



**Town Loch National Training Site (NTS)
Management Committee Report
October 2023**

Over the 2023 season the Town Loch National Training Site Management Committee has been chaired by Calum Reid and has comprised of Kevin Lochhead, Oliver Jessop, Kim Johnston, Stuart Baillie, Ali Brotherton, Carole Cooney, Liz Anderson, Andrew Williams, Georgina Hutchison and Chris Heron.

Please see below a summary of the 2023 season.

Staffing

The 2023 season saw some new faces starting and familiar ones returning to allow us to build on the excellent season we had in 2022. Chris Heron in his second season as Head Coach enabled us to continue the consistency on the coaching and driving front for another season which addressed some of the feedback received in previous years from members, where there was a rather high turnover of coaches and drivers each season. It has been a busy season for Chris, pre-season consisted of a lot of on the water training preparing for the competition season, planning the 2023 season at NTS, qualifying as a Level 1 & 2 Coach, obtaining his SBD3 qualification, along with his SBD2 & SBD3 Principal qualifications. During the season itself Chris, competed at various events including one of the Pro Tour competitions in Italy, British Nationals and the IWWF 35+ Europe & Africa Championships in France. He also obtained his D4 Competition Driver qualification and became a recognised J3 (2 Event) Judge. Off the water, Chris now represents Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland and NTS on the Waterski Tournament Committee, the British Team Selection Board and the British Waterski & Wakeboard (BWSW) Disability Committee. Whilst also providing high quality driving and coaching to all the NTS members and customers.

We also welcomed back Tegan Brady to our Front of House (FoH) team, Tegan lead the FoH team extremely well again this season, taking on many additional responsibilities and providing great customer service to all. Not to mention taking on more coaching and driving duties after qualifying as a Level 1 coach in the pre-season. Tegan also become a fully qualified J3 (3 Event) Judge during the season, judging at the Backyard Series, British Nationals, South Lake and Hazelwoods. This was an outstanding effort as Tegan was away travelling for 6 weeks during the season.

Tegan was joined by our 2 new starts in Maddie Gray and Cara Syme, who both started with a great attitude and learnt their respective roles very quickly, which enabled us to provide a seamless transition when Tegan left for her travels, and her return in the FoH department.

Finally, Katrina Paley also returned as our other FoH member. Katrina had various other commitments this year outside of NTS but aided us greatly during the peak seasonal hours. Often aiding the volunteer drivers on busy days, some of which we couldn't have operated without Katrina's help.

Kirsty Williams returned as our very competent second driver for the first part of the season before having to start her placement in Hull. Kirsty aided Chris not only in the general driving duties during her short spell this season but also towed many of our competition athletes at top speeds and rope shortenings.

Archie Lochhead returned this season as well, taking up the mantle of Driver/FoH. This was a key role this season, allowing Archie to aid with both aspects of the running of NTS, where his coaching and customer service skills developed well, enabling him to provide great experiences from start to finish for our customers.

Special thanks also go to our volunteer driver Gordon Christie who took on full driving duties on a Sunday to enable Chris to have a day off and the site to operate 5-6 days a week depending on the time of the year. Finally, a big thank you to Andrew Haslam for his bookkeeping and driving/coaching duties that he performed throughout the season.

This staff compliment with the help of our volunteers has worked well together allowing the team to work flexibly, proactively and accommodate any last-minute bookings, special requests, or changes extremely well.

The staff have done a fantastic job this season which has shown in terms of a continuing improved customer experience and feedback, more members joining and skiing more often.

This season would not have been possible without each one of these people, as well as our member volunteers not mentioned above.

Site, Equipment & Maintenance

It would not be right if we did not start by thanking Matt Mills again for his hard work in keeping the centre and boats in good condition and passing on some valuable lessons to some of us along the way. It would also not be right if we didn't recognise Alasdair Roger who has stepped up and aided us here at NTS with various aspects, including some fabrication jobs for our trailers and winch, aiding with the construction of our new boat lift, and aiding the staff if we were a little short on busy days. This help does not go unnoticed.

The aim this year was to maintain and improve on the revamp that happened at the start of the 2022 season. This included but was not limited to, revised Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in relation to boat cleaning, changing room cleaning, overall site cleanliness and customer service journeys.

This season saw us start the process of future proofing the site in relation to our boat fleet, this would ensure that we have a full complement of boats for our members and customers to use. Our 'flag ship' was a 2023 Nautique 200 official competition ski boat, which accompanied our newly purchased 2019 Ski Nautique Carbon as our day-to-day school boat. This offered our members and customers 2 top of the range boats to use, which is exactly what the National Training Site for our country should offer. We also had our trusty Malibu Response ski boat as a back-up to ensure that operations could continue if we encountered any problems with any of our fleet.

We also did a full reconciliation at the start of the season on our wetsuits, flotation vests, helmets, skis, wakeboards and kneeboards to ensure all were fit for purpose and ordered replacement equipment if it was required. This enabled us to provide first class equipment to our customers/participants. This included providing jump and trick skis of all shapes and sizes to enable more members to start 3 eventing.

Advertising & Marketing

We took the lessons learned from last season and a large amount of research was carried pre-season in relation to how we market and advertise NTS. The findings allowed us to focus in on the most appropriate and effective methods to ensure that we got the NTS brand and the services we offer in front of wide and varying demographic across the local community and the wider country.

Like last year, there was a large focus on our social media presence. Our accounts on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook ensured that viewers were kept up to date with the daily happenings and activities around the centre as well as any special offers and competitions we were promoting.

In previous years many avenues were used at a cost in the attempt to reach a wider audience, data collated from previous years indicated that a number of these avenues were not a good use of funds and resource with them providing very little return. To that end (and with some help on our website from our member – Lawrence McNamara) we focused our efforts on numerous social media advertising posts with offers and promotions online which proved extremely lucrative for the site, reaching a vast number of new participants which were later converted from our 'Beginners Experiences' to 'Development Bundles' to our 'Next Steps Membership & Set Bundle' which was great!

2023 also saw the release of our third merchandise line, which adopted the pink and blue colours of NTS with a 'pop art' theme on our hoodies. We also created a 'What's your Excuse?' t-shirt specifically to be sold at the 2023 British Nationals to which NTS was one of the main sponsors. Both lines have been a massive hit with great feedback from all our customers, so much so we only have a limited amount left in stock.

This season saw the second full season of our dockside advertising campaign where local businesses pay for a board to be advertised at NTS and as part of the package are given reduced rates to utilise our services. We gained 3 new partners this year in SDK Printing, Crombie Plumbing and Scottish Autism. We hope to see these businesses repeat their advertising in 2024 along with some new additions too.

Development, Coaching & Competitions

This year the objective was to build on the great work carried out in 2021 and 2022 in relation to coaching, development, competitions and opportunities for our members to have access to the best coaches in the country and enhance their skills no matter what age they are.

We believe we managed to achieve this and then some this season and have detailed some of the major events below that contributed to a very successful year in relation to development and coaching.

Prior to the season starting we arranged with the help of BWSW a Level 1 Coaching course for our 2023 staff members. This was to enable NTS to provide a standardised coaching delivery and journey for participants regardless of who was working which day.

In May we held a guest coaching clinic with Glenn Campbell. Where he and Chris delivered a coaching clinic to our members. This enabled our members to have a more focused one-on-one coaching experience to help dial in their technique, equipment and mindset. Feedback from the members who took part was extremely complimentary and positive and we are looking to do something similar next year.

The following day we then hosted our Friends of Tournament (FoT) Day with Glenn and Dusko like we did in 2022. We had a record attendance for FoT at NTS this year with nine U18's participating in the event which is designed to give each participant four sets over the course of the day, to be coached by a British Waterski Coaches and introduce them to the other disciplines of the sport. Every one of the participants improved greatly, from running the slalom course for the first time, to learning how to trick ski or putting on jump skis for the first time and going over the jump. We also provided extracurricular activities for our U18's (and parents) to ensure the day was fun filled and exciting such as a Nintendo switch, French bowls and board games. In 2024 we hope to have another FoT day and send our Head Coach to deliver one at another site. This is all currently being planned with the help of FoT Committee.

We also sent Chris (accompanied by Waterski & Wakeboard Scotland Development Coach, Ali Brotherton) on the road to provide guest coaching clinics at other affiliated clubs such as Aberdeen and Kyle. The clinics that managed to go ahead (some had to be postponed/cancelled due to weather, boat issues and staffing shortages) were a great success and the feedback provided from the clubs after these was extremely positive with the theme being they hoped to see these planned for 2024.

NTS also hosted two stops of the Scottish Backyard Slalom Series in May and September. Both events went extremely well, taking on the feedback from 2022 and attempting to improve the experience in 2023. Our first stop had a good turnout, some great competition on the day and a fun day had by all. We didn't think the last stop could get better than last year's amazing event, but it did! We received a record number of participants ever seen at a Scottish competition again! The day had everything from competition drivers to GB skiers to competitors travelling up from south of the border...an extra special day and a great way to finish off the Scottish competition calendar with a rainy awards ceremony...for the second year running!

Another couple of firsts (for a while), were NTS offered 2 FOC Trick Clinics to our members with the help of the FoT Committee, to which we are extremely grateful for. These clinics were designed to teach members the basics of trick and construct a trick run for them to perform at the Backyard stops at NTS. We have now got 8 new trick skiers, actively training their trick skills which is great to see. Another focus of 2023 was to get more members/participants 3 event waterskiing, to this end there was not only a push on trick but jump as well, where we saw 6 skiers take to the ramp this year, 5 more than the previous year. The plan for 2024 is to build on this.

Finally, it would be wrong not to mention the fantastic performances of our NTS members Ellie Morrison, Lorcan Morrison, Cilean Morrison, Matt Mills, Alisdair Roger, Ollie Jessop, Kevin Lochhead and Chris Heron at the British National Championships and FoT Youth Festival held at Oxford Wake & Ski Club where a large medal haul occurred. This then led to three of these individuals being included in the 25 person GB squad that competed in the IWWF 35+ Europe & Africa Championships in France where Team GB won Overall Team Silver. Well done all!

Difficulties

This season wasn't without its troubles, we had the normal (albeit fewer than last year) issues when it came to our boat fleet – mainly mechanical and electrical issues that occurred. However, thankfully due to the proactive and quick responsiveness of our staff, volunteer team and Scotland Nautique, they ensured that these issues did not prolong longer than they needed to, and we thank them fully for this.

The main learning curve was our staffing profile, with a site and business of our nature, staffing profiles are not easy to forecast and plan. However, over the last 2 years we have now seen both what overstaffing and understaffing looks like through a busy season and plan to learn from this in 2024 to provide adequate cover to ensure our members and customers are still provided a great service but our staff are able to get a better work/life balance. This is a priority during our off-season planning.

Off Season and 2024

NTS will be open over the winter to our members with Chris managing the site, driving and coaching to allow you all to continue your skiing with consistent and effective coaching on and off the water (watch this space!). We are also aiming to have the Ski Nautique Carbon on the water, so you can be towed by an industry leading boat...even in the cold months. Winter set bundles and Christmas vouchers will also be available as we get into the winter season.

In conjunction with this we will also be releasing our Winter Strength & Conditioning programme to all members – this work had been carried out by Chris last season and was a great success.

On the staff side of things, we hope to see some of the familiar faces return for next season and are already starting to train up and prepare some new members of staff so we can hit the season running in 2024.

We intend to continue with and improve upon the various coaching clinics, FoT days and competitions we held in 2023. We are also developing and planning on putting together SBD3 training to accompany the current SBD2 course we offer.

Calum and Chris continue to work on the delivery of the strategy plan for NTS up until 2025. They will be aiming to achieve more of the objectives contained within this road map to ensure we keep on track to achieving the overall goals. This includes bringing the site up to a competition level, with the objective of holding a record tournament in 2024 and possibly something larger in 2025.

Negotiation on a new lease at NTS is still ongoing with Fife Council with the introduction of some new on and off the water opportunities being dependant on this.

Overall, we believe that this year has been another fantastic year for the NTS and the sport in general in Scotland. We would like to take this opportunity again to thank all our staff, volunteers, members and customers for a great year! Roll on 2024...

*Prepared by Chris Heron
20 October 2023*