

Pembrokeshire Marine Code & Outdoor Charter Group

Marine Code

The Forum have been working for the past year with a small working group on the development of a marine code of conduct. After a great deal of information gathering and meetings with operators we are now finalising the key elements of a Pembrokeshire wide code which includes the following:-

- Generic code for all of Pembrokeshire for seals, cetaceans, birds
- Site specific codes with colour coded maps
 - a. Skomer/Skokholm
 - b. Ramsey, Bishops & Clerks
 - c. Grassholm & Smalls
 - d. Strumble Head & Dinas
 - e. Caldey Island
 - f. Stackpole Head

Having now met with all of the new and existing boat operators and most of the dive boat operators I have now been able to identify broader issues of code development and the needs of the industry as well as those more obvious conservation needs.

The project now contains a number of different elements as follows:-

- Marine Code
- Code leaflet for visitors
- Laminated generic and site card codes for boat operators for information and to display on board vessels and/or in booking centres
- Contact numbers on code for reporting irresponsible behaviour by other water users
- Training, both in the form of workshops and on site training. This would not only include training on behaviour but also on identifying cetacean species, current information on marine wildlife and general conservation information e.g., geology, etc. leading to quality information being provided for visitors including key conservation messages
- Eco-tourism marketing via websites
- Currently looking to see if local tourist information e.g., Coast to Coast would consider only advertising those operators who sign up to the code.
- Working with the WTB to place conditions on grant aid to the operators.
- Sightings recording
- Possible longer term development of an accreditation scheme for operators as in other areas of the UK.

To take the project to the next phase, the Forum are organising two meetings in March with all of the operators, one in the south and one in the north of the county. These meetings will be in the form of a workshop which will allow the operators the opportunity to discuss the code and make amendments to ensure it is workable.

Following this the operators will pilot the code over Easter before meeting up again to finalise it prior to the summer season. The Forum will then need to begin to identify potential funding sources to provide the literature and training for the operators.

In addition to this project the Forum are also involved with a number of other initiatives with potential linkages as follows:-

St Justinian's management scheme development - As part of the project a harbour group are to be established to look at the access at St Justinian's once the RNLI move their operations to a new site. Working in partnership this group of boat operators, MCA, PCC and Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group will aim to improve the existing slipway for access to the water for dive boats, marine wildlife boat trips and canoeists. The project will also be looking at access to St Justinian's and any facility requirements e.g., toilets, showers, public transport etc.

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group (POCG) – As a partnership of over 40 activity provider organisations from the public, private and voluntary sector POCG aims to develop outdoor activities sustainably, ensuring the protection of the natural environment. Over the past year the project has had a dedicated project officer to develop the group which has been funded through EDF and CCW. Work has been:

- Training – visiting each of the centres and providing on site training to staff on conservation.
- Publicity & Marketing – updating current literature, display materials, website
- Maintain POCG – developing a database of users of Pembrokeshire for educational and outdoor activities including schools & universities throughout the UK
- Raising awareness of POCG to all users of the coast
- Developing site cards and conducting risk assessments of both new and existing sites for activities

The aim of this work has been to begin to gain an understanding of capacity for activities and by developing partnerships, operators do not use the same sites at the same time and provide good quality information to their clients thus ensuring a quality experience for all.

Forum Benefits from involvement in these projects:-

- Helps to raise awareness of the Forum & encourages their involvement in Forum work e.g., Topic Groups
- Aids in sustainable development of activities in Pembrokeshire
- By working closely with the industry helps to gain understanding of some of the key issues that are facing - issues database
- By understanding the partnerships the Forum can raise awareness of them to other users of the coast
- By encouraging partnership working this aids integration of activities and provides an arena for conflict resolution
- Partnerships lead to joint initiatives therefore adding value rather than duplicating

Way Forward

With emerging WTB 'Adventure Tourism' marketing initiative it is essential that this group continues to develop at such a crucial time. Funding runs out for the POCG at the end of March 2003 and to date the project officer has not been able to secure any future funding. As much of the work of this project links into the marine code and certain aspects of the St Justinian's project, and all three require funding, would it now make sense to merge all three projects and look for one source of funding rather than three?

The project officer could provide the training for the activity providers, dive boat operators and marine wildlife boat trip operators. Maintenance of working groups, database development, marketing and provision of literature could all be done jointly. By employing just one project officer, funding could be spread over a longer period of time, freeing up the officers time from fundraising to focus on the project work.