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1. Overview

This guidance supersedes any preceding guidance during the period from 00:01 on 26th December 2020. This is based upon guidance available to date, in the absence of legislation being published.

The NI Executive has clearly outlined the restrictions over this period are to help reduce the rate of infection (R rate). As a community, the RYANI fully supports the effort against COVID 19 and we would thank the boating community for doing their part in following the spirit of the regulations and guidance.

2. Our guidance

Covid-19 preventative measures are vital in keeping you, your family and others safe and to minimise pressure on frontline services. The RYA will continue to support the national effort to control the spread of Covid-19 and assist members of the RYA family with any variations that might develop at a local level. We support the Government's Winter Plan to return to normality in a measured way and we recognise that we have a role to play by providing guidance to the RYA community on the application of the 2020 regulations.

3. Our approach

Our guidance on safe boating remains unchanged: know your limits; look after yourself; keep in touch and, above all, have a plan; we advise boaters to think carefully about these factors.

As always, we should carefully consider the potential impact that we could have on other water users when we go afloat and ensure that we do not place any unnecessary strain on the RNLI, Independent Lifeboats and other emergency services. We can do this by helping to minimise risk and by taking an extra considerate approach to our boating.

4. General guidance from NI executive

Full guidance can be found on the relevant [NI Direct webpage](#).

- **You must stay at home.** The single most important action we can all take is to stay at home to protect the health service and save lives.
- You must not leave your home unless you have a reasonable excuse (for example, for work or education purposes).
- A reasonable excuse includes 'to take exercise'.
- You should not travel more than 10 miles from your home in order to take exercise.
- Up to six people (including children of all ages) from a maximum of two households can meet outdoors, or in non-domestic indoor settings for a permitted reason, with social distancing as well as good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.
- You may not organise, operate or take part in an indoor or outdoor gathering which consists of more than six people (except for limited exemptions)

A full list of circumstances will be included in the regulations.

5. NI Executive Advice on Exercising and Sport

Exercising outdoors

- You should minimise time spent outside your home.
- You can leave your home to exercise in a public outdoor place:
 - by yourself
 - with the people you live with
 - with your bubble
 - or, when on your own, with one person from another household

You **should not travel more than 10 miles from your home** in order to take exercise. If, when you arrive at your proposed destination, there are crowds which will make social distancing difficult you should find an alternative place to exercise.

Sporting activities

- Indoor and outdoor sport is not permitted, other than at elite level.
- Elite training and competition can continue, both indoors and outdoors.
- Elite sporting events must be held behind closed doors without spectators.
- The definition of an elite athlete is set out in the regulations
- Horse racing can take place behind closed doors, in line with the elite sport regulations and animal welfare considerations.
- All sports facilities such as leisure centres, gyms, health clubs, swimming pools, tennis courts, golf courses, fitness and dance studios must close.
- Other facilities, including activity centres, equestrian centres (access for the purpose of animal welfare is permitted), marinas, and venues relating to motor sport and water sport must also remain closed.
- You cannot participate in personal one-to-one training sessions or group activities such as running or cycling.

- Physical education delivered by or for schools, pre-schools and other education providers is permitted to continue.

6. RYANI boating guidance

The RYANI is seeking further clarification to confirm exactly what the new guidance fully means for boating activities. Pending this clarification, RYANI's current interpretation is that boating as a form of outdoor exercise is permitted as long as:

- you are able to safely access, launch and recover your boat from a public space;
- you avoid travelling more than 10 miles from your home;
- it is undertaken as single or single household/support bubble crew; and,
- if the relevant waterway authorities permit recreational boating.

In addition:

- All sports facilities (which includes yacht clubs, marinas and watersports centres) must remain closed.
- Group sizes in outdoor gatherings should not exceed 6 (note: this now includes children of all ages).
- Individuals should check venue access to undertake any essential boat maintenance or to prepare boats for winter.
- You should not stay overnight other than at the place where you live, overnighing onboard is currently not acceptable, unless a) it is your main residence or b) in an emergency.
- School sport may take place but only as part of organised school activity.
- Recreational and vocational shore-based courses can still run, however, this should be carried out virtually.
- There are continuing exemptions for elite athletes for them to train or compete - named RYANI High Performance or Performance Academy athletes may therefore continue to train.

7. Insurance

The RYA's advice to all our members is that you should check your insurance policy with your insurers no matter what the policy itself actually states, particularly if your policy pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic measures and the latest restriction are preventing you from visiting your boat. Our understanding is that most insurers are willing to extend the period when boats are left unattended and we would be surprised if any insurer refused to extend this provision, although there is likely to be a condition that the vessel must have been adequately maintained prior to lockdown.

8. Further Information

Full guidance on the restrictions can be found on the NI Direct page [here](#).

The SportNI return to sport page can be found [here](#).

Further advice from RYA e.g. on entering and returning to the UK can be found [here](#)

9. RYANI Office

RYANI staff continue to work from home and certain aspects of RYANI activity have been curtailed with outlined restrictions in place.

The above guidance to members is the RYANI's interpretation of the NI executive's position with regards to the new restrictions for Northern Ireland commencing 8th January 2021. Although we strive to ensure that all of the information is accurate and up-to-date, this cannot be guaranteed due to the developing and fast-moving situation. RYA members should review the Executive's full guidance themselves and follow the latest announcements at www.nidirect.gov.uk