

# BRITISH CANOE UNION PRESS RELEASE

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## **Canoeing is the most popular watersport for the 5<sup>th</sup> year running!**

A recent survey has shown Canoeing is the most popular watersport for the fifth year running, ahead of all other watersports. This was reported in the independent survey carried out on behalf of the RYA\*, BMF, MCA and RNLI.

The trend is also evident in the steady and consistent growth in the British Canoe Union's membership figures, which are increasing between 6-9% per annum.

It would seem that the National Governing Body is not the only organisation to benefit from this dynamic sports' popularity. The dramatic increase in the sports popularity effects have been well received in the commercial sector. Many of the key canoe manufacturers have seen huge growth in sales this season. At the recent CLA (Country & Business Land Association) Game Fair held at Romsey, Hampshire the huge interest was evident from the thousands of people who were keen to try canoeing for the first time. A rapidly increasing number of the people who are interested in canoeing and the purchase of kayaks is from fishermen who are taking up the growing pastime of Kayak Fishing i.e. fishing from a canoe/kayak.

Dean Maragh, Chief Executive of the Association of Canoe Trades, comments,

"Our Canoe Village has been one of the most popular features at several large, National shows, Over half a million people have been directly exposed to the Canoe Village with millions more seeing canoeing through the associated press campaigns, it's been a real boost for the trade and many more people are enjoying paddling"

Given sharing similar objectives of which getting more people on the water to try canoeing and kayaking, the BCU, ACT (Association of Canoe Trades) and the BMF (British Marine Federation) have been working more closely together to build positive relationships with the manufacturers and work towards promoting all of the different types of canoeing one can do

The popularity of the sport is quite clear, given its many benefits, including:

### **Truly inclusive**

Regardless of age, ability or goals with 8 different types of canoeing, 500 clubs in the UK and over 8,000 qualified coaches there is something for everyone.

### **Great recreation**

Whether it is fast flowing, white water, or flat recreational paddling or even a team activity like canoe polo, canoeing caters for all tastes.

### **Healthy active**

The attractive combination of getting close to nature, getting fresh air and keeping fit at the same time is difficult to ignore. It is a great way to build strength and to work the cardio vascular system.

### **Social activity**

Canoe and kayaking is a great way to meet new people. This could be by going to a local club, paddling with friends or volunteering.

### **Economic Benefits**

The canoeing industry in its widest sense put in a phenomenal amount of money in to the national, local and rural economies.

Paul Owen, Chief Executive of the BCU comments:

“The survey is no real surprise to us, this is a fantastic sport with many benefits and is enjoyed by so many, which is why it continues to be such a popular and rapidly growing sport.”

Ends

**For further information please contact:**

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**Notes to the editors:**

Set up in 1936 to send a team to the Berlin Olympics, the British Canoe Union (BCU) is the lead body for canoeing and kayaking in the UK. In 2000 the BCU federalised to become the umbrella organisation for the Home Nation Associations in Scotland (SCA), Wales (WCA) and Northern Ireland (CANI). In England, Canoe England was set up, on a par with the other National Associations, as a division of the BCU, to support the development of canoeing in England.

The BCU is responsible for leading and setting the overall framework for the National Associations; including representing canoeing interests through coaching, competition and campaigning for increased access to Britain’s waterways for paddlers. In the Athens Olympics, Canoeing was one of Team GB’s most successful sports with medals for Ian Wynne (Bronze), Helen Reeves (Bronze) and Campbell Walsh (Silver).

Today the BCU has a membership of over 50,000, including over 500 affiliated clubs and 145 approved centres. According to the Paddlesport Review there are an estimated 2 million people take to the water in a canoe each year. The vast majority do so under a watchful eye of one of the 13,000 BCU Qualified coaches or as part of an affiliated organisation. For more information visit: [www.bcu.org.uk](http://www.bcu.org.uk).

The RYA is the national body for all forms of recreational and competitive boating. It represents dinghy and yacht racing, motor and sail cruising, RIBs and sportsboats, powerboat racing, windsurfing, inland cruising and personal watercraft. On average over 185,000 people per year complete RYA training courses at any one of over 2,220 RYA Recognised Training Centres in 20 countries. There are over 103,000 personal RYA members.

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\*RYA – Royal Yachting Association  
BMF – British Marine Federation  
MCA – Maritime and Coastguard Association  
RNLI – Royal National Lifeboat Institution