

## National Water Safety Forum

### Watersports Advisory Group

Notes of meeting held on 22 September 2007, at the ARA head office, London

#### Attendees:

<b>Chair</b>	Jim Watson	British Sub Aqua Club
<b>Deputy Chair</b>	James Stevens	Royal Yachting Association
	Peter Cornall	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
	Stuart Ward	Amateur Rowing Association
	Duncan Carter	CCPR and Secretariat

#### 1. Welcome and instructions

Jim Watson welcomed attendees to the meeting.

#### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Gareth Turnbull (British Waterski Federation) and Ben Woods (Sport England).

#### 3. Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the previous meeting held on the 7 February 2007 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. **David Walker would ensure the minutes appeared on the RoSPA website.**

#### 4. Matters arising from the notes

##### 4.1 Report from the National Water Safety Forum Meeting

James Stevens gave an update on recent discussions on advice regarding the use of lifejackets in recreational activities. NWSF provides existing information on its Website and the Watersports Advisory Group endorses this advice. Since the safety merits of lifejackets are specific to each sport, it was agreed that the relevant NGB would be the most suitable authority to provide guidance to participants on the wearing of lifejackets. Clear, web based advice was seen as the most effective method for propagating this information.

##### 4.2 Report from the Information Group Meeting

Stuart Ward (SW) gave an update of the Information Group meeting.

#### 5. Statistics

Peter Cornall (PC) presented RoSPA's new data regarding drownings in the UK. All present congratulated RoSPA on the excellent data, which would be a valuable tool in driving forward continued improvements in water safety.

There was discussion concerning "near miss" data which was chiefly collated by the relevant NGB and was regrettably less consistent than the RoSPA data. Resources were highlighted as a significant issue – many NGBs were simply unable to collate the necessary data.

There was discussion regarding the establishment of a central database to collect this data, or a RoSPA-produced template to instil greater consistency in the data collation (similar to CHIRP). Stuart Ward agreed to report these developments back to the Information Group.

PC announced that the DfT has agreed to continue funding RoSPA to continue with their data collection project.

JW undertook to invite Mike Barrett to future NWSF meetings.

There was some discussion on holding a dedicated session at RoSPA's Water Safety Conference (Bristol, March 2008) on improving and assisting accident data collection and reporting within NGBs.

However there was little appetite for a water safety day that had been mooted by others.

It was felt that this would convey a negative message. **SW agreed to communication this to the Information Group.**

## **6. Rowing Safety Review**

DCMS have asked for RoSPA's Rowing Safety Review to be signed off by NWSF.

**PC agreed to send JW a draft of the report. JW agreed to circulate the report to NWSF members and feed any comments back to RoSPA.**

The meeting also briefly discussed the MCA's enforcement for inland waterways and inland operations.

## **7. Commercial Code Vessel Safety**

There was some debate about boat owners' responsibilities for passengers who voluntarily entered the water, such as swimmers or divers. Some concern was expressed at a recent case which resulted in serious injury and the skipper had not been deemed to have responsibility for passengers once they had left the boat.

## **8. AOB**

There was some discussion concerning the recent increase in popularity of tombstoning and coasteering and the new challenges they posed for safety. There was some difficulty in engaging with these activities due to the lack of official governing bodies, although an embryonic NGB for coasteering existed.

RoSPA considered an outright ban on these activities would be unhelpful and preferred the route of education. To this end they were producing a DVD that was intended to educate participants in safe practice.

It was brought the Forum's attention that the Marine Safety Coordinating Committee is being disbanded. RoSPA will facilitate the merging of members with the NWSF.

The Forum wished to fully endorse the current government drive to improve swimming in schools, particularly given the concerning statistic that 50% of junior school children in Liverpool cannot swim.

NWSF voiced its continued support for the SwimGroup. Swimming is an important lifeskill and the foundation for the safe participation in all watersports. The SwimGroup would define the baseline for what constitutes a swimming standard. **JW agreed to send a letter to the SwimGroup expressing NWSF's support.**

Some concern was expressed about possible legal liabilities resulting from the use of automatic defibrillators, which were increasing in prevalence in clubs etc. **JW agreed to circulate a guide to defibrillators that deals with liability issues.**

JS brought the MCA's research project 586 to the group's attention.

## **9. Date of next meeting**

22 January 2008 at a venue to be decided.