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SurfABLE Scotland Project *Looking back on 2021*

Report published February 2022 (Glyn Morris, Kev Anderson)

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SurfABLE SCOTLAND

Scotland's First Adaptive & Inclusive Surf School Est.2017

1. Acknowledgements

We wish to thank **The National Lottery Community Fund** and **Highlands & Islands Enterprise**, for the incredible contribution in supporting SurfABLE Scotland in helping provide our athletes the best adventure and surf therapy possible.

Our team of volunteers, staff, athletes, parents, and carers have worked exceptionally hard through some tough times and our athletes continue to inspire us. We celebrate their growth and achievements in this report, alongside exploring the beginnings of untapped potential for the future.

To each and every athlete, parent, carer, volunteer, coach, health professional, funder, and person who has kindly donated and supported us, THANK YOU!

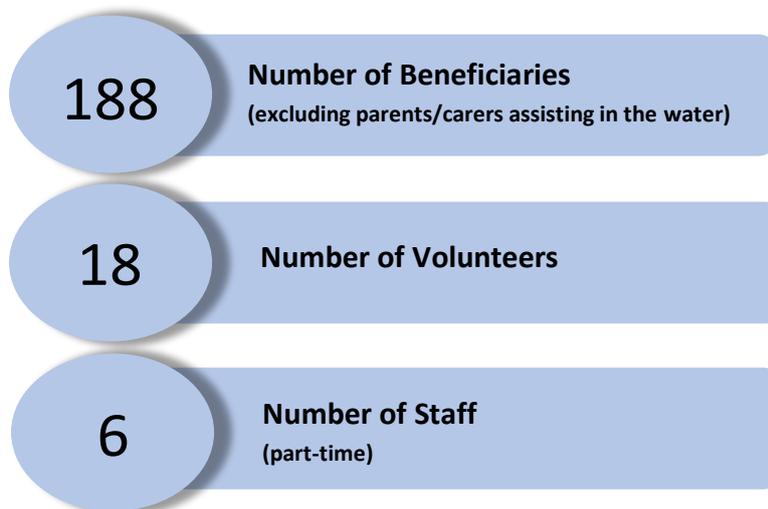


2. Introduction

We thought 2020 was a tough year, with 2021 bringing similar challenges. Behind the scenes, our fearless and dedicated team have always been ahead of their game, working both tirelessly and passionately, to help deliver the best experience of surf therapy and adventure to all.

Last year, thanks to you, we created a wave of positive impact across Moray and beyond as we continue to listen and learn from you.

We welcome the increasing volume of validated research (e.g. Marshall et al., ¹[2019](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6617262/), ²[2020](https://jsfd.org/2020/11/01/i-feel-happy-when-i-surf-because-it-takes-stress-from-my-mind-an-initial-exploration-of-program-theory-within-waves-for-change-surf-therapy-in-post-conflict-liberia/)) into the benefits of surf therapy as an innovative intervention in addressing mental health issues - a priority for health and social care. Equally, just because someone may have additional support requirements, they should not be denied access to blue space activity along some of our most stunning coastline locations. Taking great pride as a solution-based organisation, our holistic and person-centred approach is fundamental in allowing people to make informed choices to participate.



¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6617262/>

² <https://jsfd.org/2020/11/01/i-feel-happy-when-i-surf-because-it-takes-stress-from-my-mind-an-initial-exploration-of-program-theory-within-waves-for-change-surf-therapy-in-post-conflict-liberia/>

3. Overview - what we achieved in 2021

May 2021

Activities are back on!

Following guidance from The Scottish Government and Sports Scotland and the end of lockdown #2, we were able to restart our surf sessions.

As a result of 2 lockdown periods and Covid socialising/mixing measures, we depended heavily on the support from parents and carers to assist athletes in the water when strict guidelines were in place. For our volunteers, this meant another lengthy delay in their involvement. As guidelines eased, our volunteer coach recruitment drive was a priority. Working closely with ³[Lossiemouth Surf Life Saving Club](http://sportinmoray.co.uk/club-details.php?clid=3), our shared surf interests have allowed us to essentially tap into a volunteer pool with many of the club members now regular volunteers with SurfABLE, and vice versa with weekly training sessions.



³ <http://sportinmoray.co.uk/club-details.php?clid=3>

June 2021

On 12th June, we hosted the largest gathering of wheelchair users taking part in surfing, ever seen in Scotland.

⁴[Dundee Dragons](https://dunde dragons.net/) are a group of multi-sport wheelchair users and after hearing about adaptive surfing, they immediately got in touch to arrange to visit with us. The day was a huge success, thanks to ⁵[Give them a Sporting Chance](https://www.givethemasportingchance.com/), ⁶[Surfability UK CIC](https://surfabilityukcic.org/) in assisting, plus support from many other people and organisations. Dundee Dragons returned in August to repeat the experience.



We also hosted the first Adaptive Surfing Instructor Certification 2-day course in Scotland for those interested in adaptive surfing which was delivered by Surfability UK CIC. Co-produced by Surfability UK CIC, in partnership with AmpSurf and The Foundation for Global Sports Development produced the ⁷[International Surfing Association's \(ISA\)](https://isasurf.org/) first ever ⁸[Adaptive Surfing Instructor Certification Program](https://isasurf.org/learning/para-surfing/isa-adaptive-surfing-instructor-program/).

⁴ <https://dunde dragons.net/>

⁵ <https://www.givethemasportingchance.com/>

⁶ <https://surfabilityukcic.org/>

⁷ <https://isasurf.org/>

⁸ <https://isasurf.org/learning/para-surfing/isa-adaptive-surfing-instructor-program/>



Recognised for our beach and sea safety, SurfABLE Scotland was awarded a second donation of life saving equipment from local charity ⁹[Keiran's Legacy](https://www.keiranslegacy.co.uk/). This means we are now equipped with a mobile defibrillator (AED) and a portable Laerdal Suction Unit (LSU). We identified that more advanced resus equipment and training is far beyond the norm for a surf school, however, with no lifeguard patrols our Northeast beaches, and at least 20 minutes or more from a hospital, our safety provision is paramount when working with vulnerable individuals. This also means, we are equipped and skilled in providing rescue cover/emergency first aid for members of the public who find themselves in trouble close to where/when we are operating.

July & August 2021

As part of our 7-year aim, Para surfing will enter the Paralympics 2028, and it has always been our aspiration to deliver a full pathway in surf learning, from recreational surf adventure to world competitive coaching. This month saw 2 Paralympians, Karen Darke (bottom left), Paralympic Champion (Gold and Silver) and Hannah Dines (bottom right), Paralympian athlete, join us in surfing for their first-time surfing. Karen also became SurfABLE Scotland's Ambassador. Find her blog ¹⁰[HERE](https://www.karendarke.com/a-summer-with-surfable-scotland/).



⁹ <https://www.keiranslegacy.co.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://www.karendarke.com/a-summer-with-surfable-scotland/>

Not only was Hannah a newcomer to the world of surf in 2021, but she also debuted in the ISA World Adaptive Championships, California, Dec 2021, which won her 4th place in her classification. Both are providing inspiration and motivation for either those unsure surfing was even possible, or the encouragement required to get them involved.

One of our athletes Jade (below), aged 9, is a quad amputee. She attends our sessions on a regular basis and makes a 140-mile round trip with her dad to visit us. In her words, she wishes to become a Para Surfer and enter the Paralympics 2028. Her determination is so high, we have every confidence she'll achieve this.

<https://surfable.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Jade.mp4>



SurfABLE Scotland became Inclusive!

Until now, SurfABLE Scotland has been a service specifically and exclusively for people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Our journey has been a continual learning process, recognising and understanding the many different ways people view disability.

To create a fully inclusive service, we now offer non-assisted group sessions alongside our ASN and 1-1 lessons, for anyone with or without a diagnosis who would be safe and suitable without additional coaching support.

This has been a significant addition to our overall delivery. Working with athletes with varying levels of social confidence in sport, we have applied our person-centred approach to regular attending athletes in the local community, where many recognise the impact of surf therapy through an experienced coaching team and building upon trusted relationships. Some of our athletes who begin in our ASN sessions and develop surf skills, may not meet the strict eligibility criteria for para or special needs sport events, or may have the opportunity to choose mainstream pathways. Our understanding of multiple pathways, and where there

may be options in eligibility, ensures we can offer opportunities for everyone with the flexibility to meet the needs of each athlete as they grow and develop. Unassisted sessions are based on the individual, not on the diagnosis, which helps to promote equality and diversity within society.

OUR STORY

SurfABLE Scotland took to the waves for the first time in 2017, with a mission to provide full access to surf therapy for everyone (aged 5 up), regardless of disability and condition.

Our sessions consist of **additional support needs groups (ASN)**, **1 to 1**, and **non-assisted groups**, so whatever your requirements, we have a session tailored to meet all your expectations and needs, including friends and family tickets for you all to share the experience.

Surfing is all about having fun and adventure. Our team of instructors, coaches and volunteers are there to create the best experience for you to help achieve your surfing goals.



Based in the **Moray Firth**, we mainly run sessions along our stunning coastline at **Lossiemouth, Hopeman, Cullen and Sandend**.

OUR SESSIONS

ASN group sessions, for new, beginner or improving surfers. Support is available from our instructors, coaches and volunteers when required. Parents and carers are also welcome to accompany in the water to provide support.

1 to 1 sessions, for new, beginner or improving surfers who would prefer individual tuition, with support if required. Parents and carers are also welcome to accompany in the water to provide support.

Non-assisted group lessons (NEW for 2021), available for new, beginner or improving surfers who do not require additional support.

Find out more, pricing and how to book through our website, or give us a call. We have everything you need in getting you into the water, from wetsuit kits, boards, and support.

SEATED TANDEM SURFING



This surfing style is for surfers who find sitting, kneeling or lying unsupported uncomfortable or difficult. Our surfers are supported with a higher ratio of support and one member of our team surfing tandem with them, whilst other team members provide in-water support.

TANDEM SURFING



This surfing style is fun for everyone and also provides support for those who may need assistance with balance. Surfers can also receive constant one-to-one support from at least one member of our team. We encourage our surfers to surf in a way that is comfortable for them. On a tandem board, our surfers can surf sitting, kneeling, prone, and we can also assist with standing.

SOLO SURFING



This surfing style is for surfers who can use a board by themselves. Our team adjust and adapt the level of support given, depending on the individual needs of our surfers. On a single board, you can surf prone, knee ride or stand while developing your own unique surf style.

** Content from our information leaflets*

SurfABLE Scotland kicks off with a **Scotland 'Sharing the Stoke' Mini Tour** - First stop Fraserburgh, hosted by the awesome Broch Surf Club, then onto Pease Bay, Scottish Borders, and lastly Belhaven Beach, Dunbar, East Lothian. We were stoked to get good weather and waves where it was a pleasure to meet new families for the first time sharing the joy of catching a wave for the first time with many inspiring individuals.





SurfABLE SCOTLAND

SurfABLE Scotland • Assisted Surf Sessions
May - October 2021



244

Individual
& Group
Sessions

408

Athlete
Tickets

152

Parent &
Carer 1:1
Support
Tickets

0

**Athletes
Turned
Away!**

"Been so amazing this summer to discover adaptive surfing. A big privilege to be connected with SurfABLE Scotland

The opportunities they are creating for people with disabilities to access the forces and beauty of the sea and beaches, along with skills and sport and friendship are life-transforming."

~ Karen Darke MBE,
Paralympian Champion

None of the above would have been possible without the awesome support of our athletes, parents/carers, and volunteers. In particular, a huge thanks goes to The National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Players, and Highlands & Islands Enterprise.



friendly access

Technology | Sport | Education

Changing public perception of disability

4. Involving people in developing and delivering our activities

Our person-centred approach is designed to meet each athlete's individual needs, ability, and aspirations, valuing each athlete as an individual, rather than atypical traits associated with their disability and/or condition. We have also found this approach has created a ripple effect, with parents and carers learning more about maximising the ability and progress of the athlete in their care, either through assisting in the water, or observation.

We actively include and explore ways to ensure people are meaningfully involved in our development, design, and delivery of our project. However, limitations are present with a people-led approach, mainly owing to safety, practitioner knowledge and expertise.

We encourage direction from our athletes, parents, and carers, through our ¹¹[online evaluation feedback form](#), or through spoken engagement during and after each session. This enables our athletes to contribute and help us apply changes necessary in reaching new milestones, things they wish to concentrate more/less on, and positive/negative experiences, etc. Respecting and valuing stakeholder feedback at every stage through development allows us to build upon mutual trust. This makes the difference between providing a positive one-off experience and facilitating the long-term benefits of regular surf therapy.

In the short-term, our practitioners have significant influence ensuring safety and good instruction, all in a meaningful and understanding way. For the long-term, the delivery develops as our athletes explore opportunities and different pathways in sport, and their experiences help shape Scotland's first adaptive and inclusive surf school. From what we have witnessed, our athletes are also building upon their interpersonal skills thanks to a shared interest within a safe community of likeminded people. We have also seen them naturally become peer mentors and coaches to help others. These are all significant attributes of important life learning and transferable skills.

In addition to the above, we are currently developing Scotland's National adaptive surf team to represent Scotland in the annual World Adaptive Surf Championships, California. This includes working closely with Surfability UK, the International Surf Association - founding members who have inspired the global uptake and acceleration.

¹¹ <https://friendlyaccess.org/what-we-do/surfable-scotland/athlete-feedback/>

In shaping the team with good foundations of organisation and fair processes for team selection, Karen Darke and Hannah Dines have both expressed interest as part of this process through their committee and athlete roles. To ensure a policy of fair selection, we are exceptionally fortunate for the opportunity in learning from their vast experience and knowledge through international sporting events and assisting us with the National Team's development.

We are also very welcoming and supportive of young people wishing to represent SurfABLE Scotland through various channels. In June 2021, a small cohort of Lossiemouth High School pupils scooped £3,000.00 representing SurfABLE as their chosen charity in The Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) Award, based on their research and presentation.



5. Building on people's strengths

Building upon our athletes' strengths sometimes means putting our own automatic reactions to the side. As mentioned in our last report, empathy can lead us to give too much support, which can sometimes limit their independence and the opportunity for learning. While some of our young adult athletes are often all too happy to let us 'over assist', i.e., through oncoming waves, and tandem surfing for fun, we find the balance relying on experience and close discussion with parents, and carers, to ensure each session includes fun, learning, and fitness elements.

Of course there are also athletes who have strong independence with the motivation and determination to progress quickly and again, it's our job to ensure that the right balance is found.

Unfortunately, myths and false perceptions on autism, i.e., lack of empathy, compassion, creativity, etc., couldn't be more wrong. Every day we see extraordinary interactions and unprompted peer encouragement from individuals who, in another environment, may not feel the confidence to reach out. Again, supporting that, *"While an impairment can not necessarily be changed the environment often can, making the environment the disabling factor."* ~ Glyn Morris

We have also noticed the organic way some of the more experienced athletes have volunteered to help the younger ones and in working towards coaching and leadership skills.

Imagination - Many of our athletes have processing disorders/conditions, where processing sensory information from the world around them may follow different neural pathways, which can often be overwhelming. We often can't get a true insight of how they are feeling and if we could choose one superpower it would be the ability to step into their shoes to share their feelings in order to better understand. Yet, when some of our children share with us their imaginations, we feel connected and invited into their world. It could be Jacob's world of robot heroes and villains (one named Kev with a surfboard) with a storyline to make Stan Lee proud or Hayden's paddleboard trips that transform into a stealth mission where we are aircraft carriers and destroyers with torpedoes. These are many examples of creativity and imagination which the children take into the surf to enhance their experience.

6. Our connections with other organisations

Surfability UK CIC

We are proud to be working alongside Surfability UK based in Wales, co-coaching Hannah Dines to the World adaptive surf games. Surfability UK have given invaluable advice and shared good practice and experience, as well as leading our team in the UK's first course enrolment in the ISA's adaptive surf coach course.

Active Schools Moray (Forres & Lossiemouth)

Through our working partnership with Active Schools in Moray, we deliver structured swimming and pool surf group sessions to identified primary and secondary school children at Forres and Lossiemouth Swimming Pools, both during school term (curricular) and out of school hours (extracurricular). Children are referred by each school, and consent obtained through a parent, carer, or guardian. Identified children with a disability, condition, or behavioural issues have included hemiplegia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, autism, speech & language disorders, balance/co-ordination disorders, dyslexia, behavioural issues, cerebral palsy, global developmental delay, learning disabilities/difficulties, and meltdowns & shutdowns. We monitor and evaluate each child's progress, which is fed back to the child, parent/carers, and school.

Lossiemouth Surf & Lifesaving Club

A definite highlight for 2021, was the set up of a surf lifesaving club where most members are SurfABLE Scotland volunteers. This gave us the needed structure to train and recruit more volunteers in surf safety and rescue skills, complementing the training we already provide in our coaching skills and approach to further develop the volunteer team. Working alongside a club affiliated to Surf Lifesaving Great Britain, we can qualify our lifesaving training with vocational awards.

Dundee Dragons

We have now held two amazing days of sport with the Dundee Dragons wheelchair sport team building a long-lasting friendship with the coaches and athletes alike. These events gave a real feel of excitement and healing through sport and team encouragement.

Logan's Fund

In past years we have led regular sessions for local kids supported by Logan's Fund (LF) who work with kids affected by cancer. There is not a group currently living locally that receives ongoing support from Logan's fund, however, we work together to create holiday memories for families that visit the LF Sunny days caravan in Lossiemouth. Carter Gordon is 8 years old and recently completed his last round of Chemotherapy with a clear MRI which started with a day facilitated through LF and is now, along with his mum and big brother, regular surfers.

Quarriers Young Carers Support

Quarriers Activities Co-ordinator informed us that before Covid, they were supporting 70 young carers. These young carers are carers who give unpaid care to someone in their household. In October 2021 it was 160.

Positive feedback after group sessions in the Oct holidays was that the kids and young adults (up to 18) had a great time, but the flexibility of our sessions was key to success. Unlike other water sports providers in the area that offer half day or full day packages we could split our time into 2-hour sessions with quick turnover between group drop off and pick-up as a major factor for many of the young people worried about being away from home for too long. This form of flexibility is important for us to further meet the needs of those coming to us to access surf therapy.

39 Royal Engineer Regiment, British Army

Based 5 miles along the coast from one of our most used beaches, the regiment worked closely with us to explore an opportunity to build our proposed surf therapy centre. At material cost, as a community engagement project, that would also serve as training for their tradesman personnel. Understandably, albeit unfortunately, the time available to them between training did not align with the project timescale.

We are however very glad to have been through the process, building links with the armed forces and future opportunities to work with current and ex serving personnel.

Keiran's Legacy

Keiran's Legacy are a charity promoting safety, first aid training and fundraising for defibrillators at key identified areas after the death of their son Keiran. They have assisted us with advice and with the donation of first aid equipment, continuing to advise on training opportunities and options for us as a mobile unit.

Basic Movement with Johnny Fyfe & Mollie Powney, Personal Trainers

With Johnny and Mollie, we are delivering land based personal training exercises and movement classes to our athletes. The planning and delivery have impressed everyone showing the commitment to improving lives through better health and fitness and for long term actions, development, and support.

Scottish Surf Federation

The SSF is the national governing body for sport but don't currently have any opportunities for adaptive surfing. By working together, we aim to create the best foundation for a successful team by combining our experience to meet each athlete's coaching needs with the experience of the SSF in event judging.

Visit Scotland

After just one meeting we have actions to follow in jointly promoting accessible tourism with the aim to find and support local accessible guest house/hotel facilities. As the only surf school with adaptive surf opportunities in Scotland, and with the growth in both surfing and adaptive sport inspiration both reducing stigma and normalising disability, we hope this will make holiday highlights as well as opening up stunning parts of Scotland for many.

7. The difference we are making

'An active life for people with additional support needs should be more than a walk twice around a park daily.'

Having established through various forms of communication, i.e., listening to young people/parents/carers during/after our activities, and results from past surveys such as, ¹²[Moving young people with additional support needs \(ASN\) from council-run Children's Services to Adult Services](https://friendlyaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Transition-Planning-Report-v1.4.pdf), we found there to be a lack of local provision

¹² <https://friendlyaccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Transition-Planning-Report-v1.4.pdf>

for person-centred physical activities within a structured and safe environment. Something which unfortunately, many mainstream clubs/organisations do not have the capacity to provide. This may lead to many negative experiences and disengagement. We believe everyone should have the option based on informed choices and be entitled to share adventure in their lives.

We have also learned from our own experiences and through growing validated research, that the use of 'blue space' environments are an ideal setting for engagement. By equipping each athlete with the correct support, i.e., equipment and coaching, any barriers thought to be an issue by an athlete are no longer present. As Karen Darke, Paralympic Champion states, this can be 'life-transforming'.

2021 was the first summer of surf therapy funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and Highlands & Islands Enterprise, which gave us a real opportunity to create the greatest summer so far. Our beneficiaries visit us from across Scotland giving us a spread of athletes who can visit us once or twice a year, with most aiming to attend monthly or multiple times a month.

Flexibility within our booking policy and timetable is key to ensure individuals are not faced with additional barriers or discrimination based on attendance.

Thanks to the springboard in delivery we have seen the greatest strides in development to date with our regular surfers growing in skills, confidence and independence. The ability to deliver more sessions has kickstarted a cycle where skill progression opens up more exciting opportunities to surf different conditions and waves, giving further positive experiences, boosting self-esteem, and fuelling self-motivation to return to further develop. Keeping within a training zone retains focus and commitment, turning a family day out into sustainable therapy. A lifestyle with benefits to physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

It's important to note that we never push our athletes into situations which are not suitable or supportive, in order to prioritise skill progression, however, it is a powerful aid to build confidence and resilience for many athletes allowing the individual to face personal challenges and goals, gain achievements, and build independence.

In a recent short film through Surfability UK CIC, Lowri Wilkie - Neuro Psychologist, validates everything we have always wanted to put into words beautifully, and how the 5 key components of wellbeing link perfectly through surf therapy.

<https://surfable.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/SurfTherapy.mp4>

8. What we have learned from our activities

A permanent facility is desperately needed, and although we have managed to meet requirements of each athlete - thus far, it's been a real struggle for many. We have done our best with pop up shelters - which are not great on even slightly windy days. Hence the real need of a purpose-built facility ideally located with changing space provision is our priority. Yes, our athletes 'make do' and are very versatile in their own creative ways to overcome this, but until then, we feel we are not providing suitable access to our athletes. A barrier which could easily be addressed and one which we have been proactively working towards over the last 12 months.

We would like to leave just some of our feedback in this section to capture the emotions felt. Happy tears have impacted everyone involved during each and every session, regardless of it being an athlete's first visit, or for those returning.



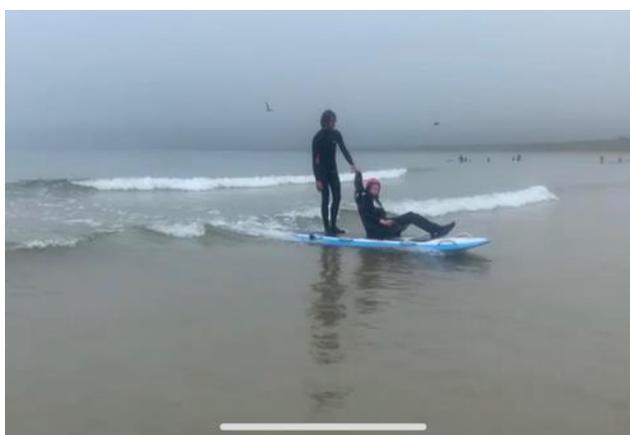
"Thank you so much for a wonderful afternoon. The SurfABLE team are truly fantastic! This was the first time our daughter who is partially sighted and profoundly disabled was on the water. She was full of smiles and laughter! Absolutely amazing for us all to be in the water as a family. Thank you so much."

"Thank you so much for my daughter's lesson today at Hopeman. Lily is terrified of the water-especially the sea! She went from saying she wasn't going in at all to absolutely loving it...she had the time of her life and is desperate to go again! It was the first thing she asked when she got out - when can I come back?! A complete miracle! It has really boosted her confidence! Kev was so patient, understanding and really encouraged her which made all the difference!"



My son Stuart is 27yrs young and is autistic, he can't write a review and it's sometimes difficult to put into words what I think he would say, however when it comes to SurfABLE sessions his face and his excitement are quite clear to see. His confidence has grown, he is realising he can do things more independently and he now looks for praise rather than reassurance! Kev is awesome and really understands how to show rather than tell Stuart what he needs to do....he's fun and really has a big fan in Stuart! We travel up to a 3hr round trip to access surf school and it's worth every mile. Thank you so much guys, and to top it off....today Stuart paddled himself to catch his wave then managed to get on his knees and up on his feet!!" #proudmum

“Lexi's first session with 🏄 SurfABLE Scotland she had an absolute ball 😄 she smiled the whole time and didn't want to leave. The guys were amazing and it was such a chilled and stress free 2 hours and believe me that's a rarity for us.”



“I just wanted to drop you a message to say thank you so much for #####'s first surfing lesson yesterday! He had so much fun and was absolutely buzzing afterwards! It's difficult to describe just how incredible you were with #####. Everything was so relaxed and nothing was impossible or even a bother. As a mother of a child with CP and autism, I have been to many ASN activities and events and often there is no real provision for a completely physically disabled child as he grows bigger, it has become harder for me to help him join in. Even with the temporary facilities that you have at Hopeman, there was never any doubt or question in your minds that ##### was going to get in a wetsuit and ride the waves! Thank you seems inadequate. SurfABLE Scotland really is the most inclusive activity or setting we've ever encountered and that is completely down to you. Looking forward to another surfing session soon!”



“Thank you guys for being so fabulous with Ruth on Tuesday with her first go at surfing at Belhaven Bay. She absolutely loved it and had salty curls too that night.

Ruth, Brett and myself were just blown away by the experience. You are amazing sharing this experience with us.

We look forward to meeting you again when we can venture north. Thanks Glyn for doing the filming. It was a pleasure to meet you all.” ~ Maggie

“Just a wee video Holly made, she had the best day and just like to say massive Thank you Kev for giving my girl this experience. Without you guys this wouldn’t have been possible.”

Check out Holly’s awesome video!



<https://surfable.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/TikTok.mp4>



“What a fun filled afternoon we had with #surfablesotland we all had an amazing time catching the waves, challenging ourselves and most of all we were supported by the AMAZING SURFABLE crew and had ALOT of fun!” 🍷🍷🍷🍷😊

“End of treatment surf with Kev and James from SurfABLE Scotland.

The guys at SurfABLE are awesome 🏄‍♂️

Not a big party like we anticipated but a great day all the same. The weather was 😎 and the kids had fun. 🌊🏄‍♂️

So glad Logan's Fund introduced us to SurfABLE. The boys have loved the past few months.

What a success 👍”



9. Looking forward

Looking back on 2021 has allowed us to highlight successes and help shape the service for the future. Our approach remains the same, offering opportunities with a person-centred approach, allowing individuals to progress and with support, enabling them to push their own boundaries.

Some observations and interventions are....

Teenagers - Often at a higher risk of isolation with additional social anxieties, we look for and encourage sub groupings and pairings within our assisted group sessions to build familiarity and friendships without forcing social interaction, instead, letting the shared interests and the opportunity for positive emotions to break the ice and allow relationships to form. This has helped us see teenagers return with less anxiety to group sessions, boosting progress in skill development. As numbers grow, it allows us the ability to consider separate sessions for older kids and teenagers ready for intermediate surf tuition, giving the opportunity to develop further independent surf and safety skills, including more social opportunities with post surf evaluation sessions.

Girls in Sport - Across all sports, teenage girls show a high dropout rate. A 2019 report, ¹³[Sport participation in Scotland: Trends and future prospects](https://www.oss.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Sporting-Trends-Executive-Summary-FINAL-.pdf), commissioned by the ¹⁴[Observatory for Sport in Scotland](https://oss.scot/), outlined, 'From the age of 8 to 10 years onwards the activity levels of boys and girls diverge with a substantial decrease in the percentage of girls meeting the guidelines. This decline is seen later for boys but culminates in the percentage of 13 to 15 year-old girls meeting physical activity guidelines dropping as low as 11% and to 24% for boys.'

Fortunately, we haven't seen this trend within SurfABLE Scotland thus far, but will continue to deliver the person-centred approach to allow sessions to adapt for any athletes change in preference or needs from their surf therapy. Surfing globally, is making changes towards gender inclusion and equal opportunities after years of sexualising and not offering the same opportunities for female athletes.

This is long overdue and allows our young athletes to look up to professional surf athletes who shape their own public image.

Our volunteer team is growing in both number and experience with an equal split in male/female volunteers who assist sessions regularly.

Competitive surf events - For many, surfing can be regarded a lifestyle rather than a sport. For those in pursuit of competing, the competitive element can be motivational, challenging and fulfilling. However, regardless of whether it's for recreational or competition outcomes, we draw the elements from both.

Opportunities in competitive adaptive surfing are growing internationally, yet there is currently nothing available in Scotland. We aim to change that as soon as possible, with plans now underway in developing Scotland's first national team.

Delivering sessions to experienced paralympic athletes was both exciting, albeit preliminary quite daunting, testing our coaching skills to cater for experienced adult athletes looking to push themselves and receive advanced coaching that would allow them to apply their transferable skills from other sports to more challenging and thrilling surf conditions.

¹³ <https://www.oss.scot/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Sporting-Trends-Executive-Summary-FINAL-.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://oss.scot/>



Picture: Hannah Dines, ISA World Adaptive Surf Championships, Pismo Beach, California, Dec 2021

Incredibly, one of our Paralympians, Hannah Dines, attended the ISA world adaptive surf comp in California in Dec 2021 and achieved 4th place in her division after surfing for less than a year.

After some amazing sessions we are now on our way to develop national events, and a team where some of our younger athletes are already inspired to become future paralympic surf athletes.

Winter - We've learned that the surf sessions are much more than sport therapy, but a grounding force of familiarity with people, expectation, and structure in a very difficult time. With fortnightly sessions in the swimming pool and sports centre we have run structured sessions with surfboards in the pools and, also fitness instructors in sport halls, designed to maintain and progress skills, health, and fitness over the winter months.





10. Watch this space....

SurfABLE Scotland's vision of establishing itself as a beacon for Accessibility, Adaptive Surf Sport and Surf Therapy in providing a purpose-built facility at Lossiemouth, will be a first in Moray, and a first in Scotland.

The incredible Surf Therapy Centre in Caswell Bay, Wales was built last year, thanks to Surfability UK, DIY SOS and Children in Need, in a special episode aired in November 2020. A first of its kind in the world, it relit our passion to create the same here in Moray and rally support in the process - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mfqs_rGT_h8

The largest barrier to our current and new participating athletes is the lack of changing facilities. For some, getting changed in a car is simply not safe or manageable, completely preventing individuals the opportunity to take part and for others it can be a very difficult exercise not nearly safe enough or dignified. This is the reason why we are 100% committed towards providing changing facilities that will give our athletes and others visiting the area with limited mobility or conditions, the right to change with privacy and dignity, and to access adventure along one of our most stunning of coastline locations.

An ¹⁵[Economic Impact Assessment](#) carried out on behalf of ¹⁶[Lossiemouth Development Community Trust](#) to present to Scottish Government in relation to funding the new walk bridge, identified the value SurfABLE Scotland and provision of a surf therapy/changing place would provide within 'Potential Longer-Term Increases'.

As we are getting everything ready to make our plans public, our support continues to grow at an incredible pace, and we wish to thank everyone involved.

We have also been humbled and inspired by the support from our Ambassador and Paralympic Champion, Karen Darke, for SurfABLE Scotland. Karen, now a regular athlete with us, will also be involved with the development of our forthcoming world competing Scotland squad.



PRESSANDJOURNAL.CO.UK

Paralympic champion hand-cyclist backs Moray charity's vision for Scotland's first inclusive surfing facility

Karen Darke, Ambassador for SurfABLE Scotland - Press & Journal release - 9 Nov 2021

https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/moray/3658701/paralympic-champion-hand-cyclist-who-vercame-numerous-near-death-experiences-backs-moray-charitys-vision-for-scotlands-first-inclusive-surfing-facility/?fbclid=IwAR36JGcxpGaHAWC8EvxGxS-hi-Cu17MxwZf2NyxoppG1wbtSX5_P77uH2Y

'While the achievements of athletes with disabilities have rightfully received more attention in recent years, particularly at an elite level, far more can be

¹⁵ <https://www.artsteps.com/view/602a820c733453278da39f1c>

¹⁶ <https://lossietrust.org/>

done to increase understanding and improve facilities across the board in our communities. Hand-cyclist Karen Darke, backing of SurfABLE Scotland's proposed project to build a state-of-the-art inclusive surf centre in Lossiemouth is a fantastic example of how awareness can be raised, and funds secured.

Watching professional athletes with disabilities or physical impairments compete, gives those aspiring to do the same, inspiration and hope, but providing them with fully inclusive sports facilities is far more beneficial. The importance of exercise for physical and mental wellbeing cannot be overlooked, and no one in Scotland should be unable to become involved in sport due to a lack of appropriate equipment, space, or staffing.

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Karen Darke

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Been so amazing this summer to discover adaptive surfing. A big privilege to be connected with [SurfABLE Scotland](#) The opportunities they are creating for people with disabilities to access the forces and beauty of the sea and beaches, along with skills and sport and friendship are life-transforming. Thanks!!! And thanks for sharing this [Press And Journal](#)



SurfABLE Scotland

Ms Darke admits she still struggles to interact socially. The sense of belonging that often comes with participating in sport is rewarding and not just something reserved for the able-bodied.'

~ Comment courtesy of P&J Reporter, Sean McAngus.

In June 2021 we hosted our first adaptive surf event with the ¹⁷[Dundee Dragons](https://dundeedragons.net/) without changing facilities, toilets, or accessible tracking for wheelchairs to the beach. Having no facility, we investigated costs of hiring outside equipment such as mobile accessible changing units and toilets, ground tracking and shelters. This exceeded £7000 in costs for one day of sessions. Through our passion and drive to overcome barriers which stand in our way, we pulled out all the stops. With a compromise to move location to a beach with less chance to hold good surf conditions and thanks to local community support, we reduced costs to £2500. On the 12th June 2021, with thanks to Give Them a Sporting Chance, we successfully held the event kicking off a



friendship with the Dundee Dragons that promises to open more adaptive sporting opportunities in Scotland. The emotions, plus feedback from these athletes was powerful. Where they never thought it would ever have been possible. Gemma Lumsdaine, a member of the GB Wheelchair Rugby Talent Squad, and active member of Dundee Dragons - is also one of just seven figures from the world of sport to make the ¹⁸[Shaw Trust Disability Power 100](https://disabilitypower100.com/project/gemma-lumsdaine/). Gemma (pictured above) stated on the day, *“I can just sit at the shore and feel the waves and sand. I’ve always wanted to do that.”*

Without question, a purpose-built facility would help meet growing demand and cater for larger groups participating.

We wish to end this report with an incredible film capturing the day, with special thanks to James Stevens, JEGS Media.

The short film of this event can be found here - <https://youtu.be/2kREcJrqfPM>



¹⁷ <https://dundeedragons.net/>

¹⁸ <https://disabilitypower100.com/project/gemma-lumsdaine/>