

AGM Proposal for Nitrox to be available to all K&E members – Diving Officer, Craig Daniel

Introduction

At present there is a group within the club who can blend their own gas mixes for their dives, providing access to a cheaper way of obtaining mainly nitrox, but also helium mixes (vs paying a dive shop). That group has worked on the basis that you pay a one-off joining fee, an annual membership and also pay for the amount of oxygen or helium used in your gas mix. This means we cover all the associated costs of running the group, a separate bank account exists to manage this and hence ensures there is no impact to the K&E club finances.

With nitrox becoming incorporated into all levels of the BSAC diver training syllabus we are proposing that all K&E members should be able to benefit from access to oxygen and helium, and be able to dive suitable gas mixes appropriate to their level of qualification. The costs of renting the J cylinders, delivery charges, maintenance of the gas blending equipment and actual oxygen and helium in the J cylinders would be covered by a single charge, still based on the amount of gas you use in your mix. That charge (stated in pence per J bar) would, however, increase from the level paid today as it becomes the sole way of recovering the all the costs associated with providing gas mixes.

Blending gas mixes

Ideally we would prefer if you were able to mix your own gases, and we can run both gas blending and compressor operation courses at the club if you would like to learn how to do so. For those who prefer just to get gas mixes without blending it themselves, we can also do this and will have a list of club members who have a blending qualification. I have confirmed with BSAC HQ that this is all OK, we will amend our current gas mixing log sheet with who blended it, and the person requesting that mix will have to show their certification covers the mix in question and sign to agree they have analysed the mix produced to ensure it is what they wanted and understand the depth limits of that mix.

Gas blending cannot be done on a Thursday club night as it takes time and we do not want to interfere with the compressor operator doing air fills for members who do not need or want gas mixes. A system will be put in place to announce when gas blending is being done on other days of the week.

Costs

At present the price of oxygen for a nitrox fill is 50p per J bar, under this proposal it will increase to 55p. Helium at present is £1.25 per J bar and this is too low to cover the cost of this gas, so it will increase to £1.80 per J bar.

These prices will be monitored closely as prices of gases are increasing and adjustments will be made to ensure this continues to be self financing.

Payment for gas used

There is a separate bank account which is used for all the associated costs and it receives payments from people using the oxygen and helium. This is a full on-line banking account and you can only pay for gas mixes you receive by bank transfer as this simplifies the monitoring of gas used, price paid and by whom. It also ensures the prices for gases are set to cover all the costs incurred.

There will be a system put in place that will mean texting myself with what gas has been used, by whom and how much. This way I can keep a close track on gasses so that we do not run short, I would also ask if anyone is going to use a lot that I am informed to ensure there is enough gas for everyone else.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this being implemented now? Diving with nitrox has become part of every level of BSAC diver grades, albeit with some limitations by grade on the gas blends you can use. You can even get dive and holiday packages where nitrox is included in what you pay for (subject to being qualified to use it). We want to make diving with nitrox and mixed gases available to any member of K&E without having to join a sub group within the club.

I only dive on air and don't use nitrox. There is no impact to you from this proposal, you will still get free air fills from the club on a Thursday night as part of your K&E annual membership fee.

Why isn't this part of the annual membership fee? Our K&E annual membership fee covers the cost elements for facilities which are available to all members (like the compressor, swimming pool and RIB operation). We recognise that not everyone will want to use nitrox or helium for the diving they do, hence you will only pay if you use these gases, even if that is only once or twice in a year – you are only paying for what you personally use.

Are the prices mentioned still cheaper than getting a gas mix from a dive shop? Yes, they have been set to recover our costs and the air part of the mix is still free as it is already included in your K&E membership, whereas you pay for an air fill at a dive shop. You have the personal choice to still get a gas mix from any authorised provider.

Why are gas mix fills not being done on a Thursday club night? Gas blending takes time to ensure the right mix is produced, oxygen must be handled carefully when fills are done and the compressor container does not have space for people to be blending when cylinders are being filled with air. Not all compressor operators have the required gas blending qualifications. All club members benefit from free air fills included in your K&E membership fee and so air fills are the priority on Thursday club nights.

What do I have to show as my nitrox qualification? If you have completed BSAC training your diver grade will cover use of nitrox (you may be limited to certain gas mixes), or you may have taken a BSAC Nitrox Skill Development Course. We also recognise nitrox qualifications issued by other training agencies. In all cases you will need to show your nitrox qualification **prior to** receiving a nitrox gas mix and we will record the certification you show and only mix to the limits of that qualification. We can always upskill you for nitrox use, why not look at progressing onto the next BSAC diver grade or we can run nitrox and gas blending workshops, both are available via training within K&E Branch.

How do I know I've got the right gas mix? Training is given on analysing gases if you have a nitrox qualification. You will be shown how the club gas analyser works and the person who blended your mix will explain the reading and you will be asked to sign a log sheet to agree the mix in your cylinder.

Can I drop my cylinders at the club and get someone to blend a mix? No, blending is done by another club member who is giving their time to do this; you have to be present when the blending is taking place, show your qualification, analyse and sign for the gas mix you have received and make an on-line payment before taking your cylinders away.