



RYA POSITION ON THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE INLAND WATERWAYS

Introduction

The RYA is the national body for all forms of recreational and competitive boating. It represents dinghy and yacht racing, motor and sail cruising, RIBs and sportsboats, powerboat racing, windsurfing, inland cruising and personal watercraft. The RYA manages the British sailing team and Great Britain was the top sailing nation at the 2000, 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games.

The RYA is recognised by Government as being the primary consultative body for the activities it represents. The RYA currently has over 100,000 personal members, the majority of whom choose to go afloat for purely recreational non-competitive pleasure on coastal and inland waters. There are an estimated further 500,000 boat owners nationally who are members of over 1,500 RYA affiliated clubs and class associations.

The RYA also sets and maintains an international standard for recreational boat training through a network of over 2,200 RYA Recognised Training Centres in 20 countries. On average, approximately 160,000 people per year complete RYA training courses. RYA training courses form the basis for the small craft training of lifeboat crews, police officers and the Royal Navy and are also adopted as a template for training in many other countries throughout the world.

The RYA is in principle broadly supportive of the Government's proposal to transfer British Waterways' undertakings to a new third sector "civil society" organisation, as set out in the Secretary of State's statement of 14 October 2010 and the Minister's speech on 15 November 2010. However, the RYA has a number of concerns that it believes must be addressed in order for such a transfer to be successful in the long term.

This policy statement sets out the RYA's general position in relation to the Government's proposal. The RYA welcomes the Government's stated intention to consult widely in relation to its proposal and the RYA will continue to engage on a national or regional basis as opportunities arise to ensure the interests of recreational boaters on the inland waterways are represented at an appropriate level.



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- In principle, the RYA is broadly supportive of the Government's proposal to transfer British Waterways' undertakings to a new third sector organisation in order to secure the development and prosperity of BW's undertakings for the benefit of users and the wider public. However, the new third sector body must be independent of Government and substantially different from BW in organisation and governance and must have navigation as one of its primary foci.
- If the transfer of BW's undertakings to an effective third sector body is to be successful, three substantial practical problems must be resolved:
 1. Financial stability
 - It is essential that the new third sector body has access to and power to manage BW's estate with a view to maximising commercial development and revenue and for the estate to be locked in to the third sector body in order for sustainable funding to be geared up in the future.
 - The new third sector body must be enabled to take steps towards achieving greater financial independence by having the power to make investments, to accept and make loans, to accept income from commercial, charitable or private sources, to accept donations and legacies, to trade and to levy fees and charges for the use of the available assets.
 - Building up the new income sources will be a gradual process and adequate Government funding is likely to be essential for the foreseeable future. It is critical that those responsible for overseeing the creation of the new organisation believe that the amount of the Government's initial financial support is sufficient to enable the new organisation to succeed.
 - In order that the new third sector organisation can plan appropriately for the future, the organisation will need a long-term contractual commitment from the Government setting out the organisation's rights and responsibilities in relation to its management of the waterways and the Government's financial support for the organisation.
 2. Governance
 - The new third sector body should be constituted in such a way as to ensure that those responsible for governing the new body have the interests of the organisation as their sole priority. The organisational and management structure should be inclusive of those who use the waterways for navigation and ensure that their views are routinely and comprehensively sought and taken into account in a transparent manner, at national, regional and local levels, as part of the policy and strategy development and management processes. The new organisation should also be inclusive of other users of the waterways, particularly as part of the policy development process.



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- The objects or purposes of the new third sector body must be carefully framed to ensure that the new organisation continues to secure and enhance the availability and development of the waterways and their associated infrastructure for navigation. The objects or purposes should also include provisions requiring the organisation to work towards financial independence and to encourage the involvement of volunteers wherever possible in order to keep costs to a minimum, whilst managing the balance between the activities of staff and volunteers to ensure effective and sustainable working arrangements.
 - Local boards drawn from across the community, to include representatives of those who use the waterways for navigation, should be created to contribute to a much stronger feeling of local involvement and these boards should be integral to the overall governance of the organisation. The management of the new body should be based on the principles of participation and openness with a renewed commitment to recruit more volunteers to undertake a wide range of activities.
3. Scope
- The constitution and guiding principles of the new third sector organisation should facilitate, rather than inhibit, consideration of whether the management of other inland waterways might be transferred to the new organisation in the future. The governance and structure of the new organisation should be such that the organisation from the outset is capable of incorporating inland navigations other than those currently managed by BW.

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