

National Water Safety Forum

Watersports Advisory Group

Notes of meeting held on 7 February 2007, Amateur Rowing Association, Hammersmith

Attendees:

Chair	James Stevens (to item)	Royal Yachting Association
	Jim Watson (from item)	British Sub Aqua Club
	David Walker	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
	Liz Walker	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
	Stuart Ward	Amateur Rowing Association
	Rob Inett	Royal Life Saving Society
	Andrew Hanson	CCPR and Secretariat

1. Welcome and instructions

James Stevens (JS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Stuart Ward and the ARA for hosting. He also wished to record his thanks to Charlotte Edward for her support in the Secretariat role since 2005.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Anna Blannin and Adrian Lole. Rob Innett advised that he would replace Adrian at future meetings. Sarah Belton had now left the employment of British Triathlon.

3. Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the previous meeting held on the 4 October 2006 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. These could now be added to the Forum website.

4. Election of Water Sports Advisory Group Chair

James Stevens had notified the group of his intention to resign the Chair due to work commitments, and did so at this point. Andrew Hanson explained that Jim Watson was willing to take the Chair, and that no other candidates had come forward. The group unanimously agreed that Jim should take the Chair.

Jim Watson then thanked James Stevens for his hard work in establishing the group, and driving its work forward over the first two years. It was agreed that the role of deputy chair would be discussed at the next meeting.

5. Matters arising from the notes

5.1 Report from the National Water Safety Congress

DW reported that the overall feedback from the conference had been positive, and that the audience supported its call for a balance between risk and responsibility. The next congress would take place in March 2008.

5.2 Report from the Information Group Meeting

Stuart Ward had circulated written notes from the Information Group in advance of the meeting. The key points discussed were:

Principles of Water Safety

The group felt this was a positive document in that its basic premise was to promote water-based activity in a responsible manner, and that it advocated proportionate risk-management. DW stated that RoSPA would seek to embed these principles in its working practices. AH offered to circulate the finalised document to CCPR's Water Recreation Division and the Adventure Activities Industry Advisory Committee. The group gave its formal support to the principles.

Information Group Funding

The information group played a key role in collecting and interpreting water-related incident information. The group discussed the letter from Michael Vlasto (Chairman, NWSF Coordinating Group), which asked advisory group members to provide indicative staff time and financial costs for collecting incident data. Providing this data could assist the group in securing funding to progress the agreed five year plan, and might encourage user-groups which did not currently collect information to do so. All group members with data collection functions agreed to seek this information.

Action: All relevant group members to provide M Vlasto with indications of staff time and financial costs for data collection.

Action: AH to send reminder to group members who were not present.

6. Statistics - Update on accident statistics

DW introduced the draft UK Water Related Fatalities data-sheet. The sheet included statistics from RoSPA, MCA, British Waterways and Inland Related Emergencies. The statistics included a broad range of incidents including homicides, suicides and road traffic accidents. DW believed that over 30 incidents remained to be matched, whilst 308 still awaited the coroner's report. Whilst on the face of it 681 fatalities appeared to be a high number, the broad context should be remembered, as should the scale of water-based activity. DW explained that further work would be undertaken to articulate the size of the activity base, using sources such as the Active People survey. Now that the bulk of the preparatory work was complete the aim was to compile these figures on a quarterly basis. The group congratulated DW and RoSPA for this work, and felt that the statistics offered an opportunity to demonstrate the value of national governing bodies, in terms of providing a safe framework for activity.

7. Diving Incident Reports

Jim Watson provided group members with an overview of BSAC's incident reporting system. A copy of this will be circulated with these minutes. The purpose of the report was to identify both the overall growth/decline in incidents, and any trends with regard to the type of incident. As

participation had increased during the '90s so had the number of reported incidents, although these had levelled off since 2000. The key message arising from the incident statistics was that most incidents resulted from poor practice, or technique, and could have been avoided had good practice been followed. For instance the number of incidents relating to re-breathers was disproportionate to their use. Appropriate skills development and training were therefore essential to reducing the incident rate. There is some evidence that the incident rate was lower among BSAC members than non-members, again indicating the value of the NGB and club support structure.

Group members congratulated BSAC on their reporting and analysis, and suggested that this could be helpful in providing a broader context to incidents during coroners' inquests.

8. Use of Automatic Electronic Defibrillators

JW informed the group that BSAC would be introducing a training module for the use of AEDs in March 2007. BSAC would not be proactively encouraging members to purchase and use AEDs, but felt it was important that BSAC endorsed training was available to those who chose to do so. The main barrier with regard to AED use within watersports, was the volatility of electricity and water. However, recent equipment had now been tested as safe when the operator was no more than 5-10 cm distant. Nonetheless there were instances where an AED would be inappropriate (e.g. in RIBs which frequently had water in the bottom). The group endorsed BSAC's stance of providing training for members who wished to use AEDs. JS added that he felt a 'pros and cons' sheet on the use of AEDs would be helpful.

9. Any other Business

The following items were raised:

9.1 Future of Water Safety Committee

The futures of the National Water Safety Forum and Marine Safety Coordinating Committee were discussed at the last Government Inter-departmental Group, and the Department for Transport was expected to state its preferred option on 22 February.

9.2 RoSPA Safety at Inland Water Sites publication

DW explained that RoSPA were in the process of updating this document and would ask group members for comments in due course.

9.3 AAIAC Publication: Surviving a Career in Adventure Activities

AH circulated copies of the document, and explained that its aim was to provide practical personal health and safety advice for adventure activities workers. The group welcomed the publication and asked AH to circulate copies to group members not present.

Action: AH to circulate a copy of the booklet to those group members not present. (Please provide AH with a postal address should you wish to receive one).

10. Date of next meeting

The time and date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12.00 p.m. Tuesday 25 September 2007. The likely venue was CCPR new office at Burwood House, 14-16 Caxton Street, London. However if this was not possible an alternative London venue would be sought.