

# RYA - EAST NEWS

## WIND FARMS SET TO SPREAD LIKE WEEDS

WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPACT WINDFARMS WILL HAVE ON YOUR SPORT, THEN WRITE TO YOUR MP, THE DTI, AND THE LOCAL AND YACHTING PRESS. SEE PAGE 10 FOR DETAILS.

If the government has its way two important East Coast areas, the Thames Estuary and the Wash, will become a sea of electricity generating windmills – with considerable disruption to the right of navigation enjoyed by yachtsmen and inshore fishermen alike.

In fact, with the first of the major farms being built on the Scroby Sands off Yarmouth this Autumn, with work installing the Gunfleet Sands wind farm expected to start next March plans have already been announced for Phase II – even bigger than ever!

Whereas these first stage wind farms are of the order of one mile by two and containing up to 30 pylons, the next generation will be huge 12-mile or more triangles containing 300 or more towers. It is feared that many of the inshore sailing routes, for example through the swatches of the Thames Estuary will be put out of bounds to yachts.

Many fear that small boats will have to follow the commercial sea lanes and go on longer, far more dangerous routes than they do now.

And according to Chris Edwards, environmental co-ordinator for the Eastern Region, there's an even more worrying trend in the offing – a serious reduction in the height of the towers and consequent less clearance under the rotor tips.

"Back in 2001 we were told the towers on the Gunfleet Sands would be 90 metres in height above Mean Sea level (MSL), with blades of 60 metre radius. This would have given a rotor tip



**CHRIS EDWARDS**

clearance of 25 metres above High Water Springs (HWS), even in bad sea states.

"Our concern then was adequate marking of the sites, especially in foul and foggy weather. In December 2002 we found they had reduced the heights to 80 metres giving a rotor tip clearance of only 20 metres above MSL.

"Now we are told the developer has applied to reduced the clearance of the rotor tips to 14 metres. The average 10.5m yacht has an air height of 16 metres including VHF aerial and some high aspect rigs reach 18 metres."

In normal conditions yachts wouldn't set themselves into danger by passing inside the mark buoys and lights – the big worry says Chris is the yacht that is in difficulty and gets blown into the array or gets lost in fog. Even if the rotor tip didn't bring the rig crashing down it would almost certainly remove the VHF aerial rendering the vessel incapable of calling for help.

The RYA's newly appointed Coastal Planning and Environmental Policy Officer

Suzie Tomson has been thrown in the deep end. She says the organisation has been objecting to any reduction of rotor blade clearance in an attempt to secure yacht safety. RYA is also fighting the imposition of no-go exclusion zones round wind farms calling them ineffective. No one seems to have considered the question of policing such zones.

Thanks to concerted pressure from RYA and environmental groups, developers now have to lodge a bond to ensure that defunct towers are properly dismantled and disposed of at the



**Suzie Tomson**

end of their projected 25 year life – or if the industry runs into financial problems. This is already enshrined in Scottish law and is expected to operate in the rest of the UK from Phase II onward (what happens to the Stage I farms?).

*Chris Edwards has written a paper on the problems with the Gunfleet wind farm. It was first published in the Tollesbury Cruising Club newsletter 'Up the Creek.' Turn to page 6 for Chris' report.*

# NEW CRUISING CHIEF HAS STRONG EAST COAST CONNECTIONS

**Stephen (Steve) Johnson (46) is the RYA's new cruising manager. A Yorkshireman, he cruised extensively on the East Coast and near Continent before moving to the South Coast.**

Steve started sailing in 1976 when he joined the Royal Navy, sailing the combined services Nicholson 55s for over 10,000 miles – as an antidote to spending most of his working life below water in submarines where he was a weapons engineering specialist.

On leaving the Navy he moved to Ely, Cambridgeshire where he worked for Philips Telecom in Cambridge and bought a small river motorboat, which he cruised on the Great Ouse, Nene, Middle Levels and Witham.

He was a member of the Denver Cruising Club and the Pike and Eel Boating Club. Upgrading to a Project 31 motor cruiser he explored the Wash and Humber, went to Holland, cruised extensively throughout all of Holland and Belgium, at the same time gaining his Day Skipper shore-based, Yachtmaster shore-based, VHF, first aid and Day Skipper practical power qualifications.

A Princess 38 Flybridge followed, which he based at Brundall Bay Marina on the Norfolk Broads and subsequently moved to Shotley Point Marina.

He moved the boat to Southsea Marina at Portsmouth in 1995 when he joined Multitone at Basingstoke as marketing director. It was here that the hankering to go back to wind power took over and eight years ago he bought a 12m Moody Eclipse. He also added his Yachtmaster practical for sail to his list of qualifications.

More recently he's been working as a management consultant to a number of blue chip companies and found-



**STEVE JOHNSON**

time to take the Yachtmaster Instructor course and taught Day Skipper and Yachtmaster at Basingstoke College.

He and his wife Sarah have cruised extensively the South coast of England and France and following a long-haul cruise to Spain now berth the boat at a marina close to Barcelona and fly out once a month to go cruising the Spanish Main.

To contact Stephen Johnson, RYA Cruising Manager, his direct dial telephone is 023 8060 4230; Fax - 023 8060 4296 and mobile - 07909 992382.

## RYA TRAINS RN

**The RYA is to provide training to all RN Naval Young Officer cadets studying at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, as part of their first year Naval General Training.**

Up to 100 cadets will undertake a range of RYA shore-based and practical courses alongside traditional naval training such as warfare, staff skills, engineering, meteorology and oceanography. The Royal Navy has increased on-water small boat training by 50 per cent, to develop strong seamanship skills.

RYA Training Manager James Stevens commented: "We are delighted and extremely proud of the partnership forged between the Royal Navy and the RYA. The RYA strives to raise the standards of proficiency and safety afloat,

and is honoured to play such a vital role in the training and development of our country's future Naval officers."

Head of the College, Commodore Tony Johnstone-Burt added: "I see it as a tremendous opportunity, both for the RYA and the Royal Navy, to be able to equip future naval officers and both civilian and military staff with an internationally recognised qualification and not least to reinforce the importance of an intimate and intuitive understanding of the maritime environment that we share with other seafarers all over the world. This is a great day."

Britannia Royal Naval College is already an RYA Training Centre.

## CALLING SAILING INSTRUCTORS

**Next winter's RYA Yachtmaster and Day Skipper classroom sailing courses held at Woodbridge Cruising Club are under threat of cancellation for lack of qualified instructors.**

For many years Woodbridge Cruising Club has provide RYA authorised evening classes leading to qualification as a Yacht Master or Day Skipper. Countless leisure craft sailing around Suffolk's coasts and rivers are now skippered or crewed by people who have gained skills and confidence through these courses.

But they are now under threat because the current tutors are taking a break from the classroom. The winter series will have to be cancelled unless the club finds suitably qualified replacement instructors. A maximum of 15 students attend each of the Yachtmaster and Day Skipper classes.

**Anyone who is interested in leading evening classes next winter at Woodbridge Cruising Club should contact the club's Training Officer, Richard Sampson, on 01394 382028.**



## ERIC TWINAME FINAL – NERVES GET THE BETTER OF YOUNGEST EAST ZONE TEAM



Over 200 young sailors made the trip to Rutland Water Sailing Club for the Eric Twiname Final. The sailors had been specially selected by their RYA High Performance Manager and class coach following months of hard training over the winter and spring.

Teams competed in almost perfect conditions and completed the full schedule of six races.

The East Zone team started the event clear favourites but it was the South West Zone which dominated, winning both the dinghy and windsurfing classes, to take the prestigious Eric Twiname Shield for best overall team.

The South East and West Zones were tied in second place, ahead of the South and East Zones.

Steve Joel, RYA Youth Racing

Manager, said: "I was really pleased with the quality of the racing and the intensity of the competition over the weekend. Every sailor should be extremely proud of their achievement in being selected to represent their Zone or Home Country at the Finals. My congratulations go to the South West team for their success. I'm sure it will drive every other team to work even harder at improving their performance at next year's Finals."

East Zone HPM Colin Murray was delighted with our team's performance: "We entered the youngest team there. They did extremely well and we should all be proud of them. They have tremendous potential and no doubt next year will give a really good account of themselves."

### The East Zone team.



**Matthew Lis (above),  
Clare Barnard (below)  
and Jonathan Moss and  
Sophia Dingwall (left).**



# ERIC TWINAME FINAL – RESULTS

## Optimist

### Individual Results

Fleet Size: 46 Boats

- 1, Oliver White, Papercourt, South East Zone (8,9,2,1,4) 24 pts
- 2, Frances Peters, South Zone (2, 3, 1, 21, 3) 30 pts (First Girl)
- 3, Matthew Lis, Corinthian Otters, East Zone (9,1,6,3,15) 34 pts

## Toppers

### Individual Results

Fleet Size: 54 Boats

- 1, Rob Partridge, Budworth SC, West Zone (4,1,3,10,1) 19 pts
  - 2, Matthew Undrell, Haversham SC, East Zone (10,5,6,5,2) 28 pts
  - 3, Ben King, Chew Valley Lake SC, South West Zone (1,12,10,5,9) 37 pts
- First Girl, Kate Black, Clevedon SC, South West Zone, (7,6,9,8,15) 45 pts

## Cadets

### Class Results

Fleet Size: 16 Boats

- 1, Jonathan Moss and Sophia Digwall, Rutland, East Zone (1,1,2,1,3) 8 pts
- 2, Jasmine Husband and Bethany Bridge, South Zone (10,2,3,4,4) 25 pts
- 3, Andrew Twinn and Ryan Bolger, Waldringfield, East Zone (3,17,3,2,1) 26 pts

## Mirror

### Class Results

Fleet Size: 17 Boats

- 1, James Budd and Helen Williamson, Leigh and Lowton SC, West Zone (2,2,2,6,1) 13 pts
- 2, Anna McKenzie and Nichola Brook, Royal Windermere YC, West Zone (1,5,3,1,4) 14 pts
- 3, Eloise Hansen and Kayleigh Hansen, Covenham SC, North Zone (2,4,4,2,3) 15 pts

## Dinghy Trophy Results

- 1, South West Zone
- 2, West, South East, South Zones
- 5, East Zone
- 6, Scotland
- 7, North
- 8, Wales
- 9, Northern Ireland

## Windsurfing

### 4.5m Class

Fleet Size: 11 Boards

- 1, Anthony Scales, Aquasports, South East Zone (1,1,2,1,2) 7 pts
  - 2, Edward Strange, Croft Farm, South West Zone (2,1,3,3,1) 10 pts
  - 3, David Woods, Durleigh, South West Zone, (5,5,7,4,3) 24 pts
- First Girl, Ade Cooke, Astbury Sailsport, West Zone, (11,9,11,11,10) 52 pts

### 5.5m Class

Fleet Size: 13 Boards

- 1, Graham Woods, Durleigh, South West Zone (1,1,2,2,1) 7 pts
  - 2, Peter Fey, South East Zone (3, 3, 2, 3, 2) 13 pts
  - 3, Anthony Gillan, South East Zone (4,2,4,1,3) 14 pts
- First Girl, Clare Barnard, Alton Water SC, East Zone (6,9,9,9,9) 42 pts

### 6.6/6.5m Class

Fleet Size: 14 Boards

- 1, Richard Hall, West Zone (1,1,1,1,3) 7 pts
  - 2, Tom Allbut, South West Zone (1,2,2,2,2) 9 pts
  - 3, Aaron Curtis, South East Zone (2,3,3,4,1) 13 pts
- First Girl, Beth Williamson, West Zone (7,5,6,5,4) 27 pts

### Windsurfing Team Results

- 1, South West Zone
- 2, South East Zone
- 3, West Zone
- 4, North Zone
- 5, East Zone

## Best Overall Team

- 1, South West Zone
- 2, South East and West Zones
- 4, South Zone
- 5, East Zone
- 6, North Zone
- 7, Scotland
- 8, Wales
- 9, Northern Ireland

**Andrew Twinn and Ryan Bolger, Waldringfield SC were third in the Cadets.**





# ET PICTURE GALLERY



**RUTLAND WATER SC  
COMMODORE DAVID  
WILKINSON.**



The sailing was superb and though we didn't win there were a lot of happy faces around the 'pit' area.  
 Top: beaching after a morning's racing. Centre: East team boss Colin Murray gives his young troops a pep talk.  
 Bottom: Cadet coach Sam Carter (right) was well pleased with the results achieved by Andrew Twinn, Will Branton, Ryan Bolger and Tom Lindsey.

# LOOK OUT, THE WINDMILLS ARE A-COMING!

by Chris Edwards

**IN MARCH next year, work will start on constructing an electricity generating wind-farm on the Gunfleet Sands about 2.5 nautical miles NE of the Spitway.**

It will consist of 30 wind turbines mounted on cylindrical towers standing 80 metres above Lowest Astronomical Tide and forming a rectangle some one nautical mile by 2.5 nautical miles running roughly north east-south west along the Gunfleet Sands.

The towers will be in charted water depths of less than 10 metres at LAT. A hub unit at the top of each tower houses the generator, which is driven by three blades of 55 metres radius. Power will be transmitted from a sub-station in the middle of the array of towers by a 132kv buried cable, across the Wallet to shore near the Port of London Authority's Holland radar tower.

Shore construction is scheduled to start this year, with the offshore works running from March through to October 2004. As the Environmental Co-ordinator for the eastern region of the

RYA, I have been involved in consultation on this project since October 2001 with RYA headquarters at Eastleigh, (now Hamble) Hants, and the developer, GE Wind Energy.

There have also been discussions with the Maritime Coastguard Agency, Harwich Haven Authority and recently Trinity House.

Originally we were told the towers would be 90 metres in height above Mean Sea Level (MSL), with blades of 60 metres radius. We calculated this would have given a rotor tip clearance of 25 metres above the sea at High Water Springs, even in bad sea states.

Our only concern in 2001 was that we did not consider the internationally agreed marking arrangements, as set out by Trinity House as the minimum requirement, to be adequate for leisure craft in an area where heavy sea fogs are far from infrequent.

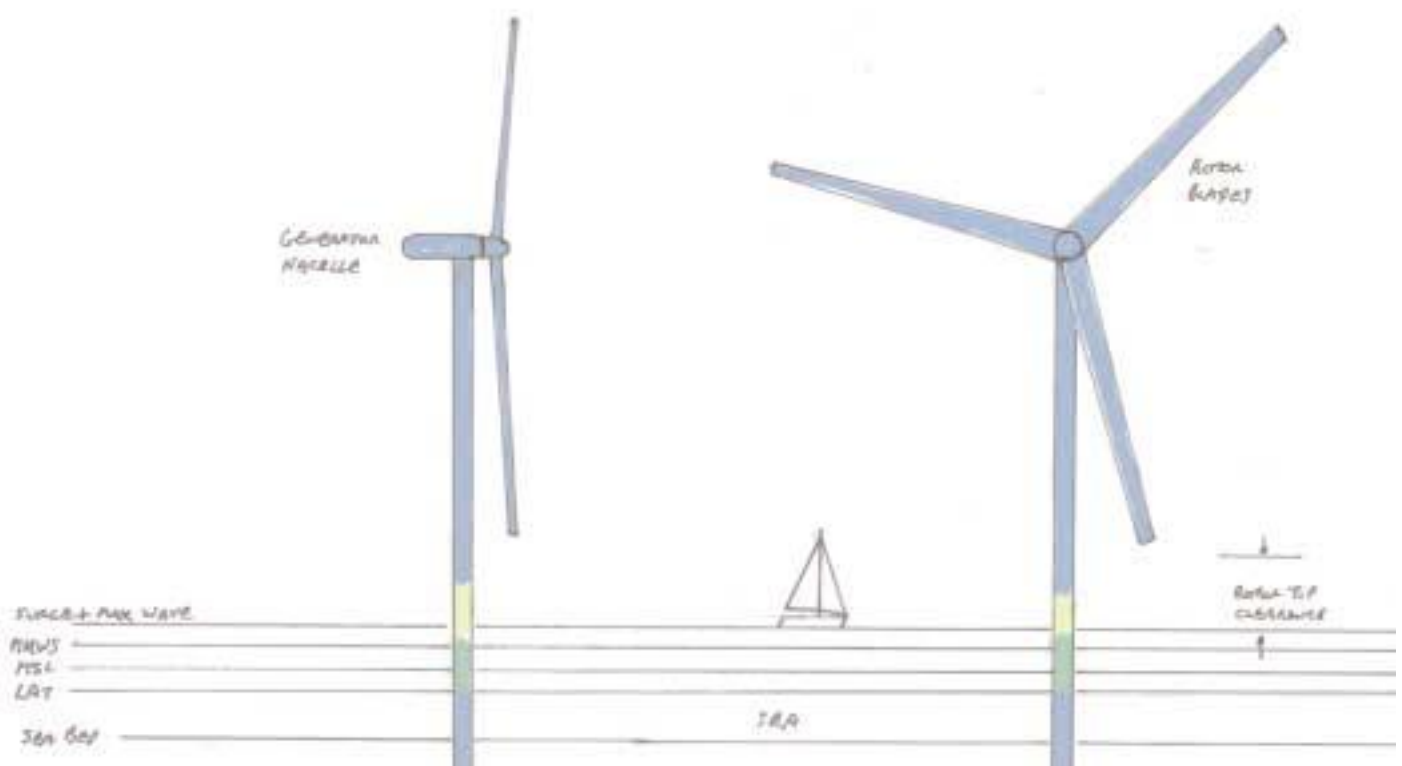
The marking specified is for each corner tower to be painted yellow to a height of 12 metres

above Mean High Water Springs and to have flashing yellow lights mounted at that height. Additional yellow lights, also at 12 metres high, are to be mounted on the towers halfway down the long sides of the farm array. Foghorns are also to be provided and possibly RACONs.

As time has gone on, the tower height has been progressively reduced to the 80 metres figure given in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project, which was issued in December 2002. We calculate that this height would give a rotor tip clearance of only 20 metres above MSL, and progressively less if we allow for the 50-year maximum significant wave height of 4.5 metres and the 50 year positive surge of 2.5 metres (e.g. for an event such as the 1953 East Coast floods).

The average yacht of 10.5 metres LOA will have an air height of 16 metres including the VHF aerial, and yachts with

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# RYA commitment to Inland Waters

**In a move that highlights its growing involvement in inland waterways boating, the RYA has brought responsibility for coordinating its Inland Navigation Panel in house.**

Neil Northmore, recently appointed to the newly-created post of Government Affairs Advisor, takes over responsibility for the Panel from external consultant Tony Ellis.

The new post follows the RYA's creation in June 2002 of a Chief Power and Motor Boat Instructor position with a specific brief to develop inland waterways training.

"Times are continuing to change for the RYA and it's important we respond to the positive messages we're receiving from the inland waterways community about the role we can play," says

RYA Chief Executive, Rod Carr.

"The appointment last year of a Chief Power and Motor Boat Instructor moved inland waterways sharply up the training and development agenda.

"We've already run an inland instructors, conference and have greatly increased our dialogue with key players like, British Waterways, the Environment Agency, the Association of Inland Navigation Authorities, the Broads Authority and others.

"That's brought encouraging noises from several directions about the contribution and experience we could bring to bear as a user's group.

"If we're to consider such a role, we must be able to deliver. Tony Ellis has done an outstanding job as a consultant, but bringing day-to-day responsibility for the Inland Navigation Panel

inside RYA House provides us with a more flexible platform for the future."

In a further development likely to please inland waterways enthusiasts, the RYA is updating and republishing its popular practical course notes for inland cruising.

## REVAMPED

The CERYA Inland Waterways Handbook, based closely on its best-selling predecessor, has been extensively revamped with input from expert advisors and several inland waterways groups, and now has new colour illustrations throughout.

It now serves the needs of all inland boaters and will continue to serve as the practical notes for courses leading to the RYA's Inland Waters Helmsmans Certificate.

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## WINDMILLS

high-aspect rigs will reach 17-18 metres. This does not give much margin of comfort.

Even worse, the developer is seeking in an Order under the Transport and Works Act 1992, to be able to reduce the rotor tip clearance to 14 metres.

It is argued that a yacht would not expect to be near enough to any tower to incur this risk, and in normal conditions this is obviously true. However, we feel it is incumbent on all concerned to consider abnormal conditions, where a yacht has no engine power available and is caught with a high sea state and poor visibility and is pushed by wind and tide into the wind-farm array.

In this situation a yellow light 12 metres up in the air is unlikely to be highly visible until the yacht is virtually on top of the tower, possibly resulting in the rotor tip hitting the mast and the loss of VHF aerial at the very least (and thus the ability to make an immediate distress call) and most probably the loss of the rig.

We have suggested the array should be marked by standard Cardinal Marker buoys some 30-50 metres further out than the corner towers.

Dialogue continues with the developer, and recently Trinity House has agreed to look again at the marking requirements for the Gunfleet wind-farm. This is particularly important because, when the array is plotted on the chart, the SE corner will be in at least 8 metres of water (which for our area almost counts as deep water) on the direct line between the Gunfleet Spit and Swin Spitway buoys!

As a result of this meeting we have now heard that Trinity House is to ask the developer to install and maintain an additional starboard hand buoy some 600 metres southwest of the mid-point of the southern boundary of the array.

Trinity House will also move the Swin Spitway buoy some 330 metres southeast of its present position. These changes will shift the East Swin clear route away from the farm array.

As sailors we are not against this offshore wind-farm, or any other, but we do have real concerns about navigational safety

for leisure craft, particularly yachts, which we are endeavouring to ensure are given full consideration by the developer and the appropriate agencies and Government departments.

**This article first appeared in Up the Creek, the newsletter of Tollesbury Cruising Club.**

## SILVER AWARDS

Two cruising stalwarts have been awarded RNLI Silver medals for their fund raising activities. They went to Ann Bartlett, chairman of the Ipswich Fund Raising Guild and Audrey Reading, the Guild's treasurer in recognition of the £30,000 the Guild has raised for the lifeboats since its inception in 1996.

Both ladies are members of Royal Harwich Yacht Club and sail with their husbands on local waters. Ann and her husband Bob have been members since 1978 and sail a Parker 27 lifting keel yacht called Sand Hopper.

Audrey Reading's association with the RNLI reaches back to 1969 when she organized her first event in Kent. Moving to Suffolk she carried on with RNLI work.

# REGION HELPS ZONE CLUBS

The first Team15 interclub of the season kicked off at Willen Lake, Milton Keynes with a bang.

Whitecap Leisure hosted the event and provided the competitors with a windsurfing demo day packed full of equipment. - Tushingham/Starboard, Bic, TWB and Niel Pryde were all on show with all the latest bits of equipment for all to try including the Team15'ers.

The weather wasn't the best but racing kicked off before the rain did for an amazing 23 entries from eight clubs - double the number of entries compared with the first event last year and quad-ruple of the number of clubs!

A lack of entries in the 6.6 fleet left Dan Harris (Team Jonti) without anybody to play with but in order to earn his prize he was given an extra lap and sailed against the 5.5 fleet. The two Zone Squad members Ryan Taylor and Jonathan Gibbs traded 1st and 2nd, Ryan just winning, whilst the rest of the fleet snapped at their heels.

The 4.5 and 3.5 fleet sailed together and formed the bulk of racers. Given a downwind blasting course around the island with a 'le mans' style finish, the racing was fast and furious with the lead often changing hands. Sam Gains (Alton Water Wipouts) sailed to the top of the 4.5 fleet and took 1st. Alex Smith, another Team Jonti player, took the trophy in the 3.5 class.

Team Jonti, only formed this year, took the team prize with a top performance across the board with a full team.

After racing finished there was a rush to grab demo kit and go for a blast while the wind steadily built. Sailors new to the sport (some had only learnt to windsurf the previous week!) got to try the very latest gear and all had big smiles coming back to the beach.

The prize giving held another surprise for the Pitsford Pirates and BTYC (who came along for a sail but didn't compete.) The RYA Eastern Region vice-Chairman, Chris Edwards, handed over to each club, a fleet of 10 boards



**Chris Edwards (centre) with Isolda Marroquin of Pitsford Pirates, Northampton (left) and Alan Webb of BTYC Sailsports with some of the youngsters who will benefit from the ex-fleet boards.**

complete with rigs, wetsuits and buoyancy aids. These had recently been the Eastern Regional fleets but had seen little use over the last two years. Chris wished the clubs well with their new equipment, safe in the knowledge that they will be seeing a lot more use.

## NUMBERS GROW

Stanborough Park, the second event held a week later, matched the numbers of competitors we had at the biggest event last year!

A hot sunny day with the wind light and flukey left the race offi-

cer at one time with the T15 flag flying in one direction and the start flag for the fleet in exactly the opposite!

Racing got under way for the 5.5 and the 6.6 fleet which sailed off down the lake, the fluky winds giving some competitors freestyle practice they didn't count on. Dan Harris (Team Jonti and a Zone Squad member) and Clare Barnard (Alton Water and another Zone Squad member) battled it out for 1st, with Dan just getting ahead.

Ryan Taylor in the 5.5 lost his sparring partner to the 6.6 fleet



**Everyone's a winner! Several of these youngsters only learnt to windsurf a few weeks ago. The Willen Lake event shows how popular this form of sailing is becoming in this region.**



## RYA GETS MAJOR CHANGE IN REPORTING BOAT ACCIDENTS

*continued next page*

**Current reporting of serious incident statistics for UK waters exaggerates the risk of recreational boating, research by a group of marine safety experts has concluded.**

The study has shown that only 8% of the total fatalities recorded on British coastal and inland waters in 2002 involved leisure boating activities.

However, media coverage of headline figures provided by the MCA (Maritime and Coastguard Agency), tended to focus on high-profile incidents such as the death of a friend of DJ Chris Evans. This made it appear that many more of the 317 reported deaths were connected to recreational boating than was actually the case.

The study by the Boating Safety Task Force, an initiative coordinated by the RYA, confirmed that

only 28 of the reported fatalities involved recreational boating. Of these, several involved sudden illness, rather than the activity being undertaken.

This compared with 263 deaths that were not linked to boating in any way. The majority of incidents involving boats related to fishing and other commercial vessels.

As a result of the findings, the MCA has agreed to review the future presentation of the data underpinning the headline figures. The two organisations will also collaborate on identifying specific problem areas through the uptake of training courses and the provision of safety guidance to recreational boaters.

The Boating Safety Task Force believes its research highlights the key role of training, rather than regulation, in reducing the overall level of incidents afloat.

"In short, Britain's safety record on boating for pleasure is much better than some of last year's headlines suggested," says Task Force coordinator and RYA chief motorboating and power-

### SUBS REMINDER

Chris Clarke, the new Treasurer of Beds and Cambs area association wants to remind members that subscriptions are now due. The cost still being £10. Chris would be grateful if cheques, made payable to RYA Beds & Cambs Area Association are sent to the following address **Chris Clarke, Orchard End, 84 Bury Road, Shillington, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 3NZ** as soon as possible, or alternatively, pass it to him at the next committee meeting on Tuesday July 22 at Grafham.

boat instructor, Jon Mendez.

"Despite our very crowded waters, the statistics prove beyond doubt that the UK's voluntary system results in fewer incidents and fatalities than in countries where recreational boating safety is governed by legislation."

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## WINDSURF NEWCOMERS

and fought newcomers, Laurie Watkins and Ashley Gains of Alton Water Wipeouts conceding a first place to each but holding on to an overall first.

Many of event one's 3.5 sailors took advantage of the light winds to move to the larger sail in the 4.5 class. The lack of wind, however gave many a hard time, but it was quickly found that those who learnt how to do a butterfly self rescue had a distinct advantage.

Class winner, James Edmunds (Redbridge Raiders), proved he had a bombproof paddling technique until the last race where Alex Smith (Team Jonti) showed that a well sailed board had the advantage no matter what the wind.

The 3.5 class was dominated at the top by Redbridge Raiders who took the top four places. This helped put them to the top of the team scores just above the

### Tail piece

**Caught on camera: East Zone Windsurf Coach Stu Meese just couldn't take the strain any more at this year's ET Final. We caught him preparing to go out for a lunchtime blast on his own board!**



Alton Water Wipeouts.

## HAVE YOUR SAY – WRITE TODAY

The DTI has received over 3,000 individual letters from people complaining that wind-farms at sea will ruin their enjoyment of the view.

They've received only one expressing concern at navigational problems and safety to

vessels – and that one letter was from the RYA. Albeit that it represented the views of upwards of 95,000 boating members, the civil servants disregard that, to them the strength of an argument lies in the number of letters for or

against in the post bag delivered to their office!

So, if you've got a view on wind farms at sea, their construction, buoyage, siting and size, then write to the DTI, your local MP and the local Press and boating magazines.

### HERE WE PUBLISH AN OPEN LETTER TO LOCAL MPs – YOU MAY WISH TO SAY MUCH THE SAME

Local MP

The announcement that a wind energy generation farm is to be built on the Gunfleet Sands off Clacton and Government proposals for many more of these farms in the Greater Wash and Thames Estuary, raise concerns that these developments pose a serious threat to our right and ability to navigate safely in leisure boats in these areas.

The developer of the Gunfleet site is understood to be seeking a deviation order under the Transport and Works Act to reduce the clearance between the tip of the generator rotor and the sea level at Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) to 14 metres. This is dangerously low. Sailing yachts of 10 metres overall length have masts in excess of 14 metres – particularly if you include a VHF radio aerial which would be vital in calling for assistance to a yacht in difficulty.

Sailors will not ordinarily sail near these installations, however, weather conditions on this coast can deteriorate rapidly, even on fine summer days, and strong winds and thick fogs are common. In these circumstances damage to sails or engine failure can and do happen. Such vessels can be swept into the wind farm and suffer serious and considerable damage and possible loss of mast and rigging.

The proposed imposition of exclusion zones round these structures will not prevent such an incursion in bad conditions and for such an accident to be deemed an illegal act cannot help the unfortunate sailor – only perhaps the developer's insurers!

The second phase of the development of these wind farms is for 300 generator towers within 12 kilometer triangles in the Greater Wash (that is from the north Norfolk coast up to Humberside) and the Thames Estuary (from Lowestoft to North Foreland). These monster sites pose a further risk by greatly increasing the distance and time small craft will need to be at sea to get round such a site and into a safe harbour.

The Thames Estuary is a complex matrix of sand banks and deep water channels used extensively by heavy commercial traffic. Yachts can and do cross these sandbanks at a number of recognised and chartered places well clear of shipping. If these larger wind farms are built on the sandbanks in water which is relatively shallow to ships, but is quite deep enough for yachts, then the latter could be forced to use the deeper channels and come into direct competition with commercial shipping – a situation neither would find satisfactory.

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) made an early representation on this question of size, stating a preference on safety grounds for smaller farms but this seems to have been swept aside.

While it is laudable to pursue alternative forms of energy the Government appears prepared to set aside our traditional and ancient rights as seafarers to sail and navigate safely with due consideration for other sea users, in a large and unique area off the East Coast. Your support is sought in ensuring that in these developments our real concerns are given full and sympathetic consideration and will not be overridden by political and commercial expediency.

**IF YOU DO WRITE TO YOUR MP, LOCAL PAPER OR THE BOATING PRESS, SEND A COPY TO THE RYA, RYA HOUSE, ENSIGN WAY, HAMBLE, SOUTHAMPTON, SO31 4YA.**