

NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday, January 30, 2017

Press enquiries and interview requests: Nicole Nayyar/Adam Grinsell 0121 248 2134/2135. Out-of-hours 07785 540 349. Michael Avril, Gillian Barclay, and representatives from Water Safety Scotland are available to interview.

A full version of the strategy and pictures are available on request.

Scotland's first Drowning Prevention Strategy aims to cut deaths by half

A new strategy aimed at drastically reducing the number of drowning deaths in Scotland is being launched by [Water Safety Scotland](#), an alliance of organisations committed to drowning prevention.

On average, 50 people accidentally drown in Scotland each year, making it one of the leading causes of accidental deaths in the country, while a further 29 people take their own lives in and around waterways.

Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy aims to cut the number of accidental deaths by 50 per cent by 2026, while contributing to the reduction of water-related suicide.

The strategy has been drawn up by experts from the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), joined by Gillian Barclay, whose 18-year-old son Cameron Lancaster drowned in a quarry in Inverkeithing in 2014.

Other organisations which provided an input included local authorities, the NHS, water leisure groups, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Government. A celebratory event is being held at Holyrood tomorrow evening (Wednesday, January 31).

Michael Avril, chairman of Water Safety Scotland, said: "The launch of Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy represents an important milestone in water safety within Scotland.

"The partnership approach that has been taken is proving to be key to the development of the strategy; this however only represents the foundation on which we must now work to turn the strategy into action. I would ask that everyone plays their part to help us save more lives in Scotland."

The strategy, developed in response to the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy which was launched in 2016 by the National Water Safety Forum, sets out six objectives:

- Improve fatality incident data and intelligence across Scotland
- Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools
- Develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies
- Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message across campaigns and communications
- Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland

- Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide.

Clare Adamson, MSP for Motherwell and Wishaw and Convener of the Cross Party Group on Accident Prevention and Safety Awareness, has supported the strategy through its development.

She said: "I am absolutely delighted to see Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy launched. It fully reflects the partnership working that has been the hallmark of its conception and development. I fully endorse the aims of the strategy to reduce accidental drowning deaths and reduce water-related suicide."

Gillian Barclay said: "The loss of Cameron is the saddest and most difficult challenge I have ever faced. Cameron's sister, brother and I became involved in water safety work because we want to help reduce the number of families and friends who face the horrific pain of losing a loved one to drowning.

"There is great work going on all the time to help people enjoy Scotland's water while keeping themselves safe, and we need to keep making people aware of the risks around water. I'm very grateful to Water Safety Scotland for allowing me to help shape Scotland's first Drowning Prevention Strategy from the perspective of someone who has lost a child in a drowning accident."

The full strategy document can be found at www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk/strategy from 10am tomorrow (Wednesday), and for more information on Water Safety Scotland see www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk