. The ENTS programmes will be based out of LV and HPP to ensure quality coaching is available consistently on quality gated white water. As outlined in 3.4, spaces on the ENTS will be increased, up to a total of twenty four in order to accommodate additional U23 athletes. Up to eight of the places on ENTS will be available to support U23 athletes. How places are allocated across the classes will be reflective of class strength and depth throughout the performance pathway as a whole and the need to achieve a balanced inclusion across classes and genders

Both RDS and ENTS programmes will provide coaching during the weekdays, weekends and in school holidays to accommodate varied athlete locations and availability.

Development in Canoe Slalom is, in part, dependent on regular and consistent access to moving water. This becomes more critical the further the athlete progresses up the pathway, the amount of time required accessing white water venues at each stage in the pathway increases. It is important to note that athletes can, and have, developed from varying backgrounds and access opportunities – the commonality is that they have all made the best of what access and opportunity is available in their individual circumstances.

3.6 Creation of an Athlete Development Framework

A critical part of providing more support for club coach development is the creation and implementation of an athlete development framework, the What It Takes To Progress (WITTP).

WITTP will align to the senior athlete development framework (What It Takes To Win) and will identify the key components that underpin the potential to be successful in the long term. This will provide for a common “language” throughout the performance pathway (from Club to Senior level) and offer a reference point for decision making (e.g. design of sessions, coaching practice and development, environmental design etc). The framework will also align to the coaching qualification system.

SECTION FOUR: ATHLETE PATHWAY

Tier	Age and level	Number and Location	Purpose	Provision
Clubs	Beginner to Prem	Various	<p>The critical foundation of the sport, supporting a broad membership, participating and engaging in slalom in a range of ways (competitor, official, volunteer, committee member, etc)</p> <p>Support and provide for the domestic competition structure.</p>	Typically all through volunteers.
Slalom Schools	J12 or J13 in Div 2 or above, J14 in Div 1 or above	Various	<p>Inclusive training camps, supportive exposure for athletes and club coaches at various white water venues. Not named to a squad but need to achieve minimum eligibility level for safety.</p> <p>Development of white water skills and technique in athletes and club coach education and qualification opportunities.</p> <p>Expectation of 'homework' and development in-between camp events.</p>	<p>60 days of coaching over the year provided by contracted coaches.</p> <p>~10 camps per year, mix of weekend and half term camps and 1 international camp.</p> <p>Athlete attendance would be charged (~£10 per day) and reinvested back into cover travel/coach costs/admin days or recruit additional coaches to reduce ratios</p> <p>Athletes are club paddlers with periodic engagement and regular input from the Slalom School programme.</p>
Regional Development Coach	J10 athletes new to the sport	~10-20 athletes per annum based in HPP and LV	Support club development and athlete recruitment.	<p>2 part time coaches 10 hrs per week.</p> <p>Weekday provision and 1 camp per month.</p> <p>Athlete are club paddlers with Regional Development Coach supporting club provision.</p>
Regional Development Squad	14 - J16 Top 50% Div 1 - Prem.	16 athletes in each region (N/C/S) 4 athletes in each class	<p>Supporting the best (~4) athletes within each region within each class</p> <p>Focus on preparing athletes to make the step to ENTS, delivering them as a J16 in top half of Prem tracking in line with ranking trajectory and performance funnels.</p>	<p>3 full time coaches.</p> <p>Provision in HPP/LV or local white water in the north.</p> <p>Pathway Strength & Conditioning Coach, volunteer psych and physio (up to 2 days per year). Coaching support at international race camps.</p>

UNDER 14

J14-J16

	Tier	Age and level	Number and Location	Purpose	Provision
J16 – U23	England National Talent Squad	J16-U23 in Top 50% Prem or above, best athletes in age classes. Those on Junior/U23 team and on track to WCP	Up to 24 boats, 4 - 6 in each class. Up to 4 U23's in HPP and up to 4 in LV.	Primary focus is to support athletes onto GB teams capable of making Junior and U23 Finals.	2 full time coaches. Provision in HPP/LV. EIS/TASS access where appropriate/eligible. Pathway Strength & Conditioning coach, volunteer psych and physio (up to 2 days per year). Coaching support at international race camps
U23	University Performance Coach	Athletes that are part of the university student body and typically U23's within the top 25% in Prem.	Between ~4-10 athletes	Support athlete preparation and performances at BUCS Slalom and Wild Water Racing events as well as U23 GB team selection preparation. (primarily aged ~18-21)	Weekday provision in HPP. ~10hrs per week over 30 weeks per year. TASS/Uni facility access where appropriate/eligible.

SECTION FIVE: ATHLETE PATHWAY DIAGRAM

