



Submission to Department of Transport on:

Statement of Strategy 2011-2013

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Introduction

ISA:

The ISA is the National Governing Body for recreational and competitive activities involving engine and sail powered craft in Ireland.. As national governing body, the ISA promotes participation and co-ordinates activities in Ireland on both inland and coastal waters. The ISA constantly monitors and reviews developments in sailing and boating, and represents the interests of its members and other sailing and boating enthusiasts, with government and international agencies.

The ISA also develops and administers a range of training and other services to support both ISA members and others involved in sailing and boating of all types, which currently includes:

- Dinghy sailing
- Cruiser sailing
- Motor cruising (Coastal and Inland Waterways)
- Powerboating
- Windsurfing
- Personal Watercraft

The ISA's training schemes are formally recognised by the Department of Transport, and in addition the ISA is responsible for the training and accreditation for the International Certificate of Competency and the Commercial Endorsement for Passenger Boat Drivers on behalf of the Department.

The ISA has 25,000 members and represents the interests of an estimated *143,000 participants in the various types of craft mentioned.

The ISA has a network of 276 Clubs, Training Centres and other Affiliated Organisations.

Our organisation welcomes the opportunity to submit our views on a Statement of Strategy 2011-2013 for the Department of Transport. Our aim is to work proactively to support the Maritime Safety Directorate within the Department of Transport in the promotion and development of safe and responsible participation within the marine leisure sector.

*Marine Institute National Survey of Water-Based Activity 2003

ISA Vision for a 3 Year Strategy

An inclusive strategy that improves the access to, and facilitates the use of, inland and coastal waters for recreation - a strategy that does not unnecessarily restrict participation.

ISA Priorities

The ISA's priorities to be addressed in the strategy in relation to Marine leisure activities include:

- **Use of regulation only where necessary, appropriate and enforceable**
- **Education and Awareness Programmes**
- **Inter-Departmental Cooperation**
- **Investment in Infrastructure**
- **Focus on the Opportunities**

Use of regulation only where necessary, appropriate and enforceable

In recent years more and more people are recognising the natural asset that is our coastline and inland waterways. This has lead to a significant increase in numbers taking to the water, and the growth of an industry providing much needed employment in small businesses in rural areas around our coastline and inland waters.

Until recently boating activity has been allowed to take place in a relatively unregulated environment, and it is this unregulated environment that makes it affordable, accessible and enjoyable. As numbers of people taking to the water increases, there has been pressure to respond to incidents involving recreational craft by introducing regulation.

Due to the nature of the activities and the extent of our coastline and waterways, it is very apparent that 'blanket' regulation does little or nothing to improve safety standards, unless it is appropriate and enforceable. Regulation generally serves to restrict responsible boat owners from participating in their chosen activity and has little impact on the irresponsible participants.

Before introducing regulation to manage water based activities we would ask the Department to:

- consider carefully the costs and complexities of effectively enforcing regulation
- consult with stakeholders (who have knowledge and expertise) to identify the real issues and self regulating solutions
- assess whether any proposed regulation genuinely fulfils the objectives to improve safety standards, without unnecessarily restricting responsible participation.

Education and Awareness Programmes



In general people involved in boating activities have a desire to participate responsibly. They have respect for their own safety, the environment, other water users and people who may be affected (directly or indirectly) by their activities. This culture exists as a result of a well structured awareness and education campaign driven by the ISA, and other agencies with an interest in watersports. The majority of those who behave irresponsibly do so through ignorance and/or a lack of training.

We would like to see the department supporting this policy of voluntary education delivered by agencies such as the ISA, as a cost effective means of increasing participation and improving safety standards.

Inter-Departmental Cooperation

As there is no longer a Department of the Marine, we have in recent years seen the marine leisure interests being fragmented across different Government departments (eg. transport, sport & tourism, environment, agriculture & fisheries, education). The result is that there is little or no co-ordinated strategy to promote or develop the sector. As an island nation we have undoubtedly some of the best coastline and waterways in the world, and where other countries are capitalising on the natural asset, Ireland is being left behind at a significant cost to the state in lost revenue and employment opportunities.

The ISA would like to see a greater political awareness of the potential of marine recreation tourism as a significant contributor to the economy spanning numerous Government Departments; We believe the strategy should encourage greater inter-departmental communication and cooperation to ensure the benefits are properly realised.

Investment in Infrastructure

As we see a decline in some of the traditional marine related industry, it presents many opportunities to develop an industry that has the potential to grow and attract employment opportunities in rural areas that are struggling and significant revenue from national and international tourism. In order to realise the potential, there is a need for greater investment in infrastructure, to improve access to the inland and coastal waters and enable greater numbers to enjoy the natural amenities the country has to offer. We would like to see a strategy to encourage the development of marine leisure infrastructure.

Focus on the Opportunities

As a general comment we would like to see a positive strategy that concentrates its efforts on the opportunities and how to achieve them, rather than the obstacles and how to overcome them.

We would like to see greater interaction with agencies that have an interest in developing the marine leisure sector, and utilise their expertise to develop initiatives that encourage safe and responsible participation in water based activities.