

# CANOE FOCUS

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# Welcome

Welcome to a New Year and I hope a new prospect for great paddling and the chance for our community to spend more time together out on the water in 2022. It was a very challenging 2021 not helped by the rapid emergence of the new Omicron Covid-19 variant just before Christmas.

Despite everything thrown at us our members, with the typical spirit that is so prevalent, made it a year of great achievement. More people than ever, it seems were out paddling and getting the benefits of the outdoor experience. The national teams returned to competition with laudable success considering the dislocation they'd had and our Olympic and Paralympic disciplines gave us a great boost with their stellar performances in Tokyo. We have some truly inspirational paddlers.

We have a big year in prospect. We shall be launching our next four year plan that will set the ambition and actions on how we can serve you better and continue to improve paddling for all concerned. The final touches are being put in place for a launch in March. We have been very focused on action and delivery – we do not expect this to change. Our new plan is evolutionary, continuing to shape our activity to the evolving needs of our members.

The composition of paddlers engaging with us has changed over the past three years. We are seeing more families in membership and we are seeing more members having SUP as one of their preferred means of paddling. We shall be reflecting this change in what we do. Please do make sure that your voice is heard – let us know what you want us to do to serve you better.

This edition of Canoe Focus once again highlights the breadth of our community and in particular the challenges that people take on. Challenge and adventure has always been a vibrant part of our community and the achievements of Dave Chant and Sophie Witter, paddling from Lands End to John O'Groats are in the finest traditions. They provide real inspiration. On their final day (day 89!) to paddle up the coast past Wick for over ten hours and 55km was in itself truly remarkable.

An adventure of a different kind is reported through Ieuan James, an elite paddler with a real sense of social responsibility which took him to Malawi to teach and coach. Our pioneering groups #shepaddles and #wepaddlettogether are making a significant impact on our drive for inclusion and we hear from Charlotte and Katie about their Ambassadorial work for #shepaddles.

To support the wider objectives of our community of paddlers we relaunched the Canoe Foundation with clear alignment to our developing needs and new resource and some of the impact this will have for 2022 is covered in this issue.

Once again we have an edition that reflects the momentum of our membership and the many areas in which we can make an impact – enjoy.

## Professor John Coyne CBE

Chair, British Canoeing





# NEWS

Receive regular updates plus exclusive discounts for our partner products with a British Canoeing membership

[members.britishcanoeing.org.uk](https://members.britishcanoeing.org.uk)

[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news)

## Women VL3 added to Paris 2024 Paralympic Games schedule

The International Paralympic Committee has announced the inclusion of the women's VL3 event to the paracanoe programme for the Paris 2024 Games. This exciting inclusion of the women's VL3 to the Paralympic Games brings the total number of medal events to ten for the next Games, whilst the addition also ensures there will now be five men's and five women's events going into Paris.



[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/womens-vl3-added-to-paris-2024-paralympic-games-schedule](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/womens-vl3-added-to-paris-2024-paralympic-games-schedule)

## British Canoeing partner with the Cayman Islands

British Canoeing is delighted to announce an exciting new partnership with Visit Cayman Islands. This new partnership will raise awareness of the benefits of paddlesports both in the UK and the Cayman Islands, while encouraging keen enthusiasts to consider the stunning crystal clear turquoise waters of this British Overseas Territory for their next paddling adventure.



[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/british-canoeing-announces-new-partnership-with-the-cayman-islands](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/british-canoeing-announces-new-partnership-with-the-cayman-islands)

## Mussabini Medal Awarded

Congratulations to Matt Lawrence and Colin Radmore on being awarded the special accolade of the Mussabini Medal at the UK Coaching Awards. The Mussabini Medal celebrates "the contribution of coaches of UK performers who have achieved outstanding success on the world stage." Craig Morris also deserves a special mention for his success in being shortlisted for High Performance Coach of the year.



[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/matt-lawrence-and-colin-radmore-receive-mussabini-awards](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/matt-lawrence-and-colin-radmore-receive-mussabini-awards)

## Learn a new skill in 2022 with the British Canoeing Awarding Body Personal Performance Awards

If learning a new skill is one of your New Year's resolutions then why not try a British Canoeing Awarding Body elearning course. The British Canoeing Awarding Body is pleased to introduce the new Equipment Management and Safety eLearning course. The eLearning will help you understand the legal requirements of equipment management and how good practice can contribute to safety and help maintain the life expectancy of equipment.



[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/new-equipment-management-and-safety-elearning](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/new-equipment-management-and-safety-elearning)

## 2022 Club Webinar Calendar Announced

British Canoeing's Club Support Team are pleased to announce the Club Webinar Calendar for 2022. These webinars aim to support clubs with areas of knowledge and development, whilst highlighting some of the fantastic practice that goes on in clubs.



[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/2022-club-webinar-calendar-announced](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/2022-club-webinar-calendar-announced)

We'd love to hear more news from the community. If you would like to submit an idea or article, please contact us on [mediaenquiries@britishcanoeing.org.uk](mailto:mediaenquiries@britishcanoeing.org.uk)

# WINTER PADDLING: CHANGES IN THE WEATHER

Winter Paddling can often look uninviting. Strong winds, torrential rain, high river levels and a drop in temperature as well as shorter days. We're not exactly selling it right... However, paddling through winter can be absolutely beautiful and very rewarding. You just need to ensure you are factoring in these changes in the weather before you head out on the water.

Winter weather conditions have an effect on:

- The places where you paddle
- The equipment you take
- Who you paddle with - experienced and inexperienced paddlers
- Whether you paddle at all

Returning to a familiar stretch of water you paddled in the summer, but now transformed by heavy rain can produce a hazardous environment beyond your capability.

When planning to paddle, always check river levels. You can do so here: <https://riverlevels.uk/>



## Before you paddle make sure you consider the following:

**River levels can rise very quickly.** Considering past, present and future weather forecasts can help determine whether a planned trip should be postponed for another day.

**Strong winds.** Stronger winds can cause increased debris in the water as well as fallen trees that could block or restrict your route.

**Drop in temperature.** When water and air temperature drop, consider your clothing and additional equipment carried, we would strongly recommend waterproof and warmer garments and layering to keep yourselves warm and dry. Always be prepared for immersion in cold water.

Please take care, consider the capabilities of yourself and others you paddle with. No matter how well you have planned ahead, always ensure you undertake a dynamic risk assessment of the conditions on the day.

For further advice on winter paddling visit the [Go Paddling](#) site and read through our [top tips for winter paddling](#) and how to deal with [cold water shock](#) online here:

<https://gopaddling.info/top-10-tips-to-help-you-keep-paddling-through-winter/> <https://gopaddling.info/cold-water-shock-what-is-it-and-how-can-i-prevent-it/>

# Six Paddling disciplines

## ...YOU MAY NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT!

By Del Kayaks / Adele Reed

If you are new to paddlesport, the first disciplines you may picture when thinking about paddling are probably canoe sprint, slalom or open canoes. However, there are so many other wonderful paddling disciplines. Paddlers involved in these disciplines range from world champions, to complete beginners. I asked six paddlers to explain a bit more about their discipline and what they love about it. Read their stories below and let them inspire you to try something new.

### Canoe Polo

Eleanor McBay

**Tell us about Canoe Polo?** Canoe Polo is an exciting 5-a-side kayaking team sport that combines paddling, ball and tactical skills. It is played on flat water, in polo kayaks with bumpers that are especially designed for balance, speed and agility. The sport is full contact and allows for some fun tackling.

**Favourite thing about Canoe Polo?** I love the aggression and adrenaline that comes from this fast-paced sport. It is often mixed at club level meaning you get to play against both men and women!

**What is the hardest part?** I think the hardest thing is combining the different skills together. To be a good player you need to have good boat control/paddling skills, hand eye coordination in ball skills, and understanding of the tactical and team elements of the game.

**How can someone get involved?** Join a club! Canoe Polo is probably the most social of the paddling disciplines and it is a great way to make connections and friendships.



### Wild Water Racing

Hannah Brown

**What is Wild Water Racing?** Wild water racing involves going down a river as fast as you possibly can, without stopping. The section of river you paddle on is white water, so within your race run you will have to negotiate rapids and turbulent waters. It's a time trial format of racing so your time will be ranked against the rest of the field when you cross the finish line. Racing over both natural and artificial white water courses, there are two race distances, a sprint and a classic.

**Favourite thing about it?** It has taken me to some of the most beautiful places around the world. There is nothing quite like paddling a river whilst being surrounded by natural beauty. I also thrive on the challenge of paddling white water, whilst applying maximum force to go as fast as possible.

**Hardest thing about it?** The hardest thing about wild water racing is the racing element! It is easier to paddle down white water, but applying maximum physical effort to the length of the course is a challenge.

**How to Get involved?** If you want to try Wild Water Racing then I recommend visiting [www.wildwater.org.uk](http://www.wildwater.org.uk) and have a read of the upcoming opportunities to race.



If you are feeling inspired to try out one of these disciplines there are so many opportunities to get involved. Check out [www.gopaddling.info/find-paddling-clubs/](http://www.gopaddling.info/find-paddling-clubs/) to find a club near you

# Freestyle Kayaking

James Ibbotson (Ibbo)

**What is Freestyle Kayaking?** Freestyle kayaking is essentially water gymnastics. You pick a feature on a river, like a hole, wave, eddy line or rock and have some fun on it. From tailies to flips to complicated sequences, it is all about enjoying what the river gives us.

**Favourite thing?** The people! Freestyle has a great community. Everyone cheers and encourages each other at all levels of Freestyle.

**The hardest thing?** Adaptation. No two features are the same. You may master a number of moves in one feature but you can have no idea in the next. This is the hardest, but also one of the most fun things about Freestyle.

**How to get involved?** Grab a boat (any boat) and just go and have fun. People will see, join in, and you will quickly become friends with people in the community. The World Championships are in Nottingham in 2022 so a great chance to see the top athletes live!



# Wave Ski

Joe Rea-Dickinscorner

**What is Wave Ski?** It's basically sitting on a surfboard with a seat belt and loops for your feet. You treat it like a surf kayak and take it out on the ocean.

**Favourite thing about Wave Skiing?** You take your kayaking skills and loosely apply them to ocean surfing and that is wicked because ocean surfing is \*fabulously\* awesome. It is the BEST way to experience ocean waves and it is about as high performance as surfing gets.

**Hardest thing about Wave Skiing?** Easy – staying upright! I have seen plenty of very competent kayakers get on a wave ski and swim in flat water. Your knees are not connected to anything and all of the balance comes from your feet and your hips.

**How can someone get involved?** Try surf kayaking first. When you do get a wave ski, paddle it on some flat water and learn to roll it before taking it out on the ocean. It will be an enormous learning curve.



# Marathon Kayaking

Nick Boreham

**What is Marathon Kayaking?** Marathon kayaking involves racing over long distances on flat water. Unlike a running marathon, marathon canoeing doesn't have a fixed distance. At the international level courses will generally be 25km to 30km. However in the UK clubs race each other in the Hasler series which see distances ranging from 4-12 miles.

**What do you love the most?** I really love the training. Most racing clubs will organise training sessions which are generally very social, even at a high level. Travelling to exciting races is also a highlight and the sport has a good community.

**What are the challenges?** Fitness, tactics and portaging are all difficult to master but perhaps the hardest thing about Marathon racing is forward paddling. Often a skill taken for granted, it is a fundamental skill for Marathon.

**How can I get involved?** Join your local kayak club! They will have a selection of boats with different stabilities so you can find which works best. They'll also be able to tell you about the upcoming local races.



# Squirt boating

Tamsyn McConchie

**What is Squirt Boating?** Squirt boating is a type of Freestyle Kayaking and probably the only discipline where you don't want your boat to float.

**Favourite thing about it?** The challenge and learning curve that comes with a new sport. With squirt boating, it's really easy to see the difference that little changes to your paddling make. There is pretty instant gratification for the work that you put in.

**Hardest thing about it?** A lot of new paddlers take some time to get used to the balance and also to become accustomed to being underwater.

**Advice for getting started?** I recommend joining [www.facebook.com/groups/364453000384939/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/364453000384939/) and finding someone local to paddle and train with.



# Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) Safety: Choosing the Correct Leash

The leash is a key source of safety when paddleboarding. It keeps you and your paddleboard together when things don't go to plan.

**To stay safe it is essential to choose the right kind of leash for the environment and conditions you are paddling in. Failure to do so could put your safety at risk.**

If you are wearing the wrong leash on moving water (flowing rivers, tidal rivers/estuaries or in tidal races) and end up in the water, the leash could become snagged or caught on obstacles and become entangled. This presents a dangerous situation that is difficult to extract yourself from. In these conditions a quick release belt system is the best option and could be essential if you are in danger.

## 1. Quick Release Belt System

**Suitable environments for use:** Moving/flowing water including, rivers, tidal rivers and estuaries, tidal races, white water rivers, where there is a risk of snagging or entrapment.

A quick release belt system is connected to a belt with a quick release buckle or fastening. It can be easily reached if you come off your board and are caught or held by the force of the water. When fitted and used correctly it releases you from your board and leash attachments, freeing you from any dangerous entanglement.

### Important

- If you have to deploy your quick release belt system you will have no primary flotation to hand, therefore British Canoeing recommends wearing a buoyancy aid.
- Tuition and practice by a British Canoeing SUP Provider in using the quick release belt system is highly recommended.
- Make sure your leash is out of the water.



The need for a quick release belt system has been demonstrated on the tidal section of the River Thames below Teddington. Tidal rivers can be deceptive with slack water around high and low tide being followed by very fast flowing water on the incoming and outgoing tides.

On this section of the Thames it has caused paddlers to collide with fixed obstacles such as pontoons, moored boats and buoys. Both paddler and paddleboard have been swept either side of the obstacle and have been unable to free themselves. Through this experience the Port of London Authority (PLA), who manage the Thames Tideway, now require all SUP paddlers to use a quick release belt system rather than ankle leashes.

## 2. Calf and Ankle Leashes

Suitable environments for use: Lakes, canals, sea/coastal bays, and surf where there is no risk of snagging or entrapment

### a. Ankle Cuff Leashes

These are the most common leashes, they often come with your board. They are easy to wear and to fit. Always attach them to the same leg each time you paddle, that way you will always know where to release them if needed.

### b. Calf Cuff Leashes

These are similar to an ankle leash but the cuff attachment is slightly larger and fits just below your knee. Some people may prefer this type of leash for ease of attachment.

### Important

- Tuition and practice is recommended. British Canoeing offers high quality SUP Specific training and awards.
- Make sure your leash is out of the water.



## Safety checklist for SUP paddlers

As well as choosing the right leash, remember to prepare properly for any trip on the water. Head over to the Go Paddling website for some tips on how to enjoy your paddling and staying safe. [gopaddling.info/stand-up-paddle-boarding-safety-checklist](https://www.gopaddling.info/stand-up-paddle-boarding-safety-checklist)

This British Canoeing video provides advice on which leashes suit different environments. [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/stand-up-paddleboard-leashes](https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2021/stand-up-paddleboard-leashes).



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# SUP IT & SEA

## THE FIRST PAIR TO STAND UP PADDLEBOARD (SUP) FROM LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS.

**After 89 days, 1703 KM and approximately 50 Seals, Dave Chant and Sophie Witter are the first pair to Stand Up Paddleboard from Lands End to John O'Groats**

### THE JOURNEY:

Dave and Sophie set out from Land's End on the 16 July 2021 for an expedition which would see the novice paddlers with less than a year's experience take on a challenge to traverse some of the UK's most challenging waterways. Their journey took them from multiple headlands such as Morte Point and the Mull of Galloway, to paddling under the Severn Bridges on the Bristol Estuary, island hopping just 10km from Corryvreckan one of the world's most dangerous whirlpools and round Duncansby Head to John O'Groats. The pair also had the pleasure of seeing the country's river and canal systems as they travelled from Sharpness to Blackpool and enjoyed the revered Crinan and Caledonian Canals in Scotland.

Parts of their journey were supported by volunteers joining them for stretches of their expedition, however most often the pair worked the logistics alone. This involved wild camping for days and sometimes meant one of the pair was left to wait whilst the other did a relay using public transport back to their support vehicle.

The pair had their challenges having only known each other two months and been on a few dates before embarking on this expedition. They had to navigate dating at the same time as navigating the waterways, taking on this adventure as a pair and as individuals. Dave and Sophie had various challenges along the way from losing their support crew after two weeks, to missing and damaged boards after a roof rack failure. They had their van breakdown, and of course no 2021 exhibition would be complete without Covid-19 hiccup, with one of their support team testing positive for Covid. Let's not forget being chased by multiple seals.

On 12 October 2021 they completed their goal and arrived at John O'Groats nearly three months after leaving Land's End using just the waterways network of Britain. The pair have just exceeded 10% of their £24,000 target, but are continuing to promote their causes to increase awareness and raise money.





## THE WHY?

SUP it and Sea started with the vision to prove that adventure is open to everyone, not just the elite. Dave and Sophie wanted to inspire people to take up their own expeditions, both small and large, and to encourage people to get out of their comfort zones. SUP it and Sea highlights how “ordinary” people can go on extraordinary journeys.

During their voyage they also wanted to promote and educate paddlers on water safety, and how to push your limits while decreasing the risks involved so that anyone can go out and make adventure happen.

Throughout Dave and Sophie’s journey they raised money for three incredible charities; Wilderness Foundation UK, RNLI and Frontline Children. Their goal was £24,000, that’s £5 per km per charity. They are continuing to raise funds so if you want to support their expedition you can donate via their website.

[www.supitandsea.uk](http://www.supitandsea.uk)

## THE CHARITIES

**Wilderness Foundation UK** is a charity that provides access to therapy for Young Adults and Adults who have experienced grief, trauma, social isolation, anxiety and depression through nature immersion courses designed to help people get outdoors and find healthy coping mechanisms.

**RNLI** saves lives at sea. For 200 years, they’ve saved 143,000 lives through a 95% volunteer base operating from 238 stations around the UK and Ireland. They also deploy lifeguards to 240 beaches in the UK, keeping thousands of miles of coastline safe for everyone to go and enjoy our Island nation each and every year.

SUP It & Sea celebrated the value of community and connection, and one example of this is the incredible support that they have received from fellow paddler Jordan Wylie and Frontline Children. **Frontline Children** inspire hope through access to education for kids in some of the most remote and challenged areas on the planet, often in conflict and war zones. The charity’s motto – Be The Difference that Makes the Difference – resonates with their own voyage to create something that has a long lasting impact for these three worthwhile charities and the spirit they cultivate.

## WHAT’S NEXT?

They are doing it all over again. Their next challenge... to be the first pair to hike back after paddling the length of Britain. You can join their journey and follow Dave and Sophie as they hike from John O’Groats back down to Land’s End on their website [www.supitandsea.uk](http://www.supitandsea.uk). They will be continuing to raise money and share their adventures through their [@supitandsea](https://www.instagram.com/supitandsea) social media pages.





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## Find the Perfect Pair of Gloves for Paddling

Wearing a pair of gloves for canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding is something all paddlers should consider, especially throughout the autumn and winter months. Here are five reasons why we would recommend you think about wearing gloves when paddling:

- 1. Keep your hands warm and dry, especially throughout the colder months.** A good quality pair of paddling gloves helps to protect your hands from those sharp wintry winds and the bitterly cold spray.
- 2. Sun protection.** If you are paddling throughout the warmer months or on sunny wintry days then paddling gloves can help protect your hands from the sun. Just look for a pair that offers a good degree of UV protection.
- 3. Protect against blisters.** A correctly fitted pair of paddling gloves may help prevent blisters forming. For maximum protection against blisters, it's important to use the right gloves for the weather conditions. Plus, you want a pair that doesn't absorb or hold water to avoid soggy hands.
- 4. Protect against scrapes, knocks and cuts.** A good pair of paddling gloves will come with some extra padding for your palms to help protect against scrapes that you might happen whilst paddling.
- 5. Paddle grip.** Wearing gloves whilst paddling may provide you with the ability to grip your paddle more confidently. You'll want to pick a pair of gloves with a non-slip palm surface.

### What kind of gloves should you use?

So when choosing a pair of gloves, you'll likely come across these main types:

**Short Finger Gloves.** These are a great option for those warmer weather paddles as they will provide good protection to your hand's skin and paddle grip without your hands becoming too hot. We would recommend looking at Gill's [Short Finger Deckhand Gloves](#) due to their quick drying properties and UV50+ protection.

**Long Finger Gloves.** These gloves help prevent your hands from catching a chill from the wind or spray during the warmer months. They will also provide good grip and abrasion protection. [Click here](#) to take a look at Gill's fantastic range of long finger gloves.

**3 Season Gloves.** Often constructed with lightweight neoprene this style is a great option to consider if you are thinking of paddling throughout autumn and early spring. We'd recommend Gill's [3 Season Gloves](#) as they come with an extended cuff length to tuck underneath your outer layers to help eliminate your wrists being exposed.

**Neoprene gloves.** These gloves, often 2/3mm thick, provide maximum warmth making them ideal for those cold wintry paddles. Make sure to pick a pair with liquid sealed seams to protect against water ingress, like [these](#) from Gill.

We all want to make sure we have the best possible experience on the water, so there's no harm in trying out a pair of paddling gloves to see if they make a difference. If you would like more advice on paddle sport clothing and equipment be sure to visit [Go Paddling](#).

# Ieuan James on... VOLUNTEERING IN MALAWI

After rounding off a five year cycle at the end of the 2021 season in September, it wouldn't be surprising to hear that most athletes take a well deserved holiday from the sport.

Whilst this was the case for most athletes following the conclusion of the season, canoe sprint athlete Ieuan James took a different approach to his time off from the sport.

Ieuan spent a month in northern Malawi with a local community group called Tafika, working on a whole manner of projects from school feeding programmes, sports academies and borehole projects.

We caught up with the 2017 Junior World Champion to hear more about his month in Malawi and the great work the Scottish paddler completed out there.



## HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED WITH THIS PROJECT?

"So my parents run a charity in a neighbouring country, Zambia so I've spent quite a lot of time out there and in Africa in general really.

"It was through them that I met the leader of a community group called Tafika Ekwaiweni and I really got on well with him. He invited me out when he found out I had a month off and I jumped at the opportunity!"

## YOU DONATED A HUGE AMOUNT OF BRITISH CANOEING KIT WHILST YOU WERE OUT THERE. HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THAT TO THIS PROJECT?

"So this season we switched to our lovely new hummel kit, which meant that we were getting rid of all of the old Errea kit.

"I managed to have the overwhelming majority of that kit taken out in a container to Malawi via Mozambique through a group called the Banana Box Charity. So I'm really, really pleased to see that happen because at the other end, it makes such a difference.

"I took what I could in my old luggage with me just as an advanced gift. We're talking about people playing volleyball barefoot and football in whatever clothes they have. So to have high quality sports equipment means more than you could imagine."

## WHY ARE YOU SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

"Seeing a small-scale community project run by local people take off and see how much it means to them. That's why it means so much to me. I feel like I made a difference and I've made friends with people that hopefully I'll meet again, but I'll remember for the rest of my life.

"They were so happy to have me there, I found myself double taking again and again and again because I thought, it's just me, but for them to have a professional athlete come over from the UK meant more than I ever understood before I went."





## WHAT DID YOU ACCOMPLISH DURING YOUR TIME?

“On the sports side of things, I ran workshops with somewhere between 100 and 300 youth volunteer coaches. I set them up as best as I could to teach sport.

“I guess they tried to approach what I was doing as sport, being a method by which you can affect behaviour change in young people.

“The message I was trying to create was that values that are important for sport, just happened to be the values important for society and wider life, so I hope I succeeded in that.

“Outside of the Sports Academy, we got six boreholes in local community schools during the time I was there. So big, big, deep pipes 6070 metres down, four water pumps.

“We were kind of troubleshooting some problems with school feeding programmes that we’re trying to get off the ground. But there are about 15 primary schools supported which meant thousands and thousands of children. So I was only there for a month, but I felt like I got a lot done.”

## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE ELSE WHO MAYBE IS CONSIDERING GETTING INVOLVED IN A PROJECT LIKE THIS?

“Yeah, it’s cliched, but it’s life changing. Experiences like this really do change your perspective on what you are doing, and I would push anyone and everyone to take the leap if they’re kind of hesitant for whatever reason about it.

I think the thing that I came back with in my head was that there was a lot of stuff that I really didn’t need to care about. There’s very little things in life and in sport that actually matter. And I could let go of a lot of the things that I was kind of holding onto.”

## WHAT PROJECTS DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH DURING YOUR TIME OUT THERE?

“I mean, no two days are the same. I was around hundreds of different local communities: schools, borehole projects, sports academies, football teams, everything.

“I spent most of my time working with volunteer coaches for youth teams, and there are many, many people in Africa who want to teach sport, particularly for kids.

“But they’ve had no formal education or any education whatsoever in that field. So I was going out there running workshops on what it means to be a coach, what it means to take part in sport, key values, behaviour change for example.”



# #SHEPADDLES

## AMBASSADOR INTERVIEW

### Meet **Katie Simmons**

By Charlotte Ditchburn

**#ShePaddles** Ambassador Charlotte Ditchburn caught up with her fellow ambassador Katie Simmons to discuss all things #Shepaddles are more.

**Tell us about yourself. What's the day job? How do you fit paddling in around daily life?**

Hey! I'm Katie I'm one of the new #ShePaddles ambassadors based in Wales and representing Canoe Wales. I'm a jack of all trades and work nearly every hour of the day. Last year I qualified as an adult nurse and dived head first into a very busy A&E department mid pandemic (great timing I know). Alongside that I've kept my previous profession as a freelance outdoor instructor of 10 years, now specialising in SUP Guiding, Mountain Leading and DofE, which I really enjoy doing. Myself and my partner Tom also run a glamping site at our home farm in Wales that's open in the summer called Basecamp Bunkhouse. We run as carbon neutral as possible with a keen angle of being eco friendly and educating others to do the same. I'm also a reservist for the British Army in the army medical corps as a nursing soldier.

At the moment fitting paddling in is difficult. I like to get out and tour for a few days with Tom. We tend to prefer big expeditions on the board, or a cheeky hit on the white water when the local river levels are up. So the weather plays a big role and last minute plans are usually our style.

**Where is your favourite place to paddle?**

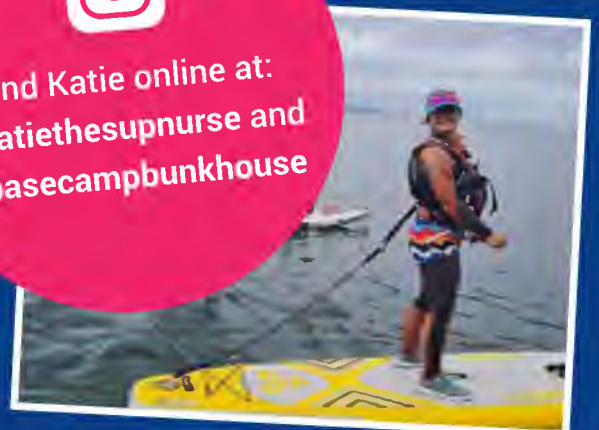
The Welsh coastline is incredible! The marine life and huge tidal races are epic fun on the SUPs. Scotland also has a place in my heart. The wildlife and circum navigation of islands as well as being able to camp in most places makes life easier.

**How did you first get into paddling? Tell us about your favourite paddling experience.**

I first sat in a kayak when I was 14 on an adventure training weekend with the Air Cadets. I spent the first 20 minutes on Lake Windermere going in circles and getting blown onto the shore by horrendous wind. My instructor attached his makeshift skeg of milk bottles behind me which only annoyed me further. I ripped it off and had a point to prove. I continued to attend camps year after year with no more milk bottle skegs. I probably first got on a SUP about eight years ago on the river Dee, running Grade 2 drops for the first time ever on a board and I didn't stop laughing the whole day! From then I've intermittently kayaked, SUPed, canoed and guided rafts down a fair few rivers. My favourite experiences have been in big sea lochs and paddling around most of the Welsh coast with plans on doing a circumnav of Wales unsupported with my partner.



Find Katie online at:  
[@katiethesupnurse](#) and  
[@basecampbunkhouse](#)







## Do you know what percentage of rivers across England & Wales have clear rights of access? How do you find out where you can paddle?

Roughly less than 4%. I have been part of the ongoing campaign for rights of access for numerous years and continue to support the efforts of numerous charities. Most of the paddling I do is in Scotland so it falls under the land reform act. When in Wales I'm usually on the coastline so there's not a great deal of restrictions unless it's nesting birds or seal pup season so I stay away respectfully. The rivers in Wales have always been very difficult. When paddling a new area I always seek local paddlers for their knowledge on access/ restrictions as nothing beats local knowledge as well as using the CROW act to find access spots.

## Tell us about the paddling moment you are most proud of?

I get a lot of people commenting on my achievements but I really live in the moment. I absolutely hate suffering on my board but have been in some really testing conditions on the sea this past year and making it back to land and actually having fuel left in the tank I suppose would be one of those moments I'm proud of. I've competed and won numerous races from White Water to endurance but that's not what drives me. I think taking friends and clients to some beautiful and wild places, has got to be right up there with my favourite moments! Seeing their faces light up in awe is special. I've also been able to share my passion with my mum this year which has been hilarious. Many memories I won't forget for lots of reasons and I'm super proud of her for getting on a board and joining me.

## How has paddling improved your wellbeing (mental or physical)?

For me paddling balances both of my evils. For my mental health to be in balance I have to get outside and test and move my body, I probably push it too hard sometimes. It's a channel to unleash emotions that get built up inside of me, either by paddling alone or with my dog (Ozzy) in a peaceful bit of flat water or by pushing my absolute limits physically by scaring myself then realising everything's okay and laughing about it afterwards.

## Why do you think other women should get involved in paddle sports?

I think it's really important to involve and encourage women in paddlesports for numerous reasons. I think at grassroots levels some women can be put off massively by not knowing how to do something and not wanting to look like an idiot attempting to do it. I think creating a community that is supportive and equal is really important to encourage women to get stuck in and have a go with a bunch of ladies that are there to help each other. I definitely have seen a huge change in the dynamic of freelancing now. Back when I started out I was the first female guide at a rafting centre but I pathed the way for other women to come through the process by mentoring and tutoring them showing the girls different ways to flip rafts etc. I just want women to know that there are loads of amazing, chilled, knowledgeable, down to earth providers in all areas of paddling these days so don't hold back because you could be that role model for someone else one day.

The #ShePaddles interview series aims to show that the Ambassadors are inspirational whilst also being normal people and that paddling everyone can paddle if they desire. To read more #ShePaddles interviews head over to Charlotte's blog [prowexplorer.com](http://prowexplorer.com)

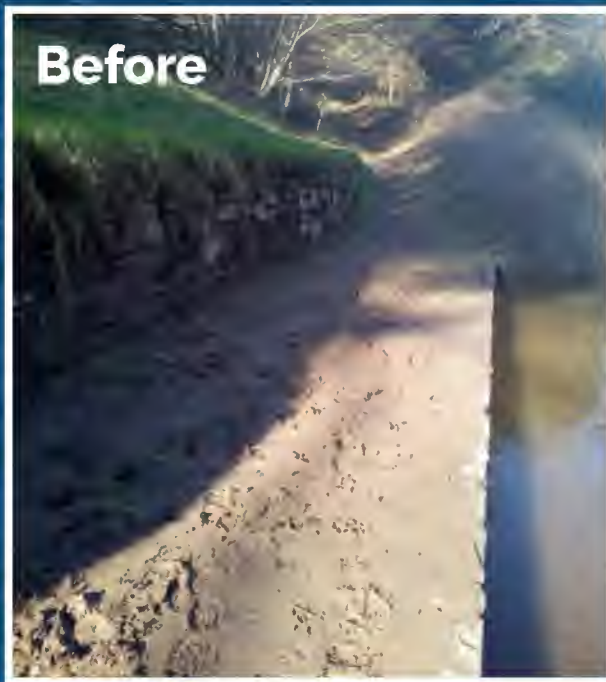
# Biblins Youth Campsite complete funded works to access River Wye

The Canoe Foundation is pleased to announce that the grant funded works at the Biblins Youth Campsite on the River Wye have now been completed.

Back in February 2021, the Woodcraft Folk organisation applied for a grant to make improvements and repairs to the popular launch site on the River Wye. The Biblins Youth Campsite is a site used by organised youth groups to engage young people in outdoor activities and bushcraft. The Canoe Foundation agreed £5,000 towards the project which looked to make improvements and repair damage caused through flooding.

The work was completed over the summer season. This included repairs to a flood damaged canoe launch installed a few years ago.

Take a look at the before and after images below to see exactly what these improvements mean to the site. For more information about the campsite, the access point usage and the Woodcraft Folk, visit their website here. [www.biblins.org.uk](http://www.biblins.org.uk)



The Canoe Foundation relies on donations to improve places to paddle across the UK. Please consider donating a one off or regular amount to the Foundation to help them continue with their work and ensure everyone has sustainable, effective access to our waterways and coastline. Thank you.

Donate here [www.canoefoundation.org.uk](http://www.canoefoundation.org.uk)



# Help us improve paddling locations across the UK

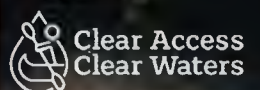
Funding infrastructure and repairs on our waterways & coastline to ensure paddling is enjoyable, accessible and sustainable across the UK



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# THE JOURNEY OF SEWAGE POLLUTION

**The sewage pollution scandal has taught us how important our voices are and how each of us can use our voice to make positive change.**

For years the issue of sewage pollution has rumbled on, with a growing awareness and growing pressure for change. However climate change has led to increased rainfall and water infrastructure has not kept pace with development growth over decades. To prevent sewage backing up into people's homes, storm overflows have been used more frequently.

With the culmination of new post brexit legislation and the Government's 'ambition to leave our environment in a better state than we found it' along with the Covid-19 pandemic, it amplifies the importance of people being active outdoors connected with nature. Surely the time is now to end the discharge of sewage pollution into our inland and coastal waters?

Participation in paddlesports and swimming during the Covid-19 pandemic dramatically increased. Between 2020 and 2021, British Canoeing membership rose from 38,500, to over 90,000. Participation in paddlesports is now estimated at 5.2 million people annually.

By the end of 2019 the #EndSewagePollution coalition of ocean and river activists, led by marine conservation charity Surfers Against Sewage and including British Canoeing and other key stakeholders handed a Petition to DEFRA containing 44,691 signatures calling for an end to sewage pollution and a guarantee of safe seas and rivers all year round.

The #EndSewagePollution coalition called for world leading water quality legislation, with an Environment Bill that sets progressive, ambitious and legally binding targets to end untreated sewage discharge into bathing water and upholds the highest standards for inland and coastal waters.

British Canoeing also responded to the Environmental Audit committee's call for evidence on water quality in rivers which focused on the water industry and urban diffuse pollution with both written and oral evidence.

The Storm Overflows Taskforce – made up of Defra, the Environment Agency, Ofwat, Consumer Council for Water, Blueprint for Water and Water UK agreed to set a long term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. Following recommendations from the Taskforce, water companies agreed to increase transparency around when and how storm overflows are used and accelerate work to install monitoring devices to create a complete picture of their activity by 2023.

## FACT

**In 2020 alone, records show raw sewage was discharged into UK Rivers and seas over 400,000 times, spilling for over 3.1m hours**



We very much welcomed the requirement that reductions should focus on areas to 'reduce impacts on public health'. Following the pandemic we have seen record numbers of people taking to our waters for recreational purposes, families should be able to experience the fun and joy of paddling outdoors in nature, without concerns for the health of their children due to the presence of raw sewage.

By mid November the Environment Bill became the Environment Act with the government passing its own amendment 'A sewerage undertaker whose area is wholly or mainly in England must secure a progressive reduction in the adverse impacts of discharges from the undertakers storm overflows' referencing to reducing adverse impacts on the environment, and on public health.

More information can be found here [www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-bill-further-strengthened-to-tackle-storm-overflows](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-bill-further-strengthened-to-tackle-storm-overflows)

Then a shocking announcement by the Environment Agency and OFWAT that a major investigation into sewage treatment works was to be launched. The investigation will involve more than 2,000 sewage treatment works, with any company caught breaching their legal permits facing enforcement action, including fines or prosecutions.



"Paddlers, Anglers, Swimmers and a whole host of NGOs have all been calling out this issue for some time, whilst also pushing hard for action in the Environment Bill. We're pleased to see this action finally being taken by the Environment Agency and Ofwat"

**Chantelle Grundy,**  
Access and Environment Officer

## What can I do?

1. Report any pollution incidents to the Environment Agency's 24-hour Hotline: Telephone: 0800 80 70 60.
2. Check how your local inland or coastal water is impacted, via the [Rivers Trust](#) and start a conversation.
3. Keep up to date with real time discharges through the [Surfers Against Sewerage Safer seas and rivers](#) app.
4. Contact your water company demanding an end to untreated sewage discharges.

It is clear that regulation, investment and enforcement is essential to deliver healthy blue spaces. We need to keep the pressure on to ensure discharge of untreated sewage and other chemicals into our inland and coastal waters ends, so we can see these beautiful places flourish and thrive once more.

Thank you to all paddlers who have engaged and continue to engage in the fight for clean waters, your voices are being heard.

British Canoeing will continue to campaign for sewage free waters for all to enjoy paddle sport through our [Clear Access Clear Waters](#) campaign and membership of the [#EndSewagePollution Coalition](#).

# HOW TO AVOID DISTURBING SEALS WHILST OUT PADDLING...



**Paddling around the coast is one of the best ways to explore our coastline and can often provide unique access to remote areas that are not accessible by foot. With this unique accessibility comes a responsibility to leave the areas visited as you find them.**

Along our coastline, it is very common to encounter seals, either in the water or resting on rocks and in coves. As cute as seals look, they are the largest land-breeding mammal, so can be hugely intimidating in the water and you should proceed with caution when in their presence. These much loved marine mammals are a real treat to spot on your paddling adventures, but sadly they are facing an extensive list of threats. Of these issues, disturbance from human interaction is a significant and growing problem. As paddlers, we can help protect seals and their pups by giving them space on land and in the water allowing them to exhibit their wonderful natural behaviour.

To ensure you give seals the space they need and to ensure both paddlers and seals can enjoy the water in harmony, have a read of these five top tips on how to avoid disturbing seals with your kayak, canoe or paddle board.

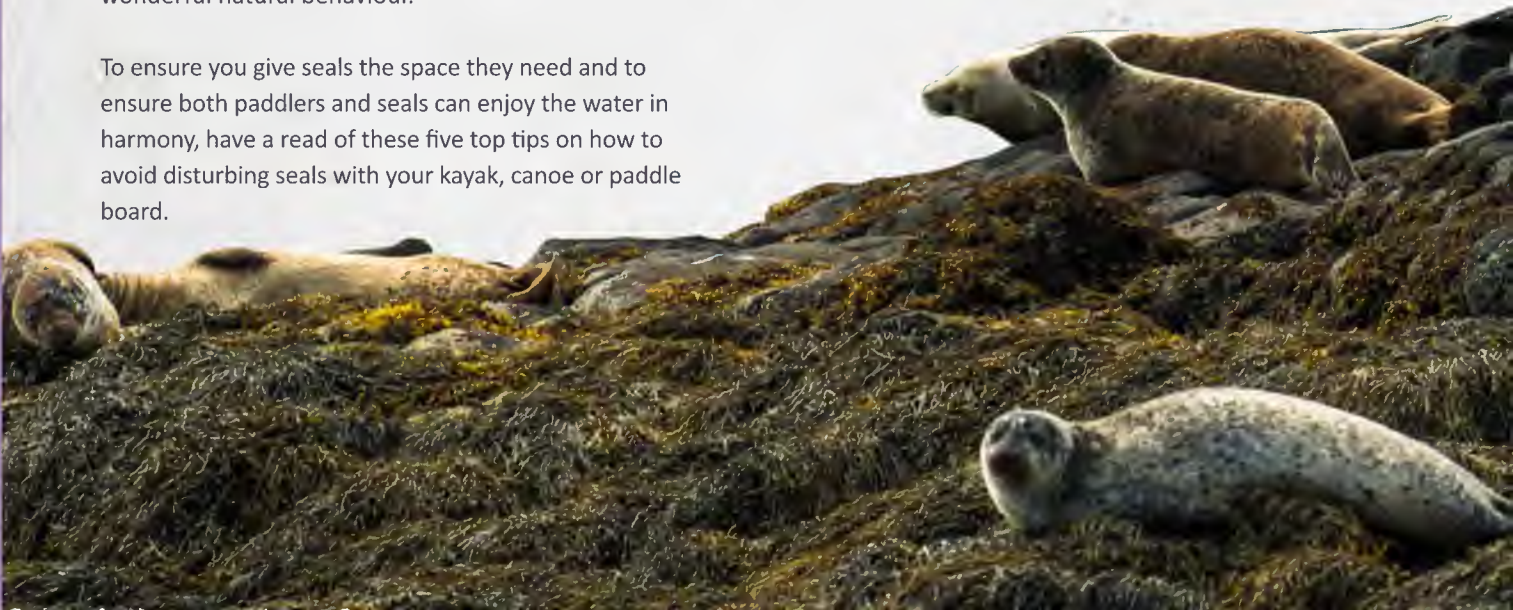
## **1. Never land on a beach where seals are hauled out or are with their pups, except in an absolute emergency.**

**Why?** Disturbing seals on land is potentially incredibly harmful as they are more likely to panic and seek safety in the water where they are formidable swimmers. This sadly results in panicked seals stampeding towards the water leading to pups being injured or separated from their mothers. Pregnant females are also in danger of losing their unborn pups within the frenzy of the stampede. Other consequences include severe cuts and bruising to the seals, especially if they are stampeding over rocks. Also, tombstoning is fatal and occurs when panicking seals enter the water from a height, often leading to broken jaws and ribs.

Did you know seals also suffer cold-water shock in a similar way to humans?

## **2. Respect and obey 'No landing' signs – normally seen during pupping season.**

**Why?** Areas marked off with 'No landing' signs are often erected during pupping season. The signs are there to ensure seals have the best environment to give birth and bring up their pups. It's incredibly important we respect these areas by slowly paddling on by and finding somewhere else to land.



**3. Always observe a seal's reactions to your presence.** For instance, if a seal repeatedly looks at you (when on land or in the water) this shows they're aware of your presence. It's now time to slowly back away avoiding eye contact to a spot where you can remain still. We'd strongly recommend being at least 100m away from the beach.

**Why?** Once a seal feels disturbed then they can stay alert for up to an hour afterwards, meaning vital energy is being wasted.

**4. Try to maintain a slow, steady and predictable rhythm as you paddle past seals.**

**Why?** Seals are very inquisitive and if they notice something unfamiliar they'll look to cautiously explore. By keeping a slow and steady pace seals will quickly lose interest in you.


**5. Exercise caution and don't do anything to harass them if one decides to approach you on its own accord. Remember to stay very still and certainly do not splash or reach out to touch the seal.** On the rare occasion a seal does attempt to board your kayak, canoe or paddle board then gently block its access with your paddle. Keep calm and let the seal move off on its own when ready. When it is safe to do so calmly and quietly paddle away. The seal may follow but will soon lose interest in you.

**Why?** Seals are not out to attack kayaks, canoes or SUPs so there is no need to panic. Seals are very curious animals and will look to investigate unfamiliar situations. So just enjoy and cherish this incredible moment.

By following these five simple guidelines you are helping to protect seals and their pups, allowing them to thrive on our beaches and in our waters. You'll also be helping to continue to showcase how paddlers can share the space with marine life without causing disturbance to their way of life or their habitats.


And always remember to please report any sightings of seals to [sightings@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk](mailto:sightings@cornwallsealgroup.co.uk). They will pass these sightings on to the nearest local recording scheme.

For more information on how you can help to protect wildlife and the environment please visit [Go Paddling](#) for more information.



We would like to thank the Cornwall Seal Group for their assistance with putting this guidance together and for the tremendous work they are doing to help protect these magnificent mammals.

If you would like to help support the protection of seals, Seal Research Trust are always on the lookout for new volunteers, supporters and donations. Your involvement will help conserve these globally rare, vital keystone species for the benefit of the wider marine ecosystem on which we all depend for both our physical and mental wellbeing. For more information on seals, visit [www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk](http://www.cornwallsealgroup.co.uk) or [www.sealalliance.org](http://www.sealalliance.org).



Did you know grey seals are Britain's largest land breeding marine mammal? Some male seals reach 3 meters long and can weigh up to 300 kilograms. Now you wouldn't want him coming aboard so please keep your distance.

# Enjoy your time on the water!



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