



Our Journey 2004 – 2013

As a disabled sailor I was looking for somewhere to sail within a reasonable distance from my home in south Essex. My nearest venues were Ipswich, Suffolk or Surrey Docks in south London, both a considerable distance away.

I looked at several locations in Essex and felt that Hanningfield reservoir was the only suitable venue as a sailing site.

I approached Essex and Suffolk Water in November 2004 regarding disabled sailing on Hanningfield reservoir with a proposal to start a disabled sailing project.

As this is a sensitive SSSI site various interested parties were contacted to gain their approval of our venture. This included the RSBP, Natural England, Essex Wildlife and the fishing clubs. By this time I had persuaded other disabled sailors to join my crusade.

An agreement was reached with ESW in March 05, which allowed us to sail on two afternoons every week between April and August, but we were not permitted to leave our sailing boats or rescue/safety boat on site and were required to remove them from site each day and return the following day.

Sailing commenced on the reservoir, but only on three occasions during that year due to the difficulty of organising the transportation of the boats plus the safety craft and arranging helpers on each of the days we sailed.

Part of the agreement was to have a bird survey. so we employed a suitable consultant to carry this out. This was to determine the effect that sailing craft had on the wildlife, but as there was only a maximum of half a dozen birds on the water at any time the RSBP inspector reported minimal interference.

At the end of the season a meeting was arranged with ESW to discuss our problems and to extend the sailing agreement to the forthcoming year.

ESW agreed to continue the sailing in 06, using the same remit as 05, but would not extend the sailing season in anyway and still refused to allow boats to be left there on a permanent basis.

06 was a difficult year due to illness and no sailing was able to be carried out.

July 07 is when Tony Yapp came on board and his input was gratefully received, but sadly passed away the following year.

Initially we approached ESW again for a new agreement for 08 season and again based upon a small independent group with minimal outside interference, but came away with exactly the same result as before, no good.

This is when we changed tactics. In February 08 we contacted the local councillor which led to Chelmsford Boro Council 's involvement and Essex CC inclusion plus input from RYA Sailability.

Sailing For Disabled People

Hanningfield Sailability Project, 9 Elham Drive, Basildon, Essex SS132NR Tel: 01268 581358
Charity Reg. No. 1084351 RYA Sailability/Hanningfield Project



After several months a meeting was arranged with ESW, Chelmsford BC and ourselves which produced a positive reaction, agreeing to the format of a permanently based disabled sailing venue.

A further meeting was held in Nov. 2008 between ourselves and ESW plus Chelmsford BC planning dept. engineers to determine the "footprint" (referring to the amount of land required). It was at this meeting. ESW announced that they were looking to provide a building for the fishermen to hold their club meetings plus a unit for ESW to use as an alternative registration room for the fishermen and by integrating all three parties, they could achieve all their desired goals

The next meeting we attended with ESW was in March 2009 which included their property development consultant, to determine the structure of the building and our requirements, plus incorporating all the three parties in their separate sections. It was also mentioned that an environmental impact survey may be required.

In October 2010 we informed that outline planning permission has been requested by ESW for a single storey building, 18m x 9m, to be erected in the existing compound area. Permission was granted by CBC, who also stated that an environmental impact survey will not be necessary.

In May 2011 tenders for the building works were submitted but funds were found to be inadequate and the project deferred for 12 months.

September 2011 further correspondence from ESW was received stating that a further 'bird survey' would be required as requested from Natural England.

An order was placed with the builder in July 2012 and in December saw the start of the new building, but immediately problems were encountered in the ground works. This required the foundations needing to be 'piled', putting the project back 3 months and completion of our new building was finally achieved on the 7 August 2013.

A bird count survey was arranged with ESW to coincide with our time on the water, as required by Natural England.

The following week we had 5 boats and our rescue craft on site and sailing finally commenced for the remainder of our contracted season, (April-August), and we finished with a total of four sessions, of which we managed to get on three occasions, but at least we were on the water and are now able to leave our boats on site thro'out the year..

Goal achieved.

So where are we now?

First and foremost we have negotiated a new agreement with ESW for 2014 which we are told is in the hands of their legal dept. and are confident that all is O.K.

We must establish a core unit to produce a detailed structure for the project and outline its objective.

Fund raising must become a top priority during this winter.

In the meantime we are using RYA Sailability charity reg. number. This is a system implemented by them, which allows newly formed clubs gain registration with minimal fuss and would automatically put us high on their list for sponsorship.

Over the last 6 months we have had a good relationship with ESW staff on site, namely the rangers, who have been very helpful and are keen for us to make it a success.

Sailing For Disabled People

Hanningfield Sailability Project, 9 Elham Drive, Basildon, Essex SS132NR Tel: 01268 581358
Charity Reg. No. 1084351 RYA Sailability/Hanningfield Project

