



Chair Report October 2023

Introduction

Welcome to the AGM for Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland. This is my third and penultimate year as chair of WWS. I am pleased to report that over the past year the volunteer board and team of; Calum Reid (Chief Operating Officer), Chris Heron (Development Officer) and Ali Brotherton (Development coach) having now consolidated the process of the running of the governing body, have been able to focus on helping development of all the disciplines, bringing new participants in and helping them to develop in a structured way. This has been demonstrated through the increase in participation of Scottish athletes at all levels.

This year sees the stepping down of two of the board directors: Kim Johnston and Carole Cooney. Kim has been on the board for the last three years with responsibility for safeguarding and Carole for 2 years having stepped back as our previous Chief Operating Officer. I cannot thank them enough for their measured input and clear council during their time.

In my report of 2022, I listed the activities that the governing body has been involved and responsible for. It is worth repeating these as an AGM is the opportunity to reflect on what we are doing for you as the sports participants:

- Updating and maintaining of the vision and strategy for the sport in Scotland
- Ensuring that the sport is safe for all those that participate.
- Making sure that equality, diversity, and inclusion are always at the forefront of decision-making making and initiatives.
- Accessing funding opportunities for our clubs and individual members.
- Creation of, and adhering to, a financial budget for the year.
- Liaising with BWSW.
- Representation of WWS on BWSW committees.
- Writing, and updating, all policies and systems around finance, HR, data management etc.
- Liaising with the local councils.
- Commitment to provision of qualified coaches across WWS sites.
- Organising coaching and competitions.
- Development of Advanced Driver Training Modules.
- Overseeing the management of the Town Loch National Training Site.
- Production of regular E-newsletters.
- Maintenance and updating of website.
- Production of online video coaching resources.

The governing body-paid positions of Chief Operating Officer (COO), Development Officer (DO) and Development Coach (DC) are only possible through funding from **sportscotland**, to whom we extend our gratitude and thanks. Our current partnership manager is Derek O’Riordan.

Our 4-year strategy was dependant on achieving an uplift in funding to allow for full time DO and DC positions. Calum and I have worked with **sportscotland** to review our position and try to achieve the uplift required. We were unfortunately only partially successful this year. This we are informed is due to the overall financial situation and **sportscotland** having less funds to allocate. We are hopeful that with continued effort to achieve more of the goals in our strategy we can impress for a further increase when funding allows.

Operational Strategy

As I explained last year our operational strategy is not just a headline for governance and funding, from it we derive long term objectives and points “along the way” of what that progress should look like. We use this guide regularly at meetings to make sure that we are on track and progressing as planned. If anyone wishes to discuss the strategy, or has something they would like to add, then please do speak to Calum.

Mid-season we had an online focus session with representatives of as many clubs as possible. The results of this have served to confirm our actions thus far and will be used to refine our proposed activity over the next off season in preparation for 2024.

Competition and Courses

Competition is essential to all sports. Years of hard work and dedication to getting better have an outlet; achieving a measure of your ability, pitting your skills against others (local, national and international), as a way of showing those coming into the sport what can be achieved, an opportunity for having a laugh and building friendships, growing our tribe of watersports enthusiasts. Competition is essential and Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland are committed to growing that aspect of the sport.

Yes, there are aspect of competition which some find difficult; standing on the dock before your turn can be particularly anxiety provoking, something that just thinking about causes many people to lose sleep over. This however can be framed as actually one of the best reasons to participate. Testing yourself in front of your peers is a humbling and similarly elevating experience. Whether it’s a backyard competition or British Nationals, whether you come out on top or go down early, it's been said before, but to take part really is the most important thing. Everyone knows how much effort and work goes into just getting there. I would urge everyone involved in our sports to take the opportunity to participate in the competitions that are available. You will find it to be a rewarding experience.

I am really pleased to report that this past year has seen a substantial increase in participation both home and nationally / internationally. The Backyard Slalom Series, Cable Wakeboard and Boat Wake events have all been well participated in, with athletes going to Nationals and Europeans. Numbers participating have slowly been increasing with the last Backyard competition at NTS being oversubscribed.

One of the initiatives has been the introduction of a trick competition running alongside the slalom competition. This reintroduction of a second discipline will hopefully help us on our way to see jumping also being included. This season has seen more new jumpers than the last few years put together, well done to all of you to bringing back this most exciting part of our sport.

Thank you very much to Chris, Ali, Calum and the respective club volunteers for their hard work in creating these wonderful sporting events.

We are also extremely pleased that our commitment to work with Friends of Tournament (the arm of BWSW that's responsible for helping fund development of new participants to the sport) achieved another fully funded FoT day with Glen Campbell as well as financial help for our back yard series.

This year FoT proposed and organised a "festival" for the new FoT skiers alongside the British Nationals at Oxford. Three of our newest skiers made the trip to Oxford and were warmly welcomed by the ski community. Hopefully next year will see even more competitors in the British Nationals.

Town Loch National Training Site (NTS)

The NTS is the centre for waterski and wakeboarding in Scotland. With enviable world class facilities both off and on water it deserves to be full every day of the season. Sadly, this is not the situation and the challenge, as always, has been balancing seasonal staff costs and facilities investment with market demand, our budget and a fickle weather pattern.

Chris Heron took over the lead coach and manager of the site last year. He has worked exceptional hard this year trying hard to limit our financial spend whilst continuing to offer the experience that site users expect. In addition, Chris has also invested considerable time in achieving national driving and coaching qualifications which will allow us to educate and guide the next generation of coaches and water users. We are planning to run more courses from NTS next season with the aim of streamlining the development of skiers and boarders across the country.

Like all sites the NTS relies heavily on the volunteers that give of their time and expertise to keep it running. Without them I doubt that the NTS would exist. Thank you to all of you.

There is a management committee for NTS which meets each month during the season. Please let one of the board members know if you'd like to be involved.

Membership and Adding Value

Membership fees from Affiliated Clubs are collected by BWSW, for now, Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland does not collect a direct membership fee. Instead, we look to the activity at Town Loch to help support our funding from **sportscotland**. As a board, it's part of our goal to build a community across Scotland and add value to being part of that community. Our "Community Boat" initiative from last year continues and we were happy to be able to support Kyle Waterski & Wakeboard Club whilst their club boat underwent repairs.

One of long-term strategy goals is to increase the number of Slalom courses in Scotland. We have this year established that there are three public slalom courses in Scotland (in various states of repair and variable use) we hope to work with local water users to bring these to the attention of local skiers and boat owners next year.

Thank you to everyone involved in making 2023 the on (and off) water success it's been.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, this has been my penultimate year as chair. Next year I will be stepping down. Succession planning is critical to the continuation of Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland. If you would like to be involved in the continuation of your sport, then pleased do speak to Calum or me.

*Kevin Lochhead – Chair
19 October 2023*