

## **RYA Training Conference 2016**

This conference is held each year for the dinghy, windsurfing and power schemes. Attendance grew yet again and the weekend had an incredibly positive atmosphere with a good mix of principals, coaches and trainers in attendance.

We continue to be supported by Arthur J Gallagher, and without their support the event would be very different. A big thank you!

We also enjoy great support from a variety of exhibitors who, again, provided a fantastic opportunity for delegates to speak direct to them about new and existing products. Amazing prizes were also provided for Saturday raffles! The exhibitors included: Arthur J Gallagher, Tushingham, Severne, Whaly, Topper, Hartley Boats, PWP, RS Sailing, Versa Dock, Spinlock, Yamaha, North Sails, Laser Performance and Total Option.

Craig Burton, RYA Training Resources Manager, opened the conference with a look at the health of RYA Training, an update on changes which have taken place and an insight to future projects and developments.

Duncan Truswell, RYA Sports Development Manager, shared findings from Sport England research, initiatives to help promote our sport and guidance on marketing opportunities, use of social media and the suite of videos the RYA have available for clubs and centre use.

Saturday also saw a range of presentations from speakers including:

- RNLI Training Manager, Glen Mallen - RNLI searches
- RYA Technical Manager, Bas Edmonds - Coding
- RYA Legal Manager Gus Lewis - Duty of Care and Insurance
- Arthur J Gallaghers, Ben Bennett
- Green Blue Outreach Officer, Kate Fortnam - new initiatives
- RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager, Jackie Reid - Safeguarding

Discussions in the afternoon invited the conference delegates to discuss a range of topics, which are summarised below:

### **Windsurfing**

Windsurfing participation and instructor training have been unstable over the last few years, with an initial increase turning into a significant drop off. We asked groups to discuss how the RYA could encourage growth, ensuring the instructor pathway remained accessible and the scheme relevant.

Suggestions such as Instructors being able to deliver additional areas, adjusting scheme content to increase accessibility, were believed to be ways to assist centres in the delivery and encouragement of participation. In addition to intermediate courses perhaps being solely clinic based.

By investigating the possibility of shorter course length, reducing syllabi content, some groups discussed the potential this may have for increasing accessibility. The demand for taster sessions has increased, along with 1:1 coaching, which may suggest a change in our learning culture and time availability, as well as other sports such as SUP diverting potential participants.

Due to the increase in taster session interest, several groups thought more time should be dedicated during instructor training to assist the delivery of effective sessions, leading to the encouragement of further participation.

Interesting debates on certificates were held, discussing whether they were important to people taking RYA courses, and the speculative view they provide the RYA of participation.

The quality of equipment was felt to be a barrier in some clubs and centres with participants not always receiving the best experiences, as well as post course marketing and whether our instructors were sign posting participants to the next course or other local opportunities.

### **Improving customer service**

Building repeat business and retaining members is one of the fundamental ingredients of success, so we asked delegates to discuss how they felt people could improve customer service at training centres, posing questions with a few thought provoking questions.

Key to one group was asking the customers what they wanted, using a 'can do' attitude, with a tailored approach. The group felt strongly that different people want different things and we should try and cater for that where possible.

Other areas such as being customer focused by providing a warm welcome, simple website with an effective, easy to use booking system, backed up with someone available on the phone to ensure booking remains personal were all felt to be crucial.

One group discussed the challenge to change attitudes, but how knowing your club's selling points could assist, along with offering whole family activities, lifestyle experiences and social environments. The type of activity available and how it's promoted are important factors. Our customers want multisport where there is choice and the whole family can participate together.

The intimidation of club racing was an issue for one group – people would like to join in but feel threatened by the environment.

Try to anticipate your customer's needs and desires by consulting them. Ask what they want by proactively gathering feedback. Matching your instructors with your clients will aid group interaction and positive experiences, increasing the likelihood of returning custom.

Marketing opportunities such as good effective use of social media and internet based review sites were felt to provide a very important and hugely effective tool, along with suggestions to encourage staff to promote the centre/club, with commission based structures and incentives.

Effective communication and staff training were felt to be imperative to one group, with customer service being included in the club/centres staff induction/training. Adopting the renowned and effective 'John Lewis' culture and ethos of going an extra mile for your customer, ensuring expectations were managed, as well as the importance of dealing with, and resolving complaints.

### **Killcords and general safety in powerboats**

Several groups discussed how the RYA and its instructors could encourage safety within the wider boating population, asking the delegates to share particular methods for encouraging and enforcing killcord usage.

Discussions yielded some good suggestions about how RYA instructors can help to reinforce the killcord message, with some suggestions including Facebook campaigns encouraging positive reinforcement, sharing case studies and statistics, manufacturers offering voucher for training with every outboard sold and student being given their own killcord on each Powerboat Level 2 course.

Some groups pointed to the possibility of audible alarms when the kill cord is not connected, with several electronic kill cords in development and entering the market, mindful that the vast majority of powerboats are fitted with the extremely simple device which the helm just needs to remember to attach to their leg!

Groups discussed how they thought the use of killcords should be made a local bylaw, providing examples where some areas this has been enshrined into local bylaws.

Working closely with outside agencies, such as the RNLI, engine manufacturers, insurance companies, British Marine and the Marine Accident Investigation Branch, was a further suggestion to increasing awareness of kill cords and general safety.

### **Should Senior Instructors automatically be able to teach the RYA Safety Boat course?**

The Safety Boat course was reviewed in 2015 and to conclude the review an interesting debate was posed which caused lively discussions, asking the delegates to discuss if they felt an RYA Senior should be able to teach the RYA Safety Boat course without being a Powerboat Instructor.

Although groups acknowledged that Senior Instructors held the Safety Boat certificate and have a wealth of knowledge and experience of rescuing dinghies and/or windsurfers, all groups agreed that more training would be needed prior to them being able to deliver the course, with concern that the discussion topic was trying to answer a problem that does not exist.

Suggestions put forward included a Senior Instructor or Powerboat Instructor endorsement, a 1 day course to upskill individuals' powerboat handling and rescuing skills, also providing an opportunity for less experience instructors to gain knowledge in areas such as paddle sports and kitesurfing.

With any new centres wishing to deliver the RYA Safety Boat course required to be recognised for dinghy or windsurfing, the provision of up to date equipment and instructors being well practiced in rescue techniques in the training environment, other thoughts included Senior Instructors being required to pass the PBI Skills Assessment prior to teaching Safety Boat and concern over a Powerboat Instructor being able to deliver safety boat although they may not be qualified in sailing/windsurfing.

Sunday provided an opportunity for delegates to attend various presentations aimed at upskilling and enhancing knowledge, including;

- Meteorology by Penny Tranter
- Understanding Sailing Fitness by Matt McGovern
- Symmetrical Spinnaker Sailing by Adam McGovern
- Stability by Andy Wright
- Training plotter by Phil Brown and Vaughan Marsh
- Understanding your Learning by Alan Williams.

Copies of the many of the presentations are available on the RYA website.

RYA Training would like to say a big thank you to everyone involved in the weekend, from our supporters Arthur J Gallagher, to workshop hosts and presenters, those who helped with organisation prior to and during the weekend, our exhibitors and all those who attended. We hope you all had a great time!