

NOTES OF MEETING

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND RYA MODIOLUS MODIOLUS CONSULTATION

DATE: 9th January 2012

PRESENT:

Include

Ms Ken Bradley	- NIEA
Mr Joe Breene	- NIEA
Mr Adrian Bell	- R.Y.A.N.I.
Mr John Taggart	- R.Y.A.N.I.

ACTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mr. Bradley introduced Mr Breene and outlined that the Department were committed to co-operate with all interested bodies including the RYA as governing body for sailing in N.I. and that it had not been the Department's intention to introduce legislation without consulting all interested parties. Mr Taggart and Mr Bell thanked him for this assurance and also stated that both the RYANI and ASLYC were equally committed to the preservation of the environment and hoped that a suitable compromise could be found to enable all aspirations to be met.

1.2 Mr Taggart & Mr Bell explained that they had sought a meeting with the minister as it appeared that legislation was being drafted which could have a direct impact on the sailing community at large and to date the marine leisure users did not appear to have been involved in discussions. It was explained that the RYANI was the governing body for sailing in Northern Ireland and with the ASLYC (who are a co-ordinating organisation for the clubs in Strangford Lough) we had a major concern to ensure that any legislation being proposed was done so after full and proper consultation with all interested parties.

1.3 Mr Breene outlined the concerns that the Department had regarding the destruction of the Modiolus Reefs and that moorings did have some effect on the reefs. SM

1.4 Mr Bell considered that there did not appear to be any scientific back up to support the theory that yachting had any significant or contributory effect on the Modiolus Reefs. Mr Breene advised that as a diver he had witnessed that the damage moorings can cause to the circle area immediately surrounding the mooring where the chains are dragged as the vessel swings. This point was conceded but as the Modiolus Reefs only occurred in depths exceeding 10 m it was pointed out that virtually no craft would have moored even temporarily in the area under consideration.

2.0 Proposals

2.1 The Department advised that they would be preparing draft legislation which they hoped would be circulated to interested bodies for consultation soon. The basis of the legislation being proposed was that an anchoring ban would be enforced in a restricted area in waters over 10m deep. Adrian Bell pointed out that most boats did not anchor in depths of this nature but the legislation had the potential to impact on the ability of clubs to lay permanent and temporary racing marks in the restricted zone which was the only suitable area in Strangford Lough for running major events. In addition Mr Taggart pointed out that the area contained in the QUB report included Ringhaddy Sound and Scott's Hole, two well known and recognised anchorages. SM

2.2 Mr Bradley advised that Ringhaddy Sound was not going to be included in the restricted area and that Scott's Hole was not considered a problem either. A discussion on anchoring requirements for permanent and racing marks took place and Mr Breen considered that the permanent marks that he was aware of should be easily licenced although the moorings may require to be placed where there was no modiolus reef. The temporary race marks were not likely to be a major issue as 56 lb weights would not be considered to be an anchor. However the license might be drafted to specify the method of mooring these racing buoys. The anchoring of committee boats for special events may prove more difficult.

2.3 Discussions took place concerning how this could be achieved

without damaging the Modiolus reefs and one suggestion was the laying of a number of permanent moorings for committee boats in the area. It was agreed that this area would need further consideration by all concerned.

2.4 Mr Bradley advised that the basis of the legislation would be to issue permits to approved users to lay racing marks etc and that each club or users would be licensed accordingly. Temporary events would be notified and approved and the policing of the rules would be by the NIEA

2.5 To assist in moving forward it was agreed that the RYANI would involve the ASLYC in providing details of the locations of all permanent racing marks currently sited in the restricted zone. This would enable Mr Breene to complete his underwater survey of the existing marks and to agree how these could best be installed in the future. He did not envisage any problems with the marks he had already surveyed. It was also agreed that RYANI would consult its affiliated clubs to further consider how committee boats might operate within the restricted area and it was agreed that the Department would circulate draft proposals for consideration including the actual areas concerned to RYANI within the next few weeks.

RYA NI
ASLYC