

Junior Surf Series Consultation – Summary & Actions for 2026

Ahead of announcing changes to the Junior Surf Series, Surfing England carried out a consultation survey with competitors and families. The questions focused on fairness, access, development opportunities, and the future direction of the series. The feedback received directly informed the final 2026 format.

1. Becoming a Qualification Route for National Championships

What we asked:

Are you supportive of the Junior Surf Series becoming a qualification route for the English National Surfing Championships?

What we heard:

- Strong overall support for using the JSS as a qualification pathway
- Clear preference for a system based on performance rather than “fastest finger first” entry
- Some concerns about pressure on younger surfers and the need to keep the series welcoming

What we’ve actioned for 2026:

- The JSS will act as a qualification route for U12 and U14 National Championship places
 - The series will retain its inclusive, developmental focus, with no major changes to format or beach experience
 - Wildcards remain in place to reduce pressure and allow flexibility
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2. Balance Between Qualification and Wildcards

What we asked:

Does the balance of half the National Championship spots via JSS and half via wildcards feel right?

What we heard:

- General agreement that a 50/50 split feels fair
- Strong emphasis on the importance of wildcards to account for:
 - bad conditions
 - missed events
 - Geographical location from events

What we've actioned for 2026:

- A 50% JSS qualification / 50% wildcard allocation
 - Automatic qualification for 1st and 2nd place finishers at each JSS stop
 - Clear rollover of qualification places if a surfer has already qualified
 - Commitment to transparent wildcard criteria
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3. Access, Fairness & Event Entry

What we asked:

Do you have any suggestions for improving fairness and access?

What we heard:

- Continued concern around oversubscribed events
- Support for systems that reduce disadvantages for those who miss out
- Requests for clarity for non-club-affiliated surfers

What we've actioned for 2026:

- A ballot system for the first JSS stop to ensure equal access
 - A priority system for subsequent events, favouring surfers who previously missed out
 - Continued club allocations, while keeping routes open for non-affiliated surfers
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4. Competition Experience & Judging

What we asked:

How can the competition experience be improved?

What we heard:

- Desire for greater judging consistency
- Interest in learning more about judging criteria
- Observations around judging positions and visibility

What we've actioned for 2026:

- Nationals-level Head Judges leading every event
 - More consistent judging panels across the series
 - Greater focus on education and clarity around judging decisions
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5. Development Pathway & Future Growth

What we asked:

Any other suggestions for improving the Junior Surf Series?

What we heard:

- Overwhelming demand for U16 and U18 opportunities
- Recognition that JSS is a strong entry point, but a gap exists after U14
- Support for more events, better windows, and long-term growth

What we've actioned for 2026:

- Strengthened the meaning and value of U12 and U14 competition through qualification
- Increased event resilience with earlier starts and more back-up dates
- Continued support for clubs to run their own competitions, helping widen opportunities beyond JSS
- U16 and U18 provision acknowledged as a key area for future development
- We're actively seeking sponsorship to be able to run U16 and U18 events, but we can't go ahead with these events until we secure funding

Our Commitment

The feedback showed strong appreciation for the Junior Surf Series and the community around it. While recognising concerns around pressure and access, the 2026 format has been shaped to:

- Reward commitment and performance
- Maintain inclusivity and enjoyment
- Provide clearer progression within the national pathway
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We would like to thank everyone who took the time to contribute their views. Your feedback has directly influenced the direction of the Junior Surf Series for 2026 and beyond, and we're so excited to see the Series develop this year.