



# The Ambassador Business Scheme

A guide to help properties  
work more affectively  
with activity providers.



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## **The Ambassador Business Scheme**

The Ambassador Business Scheme is an idea that proposes a new way of working with activity providers who use National Trust property to promote and operate their businesses. The basis of the idea is to move away from the traditional “Tenant – Landlord” style of relationship and work co-operatively to provide a higher level of outdoor property offer.

The outdoor activity sector is very competitive with some companies, such as PGL, working nationwide or Sunsail working internationally for example. One of the most competitive markets however is in the south west; properties based in this region are therefore in the prime position to be able to embrace this.

For the property, choosing who to work with can be a minefield, however the best place to start is by identifying if there are already companies working on that property’s land. A list of AALA approved businesses is also available on the AALA website ( <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/>), see AALA section below. It is important to identify the company’s ethos and ensure that they share the same values as the Trust. It is also important to choose a company who value the work the Trust does, understands the importance of it and whose concern isn’t focussed entirely on a licence to operate, this way the property will be able to generate more engagement value out of the relationship.

It is recommended that exclusivity be offered as part of an ambassador business deal: for example, one surf school per beach or one coasteering group per area of coastline, this avoids comparisons and inconsistencies between licence holders and the activity providers are likely to value further their relationship with the property.

Financially a licence agreement of this nature can be very rewarding; however properties should take advice from Outdoor Consultants with regards to charging and prices. Unfortunately credible relationships that have taken an extensive period to build have been damaged as a result of unrealistic expectations. Damaging a relationship like this between a property and an activity provider (AP) can have significant detrimental knock-on effects within the outdoor activity sector. It should be noted that very tight knit communities within these activity groups exist and that reputations can be affected easily, particularly where the old perceptions of the Trust may, in-part, remain. The lessons learnt from this is that openness, transparency and good communications between both parties is vital, even if ultimately an agreement is not achieved, there will be an increase in awareness and respect. Consistency between similar properties should also be encouraged. The Outdoor Consultants are in the best position to advise on this.

In addition to a licence fee a payback scheme can be added, for example £1 per person booking is donated to the Trust. This can add up over the course of a season to more than the value of the licence fee.

**Safety:**

Depending on the activity there are a number of qualifications and safety issues that need to be considered in the licence. All activity companies however should provide the National Trust property with copies of the following:

- **SOP** (standard operating procedures): These should be a fairly detailed and comprehensive list of procedures for various scenarios, locations and sea states, and should cover every procedure from every day running of the activity to potentially dangerous situations. This should also include information about the number of people per group, equipment on the ground, safety equipment, risks and communications. Depending on the type of activity the recommended group size will change. However it should be recognised that for the majority of activity groups of more than 8-10 people per instructor are considered unsafe. The British Canoe Union (BCU) stipulate that no instructor should be with more than 8 people at a time, the British Surfing Association (BSA) suggests that the maximum number for a surf school group should be 10 per instructor as does the National Coasteering Charter. There are companies coasteering in Pembrokeshire for example that will take a stag party of 40 people out at once, and I would recommend this something that the Trust should explicitly avoid allowing their licence holders to do.
- **List of equipment:** Each governing body will have a list of recommended equipment that the instructor should take out with them, for the majority of APs this should include a first aid kit and a VHF radio and mobile phone if there isn't access to an emergency telephone.
- **EAP** (Emergency Action Plans): Depending on the location this should include escape routes. It is suggested by the National Coasteering Charter for example that you shouldn't have to swim with or carry anyone further than ½ a mile from access to help therefore each coasteering route should have a number of escape plans. Escape plans should have co-ordinates clearly marked on them for road access and potential helicopter landing zone (HLZ), this should all be clearly marked on an OS map of the area.

For beach locations used for surfing or hiring out kayaks an EAP needs to be agreed. This should have a postcode and co-ordinates listed for at least two HLZs, an ambulance liaison point, access to water (in case of fire), emergency telephone and any gates that might be padlocked and codes for them, and an emergency rendezvous point.

- **Qualifications:** Each instructor should have the minimum instructor qualifications that each governing body recommends. There are a number of activities however where an official governing body does not necessarily exist, for example Coasteering. Each governing body that does exist has a specific list of qualifications available on their websites

(see appendix 2) however qualifications for non-governing body activities to look for are:

A: Surfing: ASI qualifications and/or BSA coaching certificate. It should be noted that the BSA no longer exists and that at present the governing body Surfing GB is currently readdressing the standard of the BSA coaching qualification with a view to changing its criteria. The ASI qualification is recognised internationally however and for the time being is considered the better qualification.



B: Coasteering: Coasteering does not as yet have an official governing body and therefore does not have a specific qualification attached to it. However The National Coasteering Charter consists of a group of outdoor adventure enthusiasts, safety specialists including representatives of the RNLI and SLSGB, and coasteering providers who all have a genuine interest in the safety of the activity. They have put together a list of pre-requisite skills that the Trust should consider as a recommended list. These documents: “Base Level Skills and Competencies for Coasteering Guides” and “Best Practice Safety Guidance for Coasteering Providers” are available on the intranet. SLSGB have also come up with a Coasteering-Lifesaving award, details of which are also available on the intranet. The Trust should ensure that their coasteering providers are members of the National Coasteering Charter and if they intend to lead groups out that include people under the age of 18 they should be AALA members. (See AALA section below). It is recommended also that the Trust should ensure that if Coasteering is going to be taking place on Trust land then the activity provider should liaise with the MCA before-hand to ensure that they are fully aware of any specific guidelines or hazards in that area. This should form part of their licence.

**AALA:** The Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (also know as AALS – Adventure Activity Licensing Service)

"The aim of adventure activities licensing is to provide assurances to the public about the safety of those activity providers who have been granted a licence. In this way it is expected that young people will be able to continue to enjoy exciting and stimulating activities outdoors without being exposed to avoidable risks of death or disabling injury.

A licence indicates that the provider has been inspected by the Adventure Activities Licensing Service on behalf of the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, with particular attention being paid to their safety management systems with young people, and has been able to demonstrate compliance with nationally accepted standards of good practice in the delivery of adventure activities to young people, with due regard to the benefits and risks of the activity." – David Ashton, Chair of AALA.



Adventure activities licensing has been in place since April 1996. It is currently sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Adventure activities licensing is delivered jointly by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (a role undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive since 1 April 2007) and the Adventure Activities Licensing Service, which is under contract to the Health and Safety Executive to deliver licensing day to day on their behalf. For more information go to: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala>

**Conservations Concerns:**

For activities such as surfing or kayaking the only issues with regards to conservation should be with regards to access to and from a point of entry/exit, or in the case of kayaking, potentially with various points along a trail. Properties should stipulate that all sensitive areas be avoided but should spend time educating the AP on the issues and points of interest. The AP should be encouraged to pass on this information and educate its own customers of the Trust's work. It is essential that activity providers spend time with the Rangers on the ground and volunteer with them for at least one day, the Rangers will become the first point of contact for the AP and therefore it's

essential that they form a relationship whereby the Ranger is easily approachable.

For activities such as coastering, the property may wish to present the AP with a sensitivity map highlighting areas to stay away from, seasonal changes and wildlife hotspots and highlights. “Eco-Steering” should be encouraged, where by the AP promotes the conservation work of the Trust along the route and draws attention to the environmental significance, habitats and points of interest along the way. They may also want to add activities like a species count or beach litter pick too. There are new guidelines with regards to coastering available on the intranet.

**Affinity Marketing:**

*“Affinity Marketing (or Partnership Marketing) is a targeted way of marketing products and services. By linking complementary brands, it can develop them into lasting partnerships and strategic alliances”*



All ambassador businesses, particularly those with exclusive use of an area, must sign up to using the brand to promote the Trust on all marketing materials, websites, vehicles and equipment including helmets, paddles, boats and rash vests. They must also provide the Trust with at least two free activity sessions per year and run events in conjunction with the Trust that the property advertises and supervises for example kayaking trips. These events are an opportunity to tailor the occasion to the Trust’s needs, it’s a chance to educate and promote the Trust to a whole new audience and provide visitors with a fantastic experience. APs can also provide safety cover at events, for example surf competitions, this can be worked into the licence also. For information about running events of this nature and event safety standards see the events guide on the intranet or contact your Outdoors Consultant. APs with websites that advertise accommodation should also provide a link to the NT holiday cottage website as well as a link to the property pages. See example below of link icon currently seen on: [www.kayakingcornwall.co.uk](http://www.kayakingcornwall.co.uk)



In return the property must advertise the AP as a preferred business on their webpages, and where relevant in the press. Properties should also offer their POS to use to advertise their business.

Marketing by association plays a huge part in the ambassador business scheme, the Trust can use the AP to spread the brand beyond properties boundaries, reaching into an area of the market still not associated with the Trust.

See Appendix 1 below for examples that could be used as to how properties and activity providers can work together, from a properties point of view.

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## **Appendix 1:**

### **Case Study A - Porthleven Cycle Hire (Low work, medium return – Future Ambassador Business)**

The relationship the Penrose Estate has with Porthleven Cycle Hire grew from a chance meeting to discuss if cycling was allowed on the estate to preferred business to much more and it's still growing. Porthleven cycle hire are a local company based in a small town on the perimeter of the Penrose estate. They started in 2009 and immediately approached the Trust as an organisation that they wanted to work with as a "trusted" brand and a provider of spaces that they could utilise.

Our first agreement was informal and based on them working with us to help us provide cycle trails on the estate in exchange for us advertising them in our holiday cottages and relevant holiday cottage pages of the website. It has since grown in the last year to a more formal arrangement with them providing a cycle trail leaflet for the estate that is co-branded and includes information about the National Trust's work. They also provide branding and Trust advertising on their website as well as holiday cottage advertising. They have run a course for our rangers to become qualified cycle guides and we are still using them as consultants to establish the Penrose Estate as a real centre for family cycling.

Although this relationship still remains informal, both parties agree that a future, more formal model, includes the investigation of setting up a satellite cycle hire hub on the estate and introducing a pay back scheme where by all bikes hired to visitors include a small donation to the National Trust. We are also hoping to include in our future working partnership branded bikes and equipment.

### **Case Study B - West Cornwall Adventure at Mullion Cove (Moderate work/high return – Ambassador Business)**

West Cornwall Adventure were primarily a water sports activity provider, they set up their business in late 2009 and approached the Trust principally as a land owner. WCA were the first company we worked with using this new approach and we were able to offer them exclusive use of a location to run kayaking and coasteering activities from as well as a location for their surf school. In exchange the property staff also set up a National Trust Surf Club with WCA, all their equipment was branded from paddles and helmets to rash vests, all leaflets and the WCA website were branded and had links advertising holiday cottages and the local property web pages.

We worked together to provide 3 joint press releases a year, they also provided two event safety cover days a year that allowed us to use them for our junior surf competitions. This meant we didn't incur a cost getting an alternative company or the RNLI to provide this. They also provided two non-pay event days a year for us. WCA also volunteered their time at local beach

cleans and wore the Trust brand on their uniforms, although this was not part of their agreement they wanted to work with us as much as they could. Because of this fantastic working relationship and because they gave back to us aspects that would otherwise have cost us significantly, we kept the lease payment to a minimum of only a couple of hundred pounds in addition to a payback of £1 per booking. They viewed affinity marketing as a significant part of what they got back from the Trust and as a property we felt fortunate of the association.



## **Appendix 2: Governing bodies and associated websites:**

Caving: British Caving Association: [www.british-caving.org.uk](http://www.british-caving.org.uk)

Coasteering: No official governing body however [www.pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk](http://www.pembrokeshireoutdoors.org.uk) has details of the Pembrokeshire Outdoors Charter and the National Coasteering Charter.

Cycling: British Cycling Federation [www.britishcycling.org.uk](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk), also Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC): [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk), Welsh Cycling Association: [www.welshcycling.org](http://www.welshcycling.org) , Sustrans: [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

Diving: British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) [www.bsac.com](http://www.bsac.com)

Hang gliding/paragliding: British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA) [www.bhpa.co.uk](http://www.bhpa.co.uk)

Kayaking: British Canoe Union (BCU) [www.bcu.org.uk](http://www.bcu.org.uk) also Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI) [www.cani.org.uk](http://www.cani.org.uk)

Kite Surfing: British Kitesurfing Association (BKSA) [www.britishkitesurfingassociation.co.uk](http://www.britishkitesurfingassociation.co.uk)

Mountain Boarding: All Terrain Boarding Associations (ATBA) [www.atbauk.org](http://www.atbauk.org)

Mountaineering: British Mountaineering Council (BMC) [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

Orienteering: British Orienteering Federation [www.britishorienteering.org.uk](http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk)

Surfing: Surfing GB [www.surfinggb.com](http://www.surfinggb.com)

Sport England: [www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)

Surf Life Saving Association of Great Britain

[www.surflifesaving.org.uk](http://www.surflifesaving.org.uk)

Wild Swimming: River and Lake Swimming Association [www.river-swimming.co.uk](http://www.river-swimming.co.uk)

Walking: The Ramblers Association [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)