

Wheelyboats: freedom on the water for mobility impaired people of all ages



The Wheelyboat Trust & Rye Harbour Sailability Fundraising Appeal

“In their myriad forms, boats, boating and waterborne pursuits have an enormous attraction and play a key role in the lives of many. However, opportunities for people of different abilities to participate are few and far between. The Wheelyboat Trust and Rye Harbour Sailability aim to redress this balance and give mobility impaired people the chance to pursue their favourite activities afloat. They provide a wonderful service and long may they continue.”

The Wheelyboat Trust - Registered Charity No. 292216

Rye Harbour Sailability - Registered Charity No. 1183222

Introduction

The Wheelyboat Trust and Rye Harbour Sailability are collaborating to raise funds for a new wheelchair accessible Coulam Wheelyboat V17 at Rye Harbour in East Sussex. Our aim is to enable anyone in a wheelchair to join other people whose greater level of mobility enables them to sail in our dinghies.

The Wheelyboat Trust

The Wheelyboat Trust (www.wheelyboats.org) is a registered charity dedicated to providing mobility, learning and sensory impaired people of all ages with independent access to water-based activities such as nature watching, pleasure boating, powerboating and angling in our uniquely designed wheelchair accessible Wheelyboats. We are a small charity that achieves great things: we help venues that are open to the public acquire Wheelyboats for the benefit of their mobility impaired visitors and we help groups and organisations acquire Wheelyboats for their own use. So far, we have supplied over 230 Wheelyboats on inshore waters, lochs, lakes, reservoirs, rivers and canals all over the UK.

Rye Harbour Sailability

Rye Harbour Sailability (www.ryeharboursailability.org) is a registered charity founded in 2016. We aim to give people of all ages, with a wide range of mental and physical impairments, the chance to experience the fun and freedom of sailing. We have around 60 members and our volunteers include experienced helmsmen and crew who operate under the direction of an RYA Senior Instructor. Our members enjoy sailing at Rye Harbour in dinghies chosen for their stability and ease of access, supported by a safety boat.

Our sailing season is from April to October, to suit the tide and the weather. Food and refreshments are available and we usually share a hot meal after being out on the water. We sail from Rye Harbour Sailing Club where the charity hires boat storage facilities and rooms for events. The Sailing Club has modern wheelchair accessible changing rooms with toilets and showers.

The need

The project is seeking to purchase a new V17 Wheelyboat for Rye Harbour Sailability at Rye Harbour in East Sussex. Currently, a reasonable level of physical strength and agility is needed to board our dinghies. We have volunteers to assist, but it is still too difficult for many wheelchair users. This massively limits the number of mobility impaired people accessing our sailing events. We have investigated the use of a winch, as used at lakes, but the high tidal range makes this impractical at our location. By enabling wheelchair users to safely board a boat, with assistance from their carer or a volunteer if necessary, a Wheelyboat would increase the number of mobility impaired people who can fully participate and enjoy the fun and freedom of being on the water.

The Coulam Wheelyboat V17

The V17 is an extremely versatile craft and is capable of operating anywhere from pleasure boating on canals and small lakes to powerboating on inshore waters. Roll-on, roll-off access is via a watertight bow door that lowers to form a ramp. It's drive-from-wheelchair console enables people with the severest of disabilities to drive the boat themselves. Seating for ambulant people is flexible and there are fixing points on the floor to secure less independent wheelchair users in place. It accommodates eight people on inshore waters. Launching at Rye Harbour would be via a concrete slipway.

Project benefits

For those who are mobility impaired and those who have additional special needs, the freedom to enjoy independence and participate in outdoor activities, such as boating, alongside their family and friends is hugely beneficial to their mental and physical health and well-being. Lack of access for people of different abilities to these activities has isolated many from enjoying what the rest of us simply take for granted. Wheelyboats redress this imbalance and offer anyone with reduced mobility the opportunity to experience life on the water.

Feedback on Wheelyboats

Wheelyboat users speak for themselves on the benefits. One parent said: 'As a carer, the break from the day to day routine and stresses is so very welcome. It is thoroughly enjoyable, challenging and relaxing, all at the same time.' Mary, a wheelchair user said: 'To me, when I'm out there, I'm like anybody else, I don't feel like somebody in a chair, it's one of the most positive experiences I've ever had since I became disabled eight years ago.' A parent was in tears of joy at a recent Wheelyboat launch, that their son could participate on equal terms as the others enjoying outdoor activities because of the access the boats provide.

Estimated Cost

The estimated cost of a Coulam Wheelyboat V17 and associated equipment is £51,319, as itemised below. The Wheelyboat Trust and Rye Harbour Sailability are collaborating to fund this by way of donations from grant making trusts, companies and individuals. Running costs (insurance, fuel and maintenance) will be met from Rye Harbour Sailability's day-to-day operating budget.

The proposed specification is as follows, with costs as at 2 October 2024:

	£
Coulam Wheelyboat V17 including drive-from-wheelchair console, stainless steel handrails, bollards, keel band, towing eye, bow door with safety catch, D-rings for wheelchair anchorage at helm, stern cubby holes with moulded seats over, front storage shelves, heavy duty D-section fendering around top deck, anti-slip floor, person overboard ladder & fire extinguisher	27,750
Suzuki DF90ATL outboard motor	7,300
Hydraulic steering, helm, wheel with factory fitted knob, battery & installation	2,376
Lenco trim tabs	1,455
A-frame	1,576
Removable helm's seat	260
Folding stainless steel bench seats (2 units)	1,737
Low profile D-rings (wheelchair strapping points)	380
ICOM M423 VHF/DSC marine radio	300
Aerial, switch panel & installation	390
Twin axle braked trailer	5,850
Storage cover	1,945
Total:	£51,319

Summary

Accessible boats enable wheelchair users to have experiences on the water that are otherwise only available to their more mobile counterparts. This is an important factor in the quality of life that they are able to lead. Rye Harbour Sailability's new V17 will make a huge difference, improving inclusion and accessibility by ensuring that all mobility impaired people are able to participate.

THE WHEELYBOAT TRUST

PATRONS Mr Jeremy Paxman Sir Max Hastings Mr Allan Lamb Mr Charles Jardine Baroness Golding Miss EFC Buchanan CVO The Lady Anthony Hamilton

BOARD OF TRUSTEES Chair: Mr AG Scott Mrs PV Seligman Mr GES Seligman Mr I Thornley OBE Mr SD Barrowcliff Mrs ME Brocklebank Mr JI Leslie Melville Mrs SE Buscall Lady ZLB Benyon.

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RYE HARBOUR SAILABILITY

TRUSTEES: Mrs C Wylson (President), Mr G Parkin (Chair), Mrs S Davison (Vice-Chair), Mr R Quigly (Treasurer), Mr C Farrant, Mrs R Culver, Capt R Elliott, Mr G Harris

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