PROTECTIVE CLOTHING POLICY

The crew of a dinghy must stay dry and warm, whatever the weather. All crew members should have access to suitable clothing that is fully functional and will protect against 'Hypothermia'!

- The effects of wind chill and cold water mean there are few days of the year when you can sail in this country without protective clothing. It is never as warm as on the land and it may rapidly become much colder.

- Protective clothing should always be taken on the boat as a precaution, even when you set out on the hottest day of the year.

- A neoprene wetsuit protects against cold water and wind. To be effective it must be a virtually perfect fit and have zips and seams that are as near waterproof as possible to stop cold water flushing through. The wetsuit can be worn with a loose fitting, windproof dry top to aid heat retention in colder weather.

- An alternative to a wetsuit is to wear a dry suit made from waterproof material with latex neck, wrists and ankles to keep all the water out. Drysuits are highly effective but are expensive and may be uncomfortable in warmer weather. Breathable fabrics which transmit sweat to the outside are likely to provide the best performance. Bright colours and retro-reflective strips are good safety features.

- Sailing boots are strongly recommended. They will provide grip when moving around a boat, protect your feet and ankles from injury while launching and sailing and will keep your feet warm.

- Sailing gloves are necessary to protect against rope burns and other possible injuries and are very good at keeping your hands warm.

- Thermal headgear can play a major role in helping conserve body heat!

Buoyancy Aids:

It is vital to always wear a buoyancy aid or lifejacket when sailing. It must be a good fit, have secure fastenings and provide the correct buoyancy to support your weight. Remember to fasten crotch straps if fitted. All buoyancy aids and lifejackets should be labelled with the European Standard CE Mark.

- Buoyancy aids and lifejackets flotation is measured in Newtons - 10 Newtons equal 1kg of flotation.

- Buoyancy aids with 50 Newtons are only for use by swimmers in sheltered waters when help is close to hand. Unlike lifejackets they are not guaranteed to turn a person from a face-down position in the water. Their advantage is that they provide a much closer fit which is likely to be less restrictive when dinghy sailing. Buoyancy aids should be clearly labelled with the weight range they are designed to support.

- Lifejackets with 100 Newtons are designed for those who may have to wait for rescue but are likely to be in sheltered and calm water. They are available with a choice of foam-only buoyancy, air-only buoyancy or air-foam buoyancy. The disadvantage to a lifejacket is that it may be too bulky when sailing or ducking beneath a low boom.