



Volunteers recognised at RYA Sailability conference

Some 90 delegates from Sailability groups from across the country, and as far afield as Scotland and the New Forest, attended the fifth annual Sailability conference and dinner at Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire, where the winners of the RYA Sailability Volunteer Awards were announced, on 25 February.

The RYA Sailability Volunteer Awards, presented by RYA Sailability Chairman Pat Dodd, recognise the priceless voluntary contribution by Sailability volunteers. They are awarded in three categories: Significant Contribution, Outstanding Contribution and Exceptional Contribution.



(Left to right) Sailability Manager Debbie Blachford with Eric Blyth and RYA Sport Development Manager Jon White

The winner of the Significant Contribution Award was Carol Canning who was instrumental in introducing Sailability to Dubai Offshore Sailing Club (DOOSC). Carol co-ordinates all aspects of the programme both onshore and out on the water making a huge difference not just for the club, but for the entire sailing community in Dubai.

Carol was unable to attend to collect her award but had instead, in true awards ceremony style, recorded a video message thanking those at the club who have helped to make it all possible. The Outstanding Contribution Award went to Michael Kemm, who unfortunately was unable to attend. Michael's work and dedication as treasurer and secretary at Rutland Sailing Club enabled the Sailability group to develop and become one of the biggest and most active Sailability clubs in the UK.

The final award for exceptional contribution went to Eric Blyth, Chairman of New Forest and District Sailability (NFDS). For the past 11 years Eric has been committed to introducing disabled people to sailing and has seen the organisation develop from having just three boats in the early days, to the 80 volunteers and 17 boats that the club boasts today.

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RYA Sailability conference *continued*

Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, Eric is dependent on a wheelchair, but this does not stop him skippering boats to allow other disabled people to experience being out on the water.

"I feel like a bit of a fraud being given this award," he said. "All I have been doing is sailing and taking people out on the water! I am absolutely delighted and will accept this award on behalf on everyone involved in NFDS".

The dinner also saw guest speaker Bob Harper, Sailability Regional Organiser for Northern Ireland, share his fascinating and inspirational stories from the five-year world circumnavigation he completed 11 years ago.

Earlier in the day, Sailability Manager Debbie Blachford kick-started the conference by announcing that in the past four years, the number of people who now sail regularly as a result of Sailability has increased by a fantastic 76%.

Delegates were treated to a variety of guest speakers throughout the morning, including South West RYA Regional Development Officer Tony Wood who gave an informative safety update and National Windsurfing Development

Officer Gillian Wright who introduced a new windsurfing initiative, Project Windsurf-UK.

After lunch it was time for the interactive workshops sessions with three different sessions available to attend. Delegates were also given the opportunity to address their questions to the panel of experts who offered advice on a range of topics including insurance (Gallagher Heath), legal matters and disability awareness training.

Bob MacCormick from Wealdon Sailability said: "Today's conference has been extremely interesting and very worthwhile. I found the insurance advice particularly helpful and will be taking home lots of new ideas with me."

Debbie Blachford, RYA Sailability Manager said:

'extremely interesting and very worthwhile'

"I would like to thank everyone who attended this year's conference. The atmosphere has been

absolutely fantastic and it is wonderful to see so many people involved with Sailability coming together and sharing ideas. We hope to see even more next year."

Thank you to Gallagher Heath and all the event sponsors.

RYA Sailability Disability Awareness Training:

Instructor Courses available in 2012

Volunteers and clubs around the UK now have the opportunity to run Sailability Disability Awareness Training Courses.

Volunteers who have already attended the standard one-day course, designed to give helpers practical advice and understanding of what is involved in working alongside disabled sailors, can now attend a Sailability Disability Awareness Instructor Course and run

Awareness Courses at authorised clubs.

For further information about how to become an instructor and/or an authorised centre please follow this link, where you will find a list of the upcoming Instructor Courses, along with an application form and guidelines to becoming an authorised centre.

www.rya.org.uk/go/disabilityawareness

Success at the Sailability Marina

The RYA Sailability team, along with a number of class associations who work with disabled sailors, exhibited at the popular Sailability Marina at this year's RYA Volvo Dinghy Show, held over the weekend of 3-4 March in Alexandra Palace, London.

From the Sailability boats to brand new equality training, the RYA Volvo Dinghy Show offered everything anyone needed to know about RYA Sailability, whether it was how to start your own group, advice on how to become a volunteer, or how to find out where to start sailing.

The Sailability Marina in the Panorama Hall proudly displayed five disability classes including the Access Dinghy, Challenger, Trimaran, Artemis 20, the 2.4mR and the Paralympic Skud 18.

The RYA Sailability Team and representatives from all the classes that work with disabled sailors and volunteers were available throughout the weekend to share their expert knowledge of the boats and to answer any visitors' questions.

Clubs and centres looking to develop a greater understanding of discrimination and equality had the opportunity to take a look at the RYA's brand new Equality Training videos (see page xx) which were launched at the show.

The series of case study clips are entitled 'What if I...' and cover a range of subjects including age, gender and disability. "Whether you're an instructor or a volunteer, we have tried to present situations that are similar to those which you may encounter and suggest some solutions to the challenges that arise," explains RYA Sailability Manager Debbie Blachford.

"No situation will be identical to the ones we have illustrated in the training, but we hope that the clips will help people to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which you can give everyone a good, welcoming service and avoiding causing any upset and falling foul of the law."

New equality videos

The RYA has produced new videos to help clubs develop a greater understanding of discrimination and equality.

Covering a range of subjects including age, marital status, gender and disability, the series of six case study clips is entitled *What if I...* and they have been designed to help clubs and centres get a greater understanding of discrimination and equality.

www.rya.org.uk/go/equalitytraining

"We have had a very positive reaction from everyone who has seen them," explained RYA Sailability Manager Debbie Blachford, who is responsible for the project.

The 2012 Equality Act places duty on sailing clubs and centres to provide for, and not to discriminate against, someone for personal characteristic reasons.

Whether you're a club, organisation, instructor or volunteer, the equality training clips have been created to present situations which could possibly occur and suggest some solutions to the challenges that could arise.

"We hope that the clips will help people to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which you can give everyone, no matter who they are, a good, welcoming service at your club or centre," Debbie concluded.

Scotland's first Sailability Centre of Excellence is launched



(Left to right) Ross Anderson, David Hill, Cllr David Arthur and Debbie Blachford

There were celebrations all round at Castle Semple Water Activities Centre when it was officially launched as an RYA Sailability Centre of Excellence on 18 March.

Located on the scenic shores of Castle Semple Loch in Lochwinnoch, the water sports centre has been recognised for its fantastic facilities which enable local disabled adults to get out on the water and experience sailing.

The award was presented by Councillor David Author, Chair of Clyde Muirshiel Park Authority, Ross Anderson, President of The Rotary Club of Gryffe Valley and Debbie Blachford, RYA Sailability Manager.

‘an outstanding programme of leisure, formal training and racing for disabled children and adults’

“Everyone has worked really hard to achieve Centre of Excellence status; it’s a superb demonstration of working in partnership with others to achieve a common goal - more sailing opportunities for disabled people” said Debbie Blachford.

Ross Anderson also presented a Crewlift hoist which was funded by the club.

“Raising money to benefit such a worthwhile project fits perfectly with the Rotary motto which is ‘service before self’,” he explained.

The perfect sailing conditions, sunshine with a good breeze, were enjoyed by sailors from local disability organisations who took to the water throughout the day. Guests were also invited to watch shorebased demonstrations of boats and specialist equipment with experts on hand to answer any questions about opportunities to go sailing in Scotland.

David Hill, Regional RYA Sailability Regional Organiser, has worked hard to pull together this large project and co-ordinate all the partners involved. “We

are delighted to be able to award Scotland’s first Sailability Centre of Excellence,” he said.

“Castle Semple Water Activities Centre provides an outstanding programme of leisure, formal training and racing for disabled children and adults. We hope this opportunity will encourage even more disabled people to come and enjoy sailing,” he concluded.

Farewell to Vic

Vic Rolfe, Sailability SW Regional Organiser for 17 years, has handed over to Bob Scull, who has shared the role with him since last year.

We send Vic our grateful thanks for all the work

he has done for Sailability, and very best wishes for the future.

Bob can be emailed at dartsail@btinternet.com.

'Best of British' evening raises over £55,000 for RYA

RYA Sailability joined forces with Coutts bank and law firm Farrer & Co to host a fundraiser at the end of March, when HRH The Princess Royal and Skandia Team GBR's Alex Rickman and Niki Birrell were the guests of honour.

The 'Best of British' themed evening was a huge success and raised over £55,000 to support sailing opportunities for sailors with disabilities.

HRH The Princess Royal welcomed an invited audience of over 300 guests in the beautiful surroundings of Coutts Garden Court on the Strand in London. She praised the work of RYA Sailability for enabling people of all walks of life to be introduced to sport.

The funds were raised through a live auction conducted by auctioneer Nick Bonham with donated high-value items up for grabs, including a flying experience from Bremont watches, a weekend at Brown's Hotel, Mayfair and a gold ring from the David Marshall Beach Rocks collection.

RYA Sailability Chairman Pat Dodd said: "We are delighted with the amount of money raised. I would like to thank every company and individual who has donated a prize, every guest who bought a prize, our wonderful drinks sponsor SPI Spirits and of course Coutts and Farrer & Co for coming together to create such a splendid evening".

Michael Morley, Chief Executive of Coutts said: "Coutts is delighted to support RYA Sailability and host such a successful event. RYA Sailability has for many years supported disabled individuals and instilled in them confidence and the ability to enjoy the freedom that comes with sailing.

"The work that they do through their charitable efforts and through inspiring people across the



country to be involved in one of our best loved sports cannot be underestimated. This is particularly true in 2012, when the United Kingdom will have the honour of hosting the Olympic Games and we can truly showcase to the world the Best of British."

Thanks also go to the staff of Farrer & Co who have supported the charity by raising funds for a new Skud18 for Skandia Team GBR sailors Alex and Niki who are competing in the Paralympic Games. After London 2012, the boat will be donated to an RYA Sailability Foundation site.

Niki Birrell said: "It has been a pleasure to be here this evening. RYA Sailability is a hugely important charity to both Alex and myself and has been one of the most important aspects in our campaigns. Hopefully we will be able to give something back to Sailability by winning a Gold this summer!"

To donate to RYA Sailability call 0844 556 9550 or text 07823 559018

RYA Sailability Multiclass Regatta 2012

Show your support for Olympic and Paralympic sailing teams by taking part in the regatta held at Rutland Sailing Club 20 - 22 July 2012

This year's Multiclass competition is being held on the same day as the RYA's Sail for Gold 'Push the Boat Out' day which hosts supporting events for the Olympic and Paralympic Teams. You can show your support too, wishing them good luck by taking part in a national competition a week before the London 2012 Games begin.

The Regatta is open to all racing sailors who race in the following classes: Neo 495 / Stratos / SKUD / Access / 2.4mR / Challenger / Sonar / SQUIB / Kinsman.

The event kick-starts with RYA race training for both beginners and more experienced sailors on the Friday, followed by an opening ceremony and barbecue for all helpers and competitors. A full day's racing on Saturday will be followed by a Regatta Dinner on Saturday evening.

On Sunday all the fleets will come together for a giant race, with the boat managing the best time over the course on handicap crowned Champion of Champions.

The weekend culminates in a prize-giving presentation with prizes for the top boats in the races. So whatever your ability from first-time racer to Paralympic level, the Regatta has something for you.

Entry forms and notice of race are available at <http://www.rya.org.uk/programmes/ryasailability/Pages/MulticlassRegatta2012.aspx>

Please send completed entry forms to: Rutland Sailing Club, Gibbet Lane, Edith Weston, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 8HJ or email sailing@rutlandsc.co.uk

Lorna Conder is the event co-ordinator and can be contacted on 07860 293423 or multiclassregatta@rya.org.uk if you have any enquiries.

RYA Sailability Volunteer Logbook Scheme

We are pleased to offer your group the chance to join the RYA Team Sailability Volunteer Logbook Scheme.

This logbook scheme has been designed to support you and your volunteers. We have created, tested and developed a structured, challenging learning scheme to support you in building a safe and stimulating environment for everyone involved in your group.

You can request a **FREE starter pack** by emailing sailability@rya.org.uk quoting '**VLB Starter pack request**' as the subject of your email, and providing us with the club name and your full contact details.

You will then receive everything you need to know to join the scheme and start using it at your club this season.

Celebration for Poole Sailability

The Mayor of Poole, Cllr Graham Wilson, has launched and named Poole Sailability's new Hawk20 keelboat, which has been specially commissioned from Christchurch boat builders Reid Marine with a number of modifications to help disabled sailors. The launch ceremony last October took place at Parkstone Yacht Club in front of a large group of members and supporters, and was filmed for a BBC documentary about local charities.



The boat has been funded by the Peter Harrison Foundation and fundraising by Parkstone Yacht Club.

It has been named *Twin Sails* and participated in the official launching of Poole's new Twin Sails bridge earlier this year.

From left: Poole Sailability Chair Anna Moreland, youngest member Charlie Williams, Mayor of Poole Cllr Graham Wilson, the Mayoress, and Commodore of Parkstone Yacht Club Barry Rolfe

Disability Taster Day

Hollingworth Lake Water Activity Centre recently opened its doors and invited people with disabilities to come and try various activities. People came from all the surrounding areas: Burnley, Rochdale, Huddersfield, Middleton and Leyland. The staff provided a variety of experiences, including canoeing, sailing and biking for all the groups. The sailing groups used a range of craft depending on their disability. Some required hoisting whilst others just the presence of someone they trusted. The centre provided Access boats, Challenger, Dart 16 and a Drascombe Lugger. The day was hectic with over 100 people attending, and everyone had a great time, though some did get a little wet!



Warren Price, RYA Sailability Regional Organiser, said: "The staff at Hollingworth WAC deserve a big thank you for their manner and attitude, for without their commitment and skill the day would not have been the outstanding success it was."

Special school sailors shine at Edgbaston



More than 35 young people from three special schools in the West Midlands had the chance to show off their new sailing skills at the first of two regional 2011 Sail4Gold Sailability Learning Difficulties Regattas last October.

Hosted by Edgbaston Watersports, the fun end-of-season festival brought together young people, aged from 8 to 21 with a range of learning disabilities, from Selly Oak Trust School, Mary Elliot Special School (Walsall) and Fort Royal Community School (Worcester).

The often gusty conditions only added to the fun as the sailors took part in a series of fun races in their own teams in the morning, before all the schools mixed and raced against each other in the afternoon.

The festival was supported by volunteers from Lordswood Combined Cadet Force and Hall Green School in Birmingham.

All the sailors have learned to sail through the RYA's OnBoard grassroots sailing scheme over the past year, with support from West Midlands Sailability, at Bartley Sailing Club (Birmingham),

Upton Warren Outdoor Education Centre (Bromsgrove) or Walsall Outdoor Pursuits.

These special sessions were introduced in 2010 to give young people with learning disabilities the chance to train and race throughout the year in an environment geared up to take account of each individual's abilities.

A similar number of sailors contested a second 2011 Sail4Gold Sailability Learning Difficulties Regatta involving Round Oak School, Support

Service and Sports College from Warwick and Pitcheroak School, Redditch at Bartley Sailing Club later in October.

Martyn Collis, West Midlands' RYA Sailability Regional Organiser, said: "It was a great day; everyone had a great time on the water. The young people had a range of different learning difficulties, across the whole spectrum of severity, and they all raced together. The gusty conditions didn't put anyone off; in fact it made for more fun all round!

"The whole ethos of Sailability focuses on the acceptance that everyone is different and it is what each individual can do, not what they can't, that can be nurtured into a lifelong involvement in sailing."

Both events were contested under the Sail for Gold banner, celebrating the build-up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to show support for the British sailing team in their preparations for the event.

New Dabber for Hykeham Sailability

More than a third more disabled adults in Lincolnshire will be able to get out on the water and enjoy sailing in 2012 after Hykeham Sailability was awarded £10,000 from Sport England to invest in a new boat.

Around 40 local disabled people have regularly enjoyed getting out on the water with Hykeham Sailability, since it was launched two years ago at Apex Lakes.

But with more community and charity groups than ever wanting to get involved in sailing, Hykeham Sailability didn't want to be turning people away so the decision was made to apply for a Sports England Small Grant to buy a new Drascombe Dabber keelboat.

With the Dabber added to their existing fleet of Access dinghies in July, Hykeham Sailability hope up to 65 people will be able to sail with them over the next 12 months.

Keven Roberts, Hykeham Sailability Chairman, explains: "Demand was exceeding capacity and we were turning disabled sailors away as we did not have enough boats. Sailing is one of the very few sports in which able-bodied sailors and disabled sailors can participate on equal terms and Hykeham Sailability is actively working to get more adults participating.

"The new Dabber will help us to do that. It will make a big difference to all those people with severe disabilities because it is designed as a sea-going boat so is therefore a very stable boat on a lake. We are looking forward to helping even more people get out on the water with Hykeham Sailability."

Janet Inman, Lincolnshire Sports Partnership CEO, added: "Lincolnshire Sports Partnership is



keen to support Hykeham Sailability, which provides an invaluable resource to the community, not just of Hykeham but the county as a whole. They have an excellent group of coaches and volunteers supporting the programme that produces high quality opportunities for disabled individuals to take part in this exciting, invigorating sport."

Hykeham Sailability is based at Hykeham Sailing Club, and the group also works closely with the Lincoln and District Sailing Association which, as an RYA Recognised Training Centre, supports Hykeham Sailability with formal training.

The group is underpinned by the commitment of 40 dedicated volunteers, who all willingly give their time to provide these opportunities for Lincolnshire's disabled community.

Howard Nelson, RYA East Midlands Chairman, said: "Sailing is a hugely sociable sport and Sailability groups are an integral part of so many sailing clubs and centres in the UK. The achievement and enjoyment that comes from getting afloat is huge. Self esteem is, without question, one of the biggest things people get from sailing."

Celebrating 30 years of disabled sailing



The Wirral Disabled Marine Association (WDMA), based in West Kirby, Wirral, sails dinghies on West Kirby Marine Lake at the side of the Dee estuary, adjacent to the Irish Sea and the Mersey estuary. Formed in 1981 and becoming a registered charity in 1982, the WDMA's aim has always been to introduce people with any form of disability to taste and to enjoy the sport of sailing. We sail with all age groups. Our youngest member is 4 and our eldest celebrated his 90th birthday last year. Our members include those who are deaf, blind, with spina bifida or cerebral palsy, amputees, brain damaged, with learning difficulties of all sorts, stroke victims, with Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis, wheelchair users or people with a combination

of disabilities. To help to celebrate our 30 years of existence, where we have helped in excess of 800 disabled people to try and to enjoy sailing, we needed another Access dinghy to expand our fleet.

Our latest Access dinghy was funded by RYA Sailability, the West Kirby Lions Club, the management and patrons of the White Lion Inn in West Kirby and WDMA members. Brendan Doyle, President of the West Kirby Lions Club, Brenda Harvey and Phil Roberts, proprietors of the White Lion Inn and Marje McCarthy, Chairman of the WDMA launched our new acquisition. Because of the association of Lions, it was decided to call the boat *Born Free*. Despite the weather, supporters from all groups witnessed the launch on 9 October last year, though because of the heavy downpour and high wind, the boat was unable to be sailed on that day.

The Chairman of the WDMA stated that this wonderful event would not have taken place without the generous donation by all contributors and their desire to help our disabled sailors, enabling those captive in their wheelchairs to capture the joy and freedom of sailing. We are all extremely grateful to everyone who supported us and helped us to achieve our latest project. Without their help, many of our less mobile members could not continue sailing without having to shorten a shorter sail time or a long wait for their turn in quite often inclement conditions. We are indebted to everyone concerned and we look forward to another 30 years of disabled sailing.

If you are disabled and live in the area, or know of someone who may like to try sailing, please contact Don Corper, Secretary to the Wirral Disabled Marine Association on 0151 625 6009 or email doncorper@o2.co.uk

The launch of *Born Free*

We are all gathered by the sea,
To witness launching of *Born Free*

Several agencies we bless,
For giving us this Access

The RYA's Sailability,
For our brand new facility

West Kirby's branch the Lions Club,
Have also helped with quite a 'sub'

Boss and patrons of White Lion,
Whose sponsorship we can rely on.

Every year they help us sail,
We ask a blessing on their ale,

To clerk of weather we say: "Please,
Each week, give us a kindly breeze

"So that for our enjoyment's sake,
We may traverse the lake."

Marje and committee, wheels have oiled,
How very fruitfully they have toiled.

A hearty welcome to *Born Free*
May God bless all who sail in thee.

Written by Jim Fieldsend on behalf of all the grateful members of a wonderful organisation on the launch of *Born Free*, 9 October 2011.

Funding the NW Access

As the regional organiser for Sailability in the North West I have always encouraged the use of Access dinghies as they provide an opportunity to enjoy sailing for a wide range of people with a disability. They are also ideal for teaching sailing to young people with learning difficulties.

I therefore approached the NW RYA Executive with a request that they should purchase an Access boat that could be moved around the region to encourage clubs and centres to develop and support sailing for all. The Executive supported the idea by agreeing to provide 50% of the funding and requesting that I find sponsorship for the other 50%.

I am grateful to the following who generously offered donations: Eric Wright, Dave Williamson, Abitare and the Windermere Rotary. Their donations raised £2400 - still just short of the 50% target set by the Executive.

The Executive then suggested that all the sailing clubs in the area be emailed and asked to donate £50 to the fund.

The response was fantastic. In no time at all, clubs from every corner of the North West were sending donations in. One member from Crosby was sponsored to shave his beard off! The shortfall in funding was not only reached but exceeded and my thanks go to all.

Warren Price
Sailability North West Regional Organiser
01772 321014



Warren Price (left) with Adam Holden from Astley Park School in the new Access dinghy.

Day to make a difference

Nine colleagues from Lloyds Banking Group spent a day last October volunteering at Lymington Sailability. In this article published in the company newsletter, **Diana Lewis** describes how it went.



On a beautiful October day, nine colleagues from Business Services set off for Lymington in Hampshire for our Day to Make a Difference at Sailability. This is a charity set up to help those with disabilities learn to sail.

The charity has various branches throughout the UK and its patron is Geoff Holt MBE who we were lucky enough to have as our guest speaker at our conference in February.

Our day started out by meeting the volunteers who unselfishly give up a lot of their free time to ensure that those with physical and mental disabilities can be assisted into boats to sail either individually, in pairs or together in a larger boat and are then able to enjoy some quality time in the Solent.

I think we were all surprised at the amount of time and effort involved in making this possible, from the initial preparation of the boats, loading them, then towing them to the launch pad.

Safety is of utmost importance and for every two boats on the water there has to be at least one safety boat with a minimum of three volunteers on board.

It has been known for the trimarans to capsize so the safety boats have to react very quickly to ensure that sailors are rescued immediately.

Some of us spent a good two hours on the water sailing out into the Solent, whilst others stayed ashore to assist with boat maintenance. The clear blue skies, 23 degree temperature and strong winds certainly helped to make this a wonderful experience for the volunteers and those who benefit so much from being independent out on the water when onshore they have to rely on others to assist with everyday life.

After returning to the harbour the sailors were helped out of the boats and we had to wash the boats off and prepare them for storage. Our efforts were then rewarded with tea and cakes kindly provided by Aly Gunn, the chairman of Lymington Sailability.

I think all those attended were very impressed with the dedication of the volunteers who gave their time to ensure that those less fortunate can participate in a hobby which allows them so much freedom and enjoyment.

If any of you would like further information on this charity please visit their website:
www.lymingtonsailability.com/volunteering.htm

After our experience with the staff and members of Lymington Sailability we decided to raise funds to help to support the charity in the purchase of some much needed new equipment.

Raffle tickets were sold and an online auction held with the lucky winners being chosen on Thursday 15 December. Overall an amazing £9,378.00 was raised for this very worthwhile charity and I would like to thank everyone for their support selling tickets and bidding in the auction.

Congratulations to those who won and enjoy your prizes!

Prestigious award for Wealden Sailability

In September 2011, the High Sheriff of Kent, Mrs Georgie Warner, paid a visit to Wealden Sailability, at Chipstead Sailing Club. Clearly impressed by the operation, and by the enthusiasm of both clients and volunteers, she has awarded the Sailability group *The High Sheriff of Kent Award for outstanding work in the Community*. This is one of just five such awards made in the whole county of Kent.

Mrs Warner returned to Chipstead on 24 April 2012, to present the certificate, together with a cheque for £500. As a token of appreciation, Wealden Sailability in turn presented Mrs Warner with a photograph of her previous sailing experience with Sailability.

Also in attendance were the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Parish, District, and County Councillors, representatives from Westbere, Frensham Ponds, and Mariners of Bewl Sailability Centres and officers of Chipstead Sailing Club. Representing the customer base were representatives from Pepenbury and Dorton House, and 23 Sailability volunteers also turned out for the day.

Wealden Sailability operates on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from April until October. No prior sailing experience is necessary. Boats, and all essential equipment, are provided. Full information and contact details are available on the WS website at www.wealdensailability.org

Left, David McKee, Trustee, centre Georgie Warner, 2011 Sheriff of Kent, right Brian Stanley, Trustee



Rudyard Sailability builds a new clubhouse

Rudyard Sailability is a registered charity based in the Staffordshire Moorlands, run entirely by volunteers, qualified to provide sailing and water-based activities for those living with any type of disability. The Club was set up in 2001 by a handful of Sailability enthusiasts who operated out of a concrete shed. In spite of such inadequate facilities the Club built up its membership and volunteer force; developed its accessible fleet and was soon welcoming up to 2000 visitors a year.

Rudyard Sailability became one of the first RYA Sailability Centres of Excellence and Education in the UK and an RYA Recognised Training Centre, and was recently honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for volunteer groups.

It soon became apparent that purpose-built accommodation was needed to provide dignity, independence and equality to users and to develop and improve the operation of the Club, and so a six-year battle for planning permission began. The Charity attracted massive support from right across the community and permission was eventually granted at a Public Inquiry in 2010.

The old boat shed was demolished in October 2010 on the orders of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Planning Department. With no alternative and with heavy hearts, Volunteers towed the entire fleet into storage away from the lake, thereby depriving those living with the most severe disability the opportunity to sail during the building project.

With an urgency to get the project rolling, work began on the wheelchair-accessible slipway to the proposed building. Work progressed throughout the arctic winter of 2010 with a dam holding back gallons of water whilst some 600 tons of earth was removed to make way for over 350 tons of limestone base. It was necessary to

construct a heated tent over the slipway so that the concrete could be poured in sub-zero conditions. With Rudyard Lake completely frozen over, the slipway was completed in December; a hard-won festive reward for all concerned.

Rudyard Sailability continued to offer a limited service to its users during the 2011 season, whilst Trustees searched for the funding necessary to start the next phase of the project in the autumn. Once again, it was a race against time as the water levels threatened to flood the site by the end of the year. Working with a wide range of partners, construction workers, tradesfolk and volunteers, being battered by the elements, work began on the preparation of the site, pile driving and foundations.

With the building being situated at the far end of a small bay, this entailed tens of convoys of tractors, lorries and heavy plant being safely marshalled on and off the site via the accessible slipway.

It was with great elation and relief, and thanks to funding from Sanja's Charity Bollywood Ball, that the essential steel frame was erected, just as the water levels submerged the slipway, cutting off heavy vehicular access to the site for another year. This meant that work could now proceed on the next phase of the building.

During this time the Charity was successful in an application for £150,000 from the Social Enterprise Investment Fund. This vital funding along, with a huge raft of other fundraising initiatives, donations and grants, meant that the work on the brickwork, insulation and stone could begin. The building really started to take shape. The roof timbers went on in February and by March, thousands of slates, all hand-punched by volunteers, were put on – an important moment. The tongue and groove

ceiling was put up, joinery work continued, and painting began on the interior. April saw another landmark moment when the glass went in the windows and the side door and the majestic front doors were hung. The scaffolding was removed, and the building was dry and secure and ready for the next phase of the project.

During May, the upper floor storage area floors were installed and insulation, painting and varnishing continues throughout the interior. Whilst awaiting quotes for the installation of the electrics and the internal fittings required in the hygiene room, toilet, office, crew room and storage areas, interior painting and varnishing continues. Work will soon begin on the under-floor heating system, as well as the re-routing of the public footpath around the building outside.

The total cost of this project is just under £500,000 which seemed a daunting task back in October 2010, and it is awe-inspiring to see just how far it has progressed in such challenging physical and economic conditions. Success is down to the vision, expertise and determination of the Charity's Chairman, and Project/Site Manager, Dennis Priebe, who has managed to persuade and inspire others, from all walks of life, including commercial, industrial, educational, financial, charitable, statutory and voluntary organisations and individuals to come forward and help realise the Charity's ambition to create this much-needed, flagship building.

There is still some way to go to complete the project which requires up to £90,000 of funding and the continued commitment of Dennis and all those who are prepared to contribute in any way to the realisation of this incredible dream. It is hoped that with such continued support Ruddyard Sailability will once again be able to offer sailing experiences to *all* those who live with disability whilst enjoying the dignity, independence and equality of a 'gold-standard' Club house.

Stop press - Torch Relay



Over 40 OnBoard sailors got a taste of the Olympic spirit on 22 May when they took to the water in Bristol Docks to play a special part in the London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay.

The sailors enjoyed showcasing their sailing skills to thousands of people who had surrounded the Docks to see the Olympic Torch carried across the water by torchbearer Blaire Hannan, future Paralympic hopeful.

The youngsters from Bristol schools, including St Mary Redcliff, Temple City Academy and Knowle Primary School, have all been learning to sail with the RYA's OnBoard scheme at WESSA (West of England Schools Sailing Association).

"Being able to play a part in the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay really was a once in a lifetime opportunity for the youngsters," explained Leon Ward, OnBoard Development Officer for the South West.

"They also got to speak to Blaire before she took part in the Relay and it was great that she had the sailors supporting her out on the water as she carried the Olympic flame."

Blaire, who is making a bid for the 2016 Paralympics, was nominated by Bristol City Council to carry the torch because of her volunteering work with Bristol Sailability as well as her own sailing achievements.

"It feels pretty incredible to have been nominated as a Torchbearer. To be able to represent sailing and a Paralympic sport is a dream come true. I had absolutely no idea I had been nominated. It feels absolutely amazing" explained Blaire.



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