



## Chair's Report October 2021

### Introduction

Welcome to all those involved in waterskiing and wakeboarding; skiers, boarders, drivers, cable operators, coaches, volunteers, management teams & enthusiastic front of house folk! It might have taken a while to get going, but it's been a fantastic summer for watersports with all clubs reporting increased activity.

This past year is my first as volunteer Chair of Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland (WWS) taking on the vacant position after last years AGM. I'd like to thank the enthusiastic directors who have worked hard to create a cohesive skills-based board. As a not-for-profit organisation your directors are comprised entirely of volunteers (two of whom are independent directors having no personal involvement in the sport) who willingly give up their time to help manage our sport in line with government guidance. Whilst certainly not the "exciting" side of the sport the work done by the board is essential if we are to be able to safely grow our sport and pass on the enthusiasm and excitement to future generations.

Two members of the board (Alford Alongi and Marriet Scott) unfortunately had to step down during the year, due personal issues. We would like to thank them for their involvement.

The tasks that your board have been involved in over the year are extensive, whether; mitigating the anticipated operational loss of 2020/2021, writing operational procedure updates to see us through the COVID-19 pandemic, managing Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland and Town Loch National Training Site, taking responsibility for safeguarding to ensure all participating children can do so in a safe environment, creating equality, diversity & inclusion policies, accessing funding opportunities, liaising with British Water Ski and Wakeboarding, creating finance/HR/data management and IT policies or managing our small team of employees, the directors have come together enthusiastically to do so.

Their effectiveness was confirmed with our very favourable audit from KPMG (a necessity when accepting funds from **sportscotland**). We are now in a strong position to move forward and build value to the membership. This is your sport and as a governing body we are here to help you.

### sportscotland Partnership

sportscotland (SS) is our connection to government and lottery funding, which is essential in order to be able to employ our Chief Operating Officer (COO), Development Officer (DO) and Development Coach (DC). I'd like to thank Barry Cook (SS Partnership Manager) who is a pleasure to work with and makes the process as simple as possible.

In the past year we unfortunately had to say to farewell to Carole Cooney as our COO, Carole was in post for a year, and we owe her a huge debt of gratitude for her very efficient management of the operations of Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland and Town Loch National Training Site. Our favourable audit report is directly related to the work that Carole did during her time in post. Carole left the COO role in order to take up the opportunity of achieving a lifelong career goal.

Although Carole has left the COO role, we have not lost her altogether as she accepted the position of independent director on the board. Carole was available to oversee the induction of our new COO and her operations skill set fits well with the board skills matrix.

This summer the applications for the COO position were numerous. The extended interview process resulted in appointing Calum Reid. This is Calum's first time as a COO, and he comes to us from a number of years at Triathlon Scotland. In the first few weeks of Calum's involvement, he has already immersed himself in our sport, meeting as many of the stakeholders as possible whilst also making sure he fully understands the sport (slalom skiing at second time out and deep water starts shortly after! - wakeboarding to follow). Calum is very approachable and always available as a direct contact with Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland. Calum's primary role, as funded by **sportscotland**, is in the effective governance of the sport, which includes management of the DO & DC. I am sure that with everyone's support Calum is going to be a great asset to our future growth.

As mentioned, this past year we liaised with **sportscotland** to receive the bulk of funding necessary to employ our COO and part time DO & DC (the shortfall in COO wages being made up by Town Loch National Training Site profits). This has been a one-year funding (usually funding is a 4-year cycle) due to our transition as a board and the uncertainty of the pandemic. The coming winter will see us refining our strategy for the next 3 years and presenting this to SS for funding approval.

### Planning the future of our sport - our Operational Strategy

The strategy we are using was created last year as a result of liaising with you, our affiliated clubs, and extended stakeholders.

Having now run Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland for the last year based on what you, as end users, told us you wanted, we are now in a good position to reflect, consult with you further and ultimately refine the "strategy" which we can all work towards.

Our "vision" remains the same:

"To grow a community of people from all walks of life and backgrounds participating in our sports, having fun, sharing successes and developing in to who they want to be".

How we focus our energies and resources in order to achieve this is the demand of the strategy. With activity in 2020 being severely limited due to COVID-19, there was hope that with a captive "staycation" population that we should see much greater involvement in our sports. Whilst COVID-19 and poor weather essentially stymied April and May, the rest of the season has proved to be everything we anticipated with all clubs and sites reporting record numbers of participants. As a minority sport we tend to suffer from "generational waves" of involvement and its very encouraging to see so many new families with young children, developing new skills and enjoying their time on the water. Our coaches across the country are so good at sharing their enthusiasm that once people discover our sport, they develop a skill for life and our community grows.

It's the the responsibility of the governing body to support all involved helping create the pathways for development in whichever way individuals choose. Our Development Officer and Development Coach are central to this; this past year they have been supporting our affiliated clubs, involved behind the scenes creating coaching programmes, online booklets, videos, zoom coaching seminars and development programmes all of which should come to fruition over the next year or two.

### Competition and Courses

Central to any governing body is facilitating competition, this past year has been frustrating for organised competition. With very limited resources for setting up competitions and the unknown of COVID-19 there has understandably been a reluctance to commit to organising events. The tail end of the season has seen "backyard" slalom competitions which are an excellent social occasion and easy entry to competition slalom. No matter your skill level, in a backyard comp everyone has a chance of winning, if you haven't attended one before I'd highly recommend it for next season; it's a chance to share the passion for your sport, meeting those involved from other clubs and enjoying their hospitality.

Next year should see the return of the Wake Series as well as a program of tournament competitions tailored to our up-and-coming community.

Similar to competition, the courses we have run this year have been limited, with only boat driving courses being possible. In addition to competition, we are also aiming to run more driving and coaching courses at the Town Loch site in 2022. Of particular interest we hope will be advanced driving courses for slalom and wakeboarding. These will be limited attendance certificated courses teaching the intricacies of driving for the benefit of the skier and boarder. Our Development Coach (Ali Brotherton) will be scheduling these to take place in the new year.

### National Training Centre

We used last winter as an opportunity to rebrand the National Training Site, with the emphasis on "Town Loch" and for it to be seen as a separate entity to the governing body, which has historically been confusing. New operation procedures were created, and a Management Committee assembled, deftly led by Chris Heron. This has been a great success, the summer seasonal team of Simon Fairbank as Head Coach, Kirsty, Ross, Tegan, Andrew, Matt and Gordon have allowed the centre to be open 7 days a week once again.

The look and feel of the site has been refreshed to everyone's benefit. Investing in a wakeboard specific boat has allowed us to significantly expand our on-water offering. A new Town Loch specific web site is scheduled over the winter. Thanks go to Raymond Calhoun and "Gordy" at Scotland Nautique for helping us throughout the season.

Currently buying ski and wake boats is challenging with new boats being nine to twelve months behind in delivery. The team at Scotland Nautique helped source a wake boat and have it operational for the start of the season. We have had a new Nautique 200 on order since last October, with a delayed delivery date Scotland Nautique lent us a top of the range carbon-pro Ski Nautique for our short line skiers to train behind. Amazing customer service and very much appreciated by everyone.

### Membership and Adding Value

Adding value to the membership of WWS is something we are acutely aware of and is part of the focus of the strategy. Courses / coaching clinics and competition are the obvious areas to work on.

Less obvious but just as important is building a strong country wide community. Our affiliated clubs have reciprocal arrangements for skiing & boarding to encourage you to drop in when travelling.

This year saw our community help out when the boat at Loch Lomond broke down – Town Loch National Training Site were able to lend a trailer and Scotland Nautique actually lent a boat in order to keep them on the water.

This winter Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland are looking at investing in a back up ski boat at Town Loch which can then also be accessed by other clubs during the season, should they run into mechanical operational issues keeping them off the water. A benefit for all.

It's the hope of the board that this 2021 season has been the start we need to energise our sport for growth, introducing it to new generations of people who are only just realising that it's their favourite way to spend their free time.

Thank you everyone for your enthusiasm and for helping make it happen.

Kevin Lochhead  
Chair