The addition of a wing foiling category will give new edge to this year’s Poor Knights Crossing event.

At this stage an experiment to gauge the logistical challenges of including wing foil competitors, 15 foil board enthusiasts have been invited to attend, and will race the downwind course alongside the ocean ski and waka ama paddlers.

It is looming as the first time wing foilers have competed alongside their ocean paddling whanau, not only in Aotearoa, and so could be a world first for an ocean crossing competitive event, race director Tim Eves said.

“I’m not sure if I’m confident enough to proclaim world first status and shout it from the rooftops just yet, but maybe if I just whisper it and see if anyone disagrees,” Eves said.

“I certainly haven’t heard of any other open ocean racing events that include wing foilers. I know the foiling craze is getting quite big now though and I also know the conditions they favour are very similar to what ocean paddlers desire, so, what could possibly go wrong,” he said.

“Possibly quite a few things could go wrong actually, but we will have a bit of fun finding out I’m sure.”

Now in its 9th year, the Poor Knights Crossing event yet again pulls alongside their major sponsors and supporters Dive! Tutukaka, who provide the ferry fleet and the bulk of the safety fleet needed to stage the race.

This year the race has also gained financial support from Northland Inc, Moana Nui Canoes and The Watertight Company, which underscores the desire to keep this event locally based and supported as all businesses aligned with the race are based in te tai tokerau Northland.

The race was cancelled last year due to covid restrictions, and entry numbers could be hit by a swag of Aotearoa waka ama paddlers competing at a world championship sprint event in London just prior to race day. But Eves remains relaxed about entry numbers at this point.

“There’s a lot of pressures on events coming from all different directions, but I think the Poor Knights Crossing is one race paddlers look forward too and will support if they can. From a long term perspective, it is probably important to keep the race on the calendar and on the radar of paddlers, there aren’t any other open ocean crossing events in Aotearoa, so it is quite unique.”

“Not counting our wing foiling invitees, the field is already almost half full of the 100 capacity, but its just a month away from race day now, so it might be time to commit if you’re thinking about racing.”

This year’s race is scheduled for Saturday September 3. Entry registration is online via the enternowonline.com website.