

# Post-Brexit sailing restrictions

Sailors are facing a host of new restrictions post-Brexit, the Cruising Association and RYA warn. Both organisations are trying to get answers from the UK Government but they expect the coming season to throw up many unresolved issues on the water.

The Cruising Association's Brexit spokesman Roger Bickerstaff said anyone sailing to an EU country should be prepared for a more 'administrative environment', while RYA Cruising Manager Stuart Carruthers said: "The important point to get across is that we are now a Third Country and there are going to be some very significant changes to the way that people can do their boating."

"As an example, the whole idea of taking a sabbatical in the Mediterranean, living on your boat, which you've bought with your pension, has just disappeared out of the window now that we are subject to Schengen Area visitor visa rules. That is just one post-Brexit reality."

Among a range of issues, the 90-day visa rule is likely to affect most boat owners. Bickerstaff said: "You need to sign in and out when you visit a Schengen territory. If you don't sign out, the clock will keep running, so when you pitch up next into a Schengen country, a port or an airport, there is a chance they won't let you in."

"We're going to have to work out how, when yachts leave to sail back to the UK, they stop the Schengen clock – how are they going to get their passports stamped when they enter and when they leave?"

Referring to a widely reported incident at the Dutch border in January, when guards confiscated a ham and egg sandwich from a British truck driver, he said: "Like the ham and egg sandwiches, there are going to be all sorts of strange things to emerge this year."

"What we're doing at the Cruising Association is trying to

identify and sort out these issues as they arise."

One anomaly that has emerged is from Sweden, whose Customs officers are taking the view that British boats lose their VAT status simply because the transition period has ended. Bickerstaff said: "That's never been something the EU Commissioner has said. In terms of HMRC's view, that is pretty settled. Boats that have been in the UK are entitled to return by the end of this year and recover their UK VAT status. Boats that have been bought outside the UK will have to pay VAT when they come back in."

He warned: "We're going to be seeing different countries taking different views."



"Another issue is your port of entry," Bickerstaff said. "In the past we have been able to turn up in France and not worry too much about it – it could be the middle of Friday night in whatever port we could make passage to safely."

"It's quite likely now we'll have to go to specific ports of entry."

Channel Islands sailors have already been advised by France that ports of entry and exit will be set up. Belgium has said the same.

The trade agreement reached late in December between the UK and EU made clear that reciprocal health care (EHIC cards) continues.

But the RYA's Carruthers warned that despite a lengthy, ongoing dialogue with the UK Government, many issues were still to be resolved.

One question mark is over RYA qualifications and in which countries they will remain valid – an issue for charterers, as well as

for local sailors and marine professionals. "While we've been in the EU, there's been a mutual understanding of other EU countries' qualifications, but that is now changing," said Carruthers. "We do know that in Spain you won't be able to use RYA qualifications on a Spanish-flagged charter vessel. This is something that we are endeavouring to address through 'Diplomatic Channels'."

Another issue is whether EU countries will continue to allow UK-registered boats to be berthed permanently in their waters and whether these can be used for commercial purposes – that is still under discussion.

Carruthers said the VAT issue was also on the table: "We're still lobbying Government on this."

He advised people hoping to sail to the EU this summer that "it's a case of wait and see".

"If recreational boaters are going to leave the shores of UK they're going to have to fill in a C1331 form, like we used to do.

Q-flags are coming back. I am recommending that anybody who is sailing to and from the UK reads HMRC Notice 8 [available on the gov.uk website]."

"There are lots and lots of things that need to be sorted out. If people want to tow their boat to the EU, is there anything they need to do differently now? How is the boat going to be treated?

"Another issue is food. Do the rules on what you can take with you apply to food kept on board?

"The status of boats in Northern Ireland is also unclear.

"Despite our constant lobbying Government, officials cannot give us answers at the moment. We're dealing with departments that have not had the chance to consider the detail of how these things affect our sector, but we are keeping the pressure on."

See [sailingtoday.co.uk](http://sailingtoday.co.uk) for a free Cruising Association Brexit webinar.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Cruising advice

Bookings are open for the RYA Cruising Conference, to be held virtually on 21 March 2021. Talks will include practical cruising advice from RYA experts and the latest updates on travelling around the EU. Places are free for RYA Members and £10pp for non-members. Book via the RYA website.

### CA online

The Cruising Association is running an online Spring Promotions Week to coincide with the fitting out season, from 22–26 March. Alongside the use of Live Chat and Zoom 1-2-1 engagement, the CA will be running discounts on CA Shop orders and a variety of discount deals with its partners.



### Lonely Rock

The Royal Western Yacht Club has opened entry for its Plymouth Lonely Rock Race starting on 4 July 2021. The event will start and finish in Plymouth, rounding the Fastnet Rock to port and leaving the Isles of Scilly to port on the return. Entry will be limited to the first 70 boats.

### Youth champs

The RYA postponed the 2021 Youth National Championships, hopefully until August. The regatta was due to take place in April in Plymouth.

### SailJuice series talks

Organisers of the Selden SailJuice Winter Series have run a series of live talks over the winter, to compensate for the loss of events due to lockdowns. Topics include the Great Lakes Handicap System, and histories of the Bloody Mary and Draycote Dash. See the series' Facebook page for links.

### Key Yachting

Key Yachting has been bought by sailors Wayne Palmer and Hayley Quinn from Thinking Space Systems. Marie-Claude Heys, who founded Key Yachting in 1996 with her late husband Paul, aims to return to her roots in offshore sailing. She competed in four Figaro campaigns and two Whitbread Round the World Races.

### SailGP

SailGP announced two new venues for 2021, Saint-Tropez in France and Cádiz in Spain. The two new venues form part of an expanded season that is planned to feature nine events, with seven having now been announced. The UK event will be in Plymouth, scheduled for 17–18 July.

