

SUPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

MANDY & STEVE WEST

Living legends part 2



PADDLING FOR EFFICIENCY

Scott Warren

CORE FLOW BRAND MATTERS

Sonya Brotherton

POLE TO POLE X GERMANY

Michael Walther

CORK'S ECO WARRIOR

Dave Ludgate

SUP SURFING

Where we at? Part 2

WW CONVERSATIONS

Emma Love

YOUNG GUN

By James Little

STATESIDE CHAT

Kristin Thomas

BEHIND THE LENS

Oli Lane-Peirce

CLUB FOCUS

The SUP Club

GEAR SHED



We're 30 issues young...

Cal's Scottish SUP adventure

SUPjunkie GBSUP report & SUP polo – Sarah Thornely

Behind the brand – Sandy Point Chandlery

Behind the brand – Turtle Bay Paddleboards

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Cover photo: Blue Ewer – The Celtic Cup, Carbis Bay

Photo: Jade Rogers Photography

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Over the entire existence of SUPM it's safe to say we've had support, help and input from a good many. With this being the 30th issue that continues - and we couldn't do it without. From actual advertising support, to contributions, physical involvement and then on to the many emotional lean ons: help comes in many guises when you put together a magazine - a lot of it often behind the scenes. You may not even know you've actually had input. So a BIG, MASSIVE, HUGE high five and thanks to everyone - near and far - who's been a part of the journey so far. A glass raised to you all!

Not all contributors are professional writers and photographers, so don't be put off writing because you have no experience! **Next issue is October 2021 with a deadline of submissions on August 25th.** Technical Information: Contributions preferably as a Microsoft Word file with 800-1200 words, emailed to tez@supmaguk.co.uk. Images should be hi-resolution and emailed with the Word file or if preferred, a Dropbox folder will be created for you. SUP Mag UK encourages contributions of any nature but reserves the right to edit to the space available. Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publishing parent company, 2b Graphic Design Ltd. The publishing of an advertisement in SUP Mag UK does not necessarily mean that the parent company, 2b Graphic Design Ltd, endorses the company, item or service advertised. All material in SUP Mag UK is strictly copyright and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission from the publisher is forbidden.



Cal Major **Photo:** James Appleton

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Challenge yourself

How's your summer going so far? Have you been getting amongst it and paddling? I'll be honest; the weather hasn't been the greatest for SUP (certainly not in my neck of the woods so far). That said, there have still been a few sessions to enjoy, mixed in with other types of riding. And the industry's struggles with supply vs demand issues, caused by all manner of factors, I know has led to some frustration on behalf of SUP brands and paddlers alike. Hopefully, if you're waiting on the kit, then it'll arrive (or already has) soon.

For those who've been out paddling often, it might now be time to step up your SUPping a notch. Whilst getting afloat is all well and good, the need to keep things fresh and add further engagement is one way to keep you coming back for more. That's why challenging yourself is always a good idea.

Whether it be tackling new SUP routes, swapping your gear for something more performance-related, trying a new area of SUP (maybe racing, for instance), adding new dimensions and broadening your stand up paddle boarding horizons will see you develop as a SUPer and all-round water person. You'll end up having more fun as well. Of course, if you're happy to stick as is, then no worries.

Ultimately there's a big wide world out there that'll present lots of opportunities for you as a paddler. As such, it'd be a shame to miss out on what's available. A lot of the time, with new SUP recruits, they do not know what else you can accomplish with a board and paddle. Therefore if you're a seasoned rider, why not impart some knowledge to your new paddle mates and show them what the sport can be? It only takes a gentle nudge in one direction to make the recipient have that lightbulb moment. I've experienced this myself as both the giver and receiver of stand up paddling (and wider watersports) knowledge. Suddenly my whole watery life has taken on new meaning and purpose, thereby delivering even more fun and fulfilment.

The BIG 3-0

In terms of this issue, welcome to the BIG 3-0. The 30th issue of SUP Mag UK - whod'a thunk it? SUPM has strived to bring you the best and broadest stand up related content going - all with a UK focus and slant throughout its entire existence. It hasn't always been the easiest as it takes a lot of effort from myself, Pete and Anne behind the scenes. But we're here, still kicking, and plan this being the way for a while yet!

We appreciate everyone's support - from readers to brands and everyone else in between. Thanks for sticking with us. We hope you continue to like what we do. Enjoy this issue, and here's to another 30 issues of SUP Mag UK! Cheers from all of us...

Tez Plavenieks – August 2021

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STATESIDE CHAT

With Kristin Thomas



What a privilege to have the opportunity to share my passion for stand up paddling with SUP Mag UK and you, the readers!

I look forward to highlighting people and events happening outside the UK, focusing on the USA and the Americas. Before being added to the fantastic list of contributors to these great print and online publications, I was asked to share a little about myself and my background.

Although I've been a lifelong water enthusiast, I found my true passion in SUP over a dozen years ago. I've spent time as a competitive swimmer, lifeguard and swim instructor, recreational windsurfer, and longboard surfer through the years. I've also spent time under the water getting my PADI freediving and open water scuba licenses during the pandemic. I think it is safe to say I'm addicted to water; isn't it fascinating – and gratifying – that this healthy addiction to H2O is rooted in brain research. (Perhaps we're not all crazy! :)

While I have enjoyed almost every discipline within SUP, if you know who I am, it is most likely as regular on the SUP racing circuit. Because I started in 2010, live in the year-round SUP location of southern California, and am at a season in life where I can travel, I've been able to race all over the USA and in numerous countries. I need to work on my count, but I have participated in well over 200 races in about 14 states and five countries. I am lucky to be an ambassador and work with the great teams from Infinity SUP and Werner Paddles.

I am in love with everything about being ON the water and fascinated with the versatility of our craft, the industry's growth, the number of women who participate, how we connect as a community, and other topics. I'd love to hear what interests you! Still working on how to keep the dialogue going about all things SUP.

Besides racing, I also served for most of the last decade as the Executive Director of the SUP Industry Association (SUPIA). While the trade organization was not my idea, at the request of industry leaders around 2011, I stepped up to found the business group and create a job for myself. The connections made and business learning were all so valuable.

When I'm not playing on the water or working on SUP related programs, I am lucky to have a pretty darn entire life with some amazing friends and a great family. My husband of 35 years, Scott, and our three now-grown children raised in Laguna Beach keep life interesting and meaningful. For the first time in over a decade, Lauren, 31, Shannon, 29 and Nathan, 26 and their partners will all live in southern California. Happy Mom!

As a teacher by trade, I have loved learning all I can about SUP, even though I don't actively have a SUP business. My certifications include WSUPA, WPA, and PaddleFit, as instructor/coach and ICF as a race official (ITO or International Technical Officer/Official).

The pandemic indeed required a pivot for me as I wrapped up my years as the Executive Director of the SUPIA on April 1, 2020. That same month I jumped into an exciting and unexpected role hosting a weekly interview on Instagram. Setting up and conducting interviews LIVE for Supconnect on their Instagram channel. What a joy it's been to get to connect with great people in the paddling world even when we weren't able to see each other face to face. Another 'shift' has been working towards guiding trips; I've enjoyed working with my friend Erin of Sunset Stand Up to co-guide a couple of Colorado River and Catalina Island trips, with two sold-out Mexico trips (Sagulita and Baja adventures) coming up in autumn.

But keeping me busiest of all has been taking on the role of Race Facilitator for the ICF World SUP Championships in Lake Balaton Hungary September 9-12. What a unique experience to bring 12 accomplished and amazing humans from Canoe/Kayak and SUP in eight different countries together working as a team to build a fantastic event!

This will be my first foray into the written side of the SUP media world. I hope my wide-ranging experience with SUP will help me share a range of content that will prove interesting and connect with you, the readers.

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SUPJUNKIE REPORTING:



THE GBSUP NATIONAL RACE SERIES 2021

Words: Sarah Thornely

Photos: Supjunkie, Jade Rogers Photography and RNLI

JUST WOW – what a month it's been for the National Race Series! Battle of the Thames on the 12th June, BaySUP Flat and Ocean Tech races on the 26th and Carbis Bay on the 4th July – we've seen some very happy paddlers on the water at all the events but let's start our news with BOTT.

BATTLE OF THE THAMES, SURBITON

Host: The Real Blue Chip SUPER Club

Held on a sunny and pretty calm day in early June, the Tenth Anniversary Edition of the iconic Battle of the Thames was a huge success. The cap was 100 due to Covid restrictions, but that smaller number more than made up with their enthusiasm and epic racing, especially from one young man we will mention later!

The adrenalin rises from the moment you arrive at a race, even pulling into the car park at Thames Sailing Club. The Real Blue Chip SUPER Club members on duty that day all did a sterling job, especially in the car park, packing the vans and cars in cheek by jowl – once you were in, you were IN!

Things were having to be run slightly differently this year, with one-way systems, temperature checks and a pre-recorded race briefing – hugs were few and far between, and those that did felt confident and comfortable doing so within government guidelines. There were plenty of respectful elbow bumps, too – who knew that would become such a thing?

The excitement levels were high though, racing has been somewhat lacking over the last 18 months and 'the Battle' would greatly benefit from that feeling of community once again.



This race is part of the UK's SUP DNA, having started some 11 years ago (year off for Covid!) with a dream from Brian Johncey to start a SUP race on the River Thames. Since then, he, his wife, family and club members have all contributed to run a slick event, even slicker in 2021 due to upgrading to Webscorer, which, having been river tested by Brian and the gang for weeks beforehand, didn't disappoint, with results being churned out within minutes of the race finishing!

Jordan Wylie was our extra-special guest for the day, giving the paddlers a pre-race warm-up speech that was inspiring and then officially starting the race and handing out prizes and medals to some very happy paddlers at the prize giving. Jordan was a joy to have at the event, giving up his day to meet and inspire the very paddlers that got behind him whilst paddling The Great British Paddle. Jordan autographed countless editions of SUPM (and body parts) throughout the day!

We were there to cover the event with an exciting Live Feed which you can catch up with on the GBSUP National Series Facebook page – it's worth checking it out to see the rolling start, which was electric with Blue Ewer flying so fast he almost caught up with our media boat! He never stopped paddling hard and finished an incredible seven minutes ahead of his nearest rival – keep an eye out for this young man; his talent and speed have increased over the last few years.

Marie Buchanan took honours in the 14' ladies, her name going on the BOTT winners' plaque once again! Dave Scott and Emily King won in the 12'6 class, Karen Greener took the N1sco trophy for the second year in a row, James Fletcher prone and Emma Adams and Ed Milnes in the 12'6 iSUP class. Special mention must go to one James Little who won the overall N1sco class beating all the adults – not bad for a very talented 15-year-old. The Challenge Tour (which is not a race) was completed by many – it is an excellent introduction to the series, and Mike Ridsdill Smith guided and supported those paddlers all the way. The mega board race is always a fun part of BOTT, and the home advantage went to Steve Llewellyn, who took his team in for the win.

From Brian: "BOTT 21, the 10th anniversary of The Real Blue Chip Super Club's flagship event. This year due to Covid, we were restricted to just 100 competitors and sold out in eight minutes. I adopted a class order rolling start which proved very successful too. Thanks to our volunteers, the event ran like clockwork once again, and we published the results onto the website just three minutes after the last competitor crossed the line. We also provided a free BBQ for all the competitors and volunteers, which was much appreciated on the day. All in all, we had a very successful event."





FLAT WATER AND OCEAN TECH RACES, BOSCOMBE PIER

Host: BaySUP

A quick breather and off to beautiful Branksome Pier, near Poole, for a double-header day on the water. The new BaySUP committee had worked hard with short notice to get this day off the ground with a new venue too, and all credit to them for a very polished event that can only get better. In the morning, we had race two of the Flat-Water Series with paddlers going back and forth along the seafront between two piers – you could be forgiven for thinking it was a tech race with all those buoy turns! The sea was calm, the sun was shining, and 75 paddlers took to the water.

The BaySUP race always brings out the old local guard (no offence!) with Ryan James, Pete Holliday, Mark Slater, Will Vincent and Adam Stiling all setting up some fantastic racing. Still, on the day, they were no match for Blue Ewer again, who came



first, closely followed by Ryan and Ben Pye. Marie Buchanan and Emily King were again winners in their respective classes, with Al Hughes winning 12'6, Sam Norton and Kezia Elliott prone and Simon Nash and Holy Chard taking out the N1Sco.

A rest for lunch, a quick rejig of those buoys, and the Ocean Tech Series started in the afternoon with 50 paddlers tackling the slightly challenging sea state. The wind had got up, and with some interesting chop and tidal movements, swimming was a-plenty. Even the most seasoned ocean paddlers took a dip. For those who don't know, tech racing starts on the beach, a race to the water with board and paddle and through the surf. Then one lap of seven buoys, coming out of the water and running around the beach flag with your board and back into the water again – five laps – enough to test all the paddlers. Exciting stuff for the spectators too, but exhausting for the paddlers.

Results were almost the same again, with the uber-talented Blue and Marie taking out the 14', Ashley Allen and Al Hughes 12'6, Sam and Kezia prone and Simon Nash N1Sco.

It was a day of fantastic racing and just being with friends on the beach – it's been a long time coming – we can't wait to return to BaySUP next year! Huge thanks must go to GBSUP Director Phil Mather, who has been invaluable at all the races with his Webscorer hat on but particularly here with his help for the BaySUP Committee, pre-, during and post-race. Big thanks also to Anni Ridsdill Smith for helping out with trophies this year.

After two wins out of two in the Flat-Water Series, Blue Ewer and Marie Buchanan won the overall trophies in the 14' and Emily King in the 12'6. A cracking start for them all.



THE CELTIC CUP, CARBIS BAY

Host: Ocean Sports Centre

If it's good enough for the G7 event, it's good enough for GBSUP – back again to the most beautiful location in Cornwall and chilled vibe you could have for an Ocean Tech race – second in the series, so all to play for again for some of our top racers.

This year, the bay was calm, but there was good swell around the headland, with wind and side chop making only the most experienced racers comfortable. The great thing about this event is that you can choose (even on the day) to take the shorter course meaning you can still enjoy this race if not confident on the open ocean. Forty-five racers took to the water, and I was one of them! Racing in my OC, as this is a multi-craft event, I was able to be right amongst the paddlers and see how they fared around the headland. Slowly is the answer! It was challenging and equally tough coming back and then across the big bay with a full-on side chop (not a paddler's friend).

Once again, in his second Ocean Tech Race, Blue Ewer won by nearly eight minutes, no mean feat with those conditions. Marie came in first for the ladies AGAIN and fourth overall against all the field, cementing her place as our most consistent female paddler. Ashley Allen and Al Hughes came first in the 12'6 and won the overall Ocean Tech Series with two wins out of two.

All paddlers who took the longer route placed higher than those who didn't, and you had to complete the small tech race to be in with a placing too – Glenn from Ocean Sports Centre had devised a cracking tech race – a diamond pursuit course, running from the beach left or right, down to your board and around half a course. You then came close to the beach, around a strategically placed flag, to continue the course on the other side – this made for fascinating racing and collisions galore on the beach flag! It was also hard to see who was in the lead unless you were Blue Ewer! It was exciting to watch and great to take part in too.

Results came in fast again, with Phil Mather and Lesley taking charge for GBSUP with speed and efficiency, as was the prize giving. It was great to see all the other craft and SUP receive their generous prizes. Glenn was able to secure cash and other gifts from the Academy of Surfing Instructors and SIC Maui.

Many people, including myself, decided to extend our time in Cornwall – it's such a great location with many beautiful spots to visit north and south. I recommend you do the same next year, especially if you think the venue is a long way to travel. Make it a destination with holiday included, and you will not be disappointed.

So... four races, five overall champions already made and a great feeling amongst the GBSUP team and UK paddlers for this fantastic race series.





What's next?

A break for a couple of months but the exciting news that has just been confirmed at the time of writing. GBSUP have long been in conversation with British Canoeing about the Sprint Championships. This was a huge hit last time, with 27 lucky top-class male and female racers being invited for the inaugural event in Nottingham in 2019 and champions crowned. A day of watching other athletes from the world of canoe and kayak, Team

GB players amongst them – a fear of that yellow bucket that held your board steady on the start line and lanes that you could not deviate from. It is something that many paddlers have since asked, *“Will this event happen again?”*

Well, the answer is a delighted YES – GBSUP has now secured 54 places each for men and women; you need to be of a good standard of sprinting and a member of British Canoeing (even if only a temporary membership). The date set is Sunday 5th September, and you will get the chance to have two attempts at the 200m sprint – trust me, it's tough! After that, the fastest nine men and nine women will automatically go into the finals, and prizes will be awarded for first, second and third.

By the time SUPM goes to print, there should be 108 very happy paddlers practising their sprinting over the summer. Roll on September.

Three weeks after that, the last of the Flat-Water races will be held in Cardiff. Previously postponed, we can't wait to go back – it's a fabulous event at the Cardiff International White Water Centre and a good 10km slog up to the Principality Stadium and back. The start is exciting, too, with a 75-metre dash to the first 180-degree buoy turn – not to be missed. Numbers were initially limited to 100, but entries have recently re-opened, and we are expecting over 200 on the start line. The local team look after us all well, and the White Water Centre is a great venue.

The GBSUP team are also working hard to secure the last of the Ocean Tech races – this is proving to be a real challenge, but rest assured, they will get it done. It could be a brand-new venue which would be exciting. This has been a challenging year for so many races and organisers, but it would be great to finish the season with a cracker. Watch this space for more news.



RNLI

GBSUP supports the RNLI this year with a fundraising total goal of £10,000 – they've set the bar high, but the team is determined to help. They are a tenth of the way there presently.

Did you know GBSUP have a range of tee-shirts and hoodies? This will now be added to with a new, distinctive design, especially for the RNLI – available in cotton and tech, with all profits going into the fundraising pot. Please check all details on the GBSUP website.

The website is also continuously updated with the latest RNLI news, and it's a great gateway to keeping up with their fantastic work – here is some very relevant information and stats: *"The RNLI continues to rely on voluntary contributions and legacies for its income. 93% of their total income comes from donations and support like ours, which in 2019 helped launch 8,941 lifeboat rescues, aid over 29,000 beachgoers and respond to 17,356 incidents. It cost £181.5M to run the RNLI lifesaving service in 2019, which is no small amount."*

The RNLI is a registered charity that saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 238 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and, in a normal year, more than 240 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK and Channel Islands."

Please do try and help raise much-needed funds by either setting up your challenge, making a donation (however large or small) or buying a tee-shirt. We all appreciate your support.

Bigger stronger, better in 2022

The GBSUP team are already looking forward to 2022 – who isn't! With some new faces joining the old, there is a lot of hard work going on in the background by this incredible team of volunteers. They are always trying to give you a better race series than the last and coming up with new ideas to make every race a unique experience for the paddlers.

If you would ever like to get involved or feel you have something you could offer the team, please do get in touch and offer yourself up – you will have a lot of fun and be well rewarded by watching the paddler's passion for SUP.

New venues, new medals, new faces, new paddlers – the team want to encourage everyone to have a go at racing – it is maybe something that you never thought you would enjoy. However, do have a go; start with the Challenge Tour, get involved, and you may find that you have a whole new world waiting for you on the racing side! Encourage your fellow paddlers to have a go – there must be many out there that don't even know there is a race series! Spread the word.

We'd also like to say a massive THANK YOU to everyone who has ever been involved in the Race Series, however small your 'job' may have been – we could not have done it without you! Until next time.



If you have been an overall winner in any year of the National Series (even in an age category), you can send your bio over, and GBSUP will include you in their Hall of Fame.





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SOMEWHERE
OUT THERE

rider: Lloyd



Scotland: Ocean Nation

1200km, ten weeks, and three orca later

SUCCESS!

Interview: Peter Tranter/Anne Egan

Pics: James Appleton

Huge congrats to Cal Major on her expedition around the Scottish coastline starting from Glasgow in aid of Seaful charity in the year of *Scottish Seas - the Year of Coast and Waters* and COP26 in Glasgow. We caught up with Cal just a day after getting off the water. So we are enormously thankful to Cal for giving us this opportunity to speak to her at this time with the experience so vivid and fresh in her mind.

First of all, when and why did the idea to do this first come to mind?

Thank you so much! I think the seed was first planted when I was paddling from Land's End to John O'Groats in 2018. The Scottish part of the trip was my absolute favourite - especially seeing all the wildlife on the North East coast, thousands upon thousands of seabirds all around me on the water; I'd never experienced anything like it! I didn't want to stop at John O'Groats, but I was pretty broken, so I decided I'd have to come back and do the rest of the Scottish coast another day.

This was cemented in my mind when it was announced that 2021 would be the Year of Coasts and Waters for Scotland, and more importantly, that Glasgow would be hosting COP26, the climate talks. I am also part of the Our Seas Coalition, campaigning for better protection of Scotland's inshore waters, and so all of these combined meant this was the perfect time to take on the expedition.

What was the worst of the planning and logistics?

Could you share with the readers of SUP Mag UK how long it took to complete your planning?

It's really hard to micro-plan an expedition like this because it's all so dependent on the wind forecast and tide times. So the day to day planning and timings has to be done no more than a couple of days in advance. That does take up a lot of time during the expedition - whenever I was off the water, I would be meticulously checking wind, swell and weather forecasts, tide times, current flows, potential entry and exit points and almanacs to choose the right place and time to be on and off the water, and to ensure that I would be safe when I did go out to sea. Then when I was paddling, I often tracked my speed to make sure I'd be back on land before the tide changed or a system came in.

There's a lot to think about behind the scenes and many decisions to make daily! The most challenging part of the pre-planning for this trip was ensuring we had appropriate land support. We have been filming for a documentary series and needed to charge the camera kit every couple of days. We also wanted to meet people and hear about their stories of connection to the sea, so getting all that side of things organised has been the most challenging! I started planning this in 2020, and most of 2021 has been solely figuring out all the logistics for the documentaries.



Completing such a venture at any time would present challenges, were there extra challenges, both seen and unforeseen, due to the pandemic?

Yes, I initially planned to do this in 2020! That obviously wouldn't have been safe or fair for local communities or legal, so I used 2020 to train, which was a blessing in disguise as I was better prepared this year than I would have been last year.

How were you received by the local people you met in different places? Did you feel you were welcome, or did you have any negative experiences that you either were surprised by or understood?

I have been so touched by the welcome we've received almost everywhere we've been. We've had the great pleasure of meeting so many local people and communities, all with a story to tell about their connection to the sea. Whether they are wild swimmers, fishermen, paddleboarders, tourism providers... the people have made this trip, and it's been an absolute pleasure to meet them. We have also had some difficult conversations along the way, but at all times, we've been open to understanding different viewpoints, and I feel so much better informed and aware as a result.

We understand your decision to start the paddle in Glasgow, where world leaders will meet for COP26. What new legislation would you like to see brought to tackle the environment's problems, particularly those affecting the ocean environment?

First of all, I would like to have it recognised that we all have a stake in the ocean's health. Not just those whose livelihoods are





entangled with it. Our ocean ecosystems are vital for producing the oxygen we breathe (more than 50% is produced by plankton in the sea!), so whether we realise it or not, every one of us is inextricably connected to the ocean. Our health and the health of the seas are intertwined. I believe that we should all, therefore, have a say in what happens in our seas. However, the conversation is too often dominated by those with the loudest and most aggressive voices, which is often, unfortunately, those exploiting it for financial gain.

The conversation around climate change is so often focused on decarbonising our societies. Whilst this is essential, we cannot overlook the biodiversity crisis we are also facing, and the vital role nature

plays in maintaining an inhabitable planet with clean air and water and producing the food we eat. Not only that, but the ocean plays an irreplaceable role in mitigating climate change, absorbing 25% of our anthropogenic carbon emissions, and with plants like seagrass sequestering 35 times more carbon than terrestrial forests.

Protecting nature has to be at the forefront of the talks at COP26, and protecting ocean ecosystems needs to be taken seriously. Our ocean ecosystems - the ones which support our life on this planet, birth awe-inspiring and important creatures and give us those environments we so rely on for our wellbeing, are deeply threatened, with fish stocks collapsed and government agencies failing, year upon

year, in their targets to aid their recovery. The UK government has pledged to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030, a figure which scientists have cited as the bare minimum needed for recovery of the seas from the over-exploitation they have been subjected to. The UK already has a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); however, many of these are no more than 'paper-parks', offering no real protection from the most damaging forms of fishing such as bottom trawling and scallop dredging, which destroy fragile marine habitats and fish nurseries.

We've heard so many times that 'out of sight, out of mind' the ocean ecosystems are too often overlooked. But we know the science and the facts now. We cannot afford to continue to deplete and destroy

the ocean. The good news is that the ocean has incredible resilience and the ability to regenerate, but it needs to be given a chance.

I want the leaders at COP26 to stand up for the protection of ocean environments. To create properly managed and enforced marine protected areas that are fit for purpose.

One solution is the reintroduction of the three-mile limit around the coast of Scotland, whereby destructive practices of bottom trawling and scallop dredging are banned in inshore waters, which are often home to the most fragile important reefs and fish nurseries. You can learn more at www.ourseas.scot

That first part of the coastline must have been incredible in terms of natural beauty. Is this a part of the world you have paddled in before or new territory for you? Can you tell us more about it?

I spent the first two days paddling down the River Clyde, which I thought would be pretty tame in terms of scenery. However, halfway through the first day, the scenery was already phenomenal, and by day two, I had views of the Isle of Arran in front of me for hours on end! All the way up the West

coast, I was surrounded by mountains, islands and incredible light. It was spectacular, a paddleboarder's heaven.

I had some pretty special nights camping on uninhabited islands and remote beaches, watching the sun set into the sea and waking up to be on the water before the sun rose. They are memories I'll never forget.

What were the most unusual sightings of wildlife species?

It had to be the three orcas that joined me on the West coast. They appeared out of the mist like something out of a film! They came straight towards me – two huge males whose fins were taller than me circled me, while one female swam under my board, turned on her side and looked right up at me. Our eyes locked for a fleeting moment before all three of them turned around and swam directly back in the direction they had come, disappearing into the mist.

Before this had happened, I had been asked how I'd feel if I met an orca on the water and I had nonchalantly replied that would be wonderful. I wouldn't be scared because I know that they have no interest in eating people - there have been no fatalities from orca in the wild! However, in the moment, surrounded by three



Two huge males whose fins were taller than me circled me, while one female swam under my board, turned on her side and looked right up at me





enormous creatures, who were so capable and strong and in control, it was very humbling and pretty terrifying - and an uncontrollable, visceral reaction ensued where I was shaking and crying for ages afterwards! I had flashbacks for weeks! But it was also definitely the highlight of the trip; I feel so privileged to have experienced that, and it's a moment I'll never forget.

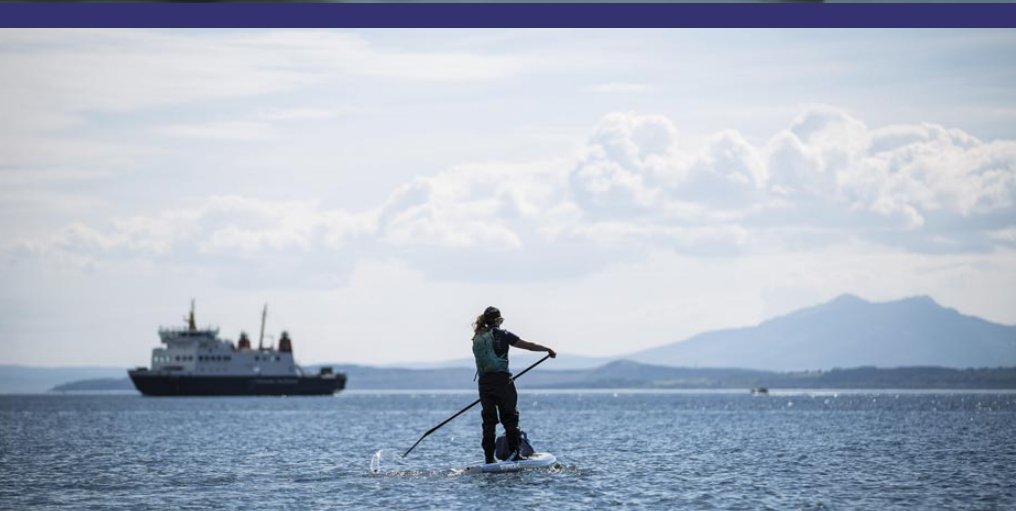
What creature comforts do you miss the most when on such an undertaking?

I miss having a kitchen and fresh food most of all! Our support crews have been excellent in helping keep us well fed, and we've done the best we could on camping stoves, but I miss a big fridge full of fresh food!

The days on the water and time away from your routine gives you space to think. Do you find it makes a significant difference to your mental well being; does paddling always put you in an excellent mental place, or sometimes is it the message or the mission that drives you?

I find that the first hour on the water, my brain is really busy, I'm thinking a lot, there's a lot going on. Then over the subsequent hours, everything starts to slot into place. I have ideas and brainwaves that come to me, creative thoughts I don't have on land, and things seem a lot calmer. There have been a lot of times when it's been tedious. I've just wanted to get to the end and even occasionally have put music or podcasts on as a way to distract myself. I've tried to be as mindful as possible, focussing on what's happening in the here and now, the water around the front of my board, the birds, the sounds, and that's all been very beneficial for my mental health.

I've found the days off the water challenging in that regard – there is so much to do, so many distractions, and I often feel pretty stressed and anxious. In contrast, when I'm on the water, there's only one focus, only one thing I can do, and it often feels like a relief from the busyness of everyday life. When the going gets tough on the water, which it often does when paddling 6-8 hours day after day, the mission and the message spur me on, as does knowing that the weather could change any day, so I am conscious of making the most of any potential weather window which appears. I also often don't have a choice! Once on the water, I have to paddle a certain distance to get to the next potential get out, and there have been times on this trip where that's been 25 miles away, so often there's no option but to carry on back to safety.





On this incredible paddle, you are fundraising for Seaful charity; what would you like to share with our readers about the work and aspirations of Seaful and how you became involved?

The word Seaful means Mindfulness of the Sea, and the charity is where environmentalism and mental health intersect. Seaful aims to reconnect more people to our incredible ocean and waterways. I founded the charity off the back of my LEJOG expedition, after learning a pretty important lesson - people will protect what they love, but they can only love what they know. When I was paddling LEJOG, I was talking to people along the way about plastic pollution in the ocean, but I came to realise that I could talk to people until I was blue in the face about the impact of plastic on the sea and wildlife there, but unless they had a personal connection to it, it wouldn't necessarily register, they wouldn't necessarily care.

We need as many people as possible standing up for the protection of our seas, but to achieve this we need people to understand what the ocean means to them personally. To be mindful of the importance of the ocean in their own lives. I've met many people along my journeys who have a strong connection to the ocean, and often times it's based around how it feels to be there.

I feel so fortunate to explore the seas both above and below water, but not everybody has that opportunity. In the UK, a nation of islands, one in five children has never been to the sea! And you might be as surprised as I

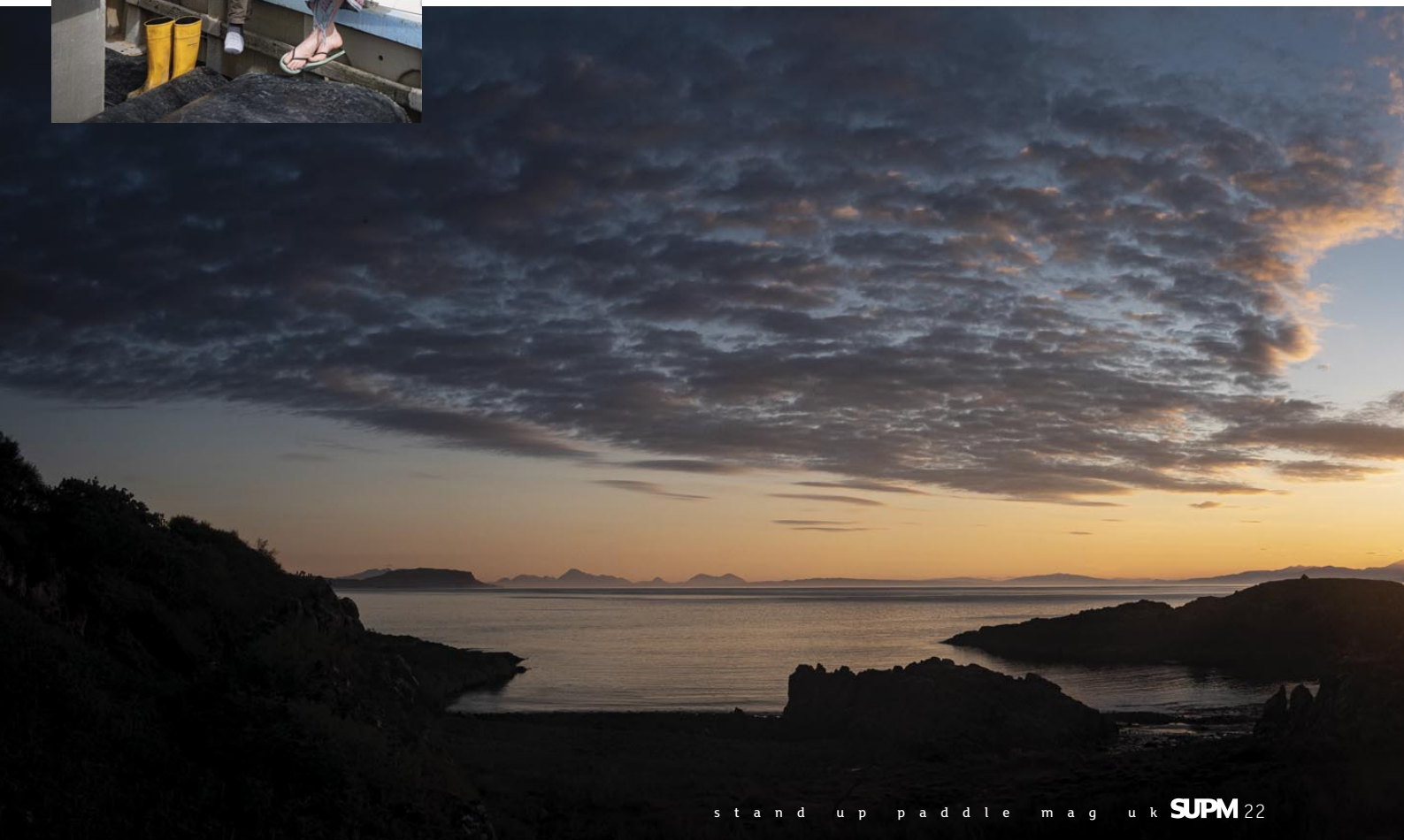
was to hear that many of them live in coastal communities. It's been proven that time in, on or by water is beneficial for mental health, and I have experienced this myself. I want to help more people experience this, inspire and empower them to spend time safely by the water, and nurture stewardship of our blue spaces as a result.

This summer, we launched our first Vitamin Sea Project pilot event with the help of the Chelmarsh SUP club, combining SUP, mindfulness, and conservation, and took over 40 children paddle boarding who had never been before. Many of the children said they had been fearful before going, but their feedback afterwards was incredible. One child said it had been the best day ever; one response was, "I've seen something so wonderful, I can't wait to go back".

I've been raising money for Seaful as I paddle - if you would like to donate even the equivalent of a coffee, we'd be so grateful - search for Just Giving Cal Major. Thank you. You can learn more about Seaful at www.seaful.org.uk.

Based on your experience, do you feel like system change is necessary rather than just individual efforts?

Definitely, I think it's unfair to put the onus on the individual to solve our planet's issues. Someone recently asked me how campaigning around marine protection differed from plastic pollution in terms of public engagement, suggesting that it's obvious what we can do



about plastic pollution - the changes we can make in our own lives etc. However, I have realised over the years that although taking individual responsibility for our plastic footprint is essential, it's the businesses benefiting from the destruction of our environment by producing all that plastic that need to be taking the responsibility. The governments that are encouraging their industries also need to be held to account. In that regard, we need to vote with our wallets and make our voices heard as consumers but also as citizens.

We need to make it known we won't stand for this, and we want to change. It's the same for marine protection, perhaps even more so. So many members of the public aren't aware of how vital the ocean is for their health and wellbeing or aware of the level of destruction befalling it - so those of us that do know need to hold the government and industries to account. We all have a stake in this, and it's time the UK government managed the ocean for the benefit of all stakeholders, not just those directly financially profiting from exploiting it. When we talk about the economics of coastal communities, that includes us - the water lovers, conservationists, recreational anglers, wildlife photographers, as well as the fishing and energy sectors.

Seeing the coastline of Scotland over that prolonged period, what surprised you regarding the level of plastic pollution you encountered? Were you hoping it would be less than it was?

I think the thing that affected me most this time wasn't so much the plastic found on beaches or floating in the sea, but the individual animals affected by it, and this time it was mostly fishing gear. I've heard all the stats - 100,000 marine mammals and 1 million sea birds are killed annually due to plastic (estimated - the accurate figures are likely to be higher). Still, they were just




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numbers until I was confronted with the suffering of individual animals. This really opened my eyes to the reality of it.

One day off the northeast coast, I came across a floating dead humpback whale calf with rope entangled in its tail and an enormous lobster pot hanging off the rope. This animal was less than a year old and had likely struggled and drowned from the entanglement. I learned from experts that entanglement is thought to be the leading cause of death in minke whales in Scotland and that there is too much rope in the seas of Scotland to maintain a healthy humpback whale population.

A couple of weeks later, I found a gannet with barbed hooks through one of its feet and into its tail. This one was alive, and I managed to free it and give it a second chance (NB I'm a vet, so I have the skills and experience to do this – if you find entangled or injured marine life please contact British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) or a local vet). Still, I saw several other gannets with fishing rope around their beaks, legs, wings that I could not help. I also watched a fulmar land on the sea with a piece of rope in its mouth. It's not so much the death of these animals that upsets me, as the idea of them suffering, and on this trip, I was face to



www.justgiving.com/fundraising/calmajor-seaful

face with the reality of that suffering. Plastic in our ocean is visible, tangible and easy to translate to the general public. What is less easy to relate to is the systematic and ongoing destruction of the seabed and over-exploitation of fish stocks out to sea, which affects all aspects of the ecosystems, from worms to whales. But out of sight, out of mind, it's much harder to be upset by than seeing a dead whale calf.

You have been an ocean ambassador for some time. Are you still mostly optimistic about the human race?

Mostly! I do have moments where my optimism waivers, as when I found the dead whale. That sent me into a bit of a downward spin, and I felt pretty hopeless and depressed for a couple of weeks. But then I think about how far we've come, how much more awareness there is now about conservation issues, how much more politically and environmentally active the youth are, and how much more public pressure there is on governments and industry.

We still have a long way to go, and we need to be working much faster than we are, not afraid to make the right decisions for fear of upsetting small groups of people. We also need to support those

who will be negatively affected financially in the short-term by conservation methods introduced but confident of the long-term benefits of protecting our one home planet.

If you could eradicate one destructive practice in the ocean tomorrow – what would it be?

It would have to be bottom-towed fishing methods: Bottom trawling, which drags heavy machinery along the bottom of the ocean, destroying fragile ecosystems in its path, and scallop dredging, which rakes up the sea bed to harvest scallops. These fishing methods are not needed to feed our UK population.

I would also educate the public further on the different fishing methods - I think there's a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding and a lack of awareness.



Often 'fishing' is lumped into one without an understanding of the different types of fishing practices. If everybody understood the facts, we'd be able to have more informed conversations about how best to manage the ocean for the greatest benefit.

A 1200 km paddle around the Scottish coast is daunting; what and where were your biggest concerns?

I was most concerned about the enormous tidal races and strong winds. I had nightmares about Cape Wrath for months before getting there, and it lived up to its name, with enormous swell rolling in from the west, reflecting back off the cliffs and creating clapotis underneath my board - crazy standing waves and what felt like volcanoes erupting beneath me! That whole North coast was pretty crazy, with very committing paddles around some prominent headlands, but the reward was the phenomenal wildlife and scenery; I regularly felt like I was in Lord of the Rings or Jurassic Park - looking back on it, it was amazing.

You've witnessed mile upon mile of stunning scenery - which was the standout memory?

It has to be crossing from Ardnamurchan to the Isle of Skye. We set off pre-dawn; the water was like a mirror, with the mountains on Eigg, Rum and Muck to the left, Skye up ahead and the mainland mountains over to the right. It was a big paddle - a 20-mile crossing to the south of Skye, but the light, mountains and wildlife during the crossing made it so special.

If there was one moment of pure joy, and to the contrary, agony. When and what caused it?

Pure joy - has to have been on the northeast coast, around Duncansby Head - incredible sea cliffs and stacks housing thousands of nesting sea birds. They just surrounded me - puffins, guillemots, razorbills and fulmar - they weren't at all bothered by me being there, swimming underneath my board,

swarming around me in the air and rafted up on the water next to me. So surrounded by raw wildlife and scenery. I felt so, so fortunate to be experiencing that and even more passionate about helping others experience that too.

Pure agony - there was one day on the north coast paddling across the entrance of Loch Eribol towards Whiten Head when the wind just funnelled down the loch directly out to sea. It was pretty intense, and for several hours I was on my knees just battling, paddling only on the left, to avoid getting blown directly out to sea. It was physically exhausting; I was in a lot of pain and mentally draining to stay calm and not panic at the prospect of ending up out to sea. I never plan to paddle in offshore wind, but with the mountains in Scotland, there are often anomalies in the wind direction, and this was one of them. I was pretty scared, to be honest, the North coast was unforgiving, and I felt pretty humbled by the power of the sea and conditions.

The wildlife is wondrous; what were the special moments you shared with the creatures you came across?

One particularly special moment was paddling out of Thurso towards Dunnet Head - we'd set off at 04.00, I was tired, and it was raining. But this experience made it all worthwhile. For a few weeks after the Orca experience, I immediately felt a huge surge of adrenaline every fin I saw in the water. I saw a blackfin. Then another. Then another four or five. But they weren't big enough to be orca. As they approached, I realised they were white-beaked dolphins - huge animals playing so gracefully and expertly in the water. I sat on my board and took it all in, a grin spread right across my face. Only a few days earlier, a pod of white-beaked dolphins had become stranded on a beach not far away and re-floated by the amazing BDMLR team - I was hopeful that these were the same dolphins, returned to their home and glad to be back.

How many calories did you burn on an average day, and what did you eat to keep refuelled?

I'm not sure how many calories exactly, but I would estimate 4-5000 a day. I ate a lot. I made sure to eat proper food while paddling and had some great lunch boxes from Klean Kanteen to take the cake in! However, my piece de resistance on the food front was my homemade expedition rations which I dehydrated myself in the months before setting off.

I have an insulated canister from Klean Kanteen and would take this with me every day with hot food in it to have on the water – this was a total game changer! I also took a flask of tea with me most days which was a huge relief after hours of paddling.

I eat a primarily plant-based diet, so I am cautious to ensure I have all the micro and macro-nutrients I need. Every day I'd have a smoothie with banana, and Vivo Life Thrive (greens and micronutrients) and Perform (vegan protein) powders, and plant-based Omega 3 and B12, which between them have all the good stuff I need to keep going each day!

James Appleton was your constant companion on this expedition; besides his excellent photography, what does he add to your time on the trip?

James paddled every mile with me in a kayak – I was made very aware of how different ocean SUPing is compared to sea kayaking! James was an absolute trooper, filming and photographing everything of

relevance, and this was invaluable for moments like finding the dead whale.

However, more importantly, I really valued being able to share the experience with James, having someone to bounce ideas and plans off and reflect on the good and bad bits together. It was such a different trip having a companion compared to my previous solo expeditions. James has a wonderful sense of humour, and even though we were both exhausted a lot of the time, we still found times to laugh at and with each other.

He supported me when the going got tough, helped me stay positive when I felt down about the state of the seas and reassured me when I felt fearful or out of control on the ocean, even if he did too. I also trust him implicitly on the water – there aren't many people I would want to paddle those waters with. Scotland has some incredible paddling opportunities, but some of the water we paddled through was seriously wild! James – you are a total legend; thank you so much.

Shout outs...

Huge, huge thank you to everyone we met along the way, and all the support from people both in-person and online during the expedition, it did make a world of difference.

Massive thank you to Klean Kanteen, who supported me on this trip – I couldn't have done it without them, and it's incredible for me to be able to work with such a like-minded, caring group of people.

Thank you also to my wonderful sponsors – Palm Equipment, dryrobe, Starboard SUP and Mooncup. Thank you, Fourth Element, Vivo Life and Patagonia, for helping out with the kit and to Water Skills Academy for all their support.

The biggest thank you has to go to our fantastic land support crews – Zoe and Skye, my Mum and Dad, and Lorna, Toby and Madie, without whom we absolutely wouldn't have done this who made our time on land so much more enjoyable. Thank you.

Thank you so much, Cal, for your time and efforts to make the world a better place – it is much appreciated.

Thank you, I appreciate your help in spreading the word about how wonderful and deserving of protection our ocean is!





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Keeping Klean Kanteen ambassador, Cal Major, hydrated as she embarked on her epic journey to stand-up paddleboard around the coast of Scotland.

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Emma Love **Photographer:** Graham Woolfven



Interviews: Emma Love

On August 1st 2019, British Canoeing launched the Stand Up Paddleboard White Water Coach Award. In a series of interviews, Emma Love grabbed some zoom time with eight of the extraordinary women to have qualified or are on route to qualifying. All with unique stories and interests but all with one passion in common – the incredible paddlesport that is white water SUP!

Emma Love is an Ambassador for both British Canoeing #ShePaddles and California Watersport Collective.

<http://www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk>

Beth Kirby

Facebook: Beth-K-SUP-Coaching

It was lovely to catch up with Beth Kirby and discuss SUP! Beth is a raft coach and medal winner, a kayaker and more recently, a qualified WW SUP coach based in the East Midlands. We chatted about Beth's passion for paddleboarding on white water and her predictions of how she thinks our amazing sport will develop in the next few years.



Photo: Beth Kirby



#ShePaddles



Photo: Chris Kippers Bond

What was your first paddling experience?

My first paddling experiences were when I was a kid. We used to go on lots of water sports holidays, and I then went on to achieve my one star (kayaking) with the Girl Guides. But it wasn't until I went to university in Nottingham that my interest in paddling took off, and I now paddle pretty much anything I can on white water including, rafting, kayaking and of course SUP!

What was it about white water SUP that sparked your interest?

Partly from seeing other people do it on the course and thinking to myself that having a go would be a bit of a laugh. I also came across it when I was not massively enjoying kayaking, mainly because of hating being stuck inside a boat. White water SUP felt like a perfect way of getting my enjoyment back. Interestingly, I have found that spending time playing on a paddleboard has helped build my confidence for getting back in a kayak.



Photo: Beth Kirby



What's your primary motivation for paddling white water on a SUP?

I enjoy the challenge of it, the feeling is fantastic when you successfully paddle down a rapid, and WW SUP is very different from the other paddling I do. There's a massive technical aspect to it that interests me, and I like the fact that it removes the barrier between male and female paddlers. We all have to work hard to stay on our boards!

I know you are incredibly competitive when it comes to paddling and have accumulated lots of competition experience with rafting. This culminated in winning bronze and gold medals (in 2017) at the Worlds in Japan. Do you find your drive to win is transferring to white water SUP?

I have not had a huge chance to have a go at the competition side, but I would love to one day. Some tremendous white water SUP competitions are happening in the USA that I would like to participate in. For the moment, I am focusing on building up my paddling skills; I would

describe my competitive edge as currently being focused on being the best I can be within the industry.

What is your prediction for how our sport will grow and its direction in the next few years?

As a sport, it is progressing pretty quickly in the UK. Since British Canoeing launched the coaching qualification (and with that, an increase in paddlers becoming qualified), we have seen a lot more people coming to try WW SUP. So already the sport is much bigger than it was a year ago. I predict we will see WW SUP progress in three directions, SUP X, river surfing and river running.

SUP X is excellent for mass participation and showcasing the sport – it is especially accessible on lower grade sections of the river. I think we will see SUP X competitions being held on artificial courses around the UK in the future.

With river running, I think we will see this split into those paddlers who are mainly interested in surfing on the wave and

those who love to paddle a stretch of a white water river. We witnessed a lot of interest in river surfing in August of last year where paddlers were heading out on the Thames. I think this will grow, particularly with freestyle kayakers wanting to have a go at something a little bit different. What would help develop this side of the sport is having artificial waves purposely built for WW SUP, as we have seen across the US.

How did you find the process of becoming a qualified white water SUP coach?

I enjoyed the process. I had previously not done any 'intentional' coaching and instead had just helped people out with little bits here and there. I found the 15 or so sessions you have to complete post orientation and prior to the assessment helped me think about how to structure support for paddlers ranging from beginners and up to advanced levels. It also made me reflect on how to understand different individual's motivations for getting on the water.



Photo: Ewan Vernon



Photo: Ewan Vernon

Since British Canoeing launched the coaching qualification we have seen a lot more people coming to try WW SUP

With the British Canoeing WW SUP coaching qualification being relatively new and significant uptake of women becoming qualified or on route to being qualified, what advice would you give women who may be interested in going down the coaching route?

Go for it! Attend the WW SUP two-day coach orientation; go and enjoy the experience and remember it is pitched at all levels of paddlers and up to grade two water. So, this is not about getting down big grade three rivers and stoppers; it is about focusing on the technical aspects of paddling. Keep in mind; women are better at the technical aspect of paddling because of our size and strength. Also, talk to the ladies who have already qualified or are on that journey; they will be able to give you lots of advice. And finally, think about having a female coach mentor to support you; they will help you on your path to instructing and coaching.



Photo: Ewan Vernon



Photo: Ewan Vernon



Julie Vigor

@Julie.Vigor.SUP

The last 12 months for Julie Vigor have been full of successes, including representing British Canoeing as a #ShePaddles Ambassador, qualifying as a Sheltered Water Coach, launching her own business Phoenix Paddlesport and completing her WW SUP Coach Orientation. What is even more impressive, she only started paddling four years ago!

Julie Vigor

Photo: Martin Harrall



#ShePaddles

Julie Vigor

Photo: Phil Hadley





Tell me about the very first time you had a go at paddling.

My very first experience of paddling was about 25 years ago. I was working in IT sales, and one of my clients invited me to paddle at Symonds Yat. We spent an afternoon going down the rapids in kayaks, and I think I swam every single time! I didn't paddle again until four years ago when my sons joined the Air Cadets. They had both decided to have a go at kayaking; I was invited to join them. I can only sum up the first couple of months as paddling around and around in circles, but then I was introduced to a fantastic coach. Suddenly we found ourselves being taught in a range of craft, including kayaks, open canoes and slalom boats – it was such a great way to get lots of paddling experience. I even entered a slalom C1 competition and much to my surprise, I won!

What is it about white water SUP that has got you so excited, and what drives you to keep playing?

My first ever attempt was last year at Cullum Lock with WW SUP coach Louise Royle. Louise was kind enough to meet and help me with understanding how to paddle a board on white water. I fell off, swam lots and immediately fell in love with the sport! I now own my own white water specific board, a Tambo Core (10.5 Lady), which I adore experimenting on. You will often find me playing with pivot turns, breaking in and out etc. and trying to do all of this as fast as possible! What drives me to keep having a go? I enjoy the challenge of white water, and I love paddling SUPs. The combination of putting a board on white water makes that challenge even more significant. I love it!

It has been a challenging year for so many of us in the UK, and I know you had lots of plans, including becoming qualified as a white water SUP coach. How did the year turn out for you in the end?

I found it tough not to get on the water, especially as I had by then decided I would like to become a SUP Coach. Lockdown made me focus on completing some of the British Canoeing online courses, including Safeguarding, Paddleability and Coaching the Mind. I also began learning yoga because I would love to teach this on SUPs eventually. When lockdown lifted, I was lucky enough to get out on the water and complete my Core Coach qualification. This, in turn, opened the door to completing some of the coaching orientations and getting ready for exciting assessments, and I am now a qualified Sheltered Water SUP Coach! So yes, what started as a challenging year, on reflection, turned into a positive and a very busy year! .

I have heard you describe your SUP journey as several stages, including qualifying to coach sheltered, open and white water. Can you tell me more about this?

I guess to put it into context; my life has changed drastically in the past three years. I left my relationship, moved into my own home, stabilised myself financially, found an entirely new set of friends (through paddling), and I am now seriously thinking about living on a canal boat! But the most exciting aspect of all this change is that I can now follow my passion – being on the water! Before SUP, I loved paddling, but it was very much a hobby. Now it is much more! The pandemic has made me realise how important it is to follow dreams. My dream is to share my passion, and my goal is to teach SUP, whether on a river, a lake, via wellness sessions, SUP yoga, or white water. I love it all! So yes, qualifying to coach on sheltered, open and white water is very much part of my plan to be able to offer SUP in all its variety!



Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall



Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall



Julie Vigor Photo: Phil Hadley



Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall

Julie Vigor

Photo: Phil Hadley



Outside of your desire to coach SUP, do you have any white water rivers you would like to paddle in 2021 and beyond?

I recently joined lots of European SUP groups on Facebook, and it has made me aware of the lovely rivers over there. My dream is to buy a campervan, go to Spain, to Northern Italy and head over to Slovenia to paddle on the Soca. I want to meet different people and do different things – I don't want to be tied down anymore. So many new adventures and opportunities are presenting themselves, and I am loving life!

And do you have a favourite river in the UK you like to take your board on?

Symonds Yat on the River Wye is a great favourite of mine. From a novice's point of view, it is fantastic because it is a relatively short bit of rapid, and you know you will come out of it at the bottom. It is a great park and play, easy to access, in a beautiful part of the world, plus there's an excellent pub for when you get off the water! And, if you want to carry on paddling (downstream) from the rapid, you can easily follow the river to Monmouth and Redbrook. It is such a gorgeous stretch of water to experience.

Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall

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By Sarah Thornely

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Living legends part 2: Steve & Mandy West

Interview: SUPM

Pics: Mistral, Steve and Mandy West

Following on from June's incredibly insightful Q&A with Steve and Mandy.



How does SUP fit your watery life?

Today SUP remains a part of our life, but we balance it with OC paddling, Hawaiian Canoe Sailing and Windsurfing. Designing boards for Mistral means I remain focused on key elements of the sport, and I aim to begin going back to paddle design which I have done in the past. When career waterman and women get involved in the pioneering process, that's when changes happen because we find ourselves being approached on various levels to assist and add a comment, inspire, mentor, and so on. It's an expected bi-product and an extension of your life, and people sense there must be gravitas behind the idea if certain individuals are involved.

To put this in context, when the ASI commissioned me to set up their system here in the UK to train instructors, it led to the co-writing with Chris Rea of the 'SUP Water Rescue and Safety Course', which was the first of its kind for the sport. With his lifeguard training experience and myself with years of paddling and ocean sports knowledge, Chris created something unique, seminal, and significant. We saw the board as a rescue craft, and we recognised the synergy to perform board rescue, but beyond this, many other aspects of water safety could be passed on to instructors. This, together with a foundation course, became a compulsory course for instructors.

Jamie and brother Justin Mitchell had written the first Level 1 ASI Instructor Course. The course dealt only with flat water, yet many schools operated from beaches with some shore break and where marine traffic was present, and so I formulated another course for a Level 2 which dealt with these issues. I then wrote a Level 3 for Downwind Paddling, focusing on a wide range of topics.

Mandy was the backbone of the ASI here in the UK as she handled all the admin side of things. We worked in Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, the USA and by 2013 or so, I had had enough; I was giving it more than it was giving me, and SUP was not fun for me at that point.

While we were in Fiji and on the verge of settling there, Chris Rea and Ben Longhurst contacted us, saying they wanted to leave the ASI and would I be interested in doing something with them. They are both top guys, and I could not say "No" to them. I came up with a name, 'Water Skills Academy' (WSA), and we put our heads together to create the first courses for SUP. Meanwhile, Chris brought over his lifeguard training courses, surf instructor courses. Since then, sit on top kayak, and coastering has been added. We want to add outrigger canoeing course and why not; when time permits. So SUP is always with me one way or another.

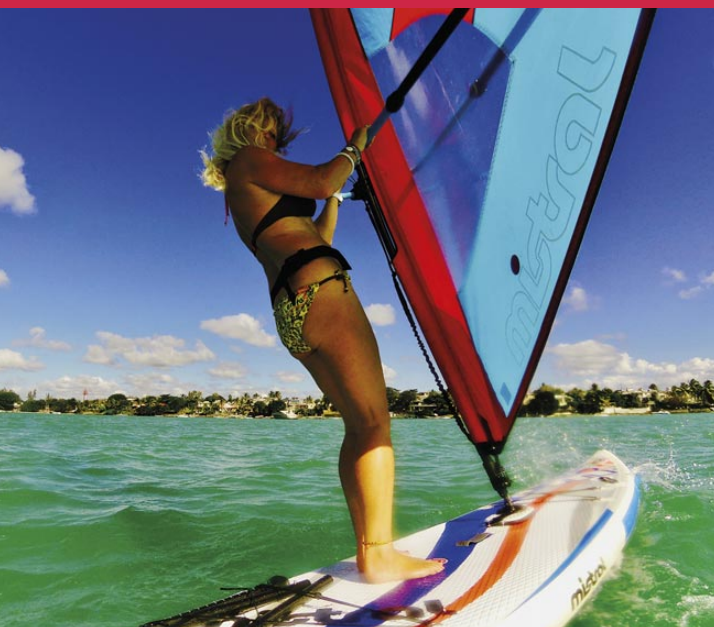


Tell us a little about your canoe sailing shenanigans – it looks to be the pinnacle of a combination of both paddle and sail sports?

I first sailed these beautiful icons in Hawaii, and then when Mandy I were living in Fiji for six months, we were sailing regularly. When we moved to Mauritius, I wanted a means for us to sail to the outer lying islands and contacted the owner and long-time friend, Nick Beck, if he knew if there was a one for sale. He tracked one down in the foothills of LA, and the owner was looking for a buyer. At \$25,000, they are not cheap, and this one was around half of this. Mistral came to the rescue and funded the purchase and shipping from LA to Mauritius. It was a game-changer in having 'Kanoa' with us on the island. In 2017 we

went to Tahiti and took part in the Holopuni Va'a event from Tahiti to Bora Bora over 400km, which was mind-blowing and an event we want to go back and compete in. When it came time to leave Mauritius, we could not leave her there, and so we had her shipped back to the UK and subsequently purchased her from Mistral. Handling one of these demands many skills. Steering is controlled by a paddle only, and though it may look easy, it's far from it. Paddle skills are essential, and when you're reaching 20+ knots in big seas, you had better know what you're doing.





Both of you have competed in various disciplines. Where does competition sit for you both?

Competition has played a part in our lives, but it's been no more than a testing ground for me and has never been an occupational obsession. Competing does not define who I am or my place in water sports. On the other hand, having the trophies and kudos from Molokai wins and other international events such as the Catalina Crossing in California and many other international events do you no harm, of course, and adds to the experiences you can share with others.

Mandy is very much like me. She is not overly competitive, just fast by default. I remember doing a downwind run with her and maybe ten others from Sandbanks to Hengistbury Head in Bournemouth. It's around nine miles, I suppose, and the conditions went from F6 to F8 and quite gnarly in some sections. Mandy was middle of the pack and a long way ahead of one of the UK's top female competitor of the time. No training, no theatrics, there she was kicking-arse and loving it. When she first competed in the River Dart Race, she won the women's division by over a mile beating the then UK National Champion. Competing is optional even if you're good and many of the best are not competing, and it's good to keep that perspective in mind.

Give us some insight into the last few years and how things have differed with personal health and COVID lockdowns.

I took a hit with my blocked artery, which scared the hell out of me. I find I don't

want to push quite as hard as I used to, but then again, I don't feel the need to and still get plenty out of my water time, whether with a boom or paddle in my hand. Oddly, I feel Mandy and I are both living our lives backwards, only beginning now to settle down in one spot for the first time. We're already making plans for our golden years when we can be in Tahiti or somewhere warm and tropical at the very least. Honestly, Covid did not affect us much, as we live by the water and work from home and recognise how fortunate we both are. From a business and personal perspective, we've had to delay travel, which we would have made this past 12 months.

Where do you see your personal on water experiences going? Any particular goals or plateaus to get over?

I think some foiling is on the horizon, notably wing foiling, as I've been fully occupied developing this part of Mistral's inventory. I'm working with two talented designers, Cam Stewart and Tom Partington, on foils designed from ground zero. These we are scheduling for 2022 together with new wing sails. We're also working on reverse engineering some classic Mistral windsurfing boards from the past, so there's plenty to get on with. Mistral is booming right now, and reinvestment is focused on some very nice high-end product over the coming years. As for experiences, we both want to return to Tahiti to compete in the 400km plus canoe sailing race over five days from Tahiti to Bora Bora; we don't do holidays, only experiences.



Away from the water, you both have other ‘stuff’ going on. Steve – writing and equipment designing. Mandy – a talented/accomplished saxophonist. How do these two elements fit your lifestyle?

What others perceive as work, I consider a lifestyle for which I get paid. It's all very blurred around the edges when your work is your life. If you find something that is your hobby for which you get paid, then you never have to ‘work’ a day in your life; which is not to say there aren't stresses that can go with it, mainly when it comes to working with difficult people, but then you learn to circumvent them where possible. Mostly my line of work is not advertised, it's what you know and who you know, and you only get out of it what you put in – reputation is everything in this industry. Although I am outspoken on the issues I know about, I am confident in knowing I am not giving opinions, but simply what I consider to be the best facts to my knowledge.

Mandy has taken a long gap out of playing the saxophone professionally, it was a lifestyle that took a lot out of her, but she's keen to drift a little back into it. However, we value our time together, and she's no intention of being out every night jamming with a band; that's not the way we want our relationship to be. We are fortunate we love the same things and blend so well that our lifestyle needs and wants complement one another. Most of all, we love being on the water together.

Steve: give us three predictions about SUP moving forwards and where you think it's heading?

SUP got off to a fractious beginning, as a concept and as an industry. Accelerated by social media, over-hyped by brands wanting to save their skins by branching out into something they knew nothing about, notably ‘paddling’. As a ‘sport’, it's about as dysfunctional a platform as you could build for any cohesive way forward for racing, race rules, board specs and race formats. Without a proper gestation period, rules were created, especially concerning board design parameters and steering systems. On the other hand, SUP as recreation is a roaring success.

It should be made clear, and there should be no ambiguity about the fact that in the context of racing, SUP forms its own ‘International Governing Body’ and,



therefore, its own rules. This IGB then works with respective affiliated National Governing Bodies (NGBs).

In the fullness of time, the said IGB decides who it wishes to affiliate with the on the basis of intent to pursue becoming an Olympic sport. Forget funding, this only goes to Olympic sports, but red tape, you can count on it. Outrigger canoeing, has as its IGB, the ‘International Va'a Federation’ (IVF). Each region then has its own NGB, such as in Fiji. They have the ‘Fiji Outrigger Canoe Racing Association’ (FOCRA), affiliated with the IVF, which is affiliated with the ICF.

The very idea that a third party should govern SUP and that we, the paddlers, accept such a status quo clarifies just how dysfunctional the entire racing scene has become. Knowledge is power, and in this instance, there's just too much BS being accepted.

Racing has mostly been about brands wanting to gain kudos and athletes wanting to get paid for globe-trotting, and that's about it. Racing is painful, it hurts, it's not that much fun, and it's made the politics more painful. Brands sell very few race boards; they're reliant on 10'6 inflatables and the like. Many brands have massively over capitalised on race board development and team riders when it would be better to sponsor ambassadors of fun and adventure on their inflatables. This is how it is.

SUP has traction as a fun, recreational pursuit on water, but it has some significant issues as a serious sport. SUP foiling has only helped dilute and confuse the evolution of the sport, and I'm wondering when Moloka'i returns, how many will line up on unlimited boards. Numbers were already declining the last



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time it was staged, and in speaking with my mate Travis Grant, a four-time winner, he told me he was keen to foil the channel the next time around, not because he was fed up with the unlimited division, but because it's the 'next thing' to conquer and why not.

Ironically and perhaps understandably, the sporting aspect of SUP has been dumbed down in respect of the equipment. It fails to appeal to accomplished athletes by not offering equipment to a cross-section that wants hi-tech and is perfectly OK with carbon this and that and gadgets and big price tags. Unlimited flatwater boards with steering mechanisms are a good

example. These boards are superior in every way over a 14' board in certain paddling environments, and yet who would know because so few have ever experienced such a thing.

The beauty is, you don't have to race these boards to appreciate them, though their lack of popularity is not helped when race organisers actively reject them, such as the organisers of the 11 Cities SUP Race. This pervasive attitude shuts down the evolutionary process for no other reason than the fact, they are too fast and will disrupt the timing of the event?

Rudder systems as a case in point, fitted to all unlimited boards or indeed any performance SUP board, make a SUP board a different experience and yet for no reason of traditional dogma, the rules are overly prescriptive, when in fact, the sport needs to evolve for the sake of greater enjoyment and diversity of participant. It's here to stay for the foreseeable future, of course. It ticks the boxes of accessibility and ease of use for the masses, which is very much the wide base of the pyramid. Inflatable users switching to hardboards will ensure greater traction and longevity.

Mandy: give us three predictions for women's SUP and what you think might happen there.

Covid has spiked the growth of family participants, and from what you see, it seems more women are participants of SUP on inflatables than men. On the other hand, fewer women race than men. SUP racing is painful, even if that appeals to some. Women make the difference to SUP because it bolsters numbers and perhaps ensures SUP is





Standing and paddling are about as hard as it gets. In this respect, it's an advanced form of paddling, possibly more primitive in fact. It's well documented ancient cultures were standing and punting and paddling before sitting, and they were pretty pleased with themselves when they did, I would think; the sense of relief would have been palpable. In a sense, we have reverse engineered a sit-down form of canoeing to standing, which could be considered regressive and in no way an advancement of the paddling process.

Paddling is a low impact activity, but the potential for injury on account of leverage loads and stresses through the body makes injury a concern for the SUP paddler. Therefore be smart about your paddle choice and paddle length in particular.

Most of all, come to terms with SUP in a way that is not too obsessive, or you will, in time more than likely, lose interest. Paddlesports can be for life, and when you mix them with a variety, then this is the spice that will keep you involved for a lifetime of watersports.

I've witnessed hundreds who have burned bright then faded away. Take a slow-burn approach, and you can enjoy watersports in all variants for a lifetime.

mainly recreational. In Australia, where I was racing OC6 canoes, as brutal as this sport is, more women were competing than men, by only a small percentage, but that's a cultural issue because Aussie women are highly competitive and love to beat men at anything whenever they can.

Women hold the balance at a recreational level, and it has been very empowering for many women who have taken up SUP, whether recreationally or as a sport. It's the fact that women find SUP appealing that its longevity is assured and this to me is very significant.

Any final thoughts on SUP, paddling in general or watersports as a whole?

SUP is part of a family of paddle sports, and I think when participants recognise this, they can grasp the reality they are part of something very much bigger. They are, in fact, part of a lineage of many related paddlesports. If you want to become 'better' at SUP, the best way, ironically, is to spend some time sitting and swinging a paddle rather than standing. Sitting permits you to focus the mind on your technique and connection with water.

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SUP POLO

is mint!

Words: Sarah Thornely (Supjunkie) and Steve Llewellyn

Photos: Supjunkie **Videos:** Starboard and Brian Johncey

Who would have thought from the early demo session held at a Starboard World Dealer meeting in Costa Brava, Spain, in 2014 that SUP polo would become a pretty cool game, hard and fast, totally exhausting, and so, so much fun!

I had a chat with Steve Llewellyn, a member of The Real Blue Chip SUPer Club, who, in my opinion, is one of THE best players in the UK – since discovering the game with the club, he has fully embraced it and spends most of his time on the water practising and playing the game. Hours spent on the Thames, using the flow to enable him to shoot at ‘goal’ and allow the ball to come back to him – he can get out at any time, alone if necessary, to hone his polo skills.

His enthusiasm is endless, touring the country to find like-minded paddlers and clubs, to show them how it's done and encourage them to start their own team.

Steve has been on the winning team many a time with Brian Johncey's Blue Chip Raiders. They are a force to be reckoned with – Brian was so taken with seeing the SUP polo in Spain that he immediately ordered all the kit and in 2016 developed the National Inter-Club Championships, which has run ever since with the Raiders winning every year but one. Under the leadership of Brian and Steve, the team also travelled to visit Waterborn SUP in Kingsbridge, South Devon, in 2019, where they played local, and other teams and again came home with the title. The club has fully embraced the game, holding training at Guildford Lido in Surrey

throughout the winter and now have two teams with potential for more, and the numbers are ever-growing. It's a great testament to Brian and Steve's enthusiasm for the game – SUP polo now runs deep through the club's veins.

So let's get on with Steve to find out more:

Steve, thank you for taking the time to talk about your love for this fabulous game! How and when did you first get involved?

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to talk about SUP Polo Sarah. It's my favourite aspect of SUPing, but so far has mainly remained unrepresented in the exponentially growing SUP world. It's time more people discovered just how much more fun they can have on a paddleboard. I've been paddling since 2014 after I saw Brian Johncey giving a SUP lesson on the Thames as I kayaked past. I joined Blue Chip, bought an iSUP and never used my kayak again after that. I was hooked on standing on the water. Soon after, I went along to one of the club's early winter polo sessions at Guildford Lido to try what Brian was trying to describe as a new game combining paddleboards with a sort of Lacrosse/polo hybrid vibe. Now, I love eccentricity, and Brian immediately piqued my interest with his babbling.

<https://youtu.be/s-tjIJRQ3X4>



A short video of one of the first demos of the game: Starboard SUP polo in Costa Brava.

<https://vimeo.com/359015562>



Check out all the action in this short video: Waterborn SUPolo 2019





Did it immediately click with you, and what turned you on about the game?

If you're lucky in life, you may come across something that appeals to you on many levels. It can improve your life; draw on abilities you didn't realise you had; give you something extra to look forward to; it might improve your health and fitness; give you an increased level of focus, or provide some temporary escapism. Polo quickly became that 'something for me'.

I'd never had such fun as I had that first day at the Lido. Windsurfing came close. I had previously spent a lot of time doing that, which I enjoyed, but that was a solo pastime for me. Having played SUP polo that first time I realised I enjoyed being part of a team, playing with other like-minded folk and feeding off each other. I knew it was for me straight away and could hardly wait to play again.

Once 'just' an enthusiastic and brilliant player, you are now the head coach for The Real Blue Chip SUPer Club – how did this come about?

Am I? Haha! Is this a paid position? Brian?

I spend a lot of time alone on my board with a paddle and a ball thinking about what will work and practising those things,

whether it's a different way to hold the paddle to pass or shoot or how to break up an attacking play, or how best to position myself and/or the board for any given situation. There's a lot of subtle stuff going on in my game that you won't necessarily see but makes a big difference to play. I like to pass this on to anyone who will listen to improve the standard of play.

I think enthusiasm is contagious. It has a way of encouraging others. When I click with something (hardly ever happens), I struggle to contain mine and probably become something of a bore to others who don't relate. For those who do, and there is a growing number at Blue Chip, and beyond, enthusiasm is an excellent source of motivation and encouragement. It rubs off on people to try something they never have before and improve on where they're currently at. If you take enthusiasm to an environment with other like-minded people, it's sure to affect you positively.

I'm hoping that as the enthusiasm spreads, it begins to fuel itself, which means I'll be out of an imaginary job. The pay was terrible anyway!

How do you think the winter training has helped the team(s)?

In previous years over the winter months, we have been fortunate to have access to Guildford Lido every two weeks to train and play. This has enabled us to improve individual skills on the board and with the paddle and ball. Time spent moving on the board and repeating simple things with paddle and ball are crucial to improving player's skill and confidence.

We always have enough players to form more than two teams, often as many as three or four teams of four. This allows us to constantly swap around players, learning each other's playing styles, trying new tactics and generally feeding off each other to improve our game. An aspect of SUP polo absent in other forms of SUP is the physical contact of boards coming together. It is inevitable you will experience this in play, and so incorporating this into sessions is essential. This is one of the most fun aspects (and comedic for spectators) of polo.

SUP polo is not just about 'playing a game' – how do you think it develops your skills as a paddler, and are there any other crossovers you can think of?

Much is to be gained from just messing about on your board with a polo paddle and a couple of balls. Think 'keepy-uppy' when you were a kid... you developed your poise,

your balance, your reaction time, your skill with a ball, your fitness, and it kept you out of mischief.

It's similar to just getting out on your board with a polo paddle and a ball or two. You'll be moving around your board in no time as you concentrate on capturing, moving and throwing the ball. You'll go from having feet glued to the spot to running up and down your board, turning 180 on it, and doing tail sink turns to 180 the board itself in next to no time.

You'll be amazed at how much confidence this will give you on your board. You'll probably never fall in again whilst paddling normally, and it will open up other SUP avenues that you might never have considered without this level of confidence.

For example, how do you feel about paddling in the wake of a large boat, on choppy seas, standing on your board in sea caves rather than kneeling, paddling with five others on a mega board, having a go at SUP surfing, trying white water SUP or doing a stand-up night-time paddle? I guarantee that once you enjoy SUP polo, you will feel these other SUP scenarios are within your reach, and you will actively seek them out. And bumping into things out on the water will prove no bother to you!

During Covid, no winter training was allowed – where have you and the team been training?

This year we were lucky to have Guildford Lido for three sessions when Covid restrictions lifted enough for outdoor sports to resume. The teams (Raiders and Supjunkie) and some new players couldn't wait to get out and play again. The levels of participation and laughter were higher than ever in March/April. We're now using the Thames outside our club (Thames Sailing Club in Surbiton) for occasional 'chuckabouts'. We've recently confirmed from Guildford Lido that we can use the outdoor pool again from October to play over the winter months. It's the perfect facility, so thanks to the excellent folk there for accommodating us.

During the darker depths of Covid restrictions, while the river bank was thronged with people out walking, running, cycling and generally mooching about having their daily exercise, I would often be out on the Thames alone near my home with a polo paddle and a few balls. I have a ready-made training ground on my doorstep, a part of the Thames upstream from a lock near a weir, so no through boat traffic, with lots of permanently moored



heavy-duty steel buoys for targets, and a healthy flow to bring the balls back quickly to keep me on my toes. It's perfect for the repetition required to improve all the general skills required for polo.

How have you seen the sport grow?

There has been a definite increase in the number of teams popping up across the country and across Europe. The sport is still in its infancy, but more and more mini-

tournaments are being organised. The Blue Chip tournament at Guildford Lido has always been popular. Waterborne in Kingsbridge have a gorgeous venue, and Crispin runs an excellent summer polo tournament down there. Bray Lake has run a mini polo tournament alongside their British SUP Club Championship event, and other racing events sometimes incorporate polo as participation entertainment.

I am hoping that, with the considerable increase in numbers of paddlers over the last year or so, there will be many more people out there interested in an additional and alternative aspect of SUP once they find their feet. We are seeing new SUP clubs popping up everywhere, all the time, and club members will always appreciate a new way of enjoying their boards. SUP polo will help bring the members of your clubs together and bring different clubs together in a fun and alternative way.



For polo to grow, we need more teams to form and compete. Playing, and even training, is a lot of fun but playing and competing with other teams increases the game's enjoyment and adds to the sense of inclusiveness of this brilliant team sport.

What do you offer to help other clubs around the country get into SUP polo?

Just this week (mid-July), I am introducing two new clubs to polo by running introduction sessions to try the game, intending to form new teams. Fingers crossed, they will feel it like I do, and who knows where their polo journey will take them.

We welcome the opportunity to play friendly games with new and existing teams. Get in touch; let's get it going. Every game is a learning and laughing opportunity. We recently had a great time playing with a new team (SUP With Us) outside the Thames Sailing Club. It was an opportunity to meet new like-minded folk and learn from each other. They were good too! I reckon we'll be seeing more of 'SUP With Us' on the polo field in future.

I am always happy to share my enthusiasm for polo with others. One of the fundamentals of a sport is a simple but robust set of rules

club with your fellow club members. If this is not something currently being offered, then float the idea to them. You could be the one in your club to kick start polo, and your fellow club members will thank you for it. It is a team game (four a side), so you need others to get the most from it.

Ask Brian at Blue Chip for a set of rules/guidelines. You probably already have the expensive bit of kit... an iSUP. A 9'6" to 11" board is fine. 32"+ wide is ideal. That's not to say you can't play on a 12'6", but there is a lot of turning in a short field, so shorter is better. The ubiquitous 10'6" all-rounder is perfect for polo. All you need then is a polo paddle for each player and a few size 3 ordinary footballs (training/junior footballs) to get you going.

You can have a very useful polo session on your own (solo polo?). Practice moving and turning around on your board and taking the ball around the board as you turn in both directions. Practice turning your board in a tight space around the ball in both directions, and practice throwing and collecting the ball with the paddle, ideally on both sides. These are all things you will use in a game. As you develop your skills get one or two moored floating targets (jumpers for

If I could pull together some top SUP racers who are in their prime and able to sprint around the polo field without getting puffed out, my money would still be on our cake-eating, beer-swilling, pie-munching Blue Chippers. Individual ability and skills are essential to good play, but the key to success in SUP polo is playing as a team. Right now, these guys are very hard to beat.

Steve, your enthusiasm for SUP polo will surely inspire others to have a go, and we thank you for your time – we look forward to this great sport developing and growing. Hopefully, many new club polo teams will be added to the list above in the near future.



setting out the game and the parameters in which it is played. Over several years of training and tournament play, Blue Chip has developed the original set of rules into a guideline for playing a structured match.

It was essential to achieve the right balance of exciting and flowing gameplay with simplicity and consideration of an appropriate level of safety. With some trial and tweaking, we believe we have just about achieved the right balance now, and these guidelines are available from The Real Blue Chip SUPer Club.

What would be your top tip to anyone wanting to learn SUP polo?

Wait no longer and get right on it! Get yourself a polo paddle and a couple of size 3 footballs. The ideal place to start is in your

goalposts don't work!), large inflatable buoys or inflatable goals work well.

You will have fun. You will improve your skill and confidence on your board. You probably will fall in initially, so dress appropriately, wear a leash and please keep well clear of wildlife.

Who would be in your SUP polo dream team?

Perhaps I lack imagination, but my immediate thought is that I already play with my dream SUP polo team. The Blue Chip players (Raiders and Supjunkie... we are one) love playing and have improved year on year, both in their individual skills and as a team. Thanks to their commitment, we will continue to improve together as we develop with the game.

Here are some of the great teams playing polo:

Blue Chip Raiders
Supjunkie
Waterborn SUP
SUP North Buccaneers/Pirates
Bartley SUP
Bath SUP
Tamworth Terrapins/Titans
24-7 Mayhem
Suffolk SUP
Central SUP Centurions
SUP With Us (newly formed polo team)

Stand up paddle boarding's an easy going (and quite mellow) watersport when practised on flat water by and large. For beginners and recreational paddlers this epitomises the experience. Those looking to progress, however, may find the surf environment is too much of a tantalising prospect. Piloting (what could be described as) an oversized surfboard, with the additional boost of paddle propulsion, opens up a whole lot more wave riding opportunities and locations than with just a surfboard in tow. As SUP continues to grow we look at the stand up paddle surfing arm of SUP (arguably the most performance orientated area that still remains in easy reach for the majority of riders). Stay tuned for part two of this article coming next issue.

Words & pics: As stated

SUP surfing as it stands 2...

Where we at?



Joe Thwaites

LOCO SUP

Tell us about your surf riding background and when you discovered riding waves with a paddle.

I first started surfing when I was 12 years old, late by today's standards. My gran used to take my brother and me over to Saltburn, which was the epicentre for north east surfing back then and still is today. We graduated from foamies to minimals quite quickly and eventually ended up with shortboards that were too small for us, so nothing new there. I stuck with prone surfing for about four years, then sold my board for a set of DJ decks. I decided I needed something to keep me out of the pub, so I started windsurfing on lakes not far from where I lived in Harrow.



A move north landed me in Leeds, and I continued my 'lake surfing' at Pugneys and Grimwith Reservoir before graduating to the coast when I moved back home to the north east when I lost my Dad. I mainly wave sailed at Redcar but still kept a hand in with the inland stuff. After a couple of years at home, I moved further north to just outside Tynemouth, but after about a year or so, the credit crunch hit and my recruitment business went from being very busy to be dead. I decided to take the brave step of setting up one of the first SUP schools in the country operating from Tynemouth beach. I remember driving down to Roger Tushingham's house and picking up my first fleet of Starboard school boards. They seemed enormous, but it didn't stop my brother and me from taking them straight out for a surf at Seaton Carew, catching waves from the offset; it was like surfing properly but so much easier!

Do you still partake in a surf dabble with a paddle? If so, how does this make up (to a greater or lesser extent) your overall paddling?

Paddle surfing is 95% of my paddling as I live 300m from the beach and enjoy a mission to a reef that we have in spades up here on the north east coast. Everyone who paddle surfs up here knows me, and I'd like to think I'm one of the best paddle surfers locally as I've put in the hours. I no longer teach SUP, but I'm always happy to give improvers a few pointers for a cold pint in the pub afterwards.

What's your overall opinion of SUP surfing in the UK currently? Do you see much new blood at your local?

SUP surfing seems to be waking up again, mainly due to loads of people buying a blow-up and now looking to progress. We're now getting blow up owners seeing more experienced paddlers slashing around in the surf, which gets them thinking I'd like a stab at that. I've always got a buzz out of passing on my skills, so I'm in the process of starting an informal SUP surfing club, the idea being that members get some insight without having to spend silly money on 1-2-1. I might get a fish supper and a few beers for my time, and hopefully, I'll be able to switch people onto the benefits of hard boards and make a couple of sales or at least foster good word of mouth.

Why do you think SUP boarding waves never exploded as some predicted?

Where to begin? Most brands are quite happy selling blow-ups to the masses as they cost less to ship, are easy to store in volume, and present fewer headaches with onward logistics. Most of the early adopters came from wind sports or surfing proper and demanded a hardboard as they just looked at the 'glorified lilo' options and thought, meh!

As SUP continues to navigate through its new growth spurt, with large volumes of paddlers coming into the fold, do you think we'll see an influx of SUP surf riders?

Absolutely! The number of calls I get daily asking me which board I'd recommend as

a first surf SUP can only be a positive sign of things to come for ocean sweeping. I don't think many of these paddlers realise that coming off a massive blow-up can be like learning from scratch again. Still, hey, that's what I'm here for, primarily to inform and ensure people get the right board. It's amazing how many people have boards that are far too big for them, so it's no wonder they're struggling to do any decent turns. Get the right kit under your feet and get a bit of know-how, and literally, anyone can ride a wave on a SUP.

Final thoughts on SUP surfing?

It's the closest thing you can do to the surfing proper that involves minimal skill, doesn't require cat-like balance and guarantees the same stupid grinning and sense of achievement you get from surfing. It burns calories like doing a HIIT workout in a sauna, especially if you wear a wetsuit in the height of summer! It gets you out on the water, which is excellent for your mental health. The floaty boards let you explore hidden breaks and interact with dolphins and other cool marine wildlife. Once people get into SUP, our experience is that they soon upgrade to a hardboard for racing or surfing, so I think the future for non-competitive SUP surfing looks very bright!

Regarding the competitive side, we'll have to wait and see. Wave pools could undoubtedly solve the unreliable conditions argument for SUP surfing's inclusion in the Olympics. Watch this space!



Paddy Martin SUP fine artist

Tell us about your surf riding background and when you discovered riding waves with a paddle.

Early adopter, I guess. My late bestie Colin McCulloch, who was shaping kiteboards for the world champ, came back from Hawaii in 2005ish and made a couple of SUPs. Before that, I was an average logger rider 10' + boards.

Do you still partake in a surf dabble with a paddle? If so, how does this make up (to a greater or lesser extent) your overall paddling?

I freaking love SUP surfing. I'm a total middle-aged grom. I do get some flat water paddles in, but it is always just a means to keep fit for SUP surfing. If there's swell at the local, I tend to get it.

What's your overall opinion of SUP surfing in the UK? Do you see much new blood at your local, for instance?

Do you see much new blood at your local, for instance? Things don't seem to have progressed that much in the UK, from what I see. I'm talking amount of people SUP surfing and the quality of surfing. In Oz, there's been a split-off of longboard and shortboard styles. I try to surf longboard style on a 10'5" Mellowwave board with a full nose outline, trying to get up on the tip where I can. But it seems that there isn't a concerted longboard or shortboard SUP thing happening over here, and in fact, I see more people going down the short pointy board route if anything.

Why do you think SUP boarding waves never exploded as some predicted?

I think the surf media perpetuated a 'SUPs suck and aren't cool vibe'. And as there were many people able to paddle into crowded lineups with not much surf experience, that didn't help. There are a lot of surfers giving bad vibes to anyone on a SUP. I've been surfing the local for 25 years, so don't get too much stick, but I get some occasionally. The SUPs aren't cool thing puts off loads of new potential SUP surfers. That said, the likes of Pete Edkins down in the South West of Cornwall, charging monsters, does give some kudos back to SUP surfing.

As SUP continues to navigate through its new growth spurt, with large volumes of paddlers coming into the fold, do you think we'll see an influx of SUP surf riders?

I guess it's inevitable to an extent. I hope people are sensible if they come into SUP surfing, taking time to work up to things, not paddling inflatables into busy breaks. They must be learning proper surf etiquette. You know the sort of thing.

Final thoughts on SUP surfing?

I rarely surf prone surfboards these days, but I think of myself as a 'surfer'. It does make me sad that there isn't more Aloha spirit in the water, but I fully get that the waves are crowded, so if you sit deep on a SUP and Hoover up all the set waves, people will get miffed. From my perspective, it's Aloha all the way. It's much harder for people to give you stick if you smile, call other people into waves, chat and spread love.



Andy Hill-Parker Team rider for Hypr Hawaii boards

Tell us about your surf riding background and when you discovered riding waves with a paddle.

I first stood up on a surfboard when I was around ten years old. Before that, I messed around on bodyboards, so I've been surfing for most of my life. I discovered paddleboarding to get out on flat water as a landlocked father of four boys. Becoming a dad deleted solo trips to the beach, so I had to get a fix somehow!

Then one summer in Croyde, I had been out to sea on my paddleboard, and as I came back in, a few waves started to come rolling in, so I gave it a go. It took a few hours to get the hang of it, but as soon as I did, that was that.

Do you still partake in a surf dabble with a paddle? If so, how does this make up (to a greater or lesser extent) your overall paddling?

If there are waves, then yes. I enjoy flatwater paddling; there are some amazing places to visit along the south coast. However, my main priority is paddlesurfing. Getting up at the crack of dawn and driving for a few hours is worth it for the buzz you get after a decent session. I'd say paddle surfing takes up 80% of my time on the water.

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What's your overall opinion of SUP surfing in the UK? Do you see much new blood at your local, for instance?

I think it depends where you go as to how well the sport is going. The waves aren't suited for classic style surfing and more to surfing with a paddle at my local spot. When it gets good surf wise, it can get crowded! As far as new blood is getting into the sport, I think many more people are showing an interest in it. It'll be interesting to see if the recent boom in paddleboard sales will make it into the lineup.

Why do you think SUP boarding waves never exploded as some predicted?

Like any new sport in surfing, paddleboarding was initially frowned upon, and there was a certain stigma attached to it. So that might have held some people back from getting into it.

As SUP continues to navigate through its new growth spurt, with large volumes of paddlers coming into the fold, do you think we'll see an influx of SUP surf riders?

Yes, I do think we'll see an influx of SUP surf riders. During the craziness that was last year, the sales of paddleboards went through the roof; surely, some people will get into the surfing side of things.

Final thoughts on SUP surfing?

SUP surfing is my main focus when there are waves. I love it; it gives you a completely different perspective on catching and riding waves. Classic style surfing has taken a back seat in recent years as I'm trying to push my paddle surfing as far as it can go.



Charlie Cripwell

SUP surfer



Tell us about your surf riding background and when you discovered riding waves with a paddle.

I started longboard surfing in the late '90s during a year abroad and then lived in a house full of surfers at Uni, so we were always in the water. I got into SUP while working offshore, as I'd be away for weeks or months at a time sitting at a bank of screens, and my fitness suffered. SUP was a great way to get straight back in the water and build my fitness level up again

while still catching waves. When I couldn't get boards to perform as I wanted, I started designing my own and manufacturing under the Freshwater Bay Paddleboard brand.

Do you still partake in a surf dabble with a paddle? If so, how does this make up (to a greater or lesser extent) your overall paddling?

SUP surfing still makes up the majority of my time on a SUP, especially in winter when the waves are pumping, and there

has to be a good reason to put on a wetsuit and venture out in the cold. I'll still go for a paddle if it's a particularly glassy flat day, but my preference is for waves. In the summer, I'll mostly be flatwater paddling and exploring along the cliffs and creeks – trying to escape the crowds.

What's your overall opinion of SUP surfing in the UK currently? Do you see much new blood at your local?

I am on the Isle of Wight, and we have the same faces SUP surfing that have been doing it for years and new people getting in on the action every so often. On bigger days (head high plus), it tends to be the experienced few of us, but as the waves get smaller and the weather gets warmer, more SUPers venture into the lineup. Of all the surf riders at any one time, a maximum of 10% of those will be on a SUP.

Why do you think stand up paddle boarding waves never exploded as some predicted?

SUP surfing was never going to take over from prone surfing, but it's undoubtedly encouraged people into waves that wouldn't otherwise surf. While it may not have exploded, the number of people doing it has increased. But as SUP itself has exploded, the percentage of SUPers that surf has reduced. I also think the craze of short surf SUPs was a misleading direction for the sport, and one I could never see the point of; they're no use on flat water, and if you want to surf a shortboard, then surf a regular shortboard. The point of SUP, for me at least, is they're multifunctional – you can take them out on flat days and ride waves.

As SUP continues to navigate through its new growth spurt, with large volumes of paddlers coming into the fold, do you think we'll see an influx of SUP surf riders?

I think the number of SUP surfers will increase, but the percentage of SUPers that surf won't. SUP is a massively accessibly watersport transitioned from a side-gig for experienced surfers/windsurfers to mass market participation. Most newcomers won't think beyond flatwater paddling, but a few of them will venture into the waves.

Final thoughts on SUP surfing?

SUP surfing is a hugely enjoyable side of the sport, but one that hasn't kept up with the massive growth of flatwater paddling. Boards will have to be multifunctional, so they can be used on flat water and in waves – although not just bog-standard 'all-rounders' with loads of volume and boxy rails. Boards like our Freshwater Bay 9'11 and 10'6 Classics – great on the flat but come to life in the surf. On the shorter surf SUP side, where riders tend to be at the more 'extreme' end of the spectrum, they will likely have foil attachments and be multifunctional in that respect.



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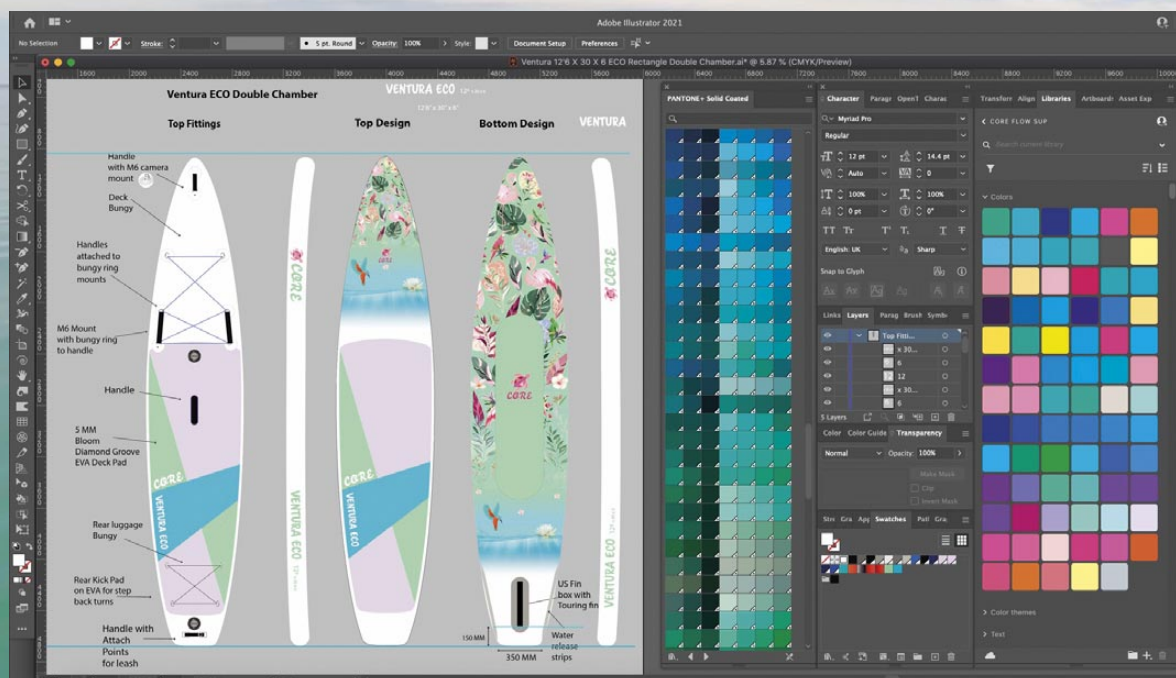
www.freshwaterbaypaddleboards.co.uk



CORE FLOW BRAND MATTERS

Words and pics: Sonya Brotherton

Another post-midnight shift at the computer, finalising a design for my new ISUP range, and I find myself propping my head up with my hand. My brain is still alert, and my eyes are keen to look for detail, but the physical fatigue is real, and I know I need to rest. But what if I forget to correct that measurement tomorrow? What if I don't get this file transferred in time? What if I miss the factory slot? What if this is just utter madness, and I am simply not going to see this through...?



That was December 2020, and since then, there have been a lot more 'what ifs'. The road to starting a new business is familiar to me, but this was something completely new, much like progression in SUP surf; at times, I was on a mellow green wave only then to be consumed by a monster of white water, kicking up over the sand bar.

From learning the process of import/export in a year of significant shipping delays and astronomical price increases, discovering the tech limitations of large-scale product design and the complexities of manufacture to the absolute joy of paddling my first creation, it has been a voyage of self-discovery and a ride for sure!

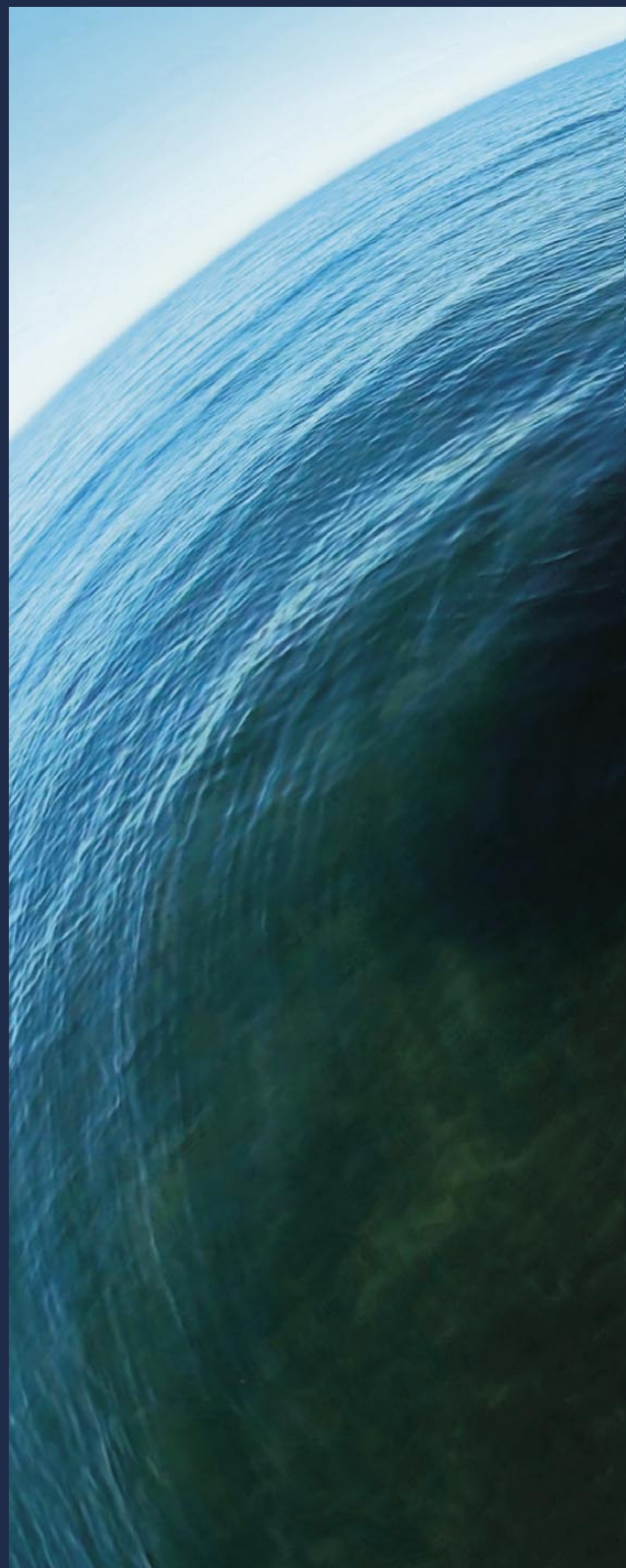
First prototypes

It seemed I would never be content until I had every minute detail perfected, so it was a huge relief when I finally took delivery of my first prototypes and realised I had got much of it right. This has given me the confidence to push forward with production for a 2022 launch.

So here is a little insight into the experience I have had to start a new brand for the SUP market.

First of all, why bother? This started with a desire to SUP and race in Europe but not necessarily on composite boards. Also, being an ocean paddler, I knew I wanted a double chamber board to paddle more than







300m from the beach, particularly in France. Double chamber options were scarce when I first started looking in 2019. I was also totally underwhelmed by the aesthetics and wanted something more expressive, maybe even beautiful, on some of the boards.

I have had many different boards, both ISUP and composite, from all-round to race boards. So I had an excellent idea of what shapes, sizes and performance outcomes I was looking to achieve. My partner, Steve Lynn, has engineering and import/export experience, and my daughter is highly creative, coming up with great ideas for children's boards, so it has very much been a family effort!

Premium materials

This isn't about being elitist; there are plenty of good options available for a gentle play on calm inland water that doesn't require the performance structure and design that I am aiming for. I need a board that can tour or race on big ocean chop and swell, maybe even catch a wave or a downwind run. For this, it needs to be well balanced with no false twist, exceptionally rigid and have a technical outline with a well thought out progressive rocker. These require premium materials and a team with the expertise to make them. So yes, these boards will be more expensive to make and therefore fit into a higher than average sales price point. My first sea trials have proven this is worth the investment.

The materials and construction will also mean longevity for the board, and ultimately that has to be a good thing. No one wants to be throwing away such a huge piece of PVC when it could have multiple years of regular use.

I searched for companies that would produce a product with the new x-woven fusion drop stitch and would be prepared to rate it to 25-30 PSI. Here is where I met quicksand, with responses such as, *"It's not necessary, we make hundreds of thousands of boards in existing product, the cost will be high."* However, with determination, I eventually found companies able to produce what I wanted, although only plain white or grey. No matter – time to get creative!

Having settled on suppliers that could digitally print on my designs, I set about creating the artwork. This has been a hugely cathartic experience but frustrating at times. I produce the designs on my computer using Adobe Illustrator in life-size dimensions to preserve print quality and make marginal shape adjustments. These involve complex

Core Flow SUP
www.coreflow.uk



layers and effects applied that amount to huge file sizes, so even with an iMac Pro processing power, 128 GB of RAM, and an 8GB graphic card, my set-up barely copes.

Resolving issues with the artwork and learning the formats to transfer to the manufacturer has been challenging. What looks like a stunning, bright aqua in RGB on screen might look as dull as the harbour outfall in CMYK print format.

The designs HAD to be right; they were going to be part of my USP to the consumer so that they are drawn to my boards, among the tsunami of new brands coming onto the market.

Generic boards with a logo slapped on

Seeing the social media marketing of generic boards with a logo slapped on was truly demoralising. The realisation that my dream of making top quality products may disappear in a riptide of debunking landfill-bound PVC was almost too much to bear.

Although this is still a legitimate concern, I believe in my product and that ultimately it

will prove popular to a consumer looking for a quality board to progress on.

Another mission for Core Flow is to pursue an ECO-friendly route as well. Despite being told, *"It's not necessary, there is no legislation yet, it is very expensive and a complex manufacturing process,"* we remain committed to trying. We have produced an ECO board that is currently undergoing sea trials before deciding how best to proceed. We have options, but, you guessed it, they come with a price tag. I hope that the larger companies will follow, as ultimately, this will drive material and construction research forward and the price down and encourage recycling possibilities.

In the meantime, I am looking into other nitrate mitigation schemes and ocean charities to help make my brand a sustainable one. If we can produce a less harmful product to make, safer to use, has comparable performance and can be recycled or is biodegradable at the end of life, well, that is the ultimate goal. I hope Core Flow can have some small part in leading the way.



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Dave Ludgate: Cork's ECO-SUP warrior

Words & pics: Dave Ludgate

Cork-based Dave Ludgate loves a sweep around his local patch. Even better is if he can be doing some good at the same time. Utilising his trusty FatStick stand up paddleboard, Dave (aka Subowti on social media) has taken it upon himself to clean up Irish waterways. We caught up with DL to find out more.

As far back as I can remember, I have always been fascinated with water. We need it to survive, it covers roughly 70% of our planet, and we are made up of over 50% water. What amazes me about it is that when no forces act on it, it is so peaceful and serene; who doesn't love paddling across a mirror-like surface and creating the only ripples on the water? However, when forces such as wind and gravity act on water, the effects can be devastating – like giant waves and all-destroying floods.

That being said, I was terrified of the sea when I was younger. I can remember my first trip on a boat outside of our harbour and being clung to the mast and wanting to go back to dry land. A local beach we used to spend our summers at had a small river to cross to get to. I used to get "the feeling" when crossing the river (about a foot deep) and insist that one of my parents come and carry me, even though they were already laden down with cool boxes, toys and windbreakers, all to keep us happy! My family still like to remind me about that decades later.

Through my parents, I learned to love the sea, with a healthy fear and respect, of course. My parents were water people; they loved the beach and boating. We actually spread their ashes in the sea, strengthening my bond with the sea further. My Dad windsurfed back in the 80s, and I can still remember his gear back then – a giant longboard, triangle sail, and an over the shoulders trapeze harness. My Dad got me into windsurfing when I was a teenager, and through that, I discovered SUP years later as a perfect alternative for when the wind doesn't blow... I was hooked!

I have been a member of my local clean up group for a few years, and as we do monthly clean-ups on the public walkways that are adjacent to the river and harbour – it made sense to combine the two and start removing some of the floating debris in the water on my board. It also gives me the perfect excuse to spend more time on the water, and there's no shortage of things for me to find.





Info:

<https://paddleagainstplastic.com>

<https://lizzieoutside.co.uk>

#paddleandpickup

Strange finds

Condoms, needles, sanitary products, nappies – all used – are just some of the things I have found floating in the water. I have found bikes, wheelie bins, political posters and gas cylinders. I have found a baseball cap from a yacht club in Sydney, a plastic packet of crisps from decades ago and even one of those cool reflectors for your bike that you used to get free in your breakfast cereal. I once found a brick-shaped object wrapped in many layers of duct tape and – after watching far too many crime shows – thought I had found my retirement fund... it turned out to be newspaper wrapped in tape; who does that?

The range of items is endless, and each holds a story. For example, the pregnancy test kit I found, I'm guessing that the person who discarded that item had bigger things on their mind than worrying about litter; I hope they got the result they were looking for from the test. Again, I imagine

that all of the beer bottles, cider cans and empty bottles of spirits come from someone for whom littering is down the list on their priorities. The hypodermic needles speak for themselves. Everyone's got their cross to bear, and deeper societal issues play a part in some of the litter I find.

Take-out food and drinks

However, the BBC recently reported that when more than 12 million pieces of litter found in and around rivers, oceans, shorelines and the seafloor were studied by researchers, eight out of 10 items listed were made of plastic. Of that plastic litter, 44% related to take-out food and drinks. We've all seen them; plastics bottles, single-use coffee cups, burger wrappers, cans... the list goes on. This type of litter I tend not to be so understanding about. There is NO excuse for this; if you can carry your takeaway food and drink somewhere, you can carry the empty wrappers back, and if there's no bin – you bring it home.

According to the Plastic Soup Foundation, an estimated 3% of all plastic produced in



the world ends up in the ocean. Over time, this plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. Some sink to the bottom; some are suspended in the water column and, there is also a portion that remains afloat. Gyres in the oceans have a high concentration of plastic waste, but these are not islands of floating plastic as some may think. The vast majority of these plastic particles can barely be seen with the naked eye because they are microplastics (smaller than five millimetres).

‘Leave no trace’

Surfonomics is the value that surfing brings to an area. When surfers (or SUP boarders, windsurfers, kiteboarders etc.) frequent an area to pursue their hobby, the local economy will benefit. Local businesses will benefit from the extra custom. Those who visit these areas are responsible not to degrade the area and adopt a ‘leave no trace’ mentality. Some take it a step further and organise clean-ups at the local put-in.

The good news is that there are things everyone can do. Although the most

impactful steps we can take to avoid a climate disaster must happen at the governmental level, you have the power to effect change as a citizen, a consumer, and an employee or employer. The market is ruled by supply and demand, and as a consumer, you can have a considerable impact on the demand side of the equation.

It is essential to remember that, while individual actions are crucial to change the mindset and to realise your power as a consumer, all of these actions will be futile if governments and corporations do not change in the right direction also. A report published in 2017 showed that 100 companies were responsible for 71% of global emissions between 1988 and 2017.

Inspiration

In the meantime, next time you’re out on your paddleboard, take inspiration from Lizzie Carr and Cal Major and grab a few bits of litter. Personally, and from a selfish perspective, it’s a great excuse to spend more time on the water, and I sleep like a baby at night!

What you can do...

As a citizen

- **Green investment** – if you are fortunate enough to have a pension, check what it is investing in.
- **Join a local conservation group** – SAS – Surfrider – Save the Waves – Clean Coasts – Sea Shepherd – Greenpeace, there are loads, or you could start your own.
- **Lobby local councillors/national government** to install greener initiatives. It may sound old-fashioned, but letters, emails and phone calls to your elected officials can have a real impact.
- **Rewild your garden** (I call it lazy gardening!) – add bird boxes, bee hotels, pollinator-friendly plants and/or grow your own veggies.

As a consumer

- **Shop local.**
- **Reusables** – keep cups, water bottles, lunch boxes, cutlery, straws, flasks, a Kelly kettle etc.
- **Travel** – electric cars – ride share – walk or cycle (the most efficient form of transport).
- **Power** – try to use renewable energy suppliers – install a smart thermostat – buy efficient appliances.

As an employee or employer

- **At work** – encourage bosses to buy/invest green - companies buy many things, from vehicles for corporate fleets to the materials used to build and renovate their buildings and the electricity to run them.

Info:

<https://paddleagainstplastic.com>
<https://lizzieoutside.co.uk>
[#paddleandpickup](#)



Words: Cloé Nandlal

Photos: Piotr Kadziela & Jade Pidgley of IRIS Photography

A fun and supportive community of friends with a shared love of paddling helped people thrive mentally and physically in the pandemic. The SUP Club was created to give people a safe place to stay connected, get outdoors, exercise and cope with the ebb and flow of emotions as we navigated our way through a challenging year.

Welcome to the SUP Club

In 2020, Piotr Kadziela, SUP coach and owner of The Blue Chip SUP School, started to notice people were struggling with their mental health in the pandemic. He knew that SUP would be the perfect way to encourage people to get outdoors, exercise and beat the lockdown lows. So, on the 16th of June last year, The SUP Club was born.

The SUP Club started with a few paddlers who got hooked on the paddling life after their first SUP lesson at The Blue Chip SUP School. Fast forward a year, and the club has over 200 members, including SUP pups, a couple of Hungarian Vizslas, Max and Mia!

The SUP Club ethos is to provide an inclusive and encouraging environment where people can make friends, learn new skills and have a great time. Whatever your level or ability, they're here to support you on your paddling journey. So whether you want to go with the flow or develop your technical skills, the club has something for everyone.

The club is in good hands, as Piotr is an ASI Level 2 SUP Instructor and Technical Coach, a member of British Canoeing and The Royal Life Saving Society UK and also holds RYA First Aid and Water Rescue qualifications.

Even though he's highly experienced, it's Piotr's passion for paddling and bringing people together that makes The SUP Club so unique. He has a natural ability to make people feel welcome and part of The SUP Club family.





CLUB FOCUS

Lockdown life with 'The SUP Club'

And the man behind the duck





First Club Paddle at Cowey Sale



Laughing together, at ourselves and each other

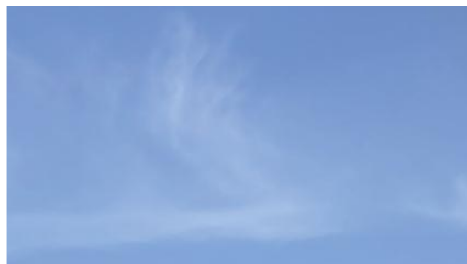
The SUP Club main mission is to have lots of fun. The club has regular social events every week, with activities ranging from chilled social paddles to more adventurous ones like SUP polo, SUP racing and fitness, SUP yoga and pilates. Mixing up events allows our members to challenge their fitness, develop new skills, experience being on the water and have a good old giggle. It's great for mental health and wellbeing too.





The club's recent social events include:

- SUP safari on the River Mole.
- Dinosaur paddle at Cowey Sale.
- Paddle and a pint on the River Thames.
- SUP yoga, pilates and fitness tasters.
- Halloween scary paddle.
- Santa paddle.
- Lunchtime paddle with our club mascot, the three-metre inflatable duck Sir Robert 'Bob' Quackington.



They have more exciting things planned for 2021 and beyond, including white water paddling, river and adventure tours, trips to the seaside and to some far away places (France, Greece and the USA, to name a few) – so watch this space!

Oh and not to forget our birthday party! We turned ONE in June, and later this summer, we'll be celebrating by hosting The BIG Paddle on the River Thames in Cowey Sale, Walton-on-Thames. Sir Robert 'Bob' Quackington will be out on the river again, together with an armada of paddlers in fancy dress. We welcome all SUPer men and women, Boardasaurus Rexs, paddle princes and princesses, fairy board mothers and many others on the water for this big event. There will be a prize for the best costume after the paddle.

To see what else they've been up to, check The SUP Club's website, Facebook and Instagram pages. Or, if you're already sold and want to join the club, get in touch!

Supporting our community

Piotr and his team continue to reach out to the local community and voluntary groups to promote paddleboarding's mental and physical benefits and make it more accessible to the communities we work in.

This summer, they're excited to welcome players from the Guildford Cricket Club's U15 Girls Squad for a lesson to celebrate their first season wins.

They are also planning to deliver educational and engagement events, including sessions on water safety, in the near future.

Club's future

The SUP Club have exciting plans for the rest of 2021 and beyond:

- To building The Blue Chip SUP School Team. To keep things exciting and SAFE for their members, by bringing on board (pun intended) more instructors with some fantastic experience.
- To go international. When restrictions start to ease, they're looking forward to taking club members on some awesome paddle adventures abroad.
- To get competitive and increasing race participation in the UK and internationally.
- We are also looking forward to some exciting partnerships with other clubs, SUP schools and other organisations.





Web:
www.TheSUPClub.co.uk

What our members say...

Ian: The calming effect of being on the water can't be overstated, and it's even better when you're doing it with a friendly group of people. In the pandemic, it's been a fantastic escape from being stuck in the house in front of a screen, but I think even in 'normal' times, it will be an awesome way to de-stress towards the end of the week.

Charley: When everything else was on hold, The SUP Club offered a fun way to get out, exercise, explore the local area and meet people in a safe and fun way. I enjoy being out on the water, and after a manic day at work, it helps me de-stress. I've loved it so much, I've just trained as an instructor, so I can now introduce the brilliance that is SUP with The Blue Chip SUP School and The SUP Club.

Lucy: I had a lesson with Blue Chip SUP School last July on a wet afternoon, but nothing could dampen the session. It was great fun, we paddled along the river, and Piotr encouraged and instructed us, and we were all standing up and paddling by the end of the session. I have since been on some of the club paddles, met lots of lovely SUP'ers and now invested in my own board. It's a great club!

Connected and stronger

Throughout 2020 and 2021, The SUP Club has kept us connected and helped us become more resilient both mentally and physically. We can't wait to see what the future holds for the club.



RACE



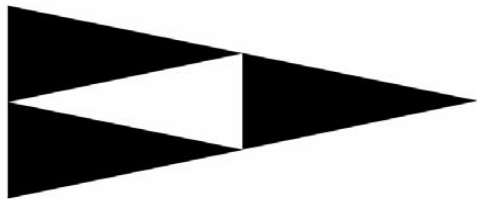
ALL AROUND



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**SUP Lessons & Technical
Coaching at Blue Chip SUP School
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Official retailer of
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BLACK PROJECT



Our quality inflatable and hard boards have been presented with the highest awards



SIC Maui London is a part of Blue Chip SUP Limited run by Piotr Kadziela, and is a SIC Maui retailer

Oli Lane-Peirce: behind the lens



Interview: SUPM

**Pics: Oli Lane-Peirce,
Tez Plavenieks**

Oli Lane-Peirce may be a name you've started to recognise if you regularly read SUPM. Regularly behind the lens, helping create visual images that grace this very magazine, Oli's become quite the ally when it comes to nailing the shot – especially for our review section. We thought it a good idea to get the lowdown on OLP. Read on for more.

Tell us when and why you first started clicking a camera shutter.

I originally bought my camera to help with my business, and with like many things alone with the panini grill, sat stagnant in a cupboard. I was contacted by Tez, a good friend of mine, to see if I wanted to help him capture him in action on an array of watersports equipment. I couldn't say no as that's what friends are for, and it's also a perfect excuse to head to the beach and gaze at the sea no matter the weather. Like many others, I have always relied on my phone to do most of my handy camera work, but in comparison to a decent DSLR, the iPhone has no comparison, and I'd never go back, although there is a time and a place for both.

Did you have any specific subject matter in mind, or was it more just whatever looked good you'd point and shoot at?

Exactly, I don't have a hobby of sorts that I like taking photos of a specific subject, such as the wings of a rare wasp. I am generally interested in capturing action shots, hence why photography of stand-up paddleboarding, windsurfing, and foiling sports is such great fun.

**Did you study up in terms of photography techniques?
If so, what specifically?**

No. I had no idea what I was doing. I want to say I probably still don't from a technical angle. I have, however, learnt to read and anticipate the moment. You can't just wait for the action and shoot, as you'll be too late, so I guess this is the biggest skill I have learnt.

What do you think makes a good photograph and why?

As I mentioned above, it involves understating your subject and what it is meant to be doing at its peak performance. I also believe it's vital to get the subject in its full glory, taking most of the screen up. However, we also want to highlight the colours of the sea and sky with the depth of hues.

How did you get into shooting watersports?

As I said previously, I got into it as a favour to a friend, but I don't see it as either a favour or a job; it's just something I get the chance to do on a weekly occasion, and I love it. I tell a lie I did once fly a remote-controlled drone over the water between Portsmouth and Hayling as a speed boat whizzed back and forth; I'm guessing that doesn't count.





Is there anything particular you look for when photographing riders on the water?

I am constantly looking for that perfect angle to include all the equipment in all its glory and surroundings, usually taking a million photos and then filtering through later to find that one. For example, if you're foiling, then I'm trying to get the foil branding, rider and the environment they are in. Regarding the environment, we are trying to catch the effects the water and wake are making. It's a holistic approach, and in some sense, I go on what feels right at the time. When the weather is bad, it's harder to catch some of those mentioned above, so I am looking at the rider's technique to focus on.

What's your favourite kind of watersports image and why?

All of it, as long as there's action. For me, as I said, it's down to the action. I enjoy capturing the rider and equipment when either riding at high speed or when doing tricks. Capturing a jump or a 360 is the hardest as it's done and dusted in a heartbeat, so you have to anticipate it. You know when the rider is positioning themselves to do it and looking at the wave in front of them to see if they are likely to perform the said trick.

Any rider you like to shoot the most, and why?

Putting it bluntly, I am not interested in photographing basic or mediocre riders as it just really is not that fun to watch or shoot...

sorry. Rider's personalities do come across in their style and, therefore, their shots, so I'd say that's quite important to me. Don't be boring!

What equipment are you using at the mo?

Nikon D3500 and usually with a Nikon DX AF-S 55-300mm lens as it gives a good range of close and covers a fair distance. However, it would be good to get up to a 600mm to cover when riders are jibbing in the distance I struggle with capturing because of the lack of lens size. The camera I love, I know it's not considered the most high-end pro camera, but what I need is something that isn't too heavy, so no full-frame, due to standing on the beach for a long time. I also need a camera that can manage JPEG conversion easily without faffing on the computer. Let's be honest; I bought this camera initially with a different intention. I didn't want to spend too much money, but I enjoy using this camera; it's comfortable and does the job with incredible crisp shots.

Any plans to upgrade or add to this? IF so, what do you have your eye on?

I'd be more focused on upgrading the lens to a Sigma 150-600mm f/5-6.3 DG OS HSM C Lens (Nikon Fit) or a Tamron 150-600mm f5-6.3 SP Di VC USD Lens for Nikon F but, if I had to change the camera, it would be to a Nikon D850. I am more than happy to stick with what I have, though.



NEPTUNE

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Surf SUP

£654.00

8'6"x30"x4"
Weight-9KG
Volume-123lt
9'x30"x4"
Weight-9.4KG
Volume-130lt



Allrounder

£674.00

10'x31"x4.5"
Weight-11KG
Volume-175lt
10'6"x31.5"x4.5"
Weight-12KG
Volume-186lt
11'x31"x4.5"
Weight-13KG
Volume-198lt



WindSUP

£724.00

10'x31"x4.5"
Weight-11KG
Volume-175lt
10'6"x31.5"x4.5"
Weight-12KG
Volume-186lt
11'x31"x4.5"
Weight-13KG
Volume-198lt



YogaSUP

£699.00

10'x31"x4.5"
Weight-11KG
Volume-175lt
10'6"x31.5"x4.5"
Weight-12KG
Volume-186lt
11'x31"x4.5"
Weight-13KG
Volume-198lt



Cruiser

£799.00

11'x30.5"x6"
Weight-15.5KG
Volume-230lt
12'6"x31"x6"
Weight-16.5KG
Volume-247lt



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£1,250.00

Length-12'6" & 14'
Width-25" & 23"
Depth to 8.5"
Weight-10.5 & 11.5kg
Volume-275 & 300L

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Do you practise any of the watersports disciplines you photograph?

I'm a comfortable SUP rider and can use and can sing SUP to an amateur level.

Got any aspirations for sports you've not tried yet? Why this (or these)?

I want to get into windsurf foiling, and I would love to have a go kitesurfing. Being a close friend of Tez and taking photographs of the sports he does, and learning ever more about the sport on a weekly event, I feel like the only thing I don't know about is doing the thing itself. I'm itching to get out

on the water, and I shouldn't have an excuse as I do have a heavy-duty winter wet suit from North Coast Wetsuits, which has worked a treat falling in the water SUPing in late November.

Tell us a little about your day job.

I own and run a property development company called Villiers Homes Limited. We build new build homes on plots that fit between just a single house to five houses at a time. We look to keep it high quality and high end generally, so I am a busy boy. We are set to rocket this year and those following. I must say COVID has been kind to me in that sense, and for

that, I am grateful as I'm acutely aware not everyone's in the same situation. If you're curious about the houses we build and have built, you can head to our site villiershomes.co.uk.

How does this fit into your photography life?

It is difficult to get out to take photographs and even harder to find the time to be on the water due to my work schedule. It usually has to be impromptu, as I spend a lot of my time fixing issues and creating opportunities for the business. But I am lucky that I live five minutes drive to the sea front, so I can usually be on call within a short space of time for an hour. Unless it's urgent, I can sometimes work around being by the water.

Got any plans to try and combine the two?

Not photography per se, but I am looking into getting a drone for the business as it will be great for marketing and researching the plots we look to buy. However, I do look to try and bring my photography skills into the business to help the social media end of the business.

Any long-term goals for your photography?

I've only shot photos of kitesurfers from a distance, so I would be interested in seeing how that goes, and perhaps get into motor water sports such as high-speed boat racing is cool. Who knows?

Final thoughts on watersports?

I always thought watching the guys out on the water: 'na that's not for me', but I kind of was thrust into it through interest and connections. I also think, what a wasted opportunity living by the water and not getting out there myself. I've had my mental health demons I have had to battle with and have found that getting involved in watersports has helped.

Final thoughts on photography?

It's not for everyone; it requires stillness and patience, but if it tickles your fancy, get a half-decent entry-level camera and give it a go. Add it to your arsenal of hobbies. We all need downtime.

Thanks and praise?

Big love to Tez for introducing me to the sport and encouraging me to get out there, lend me and give me equipment, and load me up with watersports fashion accessories. Thank you to Mark from North Coast Wetsuits for the awesome wetsuit. I can't forget my wife, too, who never bats an eyelid when I'm off out the house.



year round stoke

Photo: Paul Smith, Rock and water adventures



SUP



SK8



FLY

Photo: Cotswolds Drone Co



Paddling for EFFICIENCY



Introduction

For anyone who has pushed themselves when paddling or in other sports, ending your session early through injury or running low on energy is a frustrating feeling.

Being an efficient paddler isn't easy to achieve; it takes work, time and experience. It's something that can be coached, but a large part of it is having an understanding so you can feel where you are wasting energy and manage your efficiency better.

Through this article, I hope to give you some understanding and knowledge about being efficient and improving your paddling, whether you are a novice or experienced paddler.

So what is efficiency?

It's easy to think that efficiency only applies to racers or experienced paddlers. However, it is a fundamental element of your paddling. Being efficient can help prevent injuries, prolong your session, progress your paddling, and help you make the most of the conditions.

In a nutshell, efficiency is how we understand our energy usage when paddling. This is straightforward enough, but the more complex task is to know where we are wasting it.

Whilst many of us go out and practise our paddling by working on our technique and skills, it's not very often I see paddlers working on their efficiency. This applies to paddlers of all levels, and a great example is seeing someone pound out the distance mile after mile at their local water without changing anything. While you're sure to gain fitness this way, you may well be constantly fatiguing yourself and risking injury if you are not paddling efficiently.

Wasting energy

The most apparent signs of inefficiency are usually very obvious visual clues. The big pull and splash out the back at the end of the stroke is a classic indicator of wasted energy. Inefficiencies, however, get trickier to pinpoint as paddlers progress and begin to iron out these obvious signs.

The more subtle signs of wasting energy can come from many sources, such as a paddle that's too short, long or the wrong

blade size. It could be using a board which isn't suited to you or the conditions. It could be clothing, hydration, over paddling; the list goes on. The trick here is to constantly evaluate your paddling and learn to feel and spot these inefficiencies so you can manage them or remove them if possible. Videos and photos can help, but they can also draw the eye to the 'hero shot', which doesn't always tell the complete picture. Paddling is a fluid movement and should be a constant motion with efficiency throughout the whole cycle of a stroke.

It also helps to get regular coaching, and I don't mean weekly, but every 4-6 months is a good shout. A good coach will be able to spot the smallest details and help you improve in ways you hadn't even thought about. If you go down this route, ask plenty of questions to understand why they recommend something and make sure they are the right coach for you.

So how can you become more efficient?

Here are a few key areas to keep an eye on in your paddling to see how efficient you are and where you can make improvements.

Find the glide

Letting the board glide is a crucial component to being more efficient. Whilst all boards glide, a longer board will naturally have more glide potential than a shorter board. This is especially true with longer boards designed for touring or racing, where optimising glide is a part of the design

Words: Scott Warren

Pics: Scott Warren

Comparison 1 & 2 – two boards the same efficient technique



Comparison 2



The right coach





process. However, if you put an inefficient paddler on any board, they will struggle to get the most out of it.

I get asked all the time why that person is so quick at SUP races. It's a great example as whilst fitness and technique play a huge part, more often than not, there is a very efficient paddler on the board as well. An excellent looking technique doesn't always lead to good glide; however, over-paddling and getting more speed can often stop glide. The same comes from an inefficient catch that kills the glide as paddlers tend to pull later towards their feet.

A great way to visualise good glide on a SUP is by watching rowing sculls and how they move through the water. You will see the front of the boat rise slightly as the crew apply power, but the trick is that they don't let the front dip back down before starting their next stroke. This keeps the boat on the glide up in the water, therefore, reducing surface drag.

Chasing power and speed

As you start to progress your paddling, a fundamental need will be more power and speed. Being able to paddle quicker and accelerate the board faster will help you catch waves easier, paddle into headwinds better, beat your friends and

so on. However, if you don't build efficient habits during your progression, it can lead to poor technique and inefficiency throughout.

So what happens when we chase power and speed? The first thing we tend to do is to try and pull harder on the paddle. When we do this, we tend to over-paddle, giving us short bursts of speed but can quickly fatigue us. Usually, this leads to forearm cramps, straining the shoulders, and leaving us short of energy on longer paddles.

There are several ways you can pick up speed and increase your power whilst

staying efficient. Try using your legs to generate speed and power. They are big muscles used to doing lots of work so learn to use them in your paddling. This works especially well in windy conditions. Also, use your body weight when putting the paddle in the water. Trust the force and energy you're applying to the paddle will keep you upright, and you will have a free energy source to use in gravity as you 'fall' onto the paddle.

Don't fight the conditions

If there is one area that can test us when paddling, it's dealing with less than perfect conditions. Strong winds, currents, waves or even bright sunshine can all wear you down quicker than you might expect. If you look at any good paddler, especially those in ocean conditions, you will notice how effortless they make it look.

It's as though it's a calm day when it's blowing a rate of knots. Whilst a lot of experience goes with it, being a good paddler in a range of conditions comes down to using what's on offer, not fighting it. If it's windy, for example, and you try to power your way upwind, it can be a fine edge between being efficient, getting to your goal or burning out. If you take yourself beyond the threshold line, it can



Poor efficiency

Side on sprint start – Maximum power, minimal splash

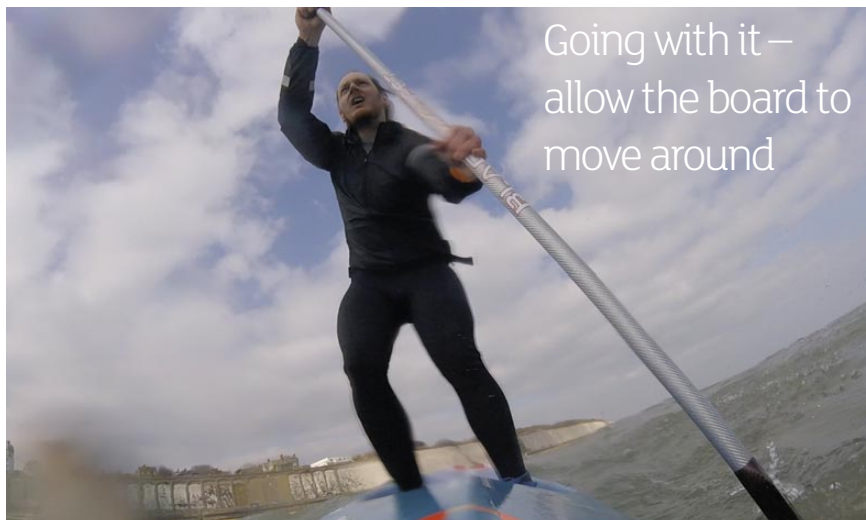


affect your recovery for the next leg upwind as you cannot recover enough in time.

The same goes for hot summer days and not managing your effort to the conditions. Building up too much heat and losing lots of sweat isn't just about drinking more water. You can lose precious other elements you need to sustain energy, and if they are not replaced will drain your stores quicker than you might expect.

It's worth taking the time to understand where your limits are in exhaustion and effort. Where the delicate balance between having enough in reserve and

going that little bit over your threshold. Listen to your body and feel when you are working that little bit too much. Experiment with hydration and nutrition to figure out what works for you. You don't have to complicate things with energy gels and specialist supplements. Just think about your output versus input and what you usually have when you jump on the water. If you train or paddle regularly on porridge, try adding something extra to your bowl like fruit or peanut butter. The same goes for drinks. If you need a boost, look at a powder that goes into your water to boost your electrolytes, for example.



Going with it –
allow the board to
move around



Check out

www.haywoodsports.com for details on Scott's SUP coaching, events and training business, and you can follow him on Facebook and Instagram @SUPScotty.

Gripping the paddle

If you have ever done short bursts when paddling, you might well be familiar with the feeling that your arms are about to fall off at the end. Most likely, you have an arm pump, where your forearm muscles have been overworked and feel tight and pumped up. Once at this point, it usually is impossible to get your arms relaxed again without proper rest, and the biggest culprit is likely how you are gripping your paddle. Having a good grip will reduce the chances of arm pump by keeping the forearm muscles relaxed and spreading the load into the bigger muscles in your body and legs.

So what is a proper grip? Well, you have two main things to consider. How tightly you grip with the bottom hand and how far apart your hands are on the paddle.

Starting with the bottom hand, you want a firm but relaxed grip. Whilst that might seem an odd statement at first, consider having just enough grip to hold the paddle without getting white knuckles. Think about your bottom hand as a connector to the paddle rather than a wrap-around vice grip, and this will keep your forearms relaxed. You can also change how you grip the paddle to help manage fatigue on longer paddles.

When it comes to hand placement on the paddle, if you have your hands too close together, this puts the strain into your arms and shoulders, so you are more likely to get arm pump or shoulder pain. A good rule of thumb is to have your arms bent at 90 degrees when you lift your paddle over your head, then bring your bottom hand up one hand's width for added comfort. A good indicator is this

position should feel like a solid connection between you and the paddle, not like your overstraining one particular muscle.

To sum it all up

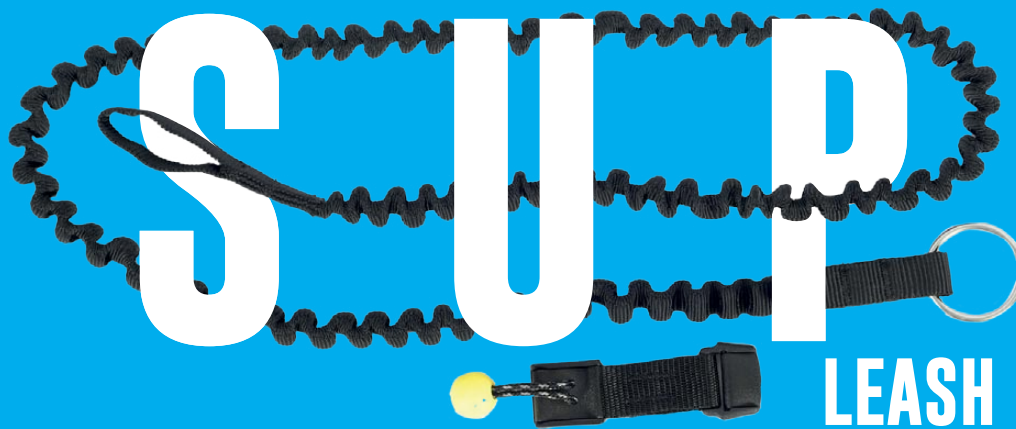
Your progression in SUP is a never-ending journey. You will learn new ways of doing things through your paddling, heading out with others, coaching and taking on new challenges. Don't allow yourself to become stagnant in your paddling, and you will find it a constant source of amazement as you try new things and reach new goals. Whilst it is important not to overthink everything in your paddling, dedicating 20 minutes or so a week to focus on a specific skill to make it more efficient is a great way to get into the habit of healthy self-evaluation. I often have clients who over analyse the smallest detail, but this is sometimes a great skill to have; it usually means they miss the thing that will make the most significant difference.

To give you an example, I tend to do two things in my paddling. Firstly I think back to previous paddles and remember what I was doing at that time, what the effects were, and how it felt. This gives me a clear picture when I put myself back in that scenario mentally and think how would I do that now. It's not what I would do differently; instead, it's visualising what you know now and how that would play out in the situation.

The second thing is running drills on a particular skill to repeat the steps or movement and hone it to be more efficient. I think about how the paddle works, my energy usage, and its effect on the board. These consistent reference points then allow me to judge the improvements I'm making within that session and when I do it again later.

Rear buoy turn – keep it smooth to save energy





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Pull the cam buckle's toggle and the SUP Leash will release, leaving the belt in place.

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YOUNG GUN

James Little (15)

Northern SUP

Photos: Jade Rogers and Sarah Thornely

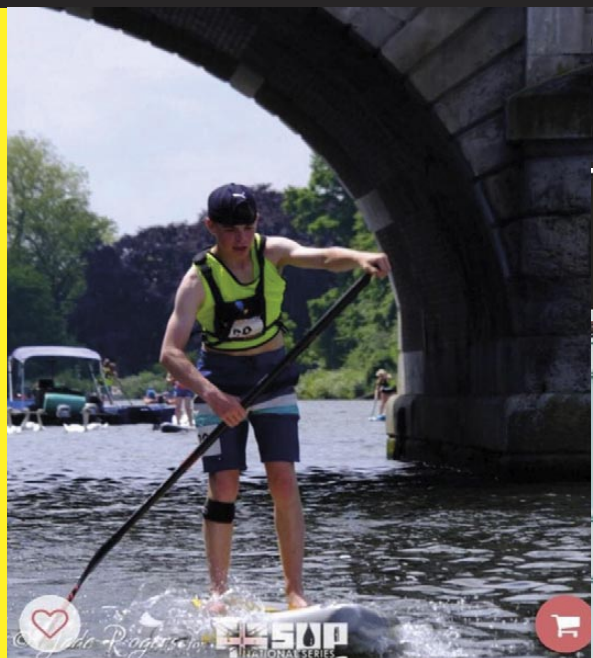
I started paddling when I was eight years old, often just playing around with my brothers at the beach, on the river or holiday.

My first board was a RED MAX Race 10ft 6 x 24", which I liked to paddle. I raced it at the GB SUP Championships at Bray Lake and many other races with junior categories in.

I went along to lots of events with my mum, who also raced and enjoyed getting involved. Three years ago, I entered the Battle of the Thames; I had to be escorted around by Claire Thorburn, a Northern SUP Race Team member. This year, I entered the full 10km race by myself and raced on a NISCO board. I did well! I love the atmosphere at the races; people look after you and are always really encouraging.

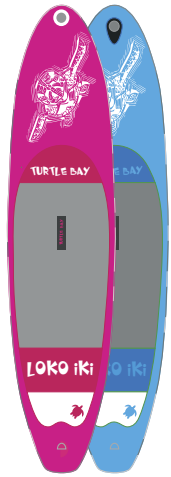
I love SUP surfing which I do on my Fanatic Pro Wave, and I am enjoying kitesurfing. I help our local water sports instructor (KA Adventure Sports) with SUP lessons and coasteering lessons at Beadnell in Northumberland, which is awesome fun. I have regularly attended Northern SUP Race Teams training, and it has been good to paddle with the adults as they challenge me to get better.

Using a small board when I was younger has helped me develop my SUP skills, especially my pivot turns. I hope to race more in the future and progress further in all the water sports; I am looking forward to doing more ocean technical races using a 14ft board. I encourage more young people to enter SUP racing or join a club, as it is great fun, rewarding and better than the Xbox!

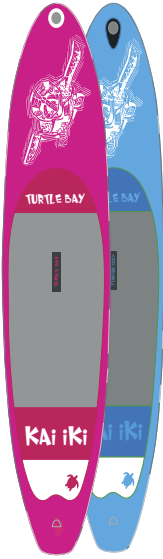


TURTLE BAY

PADDLEBOARDS



Loko iki
Kai iki
Junior All-Rounders



Halulu 10'6"



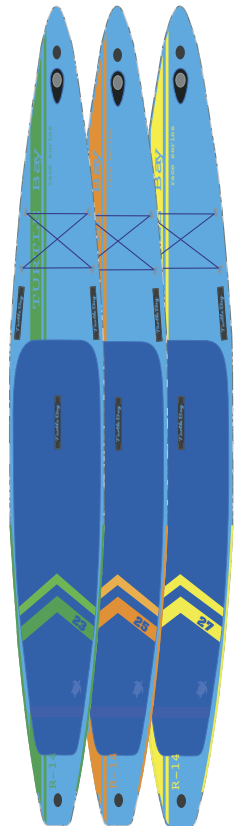
Halulu 11'2"
Adult All-Rounders



Halulu 12'5"



Wailuku 13'
Touring



R-14
Race Series

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Words: Michael Walther **Photos:** Tom Körber

The flashing blue light of the water police emerges from the drizzle. At a good 15 knots, they approach my heavily loaded SUP. Two uniformed officers stand on deck and instruct me, in a friendly but determined manner to leave the channel. I don't understand the world. How could it come to this?



My journey across Germany begins in Basel. I set my 13'6 foot Fanatic Ray Air Explorer on the Rhine at 09.00 on August 2nd. At the Wettsteinbrücke, Basel's second-oldest bridge, the longest in the city, I set off with 1300km to Kiel lying ahead of me, my board and my 45kg of luggage. I limited myself to the bare essentials, but with my small boat trolley, stove, food, six litres of water and technical equipment, a few kilos have soon accumulated!

The start goes according to plan. It seems completely unreal that I will find myself for the next three weeks only with this board, paddle stroke after paddle stroke direction north. If I had known here about the challenges that will await me, I would probably have got back on the train home. Unsuspecting, however, I set off for the first few metres.

Frequently I was asked before my tour when I would like to be and whether I have already selected sleeping places. I do not know the individual weirs and their transfer possibilities, so I could not estimate the amount of time each of these 35 obstacles would take on my journey. Accordingly, nothing is planned, and I decide spontaneously. On the first weir the exit is easy, but the re-entry, into an old arm of the Rhine, is not. It goes down a 4m high stone bank with all my equipment before a one-metre high step to the water. I have no other choice than to throw my equipment into the river and then jump in with my board. Paddling, I collect my seven things then again, before it floats away. I have a bad feeling when I think this is only the first transfer point of my journey.

But the next kilometres are fun. This oxbow is the only one with current, and some passages even have level I white water. The board is well loaded in the water with 45kg of luggage and my 90 kilos and works its way safely and stably through the rapids. Thanks to my good map, I can roughly estimate which areas are passable and which I have to portage around despite the stable board. Other than the first weir, most of the following portages are well signposted and passable except for slippery algae. Cheerfully and with a good average speed, I quickly complete the first 70 kilometres to the north.

Appreciable current

However, I quickly realise that the first kilometres were an exception. The Rhine and its oxbow lakes have an appreciable current. That clouds my mood a little, as there is already a noticeable 1-2 km/h current. So I have to bite the bullet and fight the first three days, metre by metre.

By the middle of the third day, I reach Iffezheim in Baden-Württemberg. From here, the river flows unrestricted to Duisburg and further, with an actual current that gives me plenty of pleasure at the beginning. The whirlpools and groynes at the fairway buoys are impressive and demand my full attention. The barge traffic is substantial, and in combination with jet skiers, water skiers, and sport boats, it is a mixture that demands my attention. Nevertheless, I manage 100 kilometres in each of the following two days, despite temperatures beyond 35C.

Next is Rudesheim, a wine making town in the Rhine Gorge, is also a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site in this area. From here the game changes again. The Rhine bends to the north and accelerates again through the narrow valley. Rapids, barges, ferries, everything comes together and yet I have a big grin on my face. The stronger the current, the faster the journey. It is incredibly exhausting, but how much so I only realise in the following days.

On the sixth day of my trip, I sleep until 08.00. More physically recovered but already at 28C, I put in about 10.00 and paddle slowly past Koblenz towards Bonn. The sun rises higher, the temperatures rise, and the sweat runs off me in streams as a northern German boy! Every hour I take a five-minute break. Applying new sunscreen, whereby now a thick white layer covers me, drink, consume an energy bar, and on it goes.

X Germany

Pole to pole

From Basel in the south
to Kiel in the north





Slowly I realise that all protein, energy, power or other bars must be from the same ingredients. Everything tastes the same. Figs, dates, grains, everything is sweet, sticky with no surprise to the taste buds. So I force another bar in me one after the other and stoically dip the paddle in the front and pull through. The kilometres pass by, the continuity takes me onwards, at a 5 km/h paddling speed; I can do 60 km a day with the current.

Unfortunately, the heat before Bonn tires me so much that I give up at 16:30 and look for a night camp. In order not to repeat the same mistake, I start the following day at 05.30. With a lamp and in the dawn, I creep onto the Rhine and paddle closely along the bank.

Dusseldorf

Dusseldorf is a highlight for me. I'm thrilled when I catch sight of the TV tower and a team from the world's largest water sports exhibition, 'boot Düsseldorf', are waiting for me. After a short coffee break, I continue on my way; finally, the Rhine behind me.

Around noon, I reach the Rhine Orange in Duisburg. Here the Ruhr branches off, which after a few kilometres leads into the Rhine-Herne Canal. I leave the Rhine slightly wistfully. Now I have almost half of my kilometres behind me, but I already suspect that the Rhine was relatively easy to paddle

Now I have almost half of my kilometres behind me, but I already suspect that the Rhine was relatively easy to paddle thanks to the current





thanks to the current. What lies ahead of me now are the canals to Minden, over which I would like to reach the Weser. As is the nature of canals, these offer no current, leading almost endlessly straight ahead, and I suspect now the most challenging part of my journey is ahead.

Day 10 starts at 18:00. I start my 250 km long journey to Minden. There onto the Weser, which promises finally again a slight current. I have planned 4-5 days for this section, but this day starts with a headwind and many locks – every metre is hard-fought. Shortly before Datteln, the biggest canal junction in the world, a thunderstorm is coming up behind me. Before it reaches, the east wind breaks down, and a strong southwest wind pushes me past the new coal-fired power plant.

Power plant

This new coal-fired power plant looks quite impressive. Packaged in a shimmering blue robe, it looks modern and is probably meant to suggest cleanliness. In my opinion the fact that this power plant further will accelerate climate change and that it was pointless to plan it in the first place, let alone build it or put it into operation, is another matter. I wonder again how the operators, the energy company managers, the politicians and lobbyists who advocate



such things can live with it. Because actually, the calculation is quite simple. If we continue to use fossil fuels, we will make this planet uninhabitable within a few decades.

Forecasts have been undercut recently, so I know my seven-year-old niece and my four-year-old nephew will already have to struggle massively with the problems of climate change. Perhaps it will also already affect me. We are free to decide. If we continue as before, that will soon be it with our planet in its present, exquisite form. We will have to take drastic measures if we start now, but we still have a little leeway. So if we plan, approve, operate and keep in operation fossil fuelled power plants, it's also a direct sign that we don't care about the future of our planet and our children.

It's that simple, and it has to be said that simply. For me, any power plant is merely an example. The same applies to other coal-fired power plants, factory farming in its present form, air travel at the price of a movie ticket, and the heating up of consumer hype.

Pushed by the thunderstorm wind, I escape the rain and the storm and rest that night north of Lüdinghausen. My goal was to get Münster within striking distance, I succeeded.

Respect and cheering

The following day the Dortmund-Ems Canal offers no surprises worth mentioning and relatively little shipping traffic. Slowly I approach the student city. At the canal bank in Münster, I swim and enjoy the nice weather. Here and there, I meet stand-up paddlers. When they ask me where I'm coming from and where I'm going, I answer truthfully with, "Basel to Kiel." With it, I earn respect and cheering but also head shaking, which I can understand. This canal drags, and I still have more than 150km to Minden before me.

About 21.00, I look randomly for a place to spend the night on the shore when I pass three young people listening to 'Santiano' while enjoying their shisha. I stop and get into conversation with the guys. Although I don't smoke, I quickly find myself in good company and decide to set up my night camp here. I turn my board over and put my sleeping bag on the back. Although the board is rigid, after 14 hours of standing, it is easy for me to fall asleep in the evening.

The further kilometres to Minden are tough. My wrists start to hurt, my shoulder is overloaded, and instead of completing the remaining 100 canal kilometres within two days, I lose a day and don't reach Minden until Saturday, my 14th paddling day.

Towards the North Sea

The Weser awaits me on the 15th day with light fog and a slight current. With a maximum of 1 km/h, the water flows towards the North Sea, but this is already very helpful for my motivation. Instead of 5 km/h, I can now assume 6 km/h, which in reality allows daily stages of 60-70km instead of 50km on the canals. Nienburg is my first goal of the day, and I think about whether I might even get a little further. Every day, I have set myself a minimum goal, which I hope to surpass if all goes well.

The next day, the stage to Bremen is like a roller coaster of emotions. Tailwind or calm alternate with headwind and rain due to moving thunderstorms. From evening it becomes more constant; it rains intensely

for four hours. On the last metres to Bremen, I ask myself how if I should set up my tent halfway dry. Shortly before 21:00, a 15-minute rain gap appears, and this I used to establish my night camp at the Marina Wietsee.

Quickly, therefore, I paddle the following day the remaining 30 km on the Weser-Elbe path and transfer my board and luggage to the mouth of the Oste. At 14:00, I start what is the most critical part of my tour – 8 km across the Elbe, which is still very wide at this point. I let pass a suction dredger and a container ship before I paddle on full power. The current moves me powerfully to the east, but my calculation works out. With my last strength, I enthusiastically reached the dyke of Brunsbüttel and was greeted by the first Schleswig-Holstein creature with a friendly "maaah". I guess the sheep rarely see stand-up paddlers, and so I run into the Brunsbüttel Marina, cheered on by my friends.

Kiel Canal (NOK)

It is 19:00 on August 21st; I set off on the last leg of my tour. Ninety-seven kilometres of the Kiel Canal (NOK) lie ahead of me and separate me from my home in Kiel, with 1200km behind me, and after the challenging crossing of the Elbe, I am looking forward to two quiet final days. But I haven't factored in our border guards. I'm just 7 km down the channel when I notice the police boat approaching from behind. I have my Secumar Free 100 life jacket on, my board leash on my leg, my position

light shining bright and clear, and my live tracker with an emergency button in front of me. So I don't expect any major trouble.

The team of the water police confirms to me that paddling on the channel is not forbidden in principle; nevertheless, they direct me to the shore. I have to leave the water and crawl up the rock bank. I am annoyed, disappointed and confused at the same time. On August 11th, the Water and Shipping Authority had confirmed that I was allowed to paddle on the canal. But now I'm standing on the shore and don't know what to do. After a while, I get another confirmation by phone that there is no basis to expel me from the canal. It becomes clear there is little enthusiasm on the official side that I paddle on the channel, but I may continue. So I reach Rendsburg shortly before sunset and thus the last stopover of my tour.

Finish

The discussions the day before took away six hours of paddling time, so I start the final day before sunrise. The last day is quite exhausting, but at 14:30, I reach the Holtenau Lock, the last obstacle on my way. After more than 35 locks, weirs and other obstacles, I am very practiced and so I quickly pack my board and equipment on the boat trolley. At 15:00, I reach the Baltic Sea and accompanied by friends and acquaintances on land and SUPs, I paddle the last 5 km of my journey to the Friedrichsort Lighthouse. Here begins the open Baltic Sea, and here ends my journey across Germany.

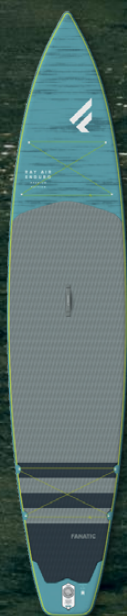


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Behind the brand

with Sandy Point Chandlery's Rory & Greg Ellis



Interview: **SUPM**

Photos: **Sandy Point Chandlery**

SUPM's Behind the Brand articles are not just focused on SUP companies themselves, It's also a chance to shine a spotlight on any set-up doing good work in the name of SUP – and Sandy Point Chandlery are doing just that. With passionate individuals at the

helm, who actively participate, SPC are great ambassadors for the sport and encouraging newbies to take up arms. And that's why they're the focus of this Behind the Brand feature.

Rory, talk us through how the business started.

I've worked for many years in the marine industry, and I've had a pretty active watersports life. When I was working at Hayling Island Sailing Club, an injury spurred me to start my own business making boat covers and sail repairs, which lead to leasing a unit at Sparkes Marina. It made sense to add a small chandlery section and used paddleboards to teach windsurfing in light airs and see how popular they became; I explored building a hire fleet. We met Steve West from Mistral and engaged with the Mistral brand. Subsequently, we had the opportunity to take over the dinghy chandlery at HISC. We then focused on creating a true watersports presence – paddle/windsurfing/surfing with Mistral demo/sales/hire/membership (from Sparkes Marina) and dinghy sailing chandlery (from HISC). I am fortunate to have Greg (my youngest brother) leading the Mistral offering, which leaves me to supervise the chandlery team and oversee business generally.

What're your core focus points, and why?

Our core drivers are enabling and supporting water goers in getting afloat on whatever their preferred craft is and enjoying themselves! That means providing quality kit to a range of budgets, a way of getting afloat and solutions that help them stay ahead and hone skills in their chosen discipline. My team love watersports, particularly dinghy and board sports. So we have excellent knowledge and enthusiasm to support a customer in making the right choice for their circumstances, and we love bringing a smile to their face!



How does SUP fit in?

SUP is the perfect gateway into watersports; it has even changed my life, allowing me more time on the water. For me, it has acted as the missing link between swell and wind and, on my days off, I know I will always be able to get on the water. SUP is now the mass-participation watersport. There is something for everyone, going for a cruise on the glassy days to surfing, yoga, racing, touring, etc. Paddleboards and the relevant accessories are integral to our sales. Still, we also have a substantial fleet of hire boards available from our beautiful harbour side location, including giant SUPs (which are a great way to get people with disabilities on the water). We also run a popular seasonal membership scheme for those who want hassle-free paddling to turn up and take a board whenever they want!

Tell us how you decide which brands to retail.

I am a strong believer in product quality and brand support. The products we provide reflect our standards; it is critical that they are fit-for-purpose and provide innovation to an appropriate standard rather than gimmicks. Brand support is also critical; whether it's boards, wetsuits or accessories, we need to know not just that the product meets our standards but that the brand stands behind their products and is proactive with us. We work with some great watersports brands, and Mistral is a top example. It fits the bill, not just with its legendary watersports heritage and top product range but with the support of the Mistral team that engage with us both on and off the water.

I believe that the underlying growth of SUP as a hobby/sport is set to continue underpinned by a general public appreciation of the fun and well-being it provides



What's your most popular SUP product to date?

I would love to say it was the Mistral Windsurfer LT; we have a massively growing fleet here on Hayling, but maybe next year! It has to be the Mistral Adventure 11.5 inflatable SUP, which has consistently been our best-selling inflatable board. For hardboards, it's close between the Mistral Sunburst and the Mistral Adventurist.

How do you see stand up paddling development? So you think even more growth, for instance?

The fact that SUP is accessible to all has given watersports a shot in the arm. I think sometimes watersports disciplines have, in the past, been guilty of becoming too technical. That's great for

the purists but can lead to higher costs and barriers to entry. However, SUP is mainstream; whilst there may always be a tendency for different branches to push high levels of innovation, I believe that the underlying growth of SUP as a hobby/sport is set to continue underpinned by a general public appreciation of the fun and well-being it provides.

What's your personal SUP kit of choice and why?

I'm lucky that I have been able to try a few SUPs! My favourite is on waves, for which, on the good days, I use the Mistral Cloud 8'6, but for anything else, I love the Windsurfer LT. That board is the one I use most, by far. It's great on the waves, but as soon as the wind gets up, out comes the rig and off I go! That said, when it comes to pure awesome design, I

have been blown away with the Mistral Vortex, Mistral Equinox and Mistral Vanquish as the true performance SUPs. The Adventurist is unbelievable and such a great board to paddle when it comes to value for money.

What are your SUP and watersports plans for the rest of the year?

Onwards and upwards! We're excited to be supporting a growing local and national clientele in getting afloat on SUPs, whether through purchase, hire or membership. We will continue to support the SUP ecosystem as best we can, and we so enjoy the feedback process with Mistral, which helps adapt and refine products to those that people need! We are also planning various tuition, workshops and events; watch out for announcements!





How will Sandy Point Chandlery grow over the next few months?

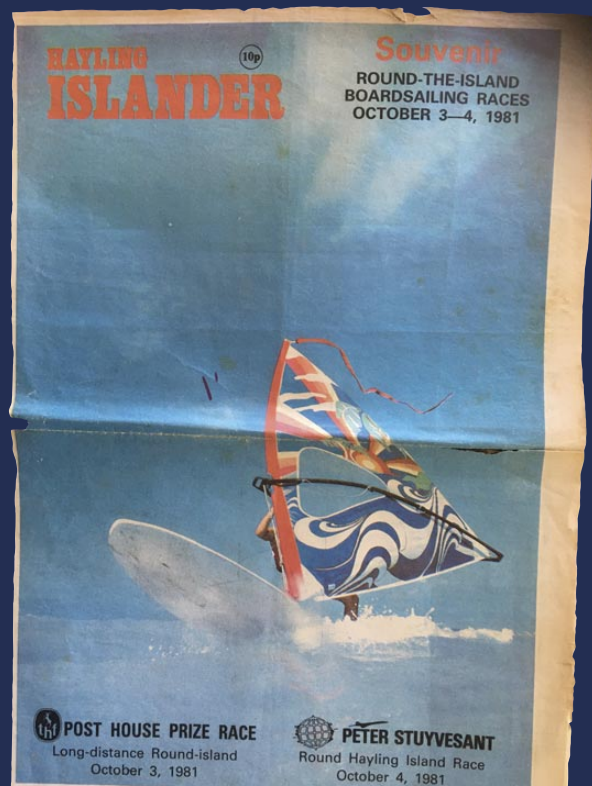
We are looking forward to our busy time of the year – it's not all sun and fun, though! We've worked hard to deliver quality watersports access - products, support, professional engagement and happiness. The signs are good that the underlying growth we've earned together with our suppliers and partners will continue as long as we maintain our high standards. FYI, We are also exploring opening another watersports base; watch this space!

Any final thoughts on SUP or the wider watersports industry?

To me, watersports is the best industry to be involved in, and SUP has broadened its appeal. I love being a part of it. The industry is doing a fantastic job getting people on the water, and long may it continue!

Thanks and praise?

A massive thanks to anyone who has supported us over the years, customers, suppliers, members and the local community. A massive thanks to my family for their support, my brilliant team, Steve and Mandy West, Mistral, Hayling Island Sailing Club, MDL, Tez and SUP Mag UK. It was a pleasure to have shared waves with the legendary Nick Kingston, and I was humbled by his enthusiasm for the sport, especially as a surfer who embraced SUP-surfing. RIP.



Mistral Round Hayling Island Challenge September 25th 2021



Founded in 1980 by Steve West and the late Peter Williams, Mistral have stepped up as the major sponsor of this iconic event, hosted once again by Hayling Island Sailing Club.

Contestants can opt for circumnavigating the 14 miles around the island, or turning at the bridge.

"Originally founded as a windsurfing event, we introduced SUP some years ago, quickly followed by OCs. This year's event will include divisions for OC1, OC2, OC6, windsurfing, Windsurfer LT One Design, SUP inflatable and hardboard, kayak, rowing 4 oar and 6. It's a unique event in the UK, if not Europe, at a world class venue.

With all the uncertainty we've all experienced of late, we hope this will be a celebration of water sports, bringing like-minded folks together. For many participants, it's more about the taking part than the competition and that's the appeal of the event," said Steve West, International Brand Manager for Mistral. Online entries open on August 9th via: www.hisc.co.uk/sailing/open-events. For updates: www.facebook.com/mistraluk

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Behind the brand

with Turtle Bay Paddleboard's
Graeme Williams





Words: Graeme Williams

Pics: Turtle Bay Paddleboard

I always enjoyed being in the sea and going to my local swimming baths at an early age, but my love of the water came in my early teens. My mum had just passed away, and as a single parent, my dad had to spend much of his time running his business. So leisure time came in the form of kayaking with a family friend, Bruce. Bruce would regularly run kayak trips on local rivers and organise camping and kayaking holidays in places such as the Dordogne in the south of France. At this point, I found my love for being on the water rather than in it.

Hooked on surfing

It wasn't until I was in my early 20s that I took an interest in surfing. A weekend away in Newquay for surfing lessons left me hooked. For much of my 20s, I'd find myself packing up the car on a Friday evening and heading off to the West Country in search of surf. The surfing scene has a habit of drawing you in, and before long, my sister and I were throwing around ideas of opening a surf shop somewhere, although it seemed a little far-fetched at the time. My life wasn't quite ready to take that path just yet. Instead, a new change in my career meant that I was now landlocked and working as a firefighter.

After six years in the service, an opportunity arose to apply for a job in the Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service. This would have been the perfect combination of working and living close to the best surfing beaches in the country. After many months of interviews and exams, I had been accepted, only for a letter to arrive a few weeks later notifying the very small number of successful applicants that due to government cuts, the Fire Service were no longer recruiting.

It was time to rethink what I wanted to do, and I decided to move to Eastbourne, close to where I grew up. Before long, I met Sara, who I later married. I moved to Hastings, just along the coast where she lived. In 2013, after a few years of living in Hastings, I stumbled across a small watersports shop hidden away in a backstreet, sadly no longer there. It was here that I was introduced to SUP. SUP was still a rare sight, and many people had never heard of it. People talk about that first glide, and for me, it was as though I had found the sport that I had been missing all my life!

SUP racing

Later that year, I took an interest in racing. Hove Lagoon hosted a winter race series, and a friend and I were both keen to try it out. Although we were competing on all-round boards, back then, it was big heavy 12' Starboards, we both did pretty well. My friend fared a little better than me in most races, but he was a good ten years younger! I loved the competitive side of the sport and, in 2014, signed up for the UK SUP Clubs National Race Series. I wanted to give myself the best chance of doing well and managed to get hold of none other than Ryan

James' Race winning Starboard Sprint. I took to the river, which would become my training ground, and I could not believe how difficult this board was to stand on. A little persevering, and I soon felt relatively stable.

My first major race was the Head of the Dart, and I'll never forget the race start! There I was on my narrow flat water raceboard, suddenly trying to hold my balance in a mass of choppy water created by the overwhelming number of paddlers racing off the line. Out of 150 paddlers, 60 of which were leisure paddlers, I came a mere 72nd. Feeling dejected, I took myself home and considered if this was something I wanted to do again. Now I'm not someone to shy away from a challenge, so I put in as much training as possible, which wasn't a huge amount given that I was now a father for the first time. Over the coming race season, I managed to find more pace, helped by upgrading to a performance paddle and an all-water raceboard later in the year. I was thrilled to end the series in the top 10 in the 14' solid board class!

SUP surfing

The work, family, and leisure balance are hard to get right, and I'd certainly been leaning far too much on the leisure (SUP racing) side of things. The training was now on the back burner, but I had discovered the joys of SUP surfing. Hastings has never been particularly well known for its surf, but for SUP, it's pretty darn good. The coming winter allowed me to experience the thrill of surfing raceboards! As if the long rides of surfing a paddleboard wasn't enough, surfing a raceboard is something else. SUP surfing was my new passion.

There was a slowly growing community of stand up paddlers in Hastings, and frustrated by the lack of a social scene, one that didn't charge you money for the privilege of paddling together at least; I started a free paddleboard club, 1066 SUP Club. It was this that pulled me further into the world of SUP. The group was becoming quite popular, and we had several kids that wanted to come along with their parents. It was also at this point that I was keen to take up coaching. The children that I had seen paddling didn't fit well on the adult paddleboards that we had. OK, balancing wasn't an issue; in fact, it

was way too easy. The problem was getting the board to glide through the water or go in a straight line and keep up with the adults. Keen to acquire some smaller boards for the club and coaching, I was horrified at the lack of available boards on the market for small paddlers and the high price tag to go with it. I couldn't understand why the industry wasn't encouraging kids and their parents into the sport.

Poor quality

After many months and endless late nights in conversation with manufacturers in China (the only country now manufacturing inflatable paddleboards), I had four prototype junior boards on their way to me. The sizes were perfect and covered ages ranging from 4-12 years. The quality, however, was far from what I had hoped for. More time was spent in the search for a good quality board supplier. Eventually, in 2017, I had found a new supplier, and a range of junior boards and a few adult boards were on their way over, which would be the basis of the new Turtle Bay Paddleboards range.

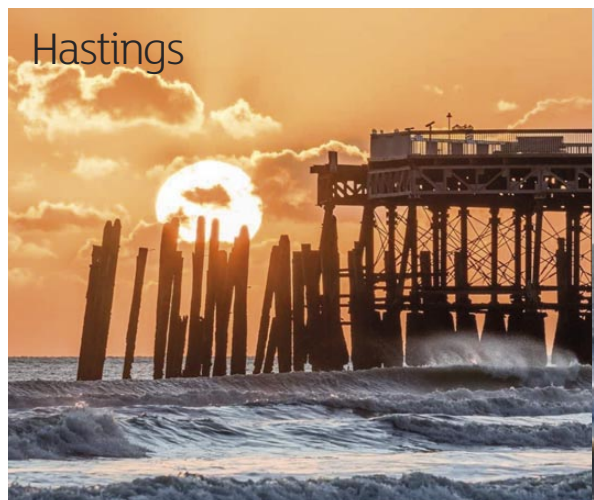
In the meantime, the local rowing fraternity at Hastings Rowing Club was very low on numbers, with less than a handful of rows to support their large premises

adjacent to Hasting Beach. They had decided to open their doors to stand up paddlers that wanted to use their facilities and store their boards there for greater convenience. This was a real game changer! No longer did we need to dash home and load up the boards when the surf was on. No longer did we need to drive around in circles to find a parking space near the beach, change in and out of our gear on a busy promenade or walk for an age to the water with our heavy boards. Very quickly, another Paddling community was forming, this time at Hastings Rowing Club.

Great Glen Challenge

2018 was a busy year. Turtle Bay Paddleboards was growing, and with the addition of junior raceboards in our lineup, we were thrilled to sponsor junior racing for the GP SUP Series. We also had some adult raceboards entering the UK Endurance Series; the most notable for me was finishing third in the Great Glen Challenge, a full-on downwind experience surfing shoulder high waves in 30+mph winds for a few hours the length of Loch Ness. 1066 SUP Club won the Endurance Series Club of the Year award. 1066 SUP Club also returned for its second year at the SUP Club Championships. We managed to collect several podiums, and a tremendous

Hastings

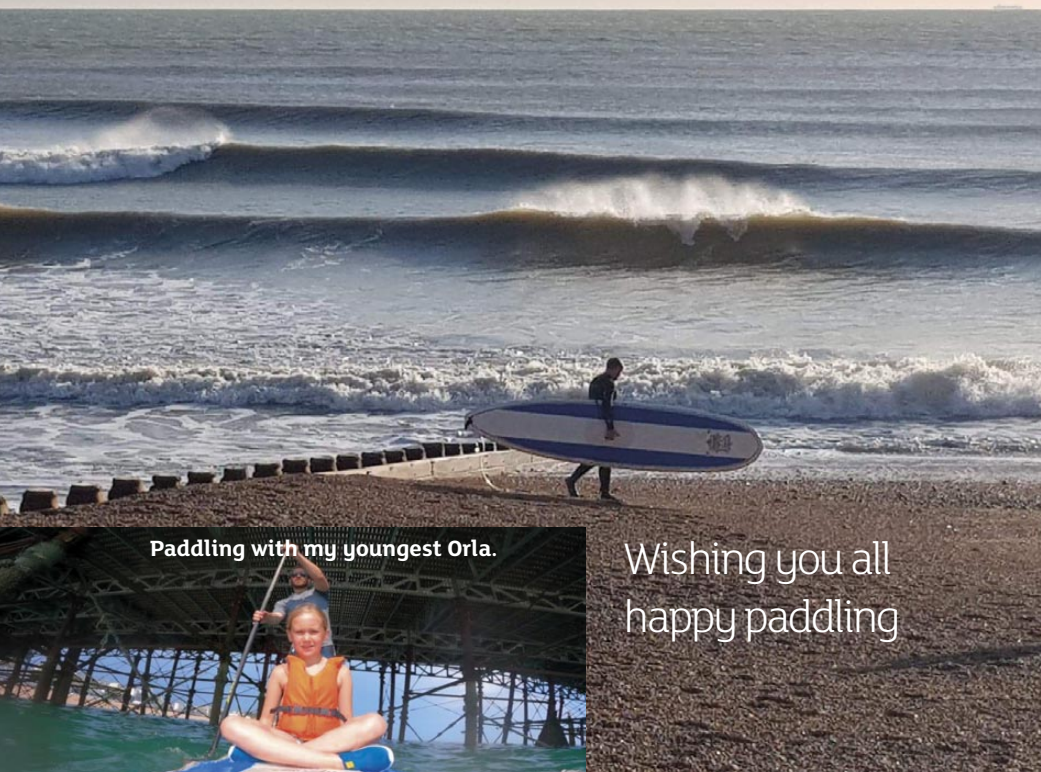


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Surfing Raceboard 2015

We now have a great manufacturing team and a good range of boards that perform exceptionally well



Paddling with my youngest Orla.

Wishing you all happy paddling



GB SUP juniors



GB Club Championships with Florrie

into place to start our new SUP hire business in Hastings, which will include our very own beach hut/cabin on Hastings Pier.

I feel very fortunate to live and work in Hastings. It has become something of a mecca for SUP, and the sport has brought me many good friends. We have a SUP surf beach that often delivers. A stunning coastal landscape to paddle along with the cliffs of the Hastings Country Park. And a great community of people that appreciate and make the most of living on the coast. I look after a thriving community of paddlers at Hastings Rowing Club, and I'm looking forward to organising many more social paddles and planned trips with the 1066 SUP Club. The Turtle Bay SUP & Surf Shack is growing from strength to strength, and I'm thrilled to be able to give work to my wonderful shop staff. As for Turtle Bay Paddleboards, now that our shop is more established, I can focus on the brand's future. We now have a great manufacturing team and a good range of boards that perform exceptionally well.

Florrie and Orla

A day rarely goes by when I'm not on the water, whether it be coaching, SUP surfing, race training, downwinding, paddling with friends for leisure or the best part, taking my two daughters out onto the water, Florrie and Orla. For me, running a brand is not about chasing board sales but developing a product that I'm passionate about and that people can truly benefit from. Whether or not we have the product in stock that our customer is looking for, it's always a joy to share the knowledge I've gained over the years and hopefully help people get the most out of our sport.

Looking ahead, we will be dramatically increasing our board stock for 2022, and we will be taking our junior range to where I always envisaged it would be. We will also be going ahead with our plans to introduce our new range of solid boards and foil boards, and foils, which I'm very excited about. I'm also looking forward to continuing our partnerships with our instructors and watersports centres around the UK. It's a real privilege to see other enthusiasts choose our equipment, a product that I have spent so much of my time designing, improving and hopefully perfecting.

If you want to see what a typical day on the water is like in Hastings, be sure to check out our YouTube channel, Turtle Bay SUP. And if you're ever visiting the town, please come by to say hello at the Turtle Bay SUP & Surf Shack.

amount of fun was had. Meanwhile, Hastings Rowing Club was filling up with paddleboards, and I was now on the committee as SUP representative, looking after the paddleboarders, kayakers and surfers at the club.

The next opportunity came in 2019. Retail premises had become available directly opposite our surf beach in Hastings. It was only a stone's throw from the rowing club too. In September that year, I left my main job, and I officially opened the shop doors for the first time. Initially, I intended to open the shop as a showroom for Turtle Bay Paddleboards, but the town was crying out for a SUP and surf shop, so the Turtle Bay SUP & Surf Shack was born.

Lockdown

Of course, a few months later, we went into our first lockdown, and as I write this, the shop has been closed for as much time as it has been open. But the industry is busier than it's ever been, and the business has grown significantly over the past couple of years. However, the industry has seen issues with supply, manufacturing lead times and difficulties with the availability of materials. But it's an exciting time for the business. I now have a team of staff, and as I write this, we are putting our plans

Gear shed

SUP Mag UK's test station. If you want your product reviewed and think it will be of interest to SUPers

Email: tezwoz1@hotmail.co.uk

Blow up levitation –

Naish Hover 5'7 x 30" x 130L inflatable foil board

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

This is the shortest board I think I've ever tested. At 5'7 in length, it's smaller than me standing on its end. When I'd fully inflated the 2021 Naish Hover inflatable, I did have a little chuckle.

SUP/wing foil boards are undoubtedly compact, and whilst there are shorter boards out there, this one is dinky.

NAISH

Price:

£979

Info:

www.naishsurfing.com/product/hover-inflatable

But. It's got a lot of thickness and width. So while the Hover air is short, it's also chunky. And it's super stiff to boot. The shorter nature of the Hover means there's less deflection as you'd get in a longer iSUP. Both these points transfer to the water where the 130L is stable (trust me when I say more than you'd think) and rock-solid rigid.

A long carbon plate is glued to the board's underside with twin US track boxes to make the Hover foil compatible. You can fit most foils, not just Naish, and the plate copes with the forces a foil produces when in use.



Unfortunately, I didn't get much in the way of swell during testing so winging it was. At 90kg dry, I had no issue getting set in relatively choppy water. There's plenty of stability for knee starts, and the Naish Hover is pretty composed. Pumping yourself up on foil isn't quite the same feeling as a hardboard. After all,

the 130L is made of PVC, which does stick more to the water. Also, there're no additional hull chines to aid release. So it takes a tad longer for the Hover to lift and fly.

Once up and foiling, the Naish Hover inflatable is a fun ride. There are no probs will feeling directly connected to the foil. In this sense, it's the same as a hardboard. Composed, and we'll mannered it flies with ease. And that width helps promote rider confidence when in flight. Should you touch down, then concentration is needed as like I said before, there are no cutouts in the hull to help pop you back up. But it's doable and still, top drawer performance orientated.

CONCLUSION

The 2021 Naish Hover inflatable SUP/wing foil board does exactly what it says on the tin. It's a good option for anyone who wants to travel with foil gear or for those with limited storage space. Packing down to a small rucksack, even the included pump had a nice feature in that the pump handle width can be reduced by unscrewing the ends. The Naish Hover air is well made from quality Drop stitch/PVC (as you'd expect) and has a top-shelf aesthetic. A blow-up foil board like this might also be a good choice for riders slightly nervous about falling when learning. The spongy, soft surface to bounce off is welcome. Many will enjoy the Naish Hover inflatable, that's for sure.



Get fresh! –

Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co compact tourer 11'5 x 32" x 6"

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co's 11'5 compact touring iSUP comes hot on the heels of the brand's all-round 10'6 inflatable reviewed last issue. This time the tourer is set to deliver better glide, tracking and carrying capacity for essential items. And deliver it does...



Price:

£ 745

Info:

<https://freshwaterbaypaddleboards.co.uk/product/compact-touring-isup/>



Having inflated the 11'5, it sets up with a very flat rocker and slight teardrop shape. There's a good chunk of Dropstitch underfoot where riders paddle from. This isn't to say the front section won't accommodate you carting gear. It will. But the shape suggests the emphasis has been placed on the paddler and their ride experience.

Setting off, the FWBPC compact tourer rushes away from the beach with admirable zoom. It's not blisteringly quick but still quick enough and holds its own against other similar style sleds. The board's beauty is revealed upon



hitting confused water states and potentially nasty flotsam and chop. Navigating areas like this is super easy with the 11'5, and it makes quick work of getting paddlers through to the next calm section.

Should you get a breeze on your back and a few bumps to run down, the Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co compact tourer will surge forwards and make a decent impression of a downwind board. But all with composure remaining intact. At no point do you feel nervous under steam, so a confidence boosted experience is what you get with this board. Of course, all this is rounded out by Freshwater Bay Paddleboard Co livery, which is distinct and shouts quality.

CONCLUSION

An adventure paddling board in the purest sense, the 11'5 compact tourer is set to unlock all kinds of fun SUP experiences. Whether this is hardcore multi-day paddling or short sojourns along your local stretch to the pub. Whatever your requirements it's all good. With everything done in a very composed way, this is an impressive board that doesn't misbehave.



All the small things –

O'Shea GROM QSx 7'10" x 29" x 135L

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

When your kids are ready to stand up paddleboard proper, you need the right gear. Messing about aboard mum and dad's SUP is one thing, but dimensions of adult boards don't fit wee ones statures. Enter O'Shea's GROM Quad Stringer (QSx) inflatable stand up paddleboard. Specifically designed with your offspring in mind.



Price:

£ 399

Info:

<https://osheasup.com/qsx-grom/>



Featuring all the usual tip-top O'Shea attention to detail, the GROM is manufactured in the same quality way as all their other SUP products. What you get with an adult O'Shea iSUP you find here. As such, the GROM is super rigid, those quad stringers helping this, with not a seam or panel out of place. And the bold graphics are most welcome and will make spotting your child and craft when afloat all the easier.



We had help testing the O'Shea GROM from a three-year-old. He commented how fun the board was just messing about in the shallows. It was interesting to note how easy, due to the smaller dimensions of the GROM, he found it scrambling on and off. And on that point, you can see the durability of O'Shea's construction in use. Which is just as well as a board made for kids, whereby they'll be on and off it like a yoyo, needs to be up to the task.

To further check out the GROM's performance, I hopped aboard for a scoot round. For a parent with skill, there's no reason you can't pilot the GROM. It might be a little shorter and narrower, but it's pretty stable for its overall size. If you fancy a nimble ride, then it certainly ticks the box.

CONCLUSION

O'Shea's GROM 7'10" ticks all the boxes a kiddy specific inflatable SUP needs to. It's a well-made board that your little ones will enjoy using. If your kids are enthusiastic about stand up paddleboarding, then a board like this is worth every penny. And as an investment in longevity and fun, the GROM will stand the test of time, no worries.



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Photo: Robin Boot Photography

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PANDA
BOARD SPORTS

Wang 'n' paddle –

McConks Go Free 9'8 x 32" x 6" V2

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

I tested the McConks Go Free 9'8 (windsurf edition) V1 in 2020. Back then, it found favour as a nimble paddler and fun windSUP. My kids liked it, especially for sail power shenanigans. The V2, tested here, is a SUP and wingsurfing platform – the beady-eyed among you, undoubtedly spotting the footstraps.



Price:

£650

Info:

<https://mcconks.com/shop/mcconks-98-go-free-2020-crossover-wingsurf-surf-board/>

2021's Go Free has been tweaked slightly with less rocker in the tail; the back section also widened slightly. This makes for a more stable ride. At first, I thought some of the Go Free's manoeuvrability may be lost, but I'm happy to report it remains chuck about. So much so when testing, I was having lots of fun practising some flat water SUP freestyle.

For some, the 9'8 Go Free may appear on the smaller side. But at 90kg (dry), I have no issues with stability, and as per the comment above, it serves me well as a trickster sled.

McConk's iSUP construction is right up there – the 9'8 Go Free is no different. As such, it'll stand up to

knocks and bangs without issue, giving much longevity. Owners should be happy with this!

Another change for 2021 is the addition of the McConks Air 7 fin box. This is two pieces of the puzzle that Velcro together and are held firmly in place by air pressure. From a practical point of view, this feature ensures easy rolling and pack down. It also means you can use whatever fin you choose (US box style), which gives a large range of fin tuning options.



CONCLUSION

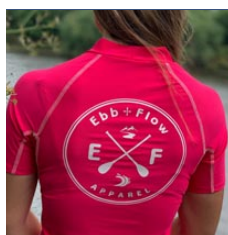
McConk's Go Free 9'8 V2 is a step in terms of overall all round performance. Those wanting a chuck about SUP machine will find exactly that here. So much, so that small wave performance is a given. Added to which, is the additional versatility of the Go Free being a good platform for learning the waves of the wing. For those who want windSUP performance instead, you can purchase the applicable version from McConks. There's a strapless option too. Top-notch construction and fun SUPing make the 9'8 a favourite McConks sled of mine.



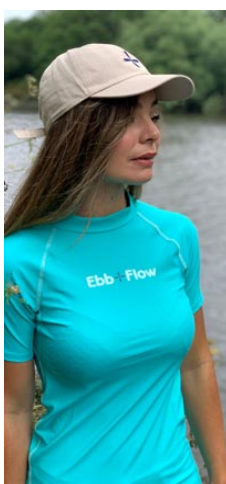


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Pure fly – FusionX Nitro Pro 6' x 29" x 130L SUP foil board

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

Specializing in custom/semi-custom foil boards, foils and wings, FusionX dropped their futuristic looking Nitro Pro SUP/wing foil board with us to check out. With its bold colourway and unique, pronounced hull chines, this is a board that certainly stands out from the crowd, and then some!



Price:

From £1295

Info:

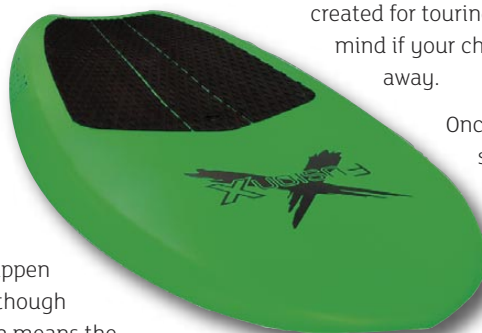
<https://foilshop.co.uk/product/fusionx-custom-nitro-pro-carbon-foil-board-wing-sup-surf/>



Hopping aboard, the Nitro Pro 130L has plenty of stability, even for heavyweights.

The short length means standing to paddle needs to happen towards the tail, although volume distribution means the sweet spot is still a little way forwards. The concaved deck gives a dependable connection to the board, even when not foiling. Riders have the option of affixing footstraps, but I opted to go without as I prefer a more centreline located, offset configuration.

There's no escaping the fact short foil boards, including the FusionX, is an absolute 'mare to paddle any distance. The yaw effect means tracking isn't exactly in abundance, with lots of corrective strokes needed to keep it moving. But all this is to be expected. Foil boards aren't



created for touring! But it's worth bearing in mind if your chosen wave is any distance away.

Once at the take-off, it's pretty simple, using the Nitro Pro's abundant volume and width, to wait at the bus stop until your peak jacks up. Then with hammer down paddle strokes, riders can oomph it onto a wave. And

this is where those funky hull contours come into their own...

Paired with the appropriate foil, the FusionX hull aims to break surface water tension as early as possible, thereby giving release to lift and hover. In the blink of an eye, riders are flying over water. When turning, the clearance between board and wave remains, even at lesser foiling height, because of the side cutouts. And should you dip down, then touches are split-second affairs, the Nitro Pro shedding water to pop back up easily.

CONCLUSION

FusionX's Nitro Pro 130L is the most progressive SUP foil board I've tested to date. There's no messing about here; it's a foiling or nothing sled. But it makes the whole thing easy and super fun. Beginners will improve quickly, whilst advanced flyers can dial in whatever move they feel inclined to perform. For me, it allows the riding of waves that are barely breaking and helps increase time on the water considerably. If you're thinking SUP/wing foil board, then you'd do a lot worse than one of these babies.



Bursting to paddle –

Mistral Sunburst 11'9 x 32" x 228L

Review & pics: Tez Plavenieks

The more versatile a product, the better, in my opinion. Whilst many will want to simply paddle, the weather doesn't always link up, and so often, paddlers are left forlornly looking out to sea or cursing Mother Nature. But with a dual purpose board, such as Mistral's fab looking Sunburst, you're primed to make the best use of all scenarios.

mistral®

Price:

£939

Info:

<https://sandypointwatersports.com/mistral/hardboards-2/sunburst/>

Firstly, the Sunburst has its unique eco-credentials firmly in place. With its cork laminate, the 11'9 draws glances (as it did during testing) and many questions. Hopping aboard and that cork element gives the Sunburst a softer feeling than full carbon SUPs. It absorbs chop during paddling and delivers a cushioned ride. Of which, the second point – its feel – is sublimely easygoing.

The Sunburst's shape is that of an all-round SUP but with slight longboard wave leanings. There's decent glide happening, and whilst pointy nose sleds do track a tad more efficiently, it's no slouch. Riders will have no issue covering ground in a suitably elegant fashion.



And then there's that additional versatility. Mistral's Sunburst is windSUP ready with its deck located mast track. And a proper mast track at that, whereby sailors can position their windsurf rig in the exact spot they want. Underneath the Sunburst has a centrally located fin box for a downwind drift stopping skeg. Therefore this is a nifty board for anyone dabbling with learning the art of sails and boards. And combined with the wavier rocker Mistral's Sunburst makes a great light wind wave windSUP machine.



CONCLUSION

My family adored playing about on Mistral's Sunburst 10' – the girl, in particular, found it fulfilling to paddle. As a not quite seven year old that's saying something. Away from recreational SUPing and the Sunburst is lovely to chuck at a few waves. With longboard style surfing performance, it's relatively throw about and stoke inducing. Should the wind rock up, stick a sail on and go flatwater cruising or carry on with your wave sesh, windy style. Beginners and cruiser breeze head should also apply, with the Sunburst being more than applicable. The cork laminate only makes it more desirable for a stand up paddleboard.



Double trouble: two foil flight overview

Reviews: Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Oli Lane-Peirce

If you're thinking of foiling, whether for SUP and/or wing, you want to make the whole process as easy as possible. Your foil choice is super important. It needs to be early lifting, stable at height and get you flying with minimal effort in conditions that aren't ideal for your regular sled. And this follows on as you progress as time on the water, in cruddy waves or flukey winds, is the main draw with foiling.

I've spent considerable time with two foils with Slingshot's Hover Glide Infinity 99 2371cm² and F4 Foils' Lightwind 2000cm². Both low aspect foils these puppies allow progression whilst building confidence..



Slingshot Hoverglide Infinity 99 2371cm²

<https://slingshotsports.com/>

With a whopping 2371cm² surface area, the Infinity 99 wing is a behemoth foil wing that's extremely aggressively performing. And by that, I mean it's as easy as you're likely to get.

Slingshot alloy/carbon modular design allows mixing and matching of front wings, foil masts and fuselages to tune your ride moving forwards. To begin with, however, the 99 wing is the one.

With very little speed, it lifts riders up and offers unrivalled rail to rail stability. If you want to just stand there and glide, no probs. But it also carves well for such a big foil. Pair with the 42cm tail wing for slightly more speed and agility or the 48cm for even more leverage and early lift.

Price: £749 (wing only) £1299 (complete)



F4 Foils Light wind 2000cm²

<https://foilshop.co.uk>

Another low aspect foil and alloy/carbon mix, the F4 Lightwind 2000cm² (2500cm² also available), is billed as a wingsurfing foil. You can, however, use it comfortably for SUP foiling when paired with the 70cm alloy foil mast.

This is another super easy foil that rises early and remains composed in flight. It flies through wind lulls and wave flat spots effortlessly and doesn't do too badly on the carving front. If you're in the mind for jumping, then its pop is pretty good. Air time wingers should definitely apply here.

An uncomplicated design, the F4 Lightwind 2000cm² is possibly the only foil you'll need for dually flight disciplines. Although if you wanted to add the bigger front wing, you could do so. This has been my go-to foil for 10-12 knot wingin' these last few months.

Price: £1300 (complete)



From the same cloth – Hypr Hawaii 14' x 20.5" prone paddle board

Review: Tez Plavenieks **Pics:** Oli Lane-Peirce

Whilst SUPM has featured prone paddleboarding in its pages before, there's never actually been a review of such a product. Hypr Hawaii's head honcho Ian Foo is an avid connoisseur of paddling and paddling paddle craft. It's, therefore, no surprise that prone platforms form part of the Hypr Hawaii range. And at the time of writing, a bunch of Hypr prone machines are set to land in the UK, including the 14' x 20.5" tested here.



Price:

£1949

Info:

www.hyprhawaii.co.uk/store
/-c37904097



For me, prone is the original precursor to stand up. The latter follows the former, so they are intrinsically intertwined. If you fancy yourself as a paddle connoisseur also, then you'd do well to get on board.

The Hypr prone 14' is a beautiful looking sled. Those brand unique hull cutouts are (as always) on point, but the board itself is an overall beauty. Just check out that sharp as a knife arrow head tail and striking colours.

I'll not lie: if your experience doesn't include narrow paddle vehicles, then even in the prone mode, you may find this sled tippy. Of course, everything is achievable. Adding a forward located stabilising fin will help. But you'll need to concentrate when driving this baby regardless.

Speed does equal stability, so the faster you can stroke, the better. Head down, digging



deep, you'll be surprised how rapid the 14' cuts through even choppy states. With confidence in the bag, switching to butterfly knee paddling may then be the go. And if you can sniff out a bump, this puppy loves a runner - even small nuggets.

I couldn't resist testing the stand up paddling performance of the Hypr prone. Having tested many narrow race boards in the past, I knew getting to my feet was doable. Even more so than lying down, the rolling nature of the Hypr is apparent.

What became quickly obvious was the need to use that roll and paddle in standing mode with railed trim. Keeping focus, the board moves super quick with paddle blade strokes, making it a really engaging experience for those that can.

CONCLUSION

Hypr Hawaii's 14' x 20.5" prone paddleboard is a real paddlers craft. Beginners may not care for a toy like this, but those with any kind of waterman/woman aspirations will love the challenge and different experiences this board offers. If you're ready to mix your paddling up, want a super high-end machine and are happy to chuck some cash at it, then this is your tool. Check-in and love it!



Eco intact – Palm Equipment Downstream 35L drybag



<https://palmequipmenteurope.com>

Review & pic: Tez Plavenieks

With not even a whiff of PVC Palm Equipment's Downstream 35L, a roll-top dry bag is a tip-top more environmentally friendly carry than most. With an integrated clear strip to view what's inside, and a comfortable (removable) shoulder strap, this is an essential 'lug ya gear about product' that many paddlers will find favour with.

With additional features like the double-stitched reinforced seams, roll-down closure, D-ring attachment point, and daisy chain attachment points, it's got a lot of versatility for a dry bag. I found it fit my requirements of carrying wet kit back from the beach, keeping dry kit moisture-free. But others will discover different applications, such as taking it onboard during longer touring missions or similar. To be honest, it'll fit whatever scenario you care to chuck it at. This is why Palm's top drawer manufacturing is key...

The Downstream 35L is super high end in the manufacturing stakes. Tough, durable and rugged, it'll take a hefty amount of abuse and has a good deal of longevity. I've tested/reviewed/used some drybags that really don't last that long. A few months of hard wear and tear at most before they start to show signs of failing or indeed fall apart. This isn't the case here with Palm's Downstream 35L.

As mentioned, the Downstream 35L has a shoulder strap which I found to be very comfortable. I actually used the bag whilst out rambling long the South Downs, and, again, it did the job asked of it fine. And land-based activities apply to the DS just as much as watery scenarios, showing (again) the versatility of such a product.

CONCLUSION

Drybags and carry alls may initially be thought of as one and the same whatever brand you choose. Still, the fact is there are differences in quality as much as any other stand up paddleboarding product (or product in general). With green, environmentally credentials firmly in place, Palm Equipment's Downstream 35L roll-top dry bag is an excellent choice for all types of SUPer and land-based outdoorsmen/women to boot.

Price: £40

Info: <https://palmequipmenteurope.com/product/downstream-35-l>

Red Original – multi-pump adaptor <https://redoriginal.com>



Review & pic: Darren Farrar @StandUpPaddleUK

The new Red Original dual valve adapter is a simple but useful bit of kit. Imagine being able to attach two pumps to one board, combine an electric pump and hand pump, or help your partner pump up their board once yours is done!

So it's simple the valve screws into your sup using a Halkey Roberts valve and works as a splitter, splitting one valve into two.

The valves feature a non-return valve as standard so that air can't escape if using a single valve. However, if using an electric pump, you can and should remove the non-return valve so that your pump can shut off and take the air pressure reading. It's easy to remove a simple twist and remove the valve non-return. There's a great video if unsure on the website.

CONCLUSION

It's simple, but my god, it works!

Price: £19.99

Info: <https://redpaddleco.com/en-gb/product/multi-pump-adaptor>



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Red Original – Waterproof Kit Bag 40-litre

<https://redoriginal.com>



Review & pic: Darren Farrar @StandUpPaddleUK
So I've had the Kit Bag for a few weeks now and what has got me excited about it is the various uses you can get out of this bag. We discussed it at length recently on @StandUpPaddleUK via the IG Live feature with Ross from Red Original.

As paddler,s we are always looking for kit that ticks multiple boxes. Let's be honest; we have many hobbies, so the kit we buy ideally has to transcend the sport it is for. The Kit Bag is perfect in this regard, with so many uses. Prime use for me is travel – more so than the everyday paddle, so it's ideal for the following.

Paddlers who like to 'paddle and pitch' if you're paddling a stretch and need to stay over the night with a tent. This bag is perfect because it is waterproof, fits under the front bungee cords of your board when full and will fit a one-person tent and overnight kit into it. The bag also integrates with different branded boards.

UK weekender trips – 40L is more than enough for one person, no doubt holding some of my partner's bits too! It fits three sets of clothes, including walking boots, a laptop and three cameras.

Due to its size (40L), it is perfect for a 2-4 day bag for trips abroad (once you're allowed!). With the correct packing, this bag will fit in an overhead locker on a plane. I'm a long time user of North Face duffel bags – this is very similar, but in my opinion, better. Being waterproof, this will double up as your beach bag (if that's part of your trip). Straps can be adjusted and moved to work as a standard duffel bag or a backpack.

Another use will be for storage of wetsuits/wetsuit booties for travel home. I'm sure you've been driving home from the coast, and the wetsuit is smelling out your car. It isn't ideal. With the Kit Bag being airtight, you can store your wetsuit and booties in the bag. This isn't a permanent solution, of course, as it will damage your wetsuit by not drying it out correctly. Still, it will be of use if required, primarily if you've used your wetsuit the same day you're driving home multiple hours.

CONCLUSION

The Kit Bag will become my weekend trip bag in the UK or abroad. It is versatile, waterproof, separate storage areas for dry/wet clothes. I've always been a big supporter of Red Original; the products are excellent. I trust the products, especially the waterproof kit, which is a massive plus for me, trusting my kit and knowing it is safe in the bag.

Price: £129.95

Info: <https://redoriginal.com/collections/bags/products/waterproof-kit-bag-40l>

Red Original – Men's Luxury Towelling Robe Luxury Kid's Poncho Towel

<https://redoriginal.com>

Review & pic: Dale Mears @StandUpPaddleUK
Change robes have gone slightly mad this year, with people picking them up for various watersports and activities. Here's the latest offering for summer from Red Original.

A suede fleece that is quick-drying and holds four times its weight in water is an excellent addition to the summer robe family.

I love these because they are simple and lightweight; think baggy hoodie that keeps your modesty and keeps the weather off you, yet add a lovely fit, feel and handy pockets and hood. Not only the hood but with the ability to drawstring and tie it up. What's even better is these come in a small bag too!

CONCLUSION

This is a well-designed robe, excellent material and what's better is this is a super affordable product from Red Original. Even the supermarkets are charging £20 for the child's size robe with inferior materials and poor sizing. If you have kids, these are amazing, I've got my toddler in one, and it's huge on her at the moment, but it's way over her size, but she loves it! It's warm and comfy and great for the beach or river!

Price: Men's Luxury Towelling Robe - £52.95
Luxury Kid's Poncho Towel - £32.95

Info: <https://redoriginal.com/collections/luxury-towelling-change-robes/Kids>

<https://redoriginal.com/products/pro-change-jacket>



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