



**SURFING
ENGLAND**



Surfing England
Adaptive Surfing Project
Spring 2021



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Foreword

Surfing is good for the soul. It's good for our physical and mental wellbeing, it provides us with endless challenge, creative outlet, connection with nature and so much more. It is not too grand a statement to say surfing can and does transform lives. The benefits are perhaps even more pronounced for those living with different levels of mental and physical ability and perhaps never more so than now, as we emerge from the grasp of Covid 19 and start to rebuild our lives. I see first-hand through the English Adaptive Championships, the Adaptive Surfing Team and the charities and clubs supporting adaptive surfing how transformative it is for surfers and volunteers alike.

In England 20% of the population live with disability, yet only just over 1% of the surfing population live with a disability. When the benefits seem so clear, why do we have such a gap? This report has been commissioned to explore that question, to understand the current level of provision for adaptive surfers and the barriers and challenges faced by those who want to start surfing.

We have a vision to see grass roots adaptive surfing grow, to make surfing more accessible to more people across the country. From that grass roots we will find more talent, feeding into the competitive pathway and ultimately supporting our work and that of the International Surfing Association to see adaptive surfing recognised in the Paralympics.

This report is a significant step forward on that journey. I'm full of excitement and hope for the development of adaptive surfing and the immediate impact we can make at home as well as the opportunity for our surfers to shine on the world stage as a future Paralympic discipline.

Ben Powis

Chief Executive Officer, Surfing England

Background

In October 2020 R and T Consulting (R&TC) were approached by Surfing England (SE) with a view to exploring ways in which funding could be secured for various projects which Surfing England wanted to progress but were restricted in doing so through lack of funds.

Early discussion identified a number of potential projects for consideration, these included:

Surf Coaching

- Full review of the surf coach qualifications and pathway (first stages underway).
- Provide a comprehensive offer, that gives coaches a genuine pathway to progress their coaching careers.
- Developing new modules, covering adaptive surfing, mental health, different disciplines etc
- Focus on quality, continues improvement etc.
- Blended learning approach – some online, some classroom and some on the beach.

Pathways to Employment

- Linked to the review of coach qualifications is both the pathway to employment through surf coaching and provision for volunteer coaches.
- Schemes in place to support those in coastal towns, in areas of deprivation, rural communities etc with their journey to becoming a surf coach – which equips them with lifeguarding qualifications as well as coaching qualifications and with the new coaching offer,
- Provide a series of transferable skills into other activity and sports roles.
- On the volunteer side, reliant on volunteers providing their time and keen to see more volunteers taking up formal surf coach qualifications through registered surf clubs.

Adaptive Surfing

- Ambition is to get more people with different levels of physical and mental ability into the water and surfing
- Have more trained coaches able to then spot, develop and nurture talent to progress into competitive adaptive surfing.
- Provide an Adaptive Surfing qualification,
- Support as many coaches as possible to get trained,
- Work with existing surf schools to create a series of adaptive centres of excellence,
- Develop the talent pathway for promising surfers.

- Collaboration will be at the heart of this work and there is huge enthusiasm and some amazing work already underway to support our endeavours.

Campaigns

- Improve diversity in the line-up. There are two areas we want to lead campaigns and projects on:
 - **Women and girls:** Brief taking shape for a 'she shredz' campaign, promoting and supporting the amazing work of our women led clubs and encouraging as many women and girls as possible into the water, into coaching, into judging.
 - **Ethnic diversity:** Despite Polynesian origins, English surfing lacks non white representation. In part, the coastal towns and areas which have waves also have a predominantly white population. But that theory doesn't hold when we consider the line up along the south coast: Bournemouth, Brighton, for example, and most noticeably at The Wave, Bristol. Artificial waves will bring surfing to huge new audiences with Bristol running and Birmingham and London the next two locations to have surf lakes. But the experience from The Wave to date, suggests that without proactive engagement with underrepresented communities, they will stay just that. We have an amazing chance to learn with The Wave, as one of the world's first wave pools, and to then apply that learning to the others that are coming forward.

Junior Surfer Scheme

- Schemed designed for 7 – 17 year olds to take them from first time seeing the ocean to competently catching green waves and executing a series of turns
- The programme was developed a while ago, and whilst the technical content is good, it needs a massive refresh and bringing up to date in terms of its presentation
- Scheme needs rolling out with materials and support to all schools and clubs that work with groms
- The way the scheme is designed and delivered should support ambition for a more diverse line up



After discussion with the SE team, it was agreed that Adaptive Surfing should be prioritise and form the basis of work for the first project.

The decision was based on the amount of enthusiasm which existed amongst those already participating in this sector and the opportunities it could create across a very broad spectrum of society.

It was also apparent anecdotally that people with disabilities were severely under-represented in participation data and that there was a very strong hunch that provision was at best patchy

Baseline and Benefits

What's the Baseline?

Firstly, we wanted to establish the baseline and see if the data available supported our hunches. We wanted to understand what the overall picture looked like, how representative of the population were the surfing participation figures for people with disabilities. The results whilst not a surprise, were not great. There is worked to be done!

How many people are surfing?

The following data sets are taken from the Sport England Active Lives survey and cover the disciplines of surfing, body surfing and kite surfing.

Table One - Total population of people surfing

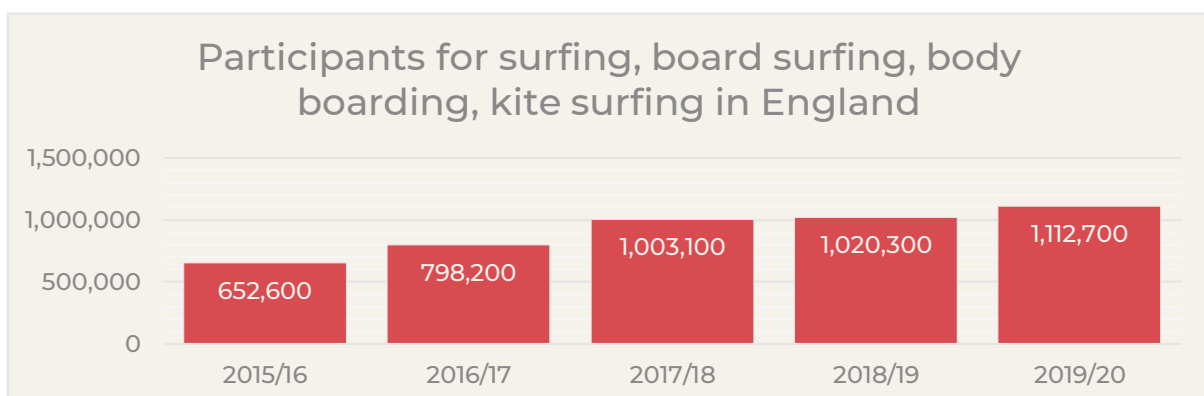
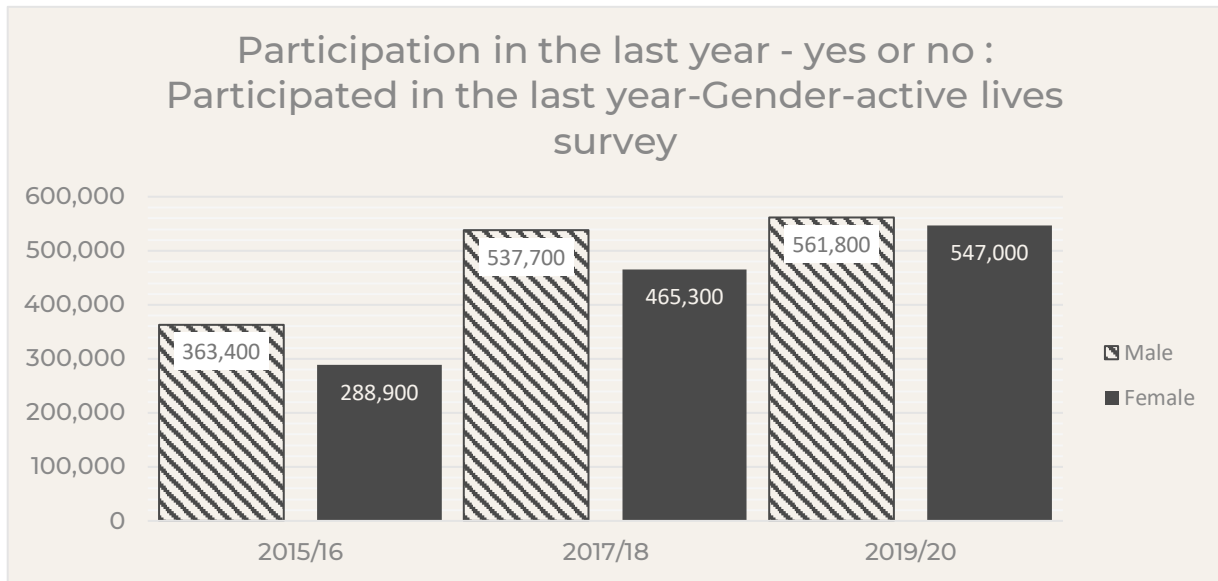


Table Two – Participation divided by Gender



The figures listed are taken from the population of England, based on participation within the last year. Drilling down into the regular participation, at 2 times a month or more we have over 100,000 regular surfers, showing a similar trend in participation. Both sets of figures are likely to be an under representation, as neither set includes the discipline of SUP (Stand Up Paddleboard) which falls under the governance of Surfing.

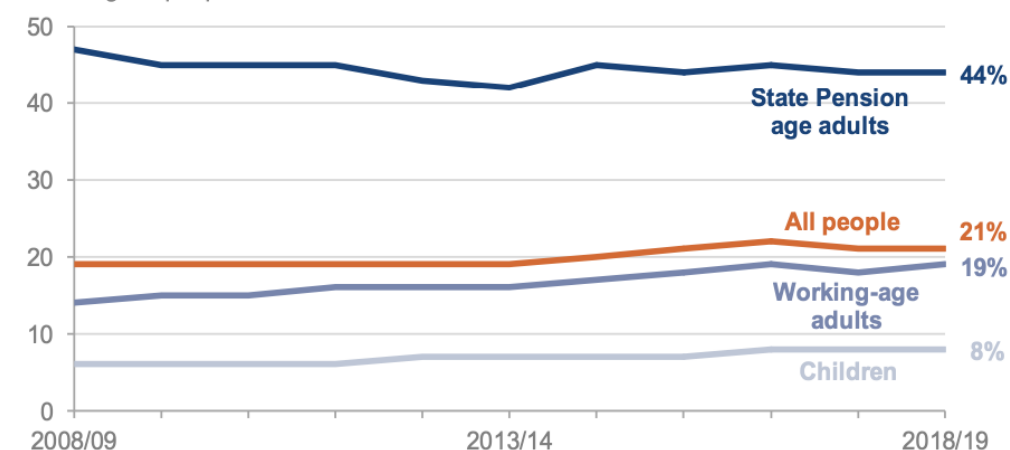
Overall, there is a strong growth in participation with good representation between the genders and an orientation toward a younger demographic.

Disability prevalence

Table Three- Disability Prevalence in the UK population

Disability prevalence by age group, 2008/09 to 2018/19, United Kingdom

Percentage of people



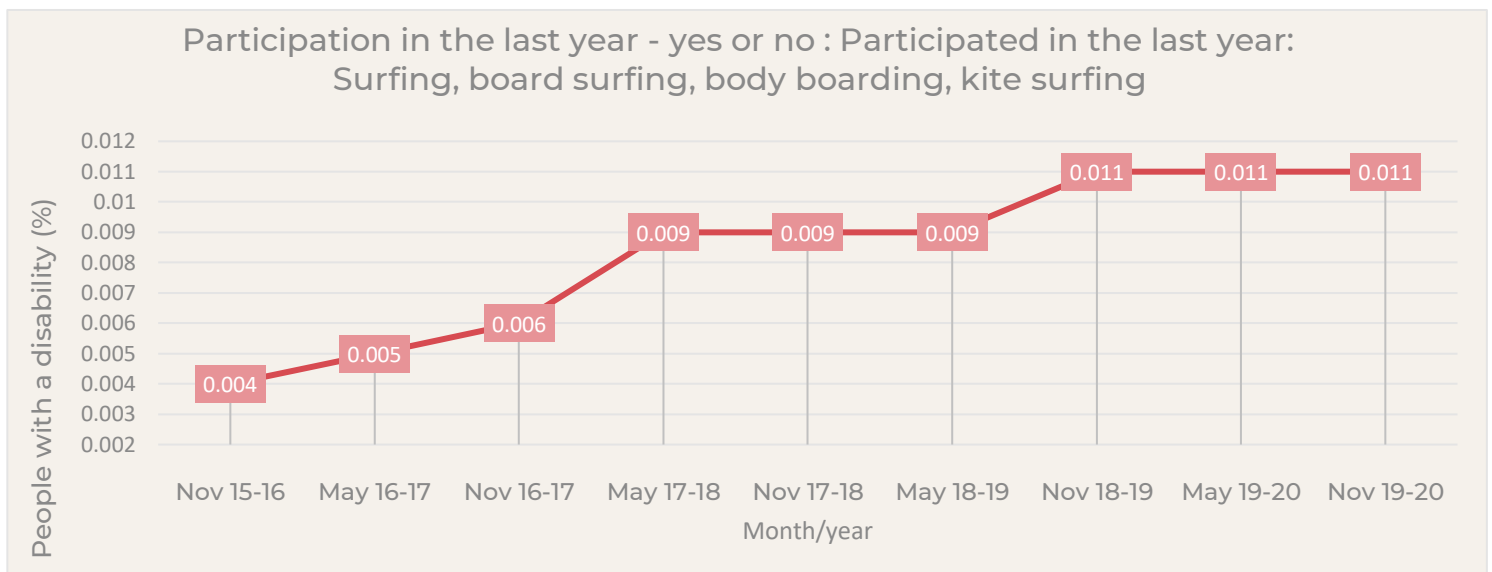
A person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has 'substantial' and 'long term' negative effects on their ability to do normal daily activities. This is the core definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010.

Table Three above shows that in the population, 21% (14.1 million) of people reported a disability in 2018/19.

Given that the data shows 21% of the population reporting a disability in very simple terms that should equate to potentially around 210,000 people with a disability trying surfing. The reality is a lot less than this.

The Active Lives survey shows the number of people with a disability participating in surfing is growing, Table 3 below shows around just 11,000 disabled people trying surfing every year only 1.1% of the total surfing participant, so a whole 20% down on being representative of the total population figures.

Table Four – Participation in surfing by people with a disability



The broad baseline is that there is a stark gap of close to 200,000 or 20% under representation of people with a disability trying surfing. So, what are the reasons and the drivers behind such a large under representation? Before we dived in and started to look at more closely at potential barriers and limiting factors we wanted to understand if there was a wider disassociation between people with disabilities and participation in active sports and lifestyles.

Disability and Activity

The Activity Alliance provided interesting data in this regard which made the gap even more troubling.

- Only 40% of disabled people feel they are given the opportunity to be as active as they would like to be.
Activity Alliance, Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2019-20
- Disabled adults are twice as likely as non-disabled adults to be physically inactive
Sport England, Active Lives Adult Survey November 2017-18
- 81% of disabled people would like to be more active
Activity Alliance, Annual Disability and Activity Survey 2019-20
- In 2012-2014, disabled adults were much more likely than non-disabled adults to report being limited in leisure activities (28% vs 3%). Leisure activities include sport and physical activity, arts and entertainment, outdoor recreation, home-based leisure, visitor attractions and social activities.
Equality and Human Rights Commission, Being disabled in Britain: a journey less equal 2017

These headline figures give a clear indication as to what lays behind the discrepancy in participation, lack of opportunity and real or perceived limitations. The stand-out figure is that **81% of disabled people reported wanting to be more active.**

Beyond these headlines the Activity Alliance data also shows how there are institutional and sociological barriers which need to be considered when looking at ways to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to enjoy surfing.

- Disabled people from lower socio-economic groups are much more likely to be inactive than people from higher socio-economic groups
43% vs 28%
- Seven in ten (70%) disabled people are motivated to be active to improve or maintain their physical health. More than half (54%) are motivated to lose or maintain weight and almost half (45%) to get fit.
- Two thirds (64%) of disabled people would prefer to take part in sport with both disabled and non-disabled people. In 2012, just half (51%) were doing so.

- Inactivity increases with the number of impairments an individual has. 51% of people with three or more impairments are inactive compared to 31% of people with one impairment.
- Almost two thirds (65%) of disabled people rely on benefits to be active. Almost half (47%) are fearful of losing their benefits if they are seen to be more active. More than half (55%) said they were likely to be more active if benefits weren't at risk of being taken away.
- Disabled people who are unemployed are much more likely to be inactive than disabled people who are employed (41% vs 26%).

Understanding the Benefits

Having determined that people with a disability are significantly under-represented in the wider surfing community and made a start towards understanding some of the institutional barriers that exist, and before engaging with the existing disabled/adaptive surfing communities we also wanted to understand the benefits which participation in surfing could bring to people with a disability.

As surfers ourselves we understand the joy that it can bring and the pure emotional connection with nature that being in the sea creates. We know that our mental health is improved, our stress levels are reduced our muscles are exercised and we burn off excess calories.

We understand however that this document will ultimately be used to support funding applications and to a very large extent they require quantitative empirical data showing that such and such action has produced such and such results.

A particularly relevant and detailed study was undertaken with The Wave Project a delivery partner who already work with Surfing England are well established in the SW of England.

The study: **The Wave Project: Evidencing Surf Therapy for Young People in the UK**

(Hannah Devine-Wright, and Cath Godfrey) undertook to examine the following abstract:

https://www.gjcopp.org/pdfs/Devine-Wright_Godfrey-Final.pdf

Sport and exercise are known to have long-term, positive consequences for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the individual and society. In the UK, a quarter of young people experience long-term illness, disability, or mental ill-health. However, understanding the impact of surfing on physical and mental health is complex, not least because there are different pathways by which surfing can improve health and

wellbeing including: playing, being in nature, socialising, taking risks and identifying as a surfer. The Wave Project is a UK-wide surf therapy charity which provides vulnerable young people aged 8-21 with an opportunity to surf once a week for six weeks.

At The Wave Project, clients 'do' surfing with the one-to-one assistance of a volunteer overseen by a surf coordinator. After completing The Wave Project clients are invited to become members of a follow-on Surf Club staffed by volunteers or become a Wave Project volunteer themselves. This paper provides an overview of the Wave Project evaluation programme between 2013-2017. During this period there have been three evaluation phases centred around Wave Project delivery: Spring 2013, Summer 2014-Autumn 2015 and Spring-Summer 2017. Each phase has employed a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the experience of clients, parents/carers, referrers, and Wave Project staff. These methods have included pre- and post-intervention client surveys, focus groups, interviews and logbooks.

The conclusion to the study is as follows:

Over three iterative phases spanning five years (2013-2017), a UK-wide surf therapy evaluation program has developed in collaboration with clients, parents/carers, volunteers, referrers, and staff. By conducting a programme evaluation that adheres to professionally accepted standards of practice (Dalton & Wolfe, 2012), the Wave Project has been able to empirically demonstrate a sustained, positive impact of surfing on vulnerable young people's wellbeing over time.

As a hub for volunteering and through its ambassadorial and social activities, the Wave Project builds community by raising awareness of the positive impact of surfing on mental health and by promoting the shoreline as a pleasurable, accessible place for recreation, learning and wellbeing that is relevant locally, nationally, and internationally. This is important since connected and empowered communities are healthy communities (Public Health England, 2015, p.4).

Participants show transformation in their lives, shifting from isolation to engagement with others through a combination of surfing, volunteering, and mentoring. Clients and their families describe great benefit from this shift and their stories about themselves and their real lived experiences become markedly different. Further unfolding of these stories will be valuable for practitioners, policy makers and academics seeking to understand the health and wellbeing benefits associated with surf therapy.

[The Wave Project: Evidencing Surf Therapy for Young People in the UK (Hannah Devine-Wright, and Cath Godfrey)]

Another particularly relevant study was that carried out by Joao Taborda Lopes et al. in 2015 which considered:

Adapted Surfing as a Tool to Promote Inclusion and Rising Disability Awareness in Portugal:

<https://jsfd.org/2015/05/01/adapted-surfing-as-a-tool-to-promote-inclusion-and-rising-disability-awareness-in-portugal/>

The study considered sports disability and discrimination, Adaptive Surfing as an alternative approach to traditional adapted sports, and Surfing as a Sports Therapy Activity.

It was conducted as an observational study across a number of Portugal's popular surfing beaches over a period of three years 2012 -2015

The conclusions are powerful, and merit being included in full as follows:

Through empowerment, adaptive surfing instructors can provide the opportunity and the necessary space for persons with disabilities to find new ways of dealing with the challenges of daily life. By growing self-esteem and self-confidence, persons with disabilities may feel encouraged to try and find an active role in society in lieu of feeling so burdened by their disability. Surfing allows social interaction and inclusion, especially among children and youngsters because of participants learning and applying social interaction rules, taking on and playing an individual role within a team, and being part of individual socialization. As in other mixed sport groups, in adapted surfers with and without disabilities face challenges together, especially because all of them must leave their "comfort zone" (dry land) and enter an unknown environment (the ocean). Surfing also presents a great opportunity for them to grow in knowledge and mutual appreciation, which increases the empathic skills for everyone involved. Adaptive surfing, as an aquatic activity that takes part in an environment full of stimuli also has numerous therapeutic benefits. It acts as an important therapeutic instrument for physical rehabilitation especially in the orthopaedic and neurological fields.

Persons with disabilities benefit from improved balance and motor coordination and consequently handle medical devices better, making them more autonomous in their daily life. Additionally, adapted surfing activities allow awareness-raising, since these activities serve as a forum for information and discussion for families, friends, and the broader community. People with disabilities can seek information on the causes and treatment of disabilities, how to avoid risk and decreased symptomatology. These sport experiences can raise awareness about the

situation of persons with disabilities, the rights of persons with disabilities and various topics such as health risk factors and primary health care. Adaptive surfing can and should be seen as bringing added value to the prevention and treatment of many pathological conditions because it contributes to social inclusion, improves self-esteem, facilitates teamwork, discourages sedentary lifestyle and exclusion (self and social), as well as stimulates protection of the environment and enhancing the quality of life.

Surfing can play a significant role in the lives of people with disabilities by promoting physical wellbeing, combating discrimination, building confidence, and playing an important role in the rehabilitation process. Four major factors were identified through surfing: Aquatic Environment; Environment – Individual Interaction; Individual – Coach/Therapist Interaction; and also Group Interaction.

We hope in the near future that adapted surfing will gain more attention from governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to obtain more funding to support these programs. More funding would enable researchers to conduct this kind of work more often, and produce more extensive data to support the case for the usefulness of adapted surfing.

[Adapted Surfing as a Tool to Promote Inclusion and Rising Disability Awareness in Portugal Joao Taborda Lopes et al. 2015]

Baseline and Benefits - Conclusions

Perhaps the conclusions were to a large extent self-fulfilling, what did we find?

- Surfing by people with disabilities is massively under-represented,
- There is a latent demand from people with disabilities to be more active,
- There are social and socio-economic barriers which limit active participation by people with disabilities and
- There are profound mental and physical benefits from surfing for people with disabilities.
- Participants show transformation in their lives
- Surfing can play a significant role in the lives of people with disabilities by promoting physical wellbeing, combating discrimination, building confidence, and playing an important role in the rehabilitation process

Unsurprisingly therefore the decision to adopt Adaptive Surfing as a priority project by Surfing England has a sound evidence-based justification.

The Deliverables

The results of the desk-based study and the discussion in the first informal focus group led to further discussion around what the purpose and the deliverables of the work should be.

Purpose:

- The development of a strategy for adaptive surfing in England.
- Create a vision for adaptive surfing that gives the sport a structure from grass roots to elite
- Provide the building blocks upon which we can win funding to grow and develop the sport.

Deliverables:

- A Vision for the growth of adaptive surfing,
- A logical structure of local, regional, and national centres for adaptive surfing
- Creation of a funding framework to support the vision
- Input into the coaching review process and development of an adaptive surfing module / qualification

To move forward it was agreed that the project would need to understand the dynamics within the adaptive surfing communities relating to:

Participant Experience:

- Demand requirements
- Experiences, problems, what works, what's needed
- Barriers to participation

Provider Experience:

- Levels of provision
- Barriers to provision



Figure 1 Participant on Adaptive Roadshow, Surfsteps, 2021

“Participant Experience” would be explored through establishing focus groups of active adaptive surfers, casual use adaptive surfers and surfer’s carers and successfully delivered adaptive surfing programmes.

“Provider Experience” would be determined through using a survey across all Surfing England surf centres, coaches, and providers.

Participant Experience

Demand Requirements and Barriers to Participation

Focus Groups

The first focus group was held at the National Adaptive Surfing Championships at “The Wave” Bristol on October 3rd, 2020.

The group comprised of:

- Andy Joyce: Team England Adaptive Surfing Manager
- Mellissa Reid: Adaptive surfer / athlete
- Natasha Davies: Adaptive Surfer /athlete
- Roger Sheridan: R&T consulting, funding specialist
- Ben Powis: Surfing England

The notes from the meeting are attached as appendix 1 to this report the headlines coming from the discussion were as follows:

The key issues arising were as follow:

- There needs to be a national wide network of adaptive surfing academies which are easily (relative to current provision) for para surfers to access. These academies would be Surfing England accredited surf schools, of which we already have a number providing adaptive surfing lessons and working in partnership with The Wave Project. Potentially these centres could be in:

Region	County	Beach
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South West	Cornwall	Newquay
South West	Devon	Bantham
South West	Devon	Croyde
South Coast	Dorset	Bournemouth
South East	Norfolk	Cromer
South East	Kent	
North East	Yorkshire	Scarborough

- Para surfers have unique requirements:
 - Normally require at least one to one support in the water, often two to one
 - A wide range of specialist adapted equipment should be available (limited supply in the UK)
 - The facility needs to be fully accessible – parking, toilets, entrances etc
 - Travel to and from any venue can be an issue and or a challenge
 - It is normally not possible for para surfers to train on their own outside of coached sessions so a higher number of coached or assisted sessions are required.

- There are quickly available competition opportunities for para surfers. If they have the desire or motivation: newcomers to the sport can find a competitive outlet quite quickly due to the breadth of categories and the comparably low participation rates

- Categorisation takes place at events and is normally an unpleasant experience and can even result in an athlete being told they cannot be categorised and cannot complete

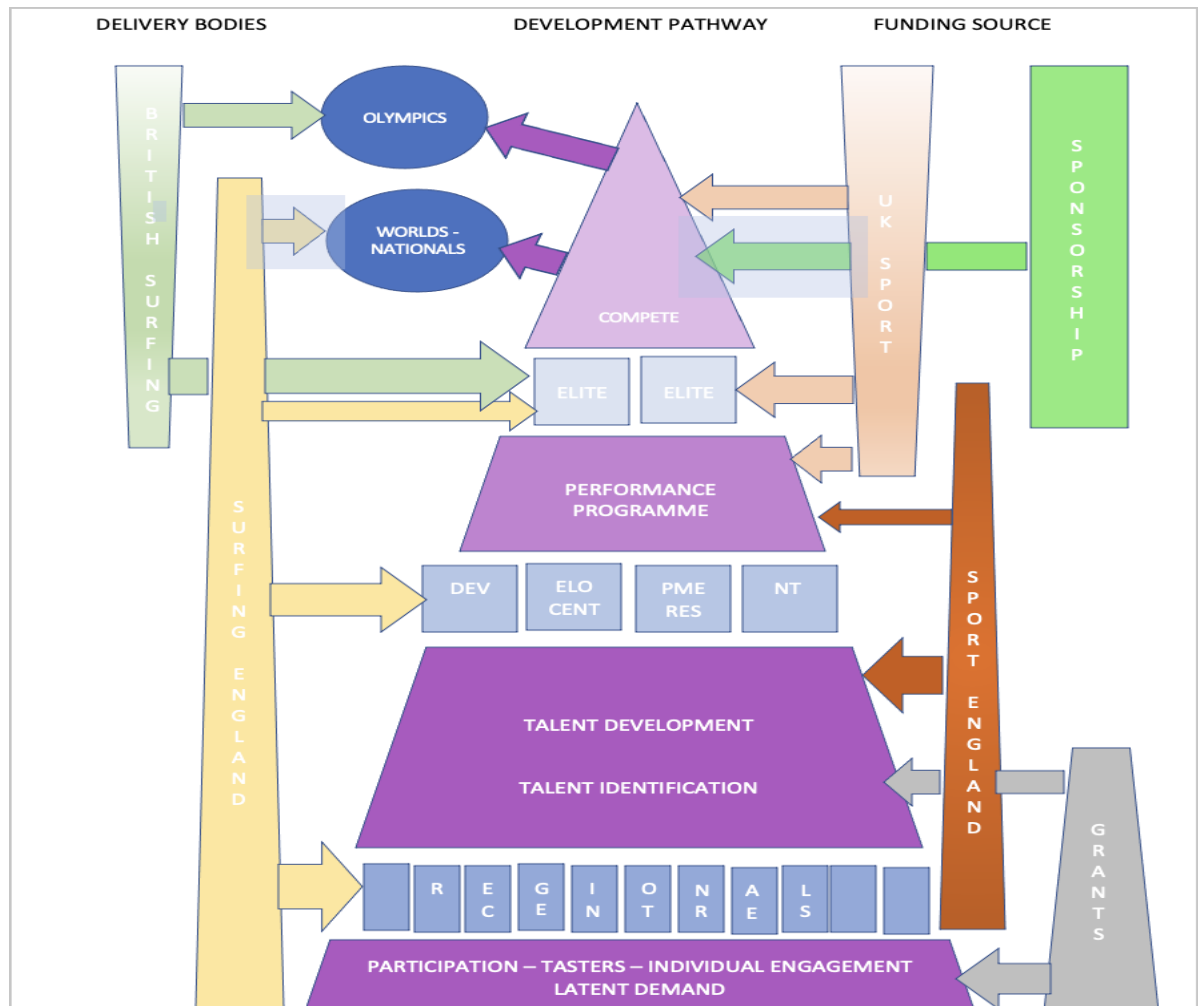
- Surfing is not recognised as a para-Olympic sport so cannot as things stand access funds from UK Sport or British Surfing. Sport England can fund development opportunities and the pathway continuum through Surfing England. However, funding from UK Sport for elite surfing would have ‘leakage’ and so whilst it cannot fund adaptive direct, the support going into coaching etc will benefit the other competitive disciplines

- Para surfing coaching qualifications are an add on to the basic ISA coaching structure. It was felt that perhaps a specific para coaching qualification should be developed?

- *NB: Surfing England are currently (at time of report, Autumn 2021) undertaking a full review of Surf Coach qualifications and the coaching pathway. Adaptive Surfing has been highlighted as key area for development, and a dedicated Adaptive Surfing coach qualification is being considered*
- Costs and logistics for competitions are significant barriers. It is down to the athletes to fund for travel and accommodation. Furthermore, rules relating to coach/athlete relationships can sometimes prohibit coaches staying at the same accommodation as athletes which means that athletes are required sometimes to take an assistant or carer with them which doubles the accommodation and travel costs.
- There is a major sponsorship opportunity in para surfing which is being explored

In addition to the key points listed above there was a lot of discussion around what a para surfing development pathway could look like.

Diagram One: a consensus of the “aspirational pathway”



The discussion from the group also supported the intention to conduct an audit of what was currently available. This would also include an attempt to identify what would be included in an “ideal” centre, which could then be compared against what was available.

In practice following further focus group discussion it became apparent that there was not in fact a single “ideal centre” and that there was rather a scale of provision aimed at the function and ambition of each centre and its users, we will return to this later in the report.

In addition to the informal chat at the Wave we held several focus groups and discussions as listed below:

Venue: Phone Call
 Date: 30th October
 Consultee: Ben Clifford, Surfability UK

Venue: Surf South West, Croyde Bay

Date: 3rd November

Consultees: Ian Bennett, Wave Project and Will Houston, Surf South West

Venue: Zoom Call

Date: 12th November

Consultees: Melissa Swinkels, David Lewis, Ian Bennett, Niki Palmer, Andy Joyce

Venue: Zoom Call

Date: November 12th:

Consultees: Alison Standley, Suzanne Edwards, Andy Joyce, Mark Bowra

In addition, Natasha Davies, Isabel Kingdom and Peg Bennett were unable to attend the focus group sessions but contributed individually.

R and T Consulting thank everyone involved who gave their time freely and who have all committed to support the project as it goes forward, your contributions are hugely appreciated.

Format

The format of the discussion was informal, very much a chat between people with shared passion and goals.

All participants agreed to the sessions being recorded, the recordings are available for all participants and Surfing England if required.

The broad scope of the discussion was as to help inform Surfing England about the needs and requirements of adaptive surfing, explanation about the project had been included in the invitation emails.

The direction of the discussion was determined by the group and loosely covered the areas listed below:

- What do you enjoy about surfing?
- Use three words to describe the experience of surfing to you
- Do you do other sports as well as surfing and if so, does surfing give you anything which you don't get from the other sports
- How often do you surf?
- Is this as often as you would like, if not what is this?
- What is it that stops you surfing as often as you like or what is it that has enabled you to surf as often as you'd like?
- Does surfing bring any physical or mental health benefits to you?
- Do these stay with you after surfing and for how long?
- What physical facilities would you want to see provided at a regional surfing centre of excellence?

- What are the essential qualities that you would expect from staff/volunteers in terms of qualifications attitude and aptitude?
- Do you have a view on how adaptive surfing should and could be promoted?
- Do you see adaptive surfing being an approach which is accessible to people across the broadest disability spectrum including mental as well as physical issues?
- Is there anything beyond the immediate footprint of a facility which would make surfing more accessible to you, such as: land-based training bands or balance boards? What could be included in a equipment library?
- What do you see as the role of Surfing England in this process?
- Do you know of an example of good practice that you think would be worth looking at?

Feedback Summary

- There is no one size fits all
- Provision as described in “Changing Places” should form the minimum expected standard of changing provision
- Independence is a key driver – the ability to participate independently and the independence achieve through participating
- Creating/enabling the ability/facility to be able to turn up and surf without having to book in advance, with multiple volunteers and support apparatus etc has been clearly identified as being a priority target for this project. This is not ignoring the fact that such facility will not be suitable for all adaptive surfers.
- Surfers should be able to progress as far as their ability and desire takes them and not be limited by facilities, resources or attitude
- Centres should be integrated as part of overall centres of excellence not stand-alone adaptive surfing centres of excellence – adaptive surfers are part of the overall surfing community.
- Enabled to “Take Risks Safely”

Themes

Access

Starts with the geographical location and distribution of the centres, travel can present particular problems and difficulties to people with disabilities so accessing a centre in Cornwall is going to be extremely difficult if you live anywhere North of Bristol. We should aim to have centres on each coast around the British Isles, as evenly spread as possible. At present for many a trip to the Wave Project or Surfability is structured around family holidays and limited to one or two occasions a year.

Car parking needs to be available, adjacent to the centre and flat smooth pathways available from the car park into and throughout the centre.

Access from the centre to the sea was identified as a crucial issue. Beach wheelchairs whilst serving their purpose are seen as being uncomfortable and highly visible which draws attention to the users. By far the preferred solution is to have some system which allows the surfers to use their own chair or walking aids to get across the beach onto the water's edge.

Being able to independently access the water's edge was expressed as being hugely important, both in terms of maintaining independence and dignity in the session but also in terms of a big step to making non-scheduled visits a possibility. Surfers should be able to arrive at a centre with friends and be able to go surfing with the minimum amount of "fuss" as possible.

To enable this to happen all aspects of the "ideal centre" need to be in place so that all the advance preparation is part of the infrastructure, management, and regular operation of the centre.

One solution to accessing the water's edge using a day chair, currently being used by Andy Joyce is to have roll-out heavy-duty rubber matting which goes from the changing room, or last hard area on the promenade or back of beach down to the waters edge.

Clearly there are problems around this such as very large tide ranges (Croyde beach for example has a range of up to 300m). Some beaches are accessed through long stretches of soft sand prior to even reaching the high tide mark. These physical issues highlight the importance of beach choice when deciding where to locate adaptive surfing centres.

Access should also include accommodation in the surrounding area, any centre should have a register of what DAT compliant accommodation is available and this should be included with any promotional material or responses for booking requests etc.

Facilities

In line with our aim that the centres should be integrated centres of excellence, the facilities and provision for adaptive surfers should be a seamless part of the centre overall and should enable and encourage independent shared use of the centre facilities, such as: social spaces, meeting rooms, reception space, or café areas, for example.

Changing and Toilet facilities

"Changing Places" units are regarded as the minimum standard the project should aim to achieve. Government legislation requires that all new public building must be equipped with a Changing Places specified unit from 2021 onwards

Picture one: Changing Places Unit



Although achieving a specified changing space in each centre would be seen as a very positive step in the right direction, it should not be regarded as the panacea to achieving excellent user-friendly adaptive surfers changing facilities.

Having a large (1.5m x 1m min) solid, tiled table built at chair height into a corner with grab handles all around in a wet room configuration would greatly improve many adaptive surfers post surf experience.

Cold is a big issue as with surfing in the UK but this is magnified with restricted mobility both in and out of the water. A solid bench as described would enable the surfer to lay/sit securely under a warm shower and would assist in being able to either independently or with limited assistance get changed. Most changing table such as those in the changing rooms spec are not robust enough for a surfer to climb onto from a chair and then manoeuvre out of a wetsuit, for this a solid build shelf/table is required. Grab handles all around would again greatly increase the ability of the user to remain independent. It is essential that all changing area are well heated.

Having an office or desk space which is fully accessible as a base for adaptive surfing administration is also an essential element of a centre of excellence.

General Layout

Throughfares from the entrance of the centre to changing rooms and onto beach access should be flat and as a minimum conform with current standards:

- Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 and Equality Act 2010 (or the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland).
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps>

The regulations should be considered in detail. Key points include: careful use of colours for people with visual impairments on (but not exclusive to): floor colouring, door surrounds, hardware and 3D signs, such as brail signs. Other regulations should be considered for physical adaptations as discussed above regarding other areas such as changing spaces and parking spaces.

Whilst it is acknowledged that meeting the standards can seem daunting and expensive it is also worth highlighting that many changes are simple, low cost and make a huge difference to the adaptive surfers use experience.

Equipment

This is a big issue and one for which there were a range of views which were summarised in the summary bullet point as being “one size does not fit all”.

The media picture of adaptive surfing is often of a chair board being used. Within our groups chair boards received mixed reviews. It was acknowledged that for a profoundly disabled surfer they do provide a “surfing experience” which may otherwise not be accessible and therefore have a valid place in the equipment kit list.

Ben who has been using and developing chair boards for over 10 years expressed concerns that poor board design and instructors that lack sufficient tandem surfing experience can lead to poor or at times dangerous surfing experiences by the participant.

A view which was repeatedly expressed was that the chair board provided a “passive experience”, was “sanitised” and “safe” Our focus group members wanted to be able to experience the thrill of taking risks, they didn’t want to drown but they wanted to be able to feel the adrenalin rush of coming off and being under water.

This does create a challenge in a world which has become, through litigation extremely risk adverse, but it is a challenge which this project, if it is to be successful in its aims, will need to respond to.

Foam top boards with plenty of grab handles provide a good platform for many adaptive surfers who are starting prone. If self-righting buoyancy aids such as those used in big wave surfing were accessible, then the view expressed through the groups was that surfers with severely restricted mobility could choose to use a prone board with minimum help and run the “risk” and excitement of getting spilled and run through the washing cycle. Having someone on hand to grab hold of and re-unit with the board would of course be required but this would be a lot less “intrusive” or

“managed” than being strapped on a chair board with 4 or more helpers guiding the way.

Equipment should allow adaptive surfers to progress as their ability confidence and experience increases. Adaptive surfing equipment is not mainstream and often bespoke which means that it is expensive for an adaptive surfer to purchase. Progression can be quite quick with adaptive surfing which again means that equipment needs to be replaced frequently. It was felt therefore that the centres should have a stock of adaptive specific boards which can be hired the same as a regular surfboard, by adaptive surfers on a “pay and play” basis just like any surf hire shop.

The actual range of boards needed was not really articulated fully and the feeling is that it maybe still in the process of being resolved. Broadly put boards need to be staple, have more than standard levels of buoyancy but also be agile and manoeuvrable. We felt that work was required to identify what would be good comprehensive range of adaptive specific boards, it was felt however that there was a crossover point unique to each surfer at which a regular board would be the preferred choice. To reach this point however the surfer needs to be able to develop their confidence and water skills through use of adaptive equipment. The change from an adapted board to a regular board could be as simple as reducing number of grab handles, reducing volume, and increasing manoeuvrability (decreasing stability) in incremental stages.

It was also felt that having a range of alternative watercraft was desirable such as SUP’s open deck kayaks etc. The thinking around this was that it would provide a broader range of activity suitable for days without surf.

Beyond boards a standard equipment list for each centre could include:

- 2 x Beach wheelchairs
- Roll out matting to get across the beach
- 2 x Transfer sling
- 2 x Transfer board
- 1 x portable, height adjustable changing table.
- 1 x Standing Aid (on turntable)
- Easier entry wetsuits – a range of wetsuits with zips in the length of the arms and legs to facility entry by surfers with severely restricted mobility.

Staffing, qualifications, and attitudes

Everyone agreed that having the right staff either makes or breaks a surfing experience, within a taught or assisted environment. Instructors

should listen to the surfer and allow them to dictate how far they want to go and the levels of risk they are prepared to take.

Experience may be more important than qualifications, but it was acknowledged that in undertaking risk assessments being able to appoint “qualified” staff was important from the operator’s point of view.

Forthcoming ISA qualifications were discussed and questions around how centres might be able to afford to send instructors on disability surfing instructors’ course was identified as an issue. Ideas around funding to create a qualification bursary scheme were considered.

Levels of staffing were discussed; it was broadly agreed that the level of staffing must be proportionate to the level of the session being held. It was felt that at times there is a default position to deploy lots of staff and volunteers which had the effect of the surfer feeling “over resourced” and having freedom restricted.

It was acknowledged that providers need to manage risk, it was felt that perhaps greater communication with the surfer and trusting their ability and judgement would result in a balance being achieved, the desire of the surfer to take risks carefully is a paramount consideration.

As already mentioned, creating the environment to allow the surfer to progress to the limit of their own desire and ability is a key objective of the project. Staff should be available who sufficiently skilled and experienced to support a surfer on that journey. It is unlikely that the same member of staff would progress through all the stages with any one surfer, although that would be great and is perfectly feasible, but if not then there needs to be clearly identified progression routes for the surfer to follow, including provision of staff that are able to “keep up”

Once moving into competition adaptive surfers must have their level of disability graded to compete at the right level. Currently there are no qualified “graders’ in the UK which means that surfers travel to events and are graded when they arrive. This is fraught with problems, surfers arrive and are told they cannot be graded, or there are delays in the grading all this adds to the stress at a time when surfers should be trying to minimise stress levels and get ready to compete. It was felt that having several qualified graders in the UK accessible to the centres would be a major step forward in facilitating higher level competition.

Beyond the obvious

Each discussion included some clear blue sky thinking around what would make something good even better, ideas that were shared included:

Having some means of identifying when those adaptive surfers were surfing within a defined area on the beach, this maybe just something which went alongside the black and white chequer flags so that without be obtrusive would just alert all surfers that adaptive equipment was being used.

In a similar theme the ability to have a quieter (exclusive?) area on the beach was discussed. It was felt that the beach geography would largely dictate this so whereas a beach like Saunton Sands which is a vast sandy beach with many peaks along its length and could accommodate an adaptive surfing exclusive area, beaches like Croyde which are a tight horseshoe bay would struggle as on the beach there is at best just two peaks. This consideration may influence the choice of centre locations

It was felt that too often adaptive surf sessions just involve getting the participant into the water and ignore the sea and surfing awareness aspects which form part of most surf lessons. Being aware of rips and paddle out etiquette etc is extremely important and should form part of adaptive surfing lessons.

In addition to land-based training the idea of having a more holistic approach which might include beach yoga or fitness classes was discussed.

What is surfing to you?

When asked to express what surfing meant to the members of the discussion groups the most common expression was.

Freedom

- From a Chair
- From Gravity
- To take a Risk
- From the Mundane
- From pre-conceptions
- From self and imposed limiting beliefs

Alongside were the words:

- Joy
- Happiness
- Fun
- Independence
- Exhilarating

Conclusions

The discussions and the focus group meetings were eye opening and provided real diamonds of insight in the benefits, and challenges of adaptive surfing.

- Should we have been surprised by the eye-catching headline: “**Take risks safely**”?
- Should we have been surprised that adapted chair boards are seen by severely disabled surfers as being “**boring**”?
- Are we challenged by the idea of “letting” disabled surfers fall and go under water and **experience fear** and adrenalin rush?
- Are we ready to embrace integrated surfing, is “**turn up and surf**” a reality to which we should aspire for everyone?
- Should we have been surprised by the amount of commonality between what surfing means to para surfers and able-bodied surfers?

The discussions and feedback showed us that we are all surfers and a shared and common love for what it is and what it can bring.

Surfers around the world have described themselves as belonging to a single tribe, whatever the water a wave is a wave and to catch and ride it is an amazing experience you are skimming across the surface of a moving mass of molecules you are travelling in three directions at the same time, along the wave, down the face and towards the shore. The wave you ride is unique no one else will ever surf it there will never be an identical wave. Your experience and joy are intrinsic, and as is often the case what is most personal is also the most universal.

The challenge then is to address that 20% deficit, we know what disabled surfers need we know what is the difference which will make the difference.

What sort of shape are we in to respond and make real change?



Figure 2 Natasha Davies and Mark Hagger, Adaptive Roadshow, Surf Steps, 2021

Provider Experience

Levels of and Barriers to Provision

National Survey

The next phase of the study was to launch a questionnaire to all centres, instructors, and delivery organisations, this included both members and non-members of Surfing England.

A summary of the results is attached as Appendix 2.

The survey itself can be found on Survey Monkey using the following link.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/_2F9VZWxonvM2_2FSvjedODO5BQ6V0914gSk7dLFNeIV0d9V6NR_2FYRRirEZMhKxLhFUO?ut_source=my_surveys_list&

Method

The survey was created using the web platform Survey Monkey. All Surfing England registered clubs were sent a direct link to the survey and the link was posted on all Surfing England's social media outlets.

Forty-five surveys were directly distributed, and an unknown number were directly accessed via SM.

A total of 38 completed surveys were returned

Geographic distribution of responses

The geographic distribution of the returns showed a good representation across the UK with most of the surf producing coasts being represented as follows:

- Southwest – 16 = 46%
 - Newquay 5
 - NQY
 - The wave project -
 - Escape Surf School
 - Big Green Surf School
 - Surf Sanctuary
 - Perranporth 2
 - Perranporth Surf School
 - Pegleg Surf Coaching
 - Redruth – Cornish Foundation NHS Trust
 - Exeter – Devon and Cornwall Police – Opsurfwell
 - Bristol - Wave Garden
 - Wadebridge – Georges Surf School
 - Devon - Devon and Cornwall Police
 - Woolacombe - Woolacombe Surf Centre
 - Par – Coastal crusaders

- Croyde – Surf South West
- South -4 = 11%
 - Sandown - Apex surf
 - Chichester – Natural surf school
 - Ringwood – Shaka Surf
 - Cirencester - Apex
- South East – 1 = 3%
 - Broadstairs – Kent Surf School
- East Coast – 1= 3%
 - Cromer – Glide Surf School
- North East - 4 = 11%
 - Newcastle – South Shields Surf CIC
 - Tynemouth – Tynemouth Surf Company
 - Scarborough – Scarborough Surf School (Wave Project) -.
 - Nailsea – Christian Surfers - Wave Project and Surfability across the UK
- Inland – 2 = 23%
 - Stoke on Trent – Wave Garden Cove
 - Bristol - The Wave - Wave Garden
 - London - Resurface UK
- Islands – 1 = 3%
 - Jersey – Healing Waves

Clearly there is an over representation from the South West which mirrors where the majority of participation occurs. The South and East Coasts are also represented, and it is important to look closely at the provision here given the proximity to the more densely populated areas of England.

Wales, Scotland, and Northern Island are not represented in this study as they have their own Regional Governing Bodies. It is hoped that the opportunities generated through the Surfing England project will enable similar projects in the other national regions.



Headline Responses:

Current Adaptive Surfing provision

Of the 38 replies 23 (67%) said that they currently run some form of Adaptive Surfing programme

Within these 23, in addition to meeting physical needs, also responded as providing for the following mental health, learning, sight and hearing needs.

Condition	Centres
PTSD/Mental Health therapy	9
Autistic/Autism/Downs Syndrome	8
Deaf/Visually impaired	2
Cerebral Palsy	2
Specialist schools	2

The number of adaptive surfers using centres on an annual basis are as follow:

- 20% - 1 to 5
- 28% - 5 to 10
- 12% 11 to 25
- 20% 26 to 50
- 20% more than 50

These figures show that in those centres catering for adaptive surfing needs, nearly half (48%) have less than 10 adaptive surfers using the centre on a regular basis.

The percentage of 32.5%, nearly a third of the centres not providing for any adaptive surfing needs is disappointing but the reasons are not surprising and show where work can be focused.

Of those that don't run any adaptive sessions the reasons are as follow:

- Lack of facilities 40%
- Cost of adapting facilities too high 10%
- Insufficient demand 20%
- Instructor -participant ratio too high 20%
- Lack of understanding/knowledge 50%
- Insurance issues 0%

Lack of understanding (50%) is possibly the least costly barrier to address, putting together an information pack combined with appropriate adaptive surfing specific qualifications would go a long way to addressing those issue and freeing up use of centres which are accessible in other ways but not currently being used.

Lack of facilities is more of a challenge and should form part of the hierarchy response so that it is possible to focus on where providing facilities will have the most impact and contribute most significantly to the overall aims of the adaptive surfing programme

Current facility levels

The current levels of provision for disabled users are disappointingly low:

The results show that:

- 74% have either no or limited wheelchair access
- 70% of centres either have no or only partial provision for people with restricted vision
- Just 40% have public spaces designed to meet the requirements of disabled users and only
- 25% have changing provision which would meet the minimum standards set by "Changing Spaces"

Evidently there is a big gap to bridge between where we are now and the aspiration to be able to facilitate drop and use access at all centres.

Staffing

The picture regarding staffing is more encouraging:

- 95% of staff have at least ISA 1
- 59% have a specific adapted surfing qualification

- 68% have staff with over 2 years' experience in taking adaptive surfing lessons
- 95% of centres have identified safeguarding and welfare staff

Reliance on Volunteers is high, 61% had a volunteers' network, slightly concerning was that 48% said that they didn't offer their volunteers any training

Equipment

Levels of equipment are disappointingly low

- 31% had a beach wheelchair
- 23% had a prone board
- 81% of respondents said that they had high volume boards which suggests given the absence of other equipment that a large part of adapted surfing provision is delivered using high volume boards.
- Sadly only 30% hire out any of their equipment for casual use.

Locations

Some brilliant results from the survey indicate that the locations of centres meet a lot of the needs of adaptive surfers.

- 68% of the respondents are based in a permanent building which is higher than we may have anticipated given that a lot of beach-based lessons are delivered from temporary structures.
- 84% are within 1km of the beach with 67% either on the beach, in the beach car park or on the beach promenade.
- 73% have flat access from the car park to the centre
- 67% have flat access from the centre to the beach
- At 73% of centres, it is possible to propel a beach specific wheelchair from the centre to the beach, with 60% being within 100m of the high tide mark.
- Nearly 60% are based on gradually shelving beaches and just over 80% are sandy. Only 10% do not have RNLI lifeguard cover and 31% are based on wide open beaches.

Overall, the physical geography of the centres is practical and should not present barriers to a comprehensive network of provision.

Current Regional Centre Options

We were keen to see if out of all the responses we had any centres which we could say were already meeting the criteria for a Regional Centre that we had come to with the focus group, so we applied the following filters to that data:

- Is the centre a permanent building?
- Disabled car parking within 100m
- On beach or Promenade
- Flat access to beach
- Self-propelled access to water
- Currently running courses
- Has experienced staff
- Has equipment
- Has adapted changing space
- Has adapted social spaces
- Has sheltered gently shelving beach

Applying all the above criteria to the responses yields two centres:

- The Wave Bristol
- Surf South West – Devon

Removing the filter for carpark adjacent to the centre yielded an additional centre

- NQY Surfing centre – Cornwall

From first-hand knowledge, Surf South West is our local school, we know that the facilities whilst strictly meeting the criteria are limited and require improvement. Despite this the work being done here is exemplarily and on its own would lend us towards identifying it as a potential Regional centre.

The Wave at Bristol does in many ways set the bar and it's what we would like to be able to achieve with our Regional coastal centres.

Reading through the responses there are two further centres which have potential to being potentially Regional centres these are:

Kent Surf School – Broadstairs
Tynemouth Surf Company - Tynemouth

These results are quite encouraging as if taken together they represent a reasonable first stage coverage of England creating accessible centres in the South West, the South and the North East.

As more Wave Garden centres are developed then these will also provide potential inland Regional centres accessible to large population centres.

Coleshill - Birmingham
Tafford – Manchester

Chart One, below shows the distribution of potential Regional Centres across England. Whilst the coverage is reasonable especially in the South West and the West of the mainland the South Coast and the Mid-East coast are clearly lacking provision.

Surf Steps in Bournemouth run by Andy Joyce provides a comprehensive programme for adaptive surfing. Andy is also the England Adaptive Surfing Team manager. So, whilst the facilities are quite basic and would represent an significant capital investment to bring them up to the required standard, Surf Steps would be an ideal candidate to fill that south coast gap in the Regional Centres network.

Glide Surf School at Cromer is the best positioned to address the deficit of centres along the East coast. Again, the centre, run by Ben Kewell does currently provide for adaptive surfing but is also run from a temporary facility based on the promenade and would require significant capital investment to create a Regional Centre.

Chart One – Potential Regional Centre Locations



Key:

Potential Natural Coastal Regional Centre Locations

- NQY – Newquay
- Surf South West – Croyde
- Kent Surf School – Broadstairs
- Tynemouth Surf Company – Tynemouth



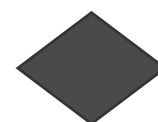
Potential Artificial Inland Regional Centre Locations

- Bristol
- Manchester
- Birmingham



Potential Natural Coastal Regional Centres (Currently with temporary facilities)

- Surf Steps – Bournemouth
- Glide Surf School - Cromer



The Way Forward

The results of the National survey provide understanding of the under representation of disabled people surfing compared to the general population. Although the percentage of centres providing some form of adaptive surfing was reasonably high at 67% the reality is that this provision is patchy and largely delivered from unsuitable facilities and is dependent on basic equipment, goodwill, and compromise.

There are however four positive themes which emerge:

- 1) There is a basis for a national series of regional centres
- 2) Provision of a small amount of basic equipment across many centres would enable measurable increases in accessible adaptive surfing
- 3) Addressing fears and lack of understanding will unlock access and participation
- 4) The Wave Project is well positioned to provide an umbrella – non facility based adaptive surfing model

These four themes can be developed into three distinct programmes and form the basis of future funding applications

Regional Centres

Step One – Commitment

- Confirm willingness to participate from identified centres
- Agree with all centres basic provision requirements based on results from phase one.

Timescale: 3-4 months

Step two – Costing

- Undertake high level cost estimates across all centres to meet identified standards
- Prioritise phasing of work programme based on areas of highest return and benefit.
- Where required, liaise with landowners to confirm permission to develop
- Where required identify land costs
- Soft market test sector for construction

Timescale: 2-3 months

Step Three – Funding

- Produce National ‘Regional Centres’ development plan showing potential increases in participation, individual and societal health and well-being benefits
- Submit funding application to variety of sources including but not limited to:
 - Host Local Authorities: Developer contributions – section 106 funding
 - Sport England: Strategic facilities Fund – A unique opportunity for LA’s to work collaboratively to submit a joint bid
- Commercial Investment: Explore the opportunity for branded centres “Excel Regional Centres”
- NLCF Growing Great Ideas

Timescale: 6 months

Step Four – Deliver

- There are several different delivery options from a single project delivered through a single contractor through to individual projects based at each centre.
- Options will be determined largely through the costing steps and the degree of joint working between LA's.
- Potentially a stand-alone company possibly a CIC could be formed to take ownership of those facilities which at present are in Local Authority ownership or on Local Authority land. Such an approach would release partnership funding contribution to the project through either land or asset value

Timescale: - Dependent on delivery model 12-24 months

Equipment and Understanding - “Kit and Coach”

Outline:

Link the provision of basic kit to up-take on the new SE adaptive surfing coaching award. Any centre which processes two coaches through the scheme will be receive a basic kit box contents to be determined but along the lines of:

Two prone boards with straps
One transfer sling
One transfer board
Range of adapted wetsuits
One beach wheelchair

Step One: Determine Scale and costings

Contact all centres that have responded with ‘Lack of Equipment’ and “Lack of understanding” and determine buy-in to a ‘Kit and Coach’ scheme.

Multiply number of signed up centres by individual kit costs

Time scale: 2 months

Step two: Determine delivery model

Different delivery options possibly through SE direct or through a charitable organisation possibly the Wave Project acting as SE agent but able to access charitable funding, with SE contributing free coach education as partnership funding and Governing Body support

Time scale: 2 months

Step three: Funding Application

NLCF:

Awards for All

Reaching Communities

Partnerships

UK portfolio

Bringing People together – would need a partner from Wales or Scotland

Time scale: 4 months

Step Four: Delivery

Month by month roll out of programme

Time scale: - Dependent on the scale of the project

The Wave Project

The Wave Project are well respected and delivering through a number of centres across England.

The results of both phases one and two tend to suggest that their role could be enhanced and supported by SE. The Kit and Coach Scheme listed above is an example of how this could be approached. There is however the possibility to look a wider relationship in which SE and the WP work together to develop a mobile non-facility-based set of physical and human resources.

There will be centres and individuals which do not fall into either the Regional or the Kit and Coach projects. This maybe simply due to the number of centres and providers in one area such as Newquay. It may also be due to the size of operation, a one- or two-person delivery that doesn't have aspirations to grow.

The WP works with these "independent" centres to provide appropriate levels of kit and qualified instructors as required to deliver adaptive surfing programmes

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This does go against the aspiration that a disabled surfer should be able to contact any centre and be able to drop in and hire kit and surf independently. It does however respond to the stark reality that for the immediate future this will not be possible and that having access to kit on a pre-booked or through a lesson would be a reasonable stop gap whilst general provision is improved.

This project requires further discussion to form and develop.

