

Dear Marit,

Many thanks for your e-mails to Sally Soper about your interest to coach rowing in Zimbabwe. We are always very keen to encourage people who are able to coach and assist us with rowing development in Zimbabwe. We have quite a lot of people who are interested in learning to row, but we are very short of coaches.

My name is Andrew Lorimer. I am the President of the Rowing Association of Zimbabwe ("RAZ") and I am also the Rowing Captain of Hunyani Rowing Club, the only non - school and largely adult rowing club operating in Zimbabwe. Previously, for a number of years I was the Chairman of the Chisipite School Boat Club while my daughter was a school pupil at Chisipite Girls School and a rower with that boat club (she is now studying in Utrecht in the Netherlands).

Let me give you some background on rowing in Zimbabwe so you know something about us and our aspirations and challenges.

Rowing started in Zimbabwe (formerly called Rhodesia) in 1953. It has always been a fairly small sport in Zimbabwe based around Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe. For many years rowing was centred around the only university then in Zimbabwe, based in Harare, on two adult rowing clubs in Harare and on three government funded schools in Harare and on one privately funded school in Harare. During the early 1980s, there was a lot of change in Zimbabwe and the one university that did row stopped rowing, one of the two adult rowing clubs ceased to exist and the three government funded schools which had rowed stopped rowing all together. Since the 1990s a number of new universities have started up in Zimbabwe but we do not have any Zimbabwean universities that row now. Two different government schools in Harare have taken up rowing, we have one adult ("Masters") rowing club in Harare and we have 3 private schools in Harare which row. We also have one private school in Marondera, 65 km from Harare, which rows. Currently we have approximately 180 people in Zimbabwe who row, living in either Harare or Marondera, and we have a small number of Zimbabwean students at schools and universities in South Africa, Europe, the UK and USA who also row. For much of the time in Zimbabwe rowing has been seen as an "elite" sport and sports such as soccer, athletics, rugby and cricket have been popular with most Zimbabweans. However, in the last 10 years, perceptions in Zimbabwe have begun to change and much more interest has been shown in rowing. Shortages of equipment and coaches and the "cost" of rowing has held back rowing development. FISA has provided some great assistance to support rowing development in Zimbabwe and to help Zimbabwean athletes competing at World Championship rowing events. But severe political and economic misrule in Zimbabwe over the last 20 years has made it very difficult to develop rowing in Zimbabwe. In 2008 Zimbabwe reported the highest hyperinflation figures in the world, with the cost of items in shops changing from morning to afternoon on a daily basis. Despite the challenges, RAZ and those who love rowing in Zimbabwe have tried to keep the enthusiasm for rowing going, and at the Rio 2016 Olympics our two Zimbabwean rowers competing there were the best performing athletes for Zimbabwe and we entered a para-Olympic rowing team at the Para - Olympics for the first time. Much greater interest is now being shown in rowing and the benefits of participation in this sport and the Zimbabwe government has encouraged RAZ to try and get rowing into Zimbabwean universities and government schools through the introduction of rowing to the Zimbabwe National Youth Games to be held in August 2018.

We row mainly at Mazowe Dam, our national rowing base in Zimbabwe, which is situated 38 km from Harare. It is a beautiful dam surrounded by tree clad mountains. For over 10 years Mazowe Dam was less than 25% full. In early January 2017, Mazowe Dam had shrunk to less than 5% full. Fortunately, between January and March 2017 we were blessed with good rains and in April 2017 Mazowe Dam filled completely for the first time in sixteen years. With the dam full and water guaranteed for at least the next five to six years, there was a significant increase in the interest in rowing around Harare. RAZ spent a significant amount of money fixing up our main club house and boat sheds at Mazowe so that we could make a big push to develop

rowing in Zimbabwe and in the Southern African Region. We want to get rowing in Zimbabwe and in Southern Africa to a new level!

With Mazowe full and our club house and boat sheds looking immaculate, we were devastated in August 2017 when RAZ was advised to stop all rowing at Mazowe as the then President's wife was taking over the dam for her own use. Rowing activities ceased as we worked hard to negotiate to get back the use of the dam for national rowing activities. Ultimately, the seismic political change in Zimbabwe in November 2017 removed the then President's wife and we now have back the use of Mazowe Dam for rowing. The late GB rower, Beryl Crockford, said that Mazowe Dam is one of the best bodies of water in the world for rowing and we are very fortunate to have the use of it.



Mazowe Dam Almost Empty – December 2016

While we now have back the full use of Mazowe Dam, it has been a challenge buying boats and other rowing equipment to increase the numbers of people rowing in Zimbabwe. Since 2009 the official currency in Zimbabwe has been the US\$. Between 2009 and 2013 reasonable reserves of US\$

were built up in Zimbabwe and it was quite easy to import items into Zimbabwe, including sports equipment. US\$ were fairly easily available. We imported several Swift and Liangjin boats into Zimbabwe. Our biggest problem then was the customs duties paid to import items into Zimbabwe. These duties were often as much as 45% of the cost of the item, which together with transport costs made importing items expensive and difficult in an environment where there is little financial assistance for rowing. Unfortunately, financial mismanagement and corruption by the previous Zimbabwe government reduced Zimbabwe from a former "bread basket" and "powerhouse" in Africa to a pauper, with 90% unemployment in the country, and very little in the way of foreign currency reserves. In addition, Zimbabwe has been unable to access significant foreign aid and foreign currency support from other countries and international bodies because of financial sanctions placed on a list of persons and bodies connected to the old Zimbabwe Government, due to the perception of repressive rule in Zimbabwe. Since 2016 it has been almost impossible to legally purchase foreign currency in Zimbabwe for use to import items of sports equipment into Zimbabwe. The little amounts of foreign currency in Zimbabwe has been restricted for the import of essential items such as electricity, fuel and food.

The recent engagement of the new Government in Zimbabwe with the international community, and the promise of good governance, has increased significantly the chances of lifting sanctions and restoring meaningful financial assistance to Zimbabwe. It is hoped that this, together with Zimbabwe's ability to earn foreign currency from mining, agriculture, tourism and manufacturing, will from 2018 onwards assist there to be more foreign currency available in Zimbabwe. Hopefully, we can start purchasing boats again. It will however, take a while for foreign currency reserves to accumulate in Zimbabwe. We still have a few very old wooden "fine" sweep fours and an old rowing tub which were bought in the 1950s. Most are no longer useable and would now make good rowing furniture. However, we can still use one or two of these beautiful old boats. In the 1980s, Graham Cawood, a Zimbabwean, built a number of sculls, sweep pairs and sweep fours in Harare from fibreglass and wood. A number of these boats are still in use. We have started a project to renovate the Cawood boats that are not being used so that we can "get bottoms on seats". These boats though are very heavy, still have canvas decks and they are quite rickety. My masters crew rowed an old Cawood sweep four on the weekend at Mazowe. The footboards squeak and groan with each stroke taken! Graham Cawood left Zimbabwe for Australia in the early 2000s when the

political and economic situation in Zimbabwe started to decline after the land invasions, but his legacy remains in a number of rowing boats still being used in Zimbabwe which were built by him.



Novice Crew on a full Mazowe Dam in front of our Club House and Boat Sheds

Between 2009 and 2014 a marginal improvement in the performance of the Zimbabwean economy allowed us to import some modern carbon fibre rowing boats from South Africa and from China. The South African boat market has struggled against competition from Chinese built

boats and now our best option is to buy boats from China. We have been very pleased with the number of Swift and Liangjin boats we have imported into Zimbabwe, particularly as their build quality and performance has improved over the years. Unfortunately, between 2015 and 2017 it has been very difficult to get new boats into Zimbabwe because of our foreign currency shortages. We are however working with FISA at the moment to see if we can import some new boats from China to establish a fleet of boats for development purposes to promote rowing in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi and other countries in the Southern African region. We are looking at new Kanghua or Swift boats for this. We would love to get two “sweep eights” into Zimbabwe as these are great for development rowing because of the great thrill of rowing in an “eight”.

We are greatly encouraged by the interest that the new Zimbabwean government is showing in rowing. There are 55 national sporting associations registered in Zimbabwe with the Government Sports and Recreation Commission (“SRC”). RAZ is one of these Associations, and represents all rowers in Zimbabwe. Over the last several years RAZ has been one of only a handful of national sporting associations in Zimbabwe that has been fully compliant with all the governance and developmental requirements of the SRC. RAZ has held regular rowing regattas within Zimbabwe, has publicised these, has worked to develop rowing in Zimbabwe, has regularly sent competitors to international competitions and has complied with all Governance standards set by the SRC (i.e. holding annual general meetings, working to a constitution, submitting annual audited accounts etc). Over the years the Zimbabwe Government has focussed a lot of money and support on traditional sports such as Football, Cricket, Hockey and Athletics. However, Government and the SRC have recently expressed disappointment that the results obtained from these sports have not been better. Both Government and the SRC have now expressed the desire to promote sports such as rowing, which were formally perceived to be “elite” but which have performed relatively well and which have the ability to achieve good results on the international stage. The Zimbabwe Government and the SRC have recently asked RAZ to spread rowing to all 10 provinces of Zimbabwe. They would particularly like to see schools, university and tertiary institutions and units of the armed forces (the army, air force, police, prisons and wildlife protection services) taking up rowing. RAZ is very excited by this as the encouragement of Government will help in opening doors for the promotion of rowing in Zimbabwe.

What it's all about....getting our youth rowing!



The Zimbabwe National Youth Games to be held in August 2018 will help popularise rowing significantly in Zimbabwe. These games are being held in Gweru, in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, where rowing competition has never been held before. The National Youth Games will feature Zimbabwe youths aged 23 years and below. However, our biggest challenge is having enough rowing coaches and rowing equipment

(sculls, double sculls and quads/fours) for the National Youth Games and for the demand that we foresee thereafter. Zimbabwe is fortunate to have 10,000 large irrigation dams and all cities and major towns in Zimbabwe have at least one large dam nearby for water supply purposes and which are suitable to row on. We believe that the SRC will provide us with a customs duty exemption to import rowing boats into Zimbabwe. Our biggest challenge is to find the foreign currency to purchase these boats, particularly with the severe shortage of foreign currency we have in Zimbabwe at present. We anticipate that the foreign currency availability in Zimbabwe will slowly improve over time and that as the Government finances improve they may assist us in purchasing equipment. However, at the moment Government is stretched to the full trying to meet all its most serious financial obligations.

The re – admission of Zimbabwe to the British Commonwealth of Nations and to the Commonwealth Games will give a great boost to Zimbabwe rowing. Both our new President and Foreign Minister have talked a lot about re-joining the Commonwealth and the importance of the benefits it will bring including the opportunity to participate again in the Commonwealth Games. The British Government is keen for Zimbabwe to re-join the Commonwealth and three British cabinet ministers have visited Zimbabwe since our political upheavals in November 2017. It will be a great boost for Zimbabwe to be able to compete in rowing at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham 2022, (hopefully rowing will be included in these Games). I am sure that Zimbabwe would be able to put in good rowing performances against England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, rather than GB as a whole. Medal opportunities would be more realistic for Zimbabwe in the Commonwealth Games than in the Olympics, although we aspire to set higher and higher performance goals at each Olympics we take part in. Good results in the Commonwealth Games would go a long way to increase the interest and support for rowing in Zimbabwe.

We are very keen to use Zimbabwe as a regional base for the development of rowing in Southern Africa. Zimbabwe is surrounded by or close to at least 6 or 7 Commonwealth countries of which only 1 (South Africa) has a well-developed rowing scene. We would love to help develop rowing in Commonwealth countries. RAZ has done some work with British Rowing (we had a Level 2 Coaches Course here in December 2016) and has been helped by British Rowing a lot over the years. RAZ would love to help expand rowing in the Southern African region and be used as a base for regional rowing development not only to improve the calibre of competition in the Region (good for our rowers) but because it's a way for us to try and raise some revenue to turn into more rowing equipment. Our Government and the SRC is also keen to see us adopting initiatives to bring people into Zimbabwe and earn foreign currency through sport competition, sport development and tourism. Being a regional rowing training hub would assist us a lot with our Government and SRC. In December 2017 we lent a trailer of boats to Malawi for a training camp to help promote rowing there, and we are also hoping to promote the development of rowing in Lesotho, which will shortly be the 154th nation to join FISA and the 34th FISA member from Africa. I have the contact details for the Lesotho rowing officials and they are keen to promote rowing in Lesotho. They have no boats at the moment and are keen to order boats. Mozambique is part of the Commonwealth and would be a good place to develop rowing, particularly coastal rowing as it has an enormous beach front. At a FISA Umpires Seminar which I recently attended in Johannesburg, South Africa I met rowing representatives from Lesotho, Zambia and Uganda and they have all expressed interest in training and competing in Zimbabwe. We have close ties with rowing in Malawi and we also have contacts



with rowing in Namibia and Zambia. RAZ is working with FISA in putting a trailer of boats together to assist develop rowing in the Southern African region, with the possibility that these could be based in Harare, Zimbabwe and then trailered around the Region where they may be needed. We would tow them to big regattas in South Africa so that regional countries could fly in there and use these boats without having to tow or procure their own boats and equipment in South Africa.

Inside one of our new Boat Sheds

As one of initiatives to promote regional rowing in Southern Africa, we are organising the first Zone 5 Regional Regatta to be held at Mazowe Dam, Harare, in June 2018. For the last couple of years, African Rowing Championships have been held annually in North Africa, particularly in Tunisia, which has a buoyed rowing course and a good supply of boats. It has been expensive and difficult for most countries in Southern and Central Africa to get to North Africa. In addition, these Championships have been held in October/November when many of our rowers are writing their end of year university and school exams. South Africa has not been particularly interested in the Championships preferring to compete in Europe. FISA is now hoping to encourage more regional regattas in order to promote regional competition and development. The first Zone 5 Regional Regatta at Mazowe Dam in June 2018, will be preceded by a week's rowing training camp and should have 10 countries taking part including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland, Angola and Mozambique. This Regatta will help prepare young Zimbabwean and regional athletes for the African Youth Games in Algeria in July 2018, where that event will be used as a qualifier for African rowing for the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires in October 2018. While some of our Zimbabwe junior and senior rowers have competed at international regattas in Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland, Lithuania, Poland, Tunisia, USA, Canada and Brazil over the last three years, it would be great to be able to develop more rowing competition in Southern Africa itself in order to encourage more interest in rowing within this region. We are also keen to try and develop Para – Olympic rowing in Zimbabwe and in the Southern African region.

Our Para – Olympic Crew



As mentioned above, rowing in Zimbabwe is administered by RAZ. We have a committee elected every year which is well run and has a considerable knowledge of rowing in Africa. We have a good development programme for junior rowers and we run a well organised series of regattas in each of the three school terms of each year in Zimbabwe. We regularly send rowers to compete outside of Zimbabwe and are achieving better and better performances. We are in good standing with our own SRC, with the Zimbabwe Olympic Committee and with FISA. We have good communications with British Rowing and Rowing South Africa and with a number of other international rowing associations, and with the regional countries around us. Our RAZ Technical Director, Rachel Davis, is in almost weekly contact with FISA and does a lot of development work in Africa for FISA. She has conducted rowing training for FISA in Italy, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Uganda, Nigeria, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia (not an exclusive list of countries) and is working to try and help Lesotho with their new rowing development. We have put in place some good policies for rowing governance and we are continuing to add to these. In Zimbabwe we have been awarded trophies for good governance and for sports development by the SRC for two years in a row. In December 2017, (with funding from FISA), we put together a strategic plan for RAZ and rowing in Zimbabwe for the period from 2018 to 2024. Our biggest challenges are lack of financial support, limited availability of equipment and not enough coaches. These challenges are directly as a result of the poor economic and political environment which we have been living in previously. Despite these challenges, RAZ has maintained a vibrant rowing community in Zimbabwe, which we hope to expand considerably as the economic and political situation in Zimbabwe improves.



Where does this all fit in with you? I hope I have not bored you too much about rowing in Zimbabwe and about the challenges here. From what I have said above I hope that you will see that there are plenty of coaching opportunities here in Zimbabwe, particularly for beginner rowers. When would it suit you best to come to Zimbabwe and what would you need from us? How long would it suit you to come for?

We would accommodate you here (either with a family involved in rowing) or ideally we would provide you with a cottage that you would use on your own to give you some personal space. We would provide you with transport to and from

Mazowe with schools and clubs going out to row. We would also hope to show you some of Zimbabwe. Would you require a stipend and if so approximately how much? If you are paid a salary here you would need a temporary work permit which would cost US\$500 from the Department of Immigration, but if you work as an unpaid volunteer then you would be able to enter Zimbabwe on a three month tourist visa which I think costs US\$55. We have what we like to think is the best climate in the world and Zimbabwe is a country full of very friendly and generally polite people. While we do have some petty crime, it is not seen to be a major issue here and violent crime is not very common at all. We can buy most of our day to day needs in our shops and we have reasonable medical services. Zimbabwe is a land of quite some variety and it is certainly an interesting place to visit at present. There is lots to do.

British Rowing level 2 Coaching Course at Mazowe

What would we want you to do here? We have lots of coaching opportunities. Here are some: -

- i. Help coach Chisipite Girls School Boat Club. This club has recently increased from about 26 to close to 40 members. Rowing is becoming more and more popular at Chisipite. Many of the new members are beginner rowers. One of the coaches of this club has been offered a three year coaching job in the USA which she can't refuse. Chisipite is a private school.
- ii. Help coach Arundel Girls School Boat Club. This club has about 20 members. It had a very experienced coach who left last year to go to the UK. It presently has two junior coaches who have only fairly recently left school.
- iii. Help coach Prince Edward Boys School Rowing Club and Girls High School Rowing Club. These are two government schools. These two clubs worry me. They have some teachers who supervise them but know little about rowing. The teachers cannot drive a safety boat and if they did they might be more dangerous to both themselves and the club members. Both clubs are badly resourced and have not paid fees to RAZ for a long time. Yet both schools have members with potential and rowing is a good thing for them. We need some help here to provide much better coaching and supervision on the water.
- iv. Help coach new members at Hunyani Rowing Club which is both a masters and juniors rowing club. We are having a number of people showing interest in taking up rowing and it would be great to have more hands to help coach our new rowers. We need coaches who can help us to train new members so that we can get some more crews to compete both socially and also competitively.

v. Help coach some of our prospective new university rowers for the National Youth Games. We will be inviting students from various universities around Zimbabwe to weekend training courses at Mazowe to teach them the basics of rowing so that they can learn reasonable basics and handle a boat safely and compete with some level of enthusiasm at the national Youth Games in August 2018.

Please let me know what you think and what questions I can answer for you. I will get right back to you with any questions you have. I am sure that we can structure something that would suit you, and your help and experience would be greatly valued here in Zimbabwe. I hope that your stay in Zimbabwe would be a lot of fun, a great experience and a very worthwhile thing to do.



Fun development Regatta at Mazowe Dam – June 2017

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Lorimer

President

Rowing Association of Zimbabwe

E-mail: Andrew.Lorimer@Innscofrica.com