

Menai Strait Regattas 2021 – Questions and Answers about the cancellation

- Why have the Regattas Committee cancelled the 2021 Regattas?
 - The Regattas Committee had been preparing for the return of the Regattas in 2021 in compliance with the COVID-19 regulations in Wales. The Regattas can involve 80 boats with 2 or 3 crew each, plus officials running the races and safety boats, and supporters on the shore. So there could be 250 or more people who in some way are connected to the Regattas. The Regattas are therefore considered to be a “large event” which exceeds the current limit of 50 people for organised activities. The organisers (the Clubs and the Regattas Committee) have to demonstrate that they will comply with the COVID rules for events.
 - We developed our plans using the RYA Cymru advice and we presented our COVID Risk Assessment to both the Ynys Mon Safety Advisory Group and the Gwynedd Events Safety Advisory Group (G-SAG).
 - In the end the risks during the actual sailing could have been managed. It was the requirements placed on us for managing the non-sailing activities that were more difficult – limiting contact while on the launches; on the pier and pontoons; safety measures in the clubs; etc. where compliance was hard to guarantee. The liabilities that the nominated event organisers carry with the possibility of fixed notice penalties of up to £10000 for non-compliance was not something the Regattas Committee or the Clubs were able to contemplate.
 - Therefore sadly the decision was taken that organising a formal Regatta in the way we are all used to would not be possible in 2021.
- Have the Committee done everything they can to find a way to satisfy the rules?
 - The Committee and the Clubs have tried to find workable solutions to all the requirements the SAGs have asked of us. Limiting number of people on the launches at any time during boarding, closing off the area around the start line, frequent cleaning of everything, and many other safety measures have all been proposed.
 - Limiting the number of people on the launches would require longer getting aboard and back to shore, impacting on the length of the races.
 - The bottom line is that as event organiser we have to ensure compliance which would involve appointing COVID co-ordinators for every day as well as people needed to support cleaning tasks. And the liability for non-compliance would fall on the Regattas and the Clubs.
- Sailing is a socially distanced sport – why is there a problem?
 - While the contact between people during racing can be easily limited to groups (family or household) that comply with the rules, there are problems ensuring this is maintained during before and after the racing. Groups of people in the launches, gathering on the pontoons or waiting on the pier or the harbour wall lead to accusations of non-compliance leading to difficult discussions with the authorities.
 - The Regattas have to be treated as an large organised event and cannot be compared with normal Club racing.
- Why can the decision not be made later so that further relaxation of the rules can be taken into account, maybe allowing the Regattas to go ahead?

- Although the COVID situation is improving, there are concerns about new variants slowing the removal of all restrictions. The rules and regulations in Wales are (currently) tighter than those applying in England and changes are not always made at the same time. We do not anticipate that delaying the decision would overcome the fundamental issues that we face in running this year's Regattas.
- We appreciate that competitors (and officials) at the Regattas need some certainty to allow them to plan for the summer. In 2020 we proposed to make the decision in late June but had feedback from many competitors that this was too late as it was often necessary to confirm accommodation, plan transport, arrange crews etc. before the end of May.
- Can we still come to Beaumaris and Caernarfon for a holiday without taking part in the Regattas?
 - As individual families and groups you should be able to visit Wales as long as you comply with the Welsh Government rules that apply to tourists and visitors at the time of your visit. These are continuing to change so you should carefully make sure that your visit fits within the guidelines.
- Can we sail our boat?
 - Sailing is permitted under the current Welsh rules providing you follow the COVID rules for outdoor activities in Wales.
- What is happening with other events?
 - We are not the only event that has had to cancel. The 2021 Abersoch Dinghy Week that would have taken place at the same time as the first week of the Regattas has already been cancelled. SCYC (the event organiser) worked very hard with the help of RYA Cymru to agree a workable plan with G-SAG but have still concluded they could not run the event successfully this year.
 - Some other events have not yet made a decision. However accepting the risk assessment and management measures may be easier for 1 or 2 day events than for our 2 week event.
 - Event in England are working under a different set of requirements and are not an indication that similar events in Wales can take place.
- What about the 2022 Regattas?
 - We are already planning for the 2022 Regattas to start on Monday 1st August and run until Saturday 13th August 2022. By then we hope that the COVID restrictions will no longer be necessary (or at least significantly reduced). We will develop the risk assessment and COVID management measures that would be adopted for the 2022 event and will discuss these with the Gwynedd SAG and Ynys Mon SAG at the appropriate time to agree our plans are compliant with whatever regulations are expected to remain at that time.
 - We all look forward to getting back on the water for the Regattas in 2022 and hope that the world has managed to get COVID under sufficient control by then to allow us to enjoy the event we love!!