

Introduction

Welcome to the AGM for Waterski and Wakeboard Scotland.

There were a number of changes following the last AGM and your board of directors for the 2023/4 season has comprised:

Kevin Lochhead (Chair)

John Radford (Vice Chair)

Calum Reid (Finance)

Liz Anderson (Secretary)

Chris Heron (NTS)

Grainne Morrison (Safeguarding)

Ollie Jessop

Karen Cornwell

Georgie Hutchison

Most significant in the changes to your board has been the adoption of our previous Chief Operating Officer (COO), Calum Reid the board. Having spent 2 years working diligently on the WWS strategy, Calum took up an offer to work at the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. Fortunately for us we were able to persuade him to stay on as a volunteer director, taking over from Stuart Baillie who retired his position earlier this year. Calum continues to exert a strong influence on our overall development.

Our thanks go out to Stuart who has, over the past 3-4 years provided expert advice and counsel in the running the governing body.

Mid-season we co-opted Grainne Morrison to the board. Grainne brings a wealth of experience in sport and management, taking on the vacant role of "safeguarding" after Kim Johnstons departure.

With Calum Reids departure from the role of COO early in the year, we were tasked with identifying and recruiting a new COO. (thank you to all those directors who gave of their time in helping achieve this). With Calum Reid having guided us so well to achieving the highest level in our KPMG audit, attesting to our robust governance, we felt that we were now in a position to move on the next level of our strategy and focus on "growth of the sport". With this in mind we advertised for a Chief Operating Officer and Head of Growth.

I'm delighted to say that our new COO, Calum Gauld has proved to be as perfect a fit as we could have imagined. Calum previously worked in a "Sport for change" charity, designing and implementing strategies to drive growth at all levels.

He quickly settled into the COO position in the early summer and has already started to exert an influence, proving to be very capable in all aspects required of him. Most recently engaging with all stakeholders in helping to refresh our strategy ahead of our annual meeting with Sportscotland.

It is mentioned in other reports, it is however worth repeating some of the areas that WWS has been working on over the last year:

- Organising and implementing courses for driving / judging and delivering coaching throughout the year
- Organising and helping to facilitate waterski and wakeboard competitions
- Working with BWSW to organise and run a Rankings Slalom event at NTS
- Building of relationships within the local community to widen the participation of those accessing our sport (HIVE / BRAG/ Fairway Fife etc)
- Liaising with Sportscotland , local council and town councils to better facilitate our sport
- Continued production of online resources (videos / booklets) for wakeboarding and waterskiing
- Overseeing the management of Town Loch National Training Site
- Production of newsletters to keep everyone up to date
- Accessing funding opportunities for our clubs and individual members
- Continued strong governance with regular updating and implementation of policies and procedures as required
- Regular cadence of contact and meetings with all our partner and affiliate clubs
- Updating and driving the WWS strategy

Whilst we have our "funded" positions through Sportscotland, it can't be over emphasised that our sport is primarily run by volunteers and they all deserve our thanks.

The future of your sport is in your hands. We all want it to grow and for others to experience and enjoy time on the water as we have.

My question to everyone is to ask yourselves "how can I help grow the sport?"

The simplest, and most effective, strategy is of course to introduce someone new to it. There is a good chance that we all have friends / family / work colleagues who would love our sport if they had a chance, so why not suggest it?

The team at NTS are always available to help design and run “group” taster sessions for the best experience.

Sportscotland Partnership

The day to day running of WWS is carried out through funding from Sportscotland to whom we extend our gratitude and thanks.

Our partnership manager for the last year has been Derek O’Riordan whom we regularly meet with to discuss the progress of our strategy and how we are using the funding.

Our current funded positions are:

Calum Gauld – Chief Operating Officer (full time)

Chris Heron – Development Officer and Development Coach (waterski) (part time)

Tegan Brady – Development Officer and Development Coach (wakeboard) (part time)

Tegan has taken over the development of wakeboard from Ali Brotherton who stepped down during the summer.

We all extend our thanks and gratitude to Ali for his many years of work with wakeboarding. Alis’ knowledge and skills will not be lost however as he will still be on hand to provide the on the water coaching clinics as required, together with overseeing the “development squad”.

Since Calum came into post we have been consulting with all involved parties as regularly as possible in order to refresh and update our strategy with the “growth” aspect being central. As the summer season is largely focused on the activities of the sport, it is the winter off season where the work gets done to prepare us for next year.

Operational Strategy

The operational strategy guides the work of WWS and is available to view on the WWS website. The long term (10yrs+) objectives were set in 2021 and have resulted in the creation of the short term annual results, which we aim to complete on our way to these overall goals.

With Calum coming into position this year we had the opportunity to refresh the strategy ensuing that our overall objectives and direction of travel is in keeping with all stakeholders. This refresh for the next two years has four focus areas:

1. Delivering accessible competitions for all
2. Growing youth participation in our sports
3. Growing the profile of our sports
4. Ensuring the future of our sports and facilities

In his role as Development Officer Chris Heron has achieved significant success already in growing group participation (with and without funding) and delivering accessible competitions. Although only in post a short time, Tegan Brady has already started to make ground in building a student section to WWS.

It's going to be a busy winter off season during which the team will be building relationships and accessing funding to allow the ideas to progress. Our strategy is based on what you have told us, any and all ideas are always welcome, please speak to Calum if you'd like to be involved or contribute to the efforts.

Competition and Courses

Our backyard series continues to grow and is clearly meeting a need, not just for a local competition to aspire to, but an opportunity for a social event across all our clubs. The general "feel" of the backyards is relaxed and fun, the perfect testing ground before looking at a national rankings competitions. If you haven't entered one yet then do consider it for next year it's a great day out and everyone is welcome. This year the backyards have been sponsored by the Friends of Tournament arm of the BWSW. This is a critical step in recognising and encouraging growth of the sport at the grass roots level, thank you to all involved at FoT.

Having run backyards for 3 years now, the next step was to run a National Rankings competition. Chris Heron set his sights on this early in the season and registered the Scottish Rankings and slalom cup in the IWWFED calendar for September. It's been over 10 years since such an event was run in Scotland and as a result there was a significant amount of maintenance and equipment renewal required in order to meet the required standards. Huge thanks go to the Chris and the team (seasonal staff and volunteers) who helped get the site ready and made it all run so smoothly on the day. As we know one of the purposes of the backyards is to introduce skiers to competition in order so that they can progress to a rankings competition. The Rankings competition was fully subscribed with a number of our backyard skiers skiing nationally for the first time. A very well done to all of them.

The UK nationals this year saw a growing team of Scottish competitors and judges attending. This year saw entries in all three disciplines for the first time in many years.

As skills progress so do the scores and 2024 has seen a number of long standing records broken.

Cable wakeboarding has seen the creation of a "development squad" based at Fox lake. Guided by Ali Brotherton the cable wakeboard team have been competing nationally and internationally with great success. Well done to all those involved.

Boat wakeboarding, whilst just as popular as ever, hasn't had the same interest in the competition side. This is something that we are looking to address for the 2025 season.

Town Loch National Training Site (NTS)

With the NTS being the headquarters of WWS and the only site specifically catering to all of our sports at the same time with a fully qualified team of drivers and coaches, it is central to our operational objectives. Within our strategy we look to drive an introduction to the sports through the NTS and then out to our partner clubs. This is proving to be successful.

The team headed by Chris Heron have been working extremely hard to offer everyone the very best experience that they can. The level of coaching has increased again with four level 2 coaches on site. Chris himself had increased his own driving and coaching skills, with expertise in all disciplines and also becoming a nationally ranked driver. Tegan and Chris have both increased their judging skills in order to facilitate a stronger relationship with BWSW and allow for national competitions at NTS.

Anyone who is a regular user of NTS will have noticed the block bookings on what are usually quiet days. These have been populated by groups such as Fairway Fife and BRAG, attending NTS as part of our commitment to increase the profile of our sports. These have proven to be very successful with participants having wonderful on water experiences, often for the first time. As ever funding for these activities is challenging, thank you to those who participated in the "pay-it-forward" initiative of contributing a set to help.

The nature of the weather and holidays, means that at the beginning and end of the season there is more availability at NTS, this is where we are looking to build and add activities. We have been in negotiations with Fife Council over the past few years to update our lease and try to add to our offerings. Hopefully this will come to fruition soon, as there are opportunities to raise additional income for the projects at NTS. In the meantime if you'd like to help please do speak to Calum, Chris and Tegan. For example we currently have a project to engage with Town Hill primary School that needs a little help to get it off the ground.

Membership and adding value

For now WWS is funded by Sportscotland and income generated by NTS and other activities such as competitions. All our objectives are easier with a bit more funding. Whilst donations are always welcome, we are trying to build value and goodwill to encourage increased participation and engagement. A few of the more recent initiatives:

1. NTS houses the Malibu Response community boat, available for use by clubs should their boat break down midseason.
2. Waterski and wakeboard coaches running coaching clinics at members clubs throughout the season.
3. Off season coaching updates for coaches at all clubs.
4. The setting up and management of waterski and wakeboard development squads.
5. Over the course of last year Ali created the online "wakeboarding trick progress" resource. This is available on the "members" section of the website and lists all surface, kicker, air and rail tricks which can be progressed through and ticked off as completed. This is to be coupled up with the instructional videos in the same area.
6. In the members section of the website there are online informational videos and "how to" booklets for 3 event skiing as well as wakeboarding.
7. Discounts on equipment (wetsuits, skis, boards) through our partnership with DryRobe & Watersports World for all members of WWS.

We are always looking for additional membership value, if you have any ideas or Business to Business opportunities then please get in touch.

2024 was planned to be my last year as volunteer chair of WWS. With a recent changeover in COO I was encouraged to stay on for while longer in order to maintain continuity. I am happy to do so, we are however on the look out for my replacement .

2024 has been another great season on the water, thank you to everyone involved, I hope you have a good winter and are looking forward to next season already!