



news from the CENTRE STANDARDS BOARD

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Future Developments

Kieran Grace, head of the Marine Leisure & Research Division in the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, has outlined the following sequence of events regarding the development of the statutory regulation of adventure sports in Ireland.

In 1999, the Government allocated responsibility for the regulation of adventure activities to the Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources. It also approved the establishment of a new Division within the Department, dealing with the marine leisure sector including responsibility for the regulation of all adventure activities.

At the end of June 2000, the Government agreed to the draft heads of a Bill establishing an Adventure Activity Standards Authority. "It is hoped that the Bill itself will be published by October 2000 at the latest.

In early July the Minister of the Marine and Natural Resources received the submission from the AFAS Consultation Steering Group "Blueprint for the Safety Regulation of Adventure Sports Providers".

Depending on the speed of the passage of the final Bill through the Houses of the Oireachtas, it is hoped that the Bill will be signed into law in late 2000/early 2001 and that the new Authority would be put in place shortly thereafter.

The AFAS Centre Standards Board will cease to function with the establishment of this new Authority. It is anticipated that this new Authority will have statutory powers to oversee the safety provisions of the Irish Adventure Sports Industry and will in due course advise the public and providers of their actions.

Looking forward

BRENDAN CRYAN
CHAIRMAN, CENTRE STANDARDS BOARD

Hopefully the summer has gone well for all in the outdoor industry and may the forthcoming autumn is as successful. September brings with it more changeable weather and a younger school based clientele for most providers, as an adventure sports trip becomes the norm for most schools, especially in the Transition Year. These adventure sports experiences are very significant for the young participant, they can represent the first trip away from home without their parents and in the company of their school friends, an important rite of passage. Also these experiences provide the chance to develop leadership skills and discover a lifelong sporting activity.

Indeed the plans of the Department of Education to introduce Physical Education as an examination subject for both Junior and Leaving Certificate, recognises the role of the outdoors and adventure sports in youth development. In this new examination subject there will be an Outdoor Pursuits module. It remains to be seen what the Department has in mind especially with regard to the assessment element, but none the less this represents a new challenge and opportunity for all in the outdoor adventure sector.

The submission of the Consultation Steering Group 'Blueprint' to the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources, marks an end to this particular consultation process. The role of the Centre Standards Board will cease with the arrival of the new statutory body. However there is still an interim need from the adventure sports sector for the approval or recognition of safety standards in the provision of adventure sports. There has in fact been an increase in the number of new providers requesting such approval, which may represent a growth in start up enterprises. The Standards Board will meet shortly to discuss how best to meet this need for safety approval, as an interim facility.

Finally as the A.F.A.S office no longer exists, please forward all enquiries to the secretary of the Standards Board: Humphrey Murphy, Duncannon Fort, Duncannon, Co Wexford. Email: humphreym@eircom.net Phone 051 389594.



*Mr. Frank Fahey, TD,
Minister for the Marine
and Natural Resources*



Centre Standards Board Approved Providers 2000



Achill Outdoor Education Centre.

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Surfing.

Adventure Activities Ltd

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking.

Atlantic Sea Kayaking

Approved for: Canoeing.

Beara Outdoor Pursuits

Approved for: Canoeing

Birr Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Archery.

Burren Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Orienteering, Caving.

Cappanalea Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Hillwalking.

Carlingford Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Archery.

**Cleire Lasmuigh
Cape Clear Island**

Approved for: Canoeing, Snorkeling, Hillwalking, Archery.

Co Dublin Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Archery.

Donegal Outdoor Adventure Centre

Approved for: Surfing, Canoeing

Dunmore East Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Archery, Hillwalking, Orienteering.

East Coast Adventure

Approved for: Canoeing.

Education Resource Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Archery.

Gartan Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Orienteering.

Kilfinane Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Orienteering.

Kilrush Creek Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing.

Kinsale Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Climbing, Archery, Orienteering.

Lilliput Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Orienteering, Archery.

Little Killary Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Archery.

Lough Allen Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Hillwalking.

Lough Dan Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Archery.

McDowells Hotel

Approved for: Canoeing, Hillwalking, Surfing.

Neptune Adventure

Approved for: Hillwalking, Surfing.

Nomadic Adventures

Approved for: Canoeing, Hillwalking.

Oceanic Manoeuvres

Approved for: Surfing.

Oysterhaven Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Archery.

Petersburg Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Caveing, Orienteering.

Russagh Mill Adventure Centre

Approved for: Climbing.

Shielbaggan Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Archery, Orienteering, Snorkelling.

Tain Holiday Village

Approved for: Canoeing, Archery, Climbing, Hillwalking.

Tanagh Outdoor Education Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Archery.

Tiglin National Outdoor Training Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Climbing, Hillwalking, Orienteering, Snorkelling.

UISCE Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing, Surfing.

University of Limerick Adventure Centre

Approved for: Canoeing.

Wild Geese Kayak Club

Approved for: Canoeing.

Centre Standards Board Developments

The Standards Board Website has been updated and can be located at <http://www.adventuresports> A copy of the Blueprint submission as well as the lists of approved providers can be sourced at this location. Please note approved providers and relevant organisations in the sector may attach reciprocating links to this site by contacting the editor at humphreym@eircom.net The Standards Board Information Leaflet will be posted to relevant organisations including schools in September.

Seventeen nationwide "Spot Checks" of Providers were undertaken this year and the Standards Board will consider the monitors report at their next meeting in September.

Membership of the Consultation Steering Group

Stephen Hannon: **Chairperson**

Brendan Cryan: Representative of the **Centre Standards Board**

Patricia Walsh: Representative for **Outdoor Education Ireland (OEI)** which is the representative body for the VEC outdoor education centres in Ireland.

Ciaran O Murchu: Representative of the **Irish Association of Activity Centres (IAAC)** which is the representative body for privately run commercial activity centres in Ireland.

Tony Wright: Representative for the **Irish Sailing Association (ISA)**, which is the National Governing Body for dinghy sailing, windsurfing, sail & motor cruising, powerboating and personal watercraft. Michael Scanlon: Representative for the **Irish Canoe Union**, the National Governing Body for canoeing and kayaking.

Gearoid Murphy: Representative of the **Comhairle Fo Thuinn – Irish Underwater Council** which is the National Governing Body for diving and snorkelling.

Tom Mc Loughlin: Representative of the **Instructors Association of Ireland** and the **VEC Instructors Association**.

Mary Nash: Representative of the **Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI)** the National Governing Body for ramblers, hillwalkers, rockclimbers and alpinists.

Sean Feehan: Representative of the **Dive Centres of Ireland**, the representative body for Dive Centre in Ireland.

Dermot Burke: Representative of **PLC Courses** training young people for careers in the outdoor sector.

Joe Langan: **Chief Executive Officers Association of the Vocation Education Committees**, the representative body for Chief Executive Officers in the Vocational Educational Sector representing Youthreach programmes and youth initiative using adventure sports.

Secretary to the Group: Humphrey Murphy

All correspondence regarding this Newsletter and the Centre Standards Board should be addressed to **Humphrey Murphy, Secretary Centre Standards Board, Duncannon Fort, Duncannon, Co Wexford.**
Email humphreym@eircom.net Phone 051 389594





The Instructors Association of Ireland (I.A.I.)

The IAI is a representative body for instructors in the Irish outdoor pursuits sector and was formed in response to a lack of co-ordinated formal representation for this group.

Its main aims are towards:

- The creation of a professional and rewarding career structure for instructors.
- Improving both safety and quality standards within the industry.
- Ensuring instructors views are properly represented.

It is the intention of the IAI to achieve these aims by working closely with providers, NGB's and other concerns within the industry to ensure the changes necessary are mutually beneficial.

Progress has already been made on all of these issues through representation and participation on the Consultation Steering Group, which in consultation with the adventure sports sector submitted a series of recommendations to the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources regarding statutory regulations for the sector. The IAI has ensured a recommendation in this Steering Group submission, for the representation of instructors on the proposed new statutory body, the Adventure Activities Safety Authority.

The IAI welcomes additional members and there will be an Annual General Meeting in October, it is vital that as many instructors as possible attend. For information on membership and notification of the date and location of the AGM, please contact me at kavanaghrichard@hotmail.com or at Achill OEC, Cashel, Achill, Co, Mayo.

Richard Kavanagh
(Provisional Chairman)

Why I changed my SOKS

. . . Some thoughts on Sit On Kayaks

JERRY SCOTT-MABER
CARLINGFORD ADVENTURE CENTRE

Frankly the first time I chanced upon SOKs, I recoiled in horror. They looked like the most awful-looking things that I had ever seen; Bulbous fisher price designs, with a cockpit and foot rest moulding akin to an aliens rib cage. As a Kayak and Open Canoe L3 (E2) BCU (ICU Instructor equivalent), my judgement must have been clouded by my preconception of the definition of a real Kayak or Canoe.

Now 7 years later, with SOK experience to match, I am not only a convert, but fundamentally convinced that SOKs are the way that multi-activity centres should go.

The modern SOK is a far cry from the Rob Roys of the past, the stability is vastly improved and so is the directional control. They now come in so many different designs, there is a SOK to suit almost any type of water conditions. White water, Sea touring, Camping expeditions, Sprint, you name it they exist. Not only in a basic form but they have an amazing amount of accessories to transform them selves to the comfort and skill level you require.

Working with beginners in traditional Kayaks has its inherent challenges as we all know. Firstly they capsize and require an instructor rescue to empty them. In some cases capsizes frighten the beginner enough to put them off kayaking forever. Secondly they spin around in circles, frustrating and leaving a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the participant. The same participant we are trying to encourage into an activity that can ultimately be immensely satisfying and rewarding.

So with traditional craft we terrify them by trapping them upside down under water, and annoy them by making them struggle to go anywhere, what is the answer?

SOKs are less likely to capsize, do not fully immerse/trap the user and can be self rescued by the user without the assistance of an instructor (often much faster then a traditional kayaks).

The major drawback with SOKs in the past was the fact that they were designed and developed in warmer climes, where getting wet did not really matter too much, and therefore introducing them to northern Europe was an utter mission in

the early days. Now wetsuit technology is such that wetsuits are much warmer, better fitting, and cheaper. As most centres issue wetsuits to their clients before they go on a water activity the problem of wet and cold is solved.

"Enter the SOK!"

I worked on the river Ardeche in France as a freelance guide for 6 years. I regularly guided groups of novices on day trips of 24 Km, on grade 2 water. I never once had an accident related to the Sit On Canoes. While many others, using traditional kayaks, pinned, folded, and sank. In fact if you can think of it they did it!

The great advantage of the SOKs in white water conditions, is that when they hit a rock and broach, instead of filling with water, sinking, and finally pinning, they float around the rock as they are so buoyant. Recovering an upside down SOK is a matter of flipping it over, while traditional craft which are full require much more effort and consequently more time spent immersed in the water for your clients

Kayaks, Canoes, K1, K2, C1, C2, Sprint trainers, white water, the list goes on, and so do the manufacturers. Rotomod (Fr) DAG (Fr) Pyrahana (UK) Cobra (U.S.) Make sure you choose the Craft to suit your centre and get a look at the boats and accessories that you might need before you purchase them.

As absolutely nothing in the world is either Kid or Instructor "proof", there will always be some maintenance, and as fittings to the boats must be attached by "pop rivets there will be some leakage, but its nothing you cannot fix easily. Drainage bungs solve slow leakage.

Happy clients, injury free staff, smiling faces, "Life's Great just change your SOKs".

Last word

I decided on ROTOMOD SOKs for this centre as, I have worked with their equipment in the past and found them to be on par with the rest and competitive price-wise.



Statutory Regulation of Adventure Sports Provision

STEPHEN HANNON
CHAIR CONSULTATION STEERING GROUP

The Consultation Process which began following the report of the Government Interdepartmental Working Group, "A Review of the Safety Regulation of Adventure / Activity Centres in Ireland" is now complete. The outcome of this Consultation Process has been the production of a Blueprint for the regulation of adventure sports provision in Ireland.

The Consultation Process, which has resulted in this Blueprint, was designed and directed by the Consultation Steering Group, which comprised representatives of the outdoor adventure sports sector. Through regional meetings and written submissions, the Process sought to engage those involved in the provision of adventure sports in constructive debate. A high degree of consensus was achieved as to the issues involved and the way forward for the Consultation Process and meetings of the Consultation Steering Group.

The Blueprint focused on eight specific issues (A synopsis of these eight recommendations is included in this Newsletter). These issues were identified as critical elements in the design of an effective regulatory scheme for the adventure sports sector. Working within a tight timescale it was beyond the scope of this voluntary group to become involved in the details of implementation.

Adventure sports provision has developed into an important part of the Irish sports and leisure sector. The report of the Interdepartmental Working Group found that generally high safety standards operate in this sector. The level and quality of debate during the Process reflects the on-going commitment of this sector to effective and realistic measures, which enhance the safe provision of adventure sports. The Consultation Process should ensure that the forthcoming legislation is informed by the expertise and concerns of those who will be effected by its implementation.

The completed Blueprint can be viewed on the following web site <http://www.adventuresports> A final meeting of the Consultation Steering Group will be held in late August to keep representatives abreast of the timetable for implementation and legislation.

The Consultation Steering Group would like to express appreciation to the many contributors who attended the regional meetings or who made written submissions for their part in the Consultation Process.

Key Recommendations in the Blueprint for the Regulation of Adventure Sports Providers

The following are the eight key recommendations of the Consultation Steering Group as outlined in the submission to the Minister of the Marine and Natural Resources, Minister Frank Fahey.

1. Activities

The activities to be included under the scope of the legislation would be specifically listed. Not all activities would be included in the first phase of implementation. The establishment of Technical Committees per activity, to define the sports included and in some cases aspects of sports to be included/excluded.

2. Providers

The categories of solo excursion and 'genuine' clubs would be excluded. Commercial providers of adventure sports/activities, equipment hirers, and a number of other types of providers would be included under the scope of the legislation. Each category would be clearly defined by the Authority. Further discussion would be required on the issues of educational establishments.

3. Adventure Activity Standards Authority

The composition of the Adventure Activity Standards Authority (AASA) would have a balance of nominations from NGBs, Providers, Instructors, and User Groups as well as representatives from relevant Government Departments and the Health & Safety Authority and an independent chairman.

4. The Inspection/Monitoring Process

The Inspection/Monitoring Process would include announced and unannounced visits, and document inspection.

5. Criteria for evaluating the safe provision of Adventure Sports/Activities

This was the key issue of discussion during the Consultation Process. It was agreed that monitors would evaluate elements of providers' operations such as staff, locations, equipment, procedures, and the nature of the courses.

It was further agreed that NGB Guidelines would be used as the benchmark for evaluating providers and that the Authority would decide on issues of flexibility of NGB Guidelines.

6. The Inspectorate

The Inspectorate would be an independent relevant organisation employing monitors and technical advisors with sufficient technical and outdoor sector knowledge.

7. Phased Implementation

It was agreed that there should be a phased implementation process beginning with the registration of providers.

8. Additional Observations

The Consultation Steering Group noted that safety regulation could not be examined in isolation and that if it is to be effective there would need to be further exploration of issues such as: VAT, rates, European wide qualifications, cost implications for providers, training subsidies, the lack of a career structure for instructors, instructor conditions, mechanisms to enable suitability checks for those working with children.

A complete copy of this submission, can be viewed or downloaded from the following web address <http://www.adventuresports>