

Adventure Activities Licensing Authority - Changes 1 April 2020

The contract for the Adventure Activities Licensing Service, which is currently held by Tourism Quality Services Ltd (TQS), ends on 31 March 2020. HSE recently announced Adventure Risk Management Services (Adv-RMS) as the successful bidder for the contract to provide inspection services for the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA). The new contract begins on 1 April 2020.

HSE is grateful to Sir Brooke Boothby, John Walsh-Heron and to Marcus Bailie and his team at TQS for the many years of dedicated service they have given to AALA and the adventure activities industry.

We are looking forward to working with Tim Morton of Adv-RMS, who is currently employed as Deputy Head of Inspection at TQS.

Tim will be running the new contract, and we are already in discussion with him to ensure a smooth transition.

What is changing?

From 1 April 2020 HSE will take over the administrative function of AALA and will be the main point of contact for all providers. Every application, report and decision will come through HSE and all enquiries and complaints will be handled by HSE. Where enquiries are of a technical nature, HSE will consult Adv-RMS as needed.

Application Process

The core business of AALA will remain, however HSE will introduce an updated licence application form together with guidance to assist Providers with the new process.

An important change is that HSE will place greater emphasis on the thoroughness of applications and the documentation that explains Providers' safety arrangements. This will mean that inspectors can examine the paperwork at an early stage, allowing the site visit to focus on the practical aspects of the adventure activities provided. Comprehensive, straightforward guidance will be made available to explain the information applicants need to submit.

This approach will help providers, and especially first-time applicants, focus on what is required to ensure safety, before they attempt to obtain a licence. HSE believes this will result in fewer refusal notifications and delays to licensing decisions. Clearing the paperwork at an early stage will also allow for better scheduling of visits and consequently, fewer follow-up visits will be required.

Providers wishing to renew a licence will want to avoid a gap between the expiry of the existing licence and commencement of the new one. To do this they will need to ensure that the completed application and fee is received by HSE at least 3 months before the existing licence expires.

Please be aware that the HSE may need to contact Providers for any missing information before the application is deemed complete, therefore it is advisable to allow some additional time for this, and for the payment to clear.

Applications will only be viewed as accepted once the application form, the supporting documentation and the licence fee have been received.

Site Visits

All first-time applicants will receive a site visit. Renewal applicants can expect a site visit too. However, if a provider seeking renewal can demonstrate competence, compliance and commitment to

maintaining robust Health and Safety management systems through their application, and the inspector is of the opinion that a site visit is unnecessary to verify this, inspectors can recommend a licence is granted without visiting. When licences are granted in this way, AALA reserve the right to carry out inspections during the lifetime of the licence. HSE will devise criteria for inspections outside the application process.

Ongoing support

Providers will still be able to ask for advice during the application process, but the inspector should not be regarded as an additional technical advisor or ongoing consultancy service. Providers must ensure they have access to competent advice (a requirement of the regulations) where it is needed.

Providers will receive a guide to the application review process and a quarterly newsletter from Adv-RMS, covering sector news on various topics such as equipment, qualifications, standards and other relevant matters.

Providers should also keep up to date by, for example, reading information provided by National Governing Bodies etc.

Service Users

Users will be unaffected by these changes and should not see any difference in provision or diminution of the assurances provided by the licence. Providers will still be able to display the AALA logo on websites etc.

Summary

What's Changing?

- The application process – documentation will be examined before, rather than during the site visit;
- Applications will only be accepted and progressed once payment and supporting information is received.
- Adv RMS will only provide the inspection service, i.e. all applications, complaints and queries to be sent to HSE (contact details will be available on the HSE website from 25 March 2020).

What isn't changing?

- The scope of adventure activities covered
- The reach of the legislation
- The licence fee
- The standards to be met in order to obtain a licence

Existing licence holders are being provided with information about how the changes will affect them, and information on key dates and how to make an application. Existing licences will remain valid until the expiry date stated on the licence.

More information will be available soon on the AALA webpages.

Questions should be submitted to aala@hse.gov.uk