

Adventure Activities Licensing Authority Meeting
Thursday 25 March 2010

Adventure Activities Licensing Service Head of Inspection report
September 2009 – February 2010

1. Number of Licence Holders

This stands at 1209 as at 26.02.10

2. Relevant Action

During the reporting period, five providers were issued with notices that we were considering revoking their licence. Of these, three providers had their licences revoked when they failed to contact us. We considered revoking a fourth licence, but rescinded the notice when the provider addressed our concerns satisfactorily.

A further visit to conclude the fifth case has been arranged. Their previous licence has since expired so they are currently not licensed, and their details have been removed from the Register.

During the reporting period, we issued three providers with notices that we were considering refusing their application for renewal of their licence. All three are currently in progress.

See Appendix 1 for more detail.

3. Recorded Accidents and Incidents

During the reporting period, the following accidents / incidents were entered on the Licensing Service's database.

a) November 2009: 2 male instructors were injured whilst considering new sites for coasteering. They were from a party of five from an Exeter based outdoor adventure provider. A 42 year old broke his leg and a second instructor in his 20's dislocated his knee. Both were airlifted to safety by a coastguard helicopter.

b) November 2009: A 46 year old experienced canoeist drowned when he became trapped against a tree on the rain swollen River Dart. Two other canoeists who tried to rescue him were treated for hypothermia following a large-scale rescue operation which involved fire, police, ambulance, Dartmoor Rescue and a helicopter.

c) December 2009: A 15 year old girl had to be airlifted out of a gorge after she fell 90' following a mountain bike accident. She was part of an organised group from a licensed centre. Police said it appeared

that she had lost control of her bike before hitting the bridge and falling into the gorge. Emergency services found her conscious and breathing and airlifted her to hospital. She suffered a broken arm and serious internal injuries.

Sam Crymble, AALS Senior Inspector visited the site with Michelle Gillies, HSE in January 2010. In his subsequent report Sam concluded that, while he personally would have identified the risk of collision with the bridge parapet at the sharp corner as a possibility, he would have not regarded someone being flung over the parapet into the gorge as a possibility. He was unable to find any documented or anecdotal reference to any similar incident at the location.

d) February 2010: An 18 year old Explorer Scout was killed after falling through a cornice. He was part of an all adult group (which included his mother and uncle) who were in Scotland as part of an annual trip to expand their winter hill walking skills. He was leading a group along a ridge on Creag Meagaidh when he broke through the cornice and fell a considerable distance. He was air lifted to hospital but was pronounced dead on arrival. No-one else was injured.

4. Further action to improve safety in the sector.

4.1 Human factor safety research.

As reported at the last meeting this continues to be a fruitful area of work and we have already started feeding lessons learned back to providers and the sector in general. So far this has been confined to inspectors pointing out specific issues of detail which we believe can make a significant difference. We would like to expand this into feedback in sector magazines, and during presentations to major representative bodies.

4.2 Coasteering.

Coasteering generally involves swimming around rocky sections of coast, together with climbing over rocks and cliffs, and often jumping from a height into water. It is usually licensable because of the climbing component. There is no National Governing Body.

We have been working with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), RoSPA and a cross section of coasteering providers to help them agree a good practice guidance document (GPG) and an outline syllabus for instructor training. A second draft is currently being compiled (by RNLI) for broad consultation. The draft uses significant relevant sections from the Combined Water/Rock Activities collective interpretation documents. I have referred the group to Gavin for further opinion.

4.3 Stand Up Paddle Boarding (SUP Boarding)

This is a comparatively new sport and, as the name suggests, involves propelling a type of surf board with a paddle. It is therefore licensable.

In some circumstances there is considerable potential for multiple fatality accidents. There is no National Governing Body for SUP Boarding.

We have begun work with the British Stand Up Paddle Board Association which is the main trainer of SUP Boarding instructors and hope to help them to produce a Good Practice Guidance Document (GPG) and an outline instructor training syllabus. I have referred the group to Gavin for further opinion.

4.4 New life-saving awards

We have been approached by the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) to comment on their new series of training courses to be targeted at a new potential client group to include teachers who may wish to take children and young people in their care into the water environment, and instructors at outdoor centres, etc.. They have found our Combined Water/Rock Activities collective interpretation documents very useful in identifying which issues to address in the training. I have referred the group to Gavin for further opinion.

Marcus Bailie
09.03.2010

Appendix 1: Relevant Action taken by the Licensing Service between September 2009 and February 2010

1. Action Taken: Minded to Revoke licence, Rescinded

The Licensing Service received a complaint from the Educational Visits Advisor for regarding a kayaking / windsurfing session that he had observed the provider running for a school under the County's jurisdiction. At the subsequent inspection on 13th August 2009, the Senior Inspector identified a number of failures.

Notice that we were considering revoking his licence was sent to the provider on 4th September 2009.

The provider forwarded information to the Senior Inspector and the Senior Inspector carried out a further inspection on 28th September 2009. During this visit, the provider provided evidence that he had taken the required action and also assured the Senior Inspector that kayaking sessions would be limited to 'hire only' in the future.

It was concluded that matters had been addressed to the required level, but that the provider may expect an unannounced visit during the duration of his licence to confirm that the requirements are still in place. As a result, we felt able to rescind the Notice.

2. Action Taken: Minded to Revoke licence, Revoked

On 25th November 2009 the Licensing Service received information from one of the Freelance Inspectors that the provider had ceased trading. This was further confirmed by a statement on the provider's website that they had "effectively ceased trading on 9th October 2009."

A Notice that we were considering revoking their licence was sent to the provider on 30th November 2009, with the covering letter advising the provider that they could contact us to withdraw the licence at any time within the 28 day period.

There was no contact from the provider and their licence was therefore revoked on 8th January 2010.

3. Action Taken: Minded to Revoke licence, Revoked

The Licensing Service received information that the provider had left his operating base, was no longer trading and had gained employment with another provider. This information was confirmed by the Senior Inspector. In the absence of a current postal address, an e-mail was sent to the provider on 29th October 2009 requesting that he contact the office to confirm the current

position and advising that, if he was still offering adventure activities, he would need to provide a current postal address.

There was no contact from the provider. A Notice that we were considering revoking his licence was sent via e-mail on 30th November 2009.

The provider e-mailed the office on 1st December 2009 providing a new address but advising that he did not want it published anywhere. A reply was sent to the provider by return to advise that, in order for his licence to continue, a current postal address would need to be published and requesting that he contact us again to advise how he wished to proceed.

There was no further contact from the provider and his licence was therefore revoked on 8th January 2010.

4. Action Taken: Minded to Revoke licence, Revoked

The provider had failed to respond to letters and e-mails sent by the Senior Inspector who had been trying to set a date for an inspection of caving activity. Of the three addresses the Senior Inspector had written to, two letters were returned by the Royal Mail marked "gone away".

A Notice that we were considering revoking his licence was sent to the provider's three known addresses on 8th December 2009

There was no contact from the provider and two letters were returned by the Royal Mail marked "gone away".

The revocation notice was sent to the provider's third known address on 8th January 2010.