

Proposal to Boat Clubs in Oxford and Cambridge

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is John Willis and I am a Trinity Hall, Cambridge graduate (1979). I was born without fully formed arms or legs though that has never stopped me.

I founded Power2Inspire 3 years ago in Cambridge – we are based in the Future Business Centre in Kings Hedges Road, Cambridge. We promote Inclusion through Sport, holding inclusive sports days in schools and the community, and Festivals of Inclusive Sport. To date we have held 8 Festivals, focussing on golf, hockey, tennis, cycling and badminton. Last year I completed my Road2Rio challenge, participating in all 34 Olympic and Paralympic sports, and that included rowing with an adapted blade. That and as a former cox has prompted me into hosting an Inclusive Rowing Event.

This idea has grown into creating an Oxford v Cambridge Inclusive Boat Race. The idea would be to hold a virtual race but make it truly inclusive, by including disabled and non-disabled, men and women and students and alumni in the same crew of 8. The “Race” would take place on ergs, in two venues, one in each city, connected by an online streaming provider. It would be a relay over 8,000m – 1,000m for each rower – and showcase the inclusivity of rowing.

I have written to both OUBC and CUBC requesting their endorsement for the event but I have expressly not asked for their squads to be involved in any way. In the meantime we have received support and endorsement for the concept from the former Minister for Disabled People, now Secretary of State for International Development, Penny Mordaunt.

I am seeking your assistance as the Captains of College Boat Clubs. I hope to draw crew members from the rest of the university and alumni, and therefore from your members. I am hopeful we will hold the event on one evening in the week in the run up to the Boat Race proper (24 March 2018), thereby boosting the publicity for the main event.

In particular I am looking for a captain from each university prepared to help put together the crew, and coordinate with a venue. We have been offered the loan of Concept2 rowing machines, so we are just looking for the ideal space to show off each university as we hope to create quite an online audience.

If you are interested and wish to hear more please do get in touch either by email or phone:

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07711 731286 or 01223 781364.

Many thanks,

John Willis