

**ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES LICENSING AUTHORITY (AALA)  
MANAGEMENT BOARD**

**THIRTEENTH MEETING 26 March 2013**

**9 Quinton Business Park, BIRMINGHAM**

**11.00 – 14.00**

In attendance: David Ashton – HSE (Chair AALA MB)  
Alistair McNab – HSE (Vice Chair AALA MB)  
Clare McNicholas – HSE Policy  
Richard Broughton – HSE Policy  
Gavin Howat – HSE Field Operations  
Brian Chapman – Independent member AALA MB  
Ian McMorrin – Independent member AALA MB  
John-Paul Lawrence – Local Authorities  
Anne-Marie Edwardes – Department for Education (by telephone)  
Jackie Moyles – Welsh Government  
Sir Brooke Boothby – Chair TQS/AALS  
John Walsh-Heron – Chief Executive TQS/AALS  
Marcus Bailie – Head of Inspection TQS/AALS

Apologies: Jonathan Holvey – Department for Work and Pensions  
Douglas Armstrong – Scottish Government

**Welcome and Introductions**

1. The Chair welcomed those attending. Apologies were noted.

**Minutes and actions from the last meeting**

2. The minutes and actions from the last meeting (27 September 2012) were cleared.

**Action**

- **Agenda, reports and minutes of the September 2012 meeting to be placed on the AALA website**

**Progress report**

3. The Board was given an update on progress since the last meeting. Following the pause with the planned abolition of the AALA in England, rather than consulting again in England on outright abolition of the AALA or extending its scope to all activities (as noted at the September 2012 meeting), the new Minister at DWP had asked for all options for future arrangements to be developed and assessed. These options range from abolition as planned through to keeping the regime as it is, whilst examining the scope for efficiencies, or extending arrangements to all adventure activities (also with an examination of any efficiencies).

4. A paper on options for future arrangements for the AALA in England was put to the Minister in January 2013. The Minister together with his colleagues across Government who have an interest in this topic, are actively considering future options for the AALA. Until a decision is made, the current arrangements remain in place.
5. The Scottish Government has decided to establish its own AALA underpinned by legislation. A Working Group has been established and the intention is for the relevant legislation to be laid before the Scottish Parliament sometime during 2014. HSE officials have been invited onto the Working Group and attended the first meeting in February.
6. The following points were made in discussion:
  - TQS noted the current position and restated their willingness to continue with the contract to provide the Licensing Service for the time being. At some stage however, retendering for the Service will have to occur. The Chair of the Licensing Service noted that in order to continue providing the Service from the end of March, the extension paperwork was required as a priority.
  - The adventure activities sector remains concerned at the potential for differing arrangements across Great Britain (GB) and would prefer for there to be GB-wide arrangements (if not across the United Kingdom).
  - It was suggested future work could usefully consider the extent to which a core of commonality was achievable, as well as the scope for mutual recognition by authorities across GB of safety arrangements.
  - The Welsh Government has signalled its intention to retain a statutory licensing scheme. The decisions by the Scottish and Westminster Government will inform their thinking on the shape and scope of any Welsh regime.
7. Summarising, the Chair noted that we may have clarity over the coming months but for the time being the status quo remains. The Board and the sector will be kept informed of developments as they arise.

### **Action**

- **Secretariat to provide the Licensing Service with the extension paperwork by end-March 2013**

### **Developments in HSE**

8. A general update paper on developments will be circulated to Board members after the meeting. A paper on options for the current website was tabled. Arguably, the current website and the information on there are not up to standard both with respect to current Government priorities for web-based information and compatibility standards.
9. The paper proposed refocusing the AALA web pages on the regulatory regime itself, relevant resource materials (AALA annual reports, Board minutes and so on.) and strictly operational guidance. Importantly, updates on the future of the regime would also be posted. At the same time, the navigation could be improved and errors in page headers corrected.

10. All other materials would transfer to a web community. A web community is a micro web site that is open to anyone to view and optionally join if they want to receive more information. It is not subject to quite the same strictures as a formal web site so it can host a wider range of materials.

11. The following points were made in discussion:

- As this was quite a fundamental change, the Board members would welcome an assessment of the likely costs and more importantly the benefits of the change.
- The HSE website is not being absorbed into the 'direct.gov' pan-Government web presence and so will continue as a stand alone site. Compatibility issues with cross-Government linkages as appropriate to the AALA site will need considering.
- The DfE have done a lot of work on rationalising their website and its information and would wish to ensure that the DfE website links correctly to the appropriate AALA web presence.
- The current inspector guidance notes will need to be assessed to examine their appropriateness for either the website or any future community.

12. Summarising, the Chair noted the intention for a split web presence of an official 'website' containing framework documents backed by a 'community' where more information could be made available for those with an interest. He asked that a further paper be prepared with an initial analysis of what types of information might go where and why; examples of these; and an assessment of the costs and the benefits of the proposed change

### **Action**

- **General update paper to be circulated post-meeting**
- **HSE and DfE to liaise on ensuring correct linkages between websites**
- **Further paper on proposed changes to the web presence to be prepared and circulated**

### **TQS Reports**

#### **Finance**

13. The current financial position had been circulated and showed a slight fall in income. Savings had been made on inspectorate costs and overheads. Some flexible 2013/14 payments had been brought forward to ease the 2014 pressures.

14. It was noted for the record that twelve providers had not renewed the licence and then subsequently renewed. For understandable administrative and operational reasons these licence holders were on reapplication given the same licence number they held previously. There is therefore in previous reports an under-reporting on licence holders.

15. The following points were made in discussion:

- There are likely many and varied reasons for the number of licence holders not renewing, ranging from uncertainty in future arrangements to financial pressures. On the one hand, Local Authority provision and use may fall back. On the other, this could lead to an increase in private provision as staff go freelance. A detailed assessment going forward could examine the reasons in more detail.
- It would be useful to assess the numbers of children taking part in adventure activities, and whether this had increased, reduced or remained static. Many Local Authorities use a system called EVOLVE to document extra-curricular school visits and activity.

#### Inspection report

16. The Head of Inspection's report had been circulated and the Board noted its contents.

#### **Issues Arising**

##### Department for Education

17. DfE Ministers are reviewing the work of the department and there is a commitment to at least maintain the current relationship with the AALA. DfE also noted that they write to the parents of children injured or worse whilst on school premises or activities.

#### **Action**

- **DfE to be informed of any incidents where a child has be injured or worse whilst on an activity**

##### Welsh Government

18. The Welsh Government reiterated their current position of waiting for further clarity on the future arrangements in both England and Wales before deciding on the shape and scope of arrangements in Wales.

#### **Date and venue of next meeting**

End-September/early-October 2013, Health and Safety Executive, 9 Quinton Business Park, Birmingham (to be confirmed)