

Who are Adventure-RMS and why there is no longer a licensing service

Prior to 31st March 2020 the HSE contracted out all the operational and administrative functions of the adventure activities licensing scheme to TQS Ltd operating as the Adventure Activities Licensing Service. From 1st April 2020 HSE have contracted Adventure-RMS to provide an inspection service only. These new arrangements are significantly different, and Adventure-RMS are contracted as a reactive inspectorate and not a pro-active service. We are required to undertake the review of applications forwarded by the AALA (HSE) and provide them with a report, including a decision on the licence application. All other functions (fee handling, administration, complaint handling, public information and sector liaison) previously delivered by TQS are now completed by the AALA itself. Adventure-RMS has a role in supporting the AALA (when requested) with technical expertise and advice in relation to enquiries, complaints, and questions; and in helping to review the existing guidance notes available to providers, their clients, and members of the public

Adventure Risk Management Services (Adventure-RMS) is managed by Tim Morton, the former deputy head of inspections for TQS (the licensing service). Tim has worked in adventure activities for over thirty years as a climber, paddler and sailor. He has run his own centre, worked in local authority provision, been a head of centre for a charity, a freelance instructor, a senior AALA inspector and an expert witness. He has delivered National Governing Body training and assessment for Mountain Training, British Canoeing and the Royal Yachting Association.

Adventure-RMS provide inspection services in adventure activities against regulations, standards and established criteria. It currently provides these services as the AALA inspectorate, appointed by the HSE, and under a separate contract, as the Adventure Training Safety Regulator inspectorate appointed by the Ministry of Defence. A team of consulting inspectors and inspectors, spread across the UK, undertake inspections. Around half of the inspectorate were previously AALA inspectors for TQS. This inspection team is supported by liaison officers, consultants, and the head of service.

Whilst the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004 (amended in 2007) remain exactly the same, the process of reviewing licence applications (new or renewed) has changed. These changes effect both the application process (provided by the AALA) and the review of applications (undertaken by Adventure-RMS). The Adventure-RMS application review process is, in part, designed to provide multiple opportunities for providers to demonstrate that their arrangements are suitable and sufficient and, as a result, avoid a situation in which the AALA might need to take any action other than issuing a licence. The process includes a core inspection, (document review, on-line research, remote communication with the provider) and, when required, a further inspection (site visit), to consider how activities are delivered and managed in practice. There are several opportunities within the process for the inspector to provide feedback, some of which may later appear in their reports but more often will be verbal observations and comments from their review of what a provider does and how they do it. A full guide to the application review process is provided to applicants and available to all on request.

The aim of the adventure activities licensing scheme is to give assurance that good safety management practice is being followed so that young people can continue to have opportunities to experience exciting and stimulating activities outdoors (Paragraph 1, L77, Guidance from the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004) . The aim of Adventure-RMS is to undertake application reviews in an efficient and professional manner, which reflects this statement and which, when possible, provides additional value to the provider.

