

# SUPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

## PLANNING YOUR FIRST SUP ADVENTURE:

By Chris Brain

## A THRIVING FEMALE COMMUNITY

#ShePaddles

## COACH NEEDED?

By Dana at Active360

## A CHAT WITH...

India Pearson

## QUICK RELEASE BELTS

By Louise Royle

## BC member's special

Emma Love's WW conversations with...

Jessica Phillip, Jenna Sanders, Lisa Boore, Charlotte Louise, Beth Kirby, Julie Vigor, Louise Royle & Joyce Johnston



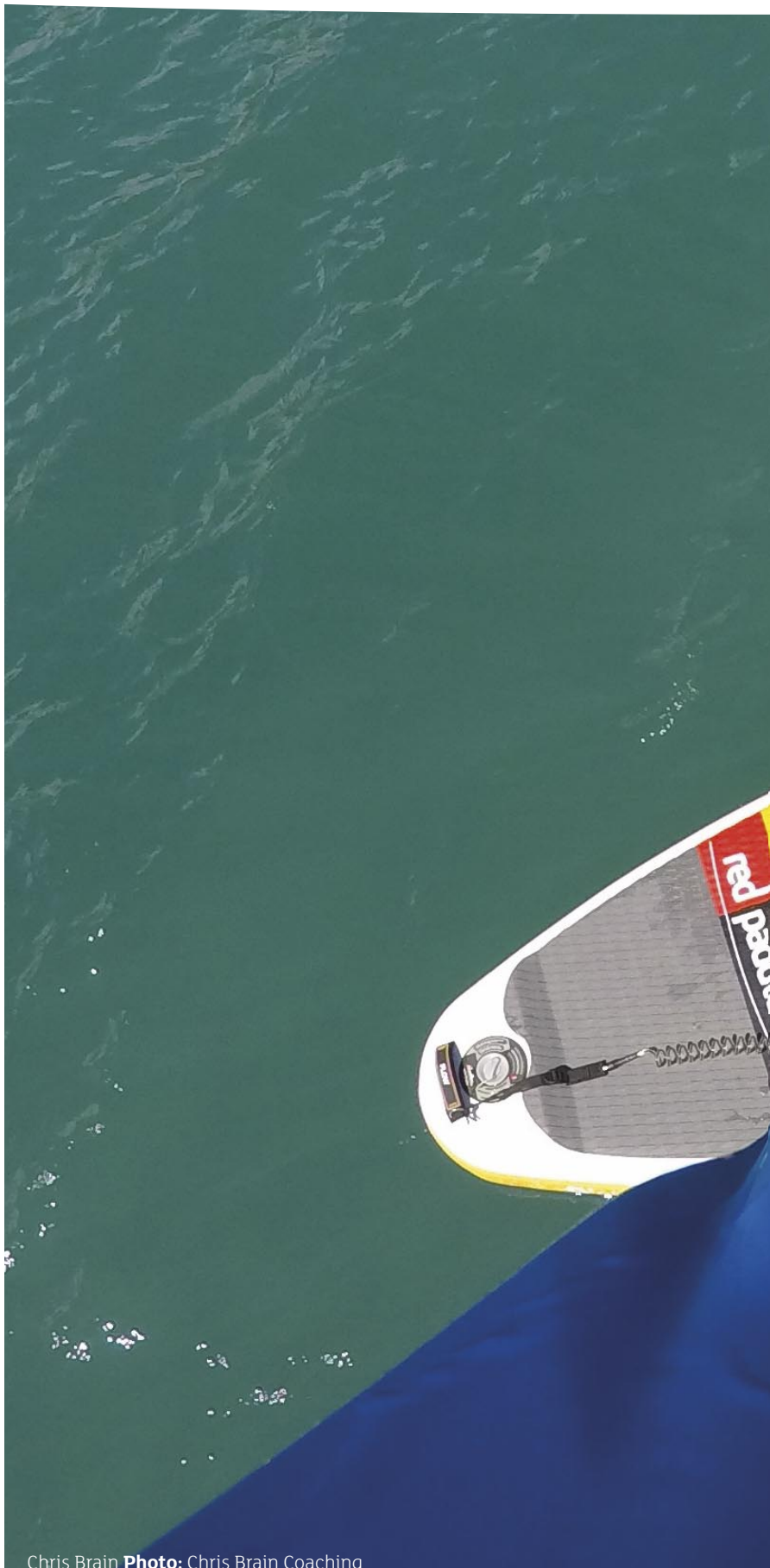
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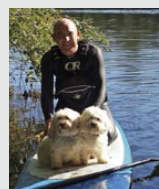
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# Planning your first SUP ADVENTURE

**Words:** Chris Brain

**Pics:** Georgina Maxwell, Sonja Jones, Matt Haydock, Red Paddle Co and Chris Brain

For many paddlers, once you have practiced the fundamental skills required for SUP like paddling forwards, turning, steering and getting back on the board, you might feel like you are ready to take it a step further. Heading out on your first SUP adventure is a fantastic milestone in your personal paddling journey, but moving from the safety of being close to shore or a fixed location and going somewhere further can be a challenging step. There can be lots of elements to consider and knowing where to start and what to think about can be difficult, especially if you don't have any other paddling experience to lean upon.

To help you plan an awesome SUP experience, I have identified some considerations and key questions that you will want to ask yourself before you set off. You can think of this as a checklist to work through to make sure you have covered all the key aspects to planning your trip.

Do remember that if you are really new to on the water adventures, even a short trip in what may seem like a straightforward location can feel very exciting and that most paddlers' first trips are done in sheltered environments with fewer hazards and risks.

## What experience do I have?

Considering your current experience is a key place to start when planning a SUP adventure. If you're starting from scratch then it is best to enjoy taking small successful steps first and to build up from there, rather than throwing yourself in, quite literally at the deep end.

If you are just getting started with SUP it can be difficult to benchmark your personal skills especially if you have no one else to compare yourself to, making it hard to work out how competent you are and what kind of trip may be suitable. You may feel like you have good board control when you are paddling and can make it go where you want to, but are these skills still strong with small waves, some wind or after an hour of paddling?

## Consider

- Can I effectively move my board forwards and steer and control it easily?
- Am I able to change direction and to accelerate my board if I need to avoid a hazard?
- Can I paddle kneeling and prone in case I need to?
- If I fall in the water can I swim back to my board and climb back on easily?
- Am I happy being in deeper water and potentially further away from the shore?

A good place to start could be a canal journey, as they typically allow for easy access and egress and are not affected in the same way by the wind as maybe an open water journey could be.

### Consider

- Can I effectively move my board forwards and steer and control it easily?
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### What do I want to do?

Once you have the SUP bug, dreaming about amazing SUP adventures can occupy your thoughts throughout most of the day! When you plan your trip, you need to consider what your motivations are for the trip are and what you want it to feel like. It's perfectly fine to want to use your SUP to enable a slightly more adventurous picnic, but of course it could also be used to facilitate a much longer physical challenge too. Remember that starting small is probably safer (and more enjoyable) at the start, you wouldn't take up running and set off for a marathon on your first time out would you?

### Ask yourself

- Do I want a relaxed and gentle experience?
- Am I looking for a physical challenge?
- Do I want to explore new locations from the water?
- What kind of distance do I want to cover?
- How long do I want to be out for?

### Who am I going with?

Whilst a solo adventure may be a great future goal, there is definitely some security to heading out with peers and/or more experienced paddlers initially. Other paddlers can help with planning, assist with decisions

along the way and can add to the security of being on the water if you are less experienced.

### Think about

- What can I contribute to the journey?
- What can others contribute to the journey?
- Am I directly responsible for anyone on the journey e.g. children and family and can I look after them in this environment?
- Am I capable of looking after myself as well as supporting the others at the same time?

### Where am I paddling?

All of the previous questions will directly influence where you can head to for your SUP adventure. The key point when choosing the location is that the environment must match the skills and experience of the paddlers. If the environment/location is too challenging or too advanced for the group, this is when issues will typically arise.

You may well already have a venue or a trip in mind, but if you are unsure where to paddle the 'Go Paddling' website has a whole host of information aimed at paddlers getting out and planning trips for the first time in the UK. The website has trail maps, paddling challenges and paddlepoints, which allows you to search for access and egress points and points of interest too.

A good place to start could be a canal journey, as they typically allow for easy access and egress and are not affected in the same way by the wind as maybe an open water journey could be. There are also some great stretches of river that make amazing SUP venues, but a bit of care and research must be done beforehand to ensure that the river is suitable for your







skills and experience. In England we can gain this information from the flood warning information service and links to information about Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland river levels can also be found too. If you are outside of the UK a quick online search should bring up the relevant information for your region.

Of course many other paddlers love to take their boards to salt water venues and there are incredible opportunities for play in estuaries, at the beach or on the coast. These venues do have additional considerations as you must take into account the tide and the effect it will have on the trip. Even the slowest moving tide could mean that you may not be able to paddle against it and cannot safely return to land.

Finally, one of the biggest considerations when choosing where to paddle must be the expected weather conditions. This can affect the direction you choose to go, the time of day you might want to set off, how you dress and the kit you take with you. Wind can have a huge effect on SUPs and you don't want to be in a position where you spend the day battling against it. Forgetting to check the weather forecast can lead you quickly into a dangerous situation, so going online to check beforehand is critical. There are some great websites and apps available and a good one, which can give us all the information we need is called 'Windy'. A few minutes spent checking when you are planning could save you plenty of time and trouble!

Even the slowest moving tide could mean that you may not be able to paddle against it and cannot safely return to land



## Have you thought about

- If the intended trip matches your skills and experience?
- Taking a map?
- Where will you get in and out and are there points to escape along the way?
- Gaining a recent weather forecast?
- If the wind is blowing in your favour or will it be against you?
- If the wind is blowing you towards the shore or away from it?
- Checking the tide times?
- Checking the river levels?

## Are there any hazards or risks?

Understanding what you will experience along the trip is critical to identifying hazards and risks that you may need to deal with as you paddle. As you follow your journey on a map, look for points where you are further away from the shore or places you will need to cross a larger expanse of water. If you do this, not only will you be more exposed to the wind, but you could also come across larger craft which may not be able to avoid you as easily.

If you are paddling on a river you may also come across weirs, which can create powerful and lethal currents in the water. Keep your eyes peeled for sudden changes in the height of the water appearing in the distance (horizon lines) and avoid going too close, as you can easily end up in a position where you can't paddle away from them.

On many navigable sections of water, hazards can be marked on the map or identified with signage at water level, however, this is not a given. Paddler guidebooks can be a great source of information and you can always ask online to see if anyone else has already paddled where you are planning to go and can give you up-to-date information too.

## Do you know

- If there are any potential hazards during the trip?
- If there are any moments where you may need to be more aware of your surroundings?
- How far away from shore you will typically be?
- If there are other boats and craft on the water?
- If these boats will be making waves that might knock me from my board?
- If you can get off the water if you need to?

## What equipment do I need?

Your first SUP experience can most likely be completed with almost any board and

minimal additional equipment. However, if you're planning to head out for a longer trip, it can be worth considering if your board is suitable for the distance.

Longer boards designed for touring are typically more manageable when covering distance and often have space for a small amount of equipment. Taking time to check the condition of your board, making sure it is pumped up to a suitable pressure (if using an inflatable) and examining the condition of your leash will be time well spent. Remember that your leash is part of your safety kit and there really should be no need to remove it when you are out on the water. Many SUP paddlers may choose not to wear a PFD (buoyancy aid) but if you do this, you need to be wearing your leash at all times, confident in the water, a good swimmer and able to self rescue back onto the board with ease. If you're not sure, then wearing a PFD will bring a bit of extra reassurance and a simple one that fits well is likely to be all you need.

For your journey you also might want to pack extra kit, which you should be able to store on your board in a small dry bag. Some of the contents of this kit could be regular things that you know you will need such as your lunch and a drink but other things could be packed for those 'just in case' moments.

I typically advise paddlers on what they need to take on a trip: we need to be able to fix people, feed people, keep warm and call for help. This means we want to consider some kind of first aid kit, spare food, spare layers, maybe an emergency shelter as well as having your phone/radio available to hand.

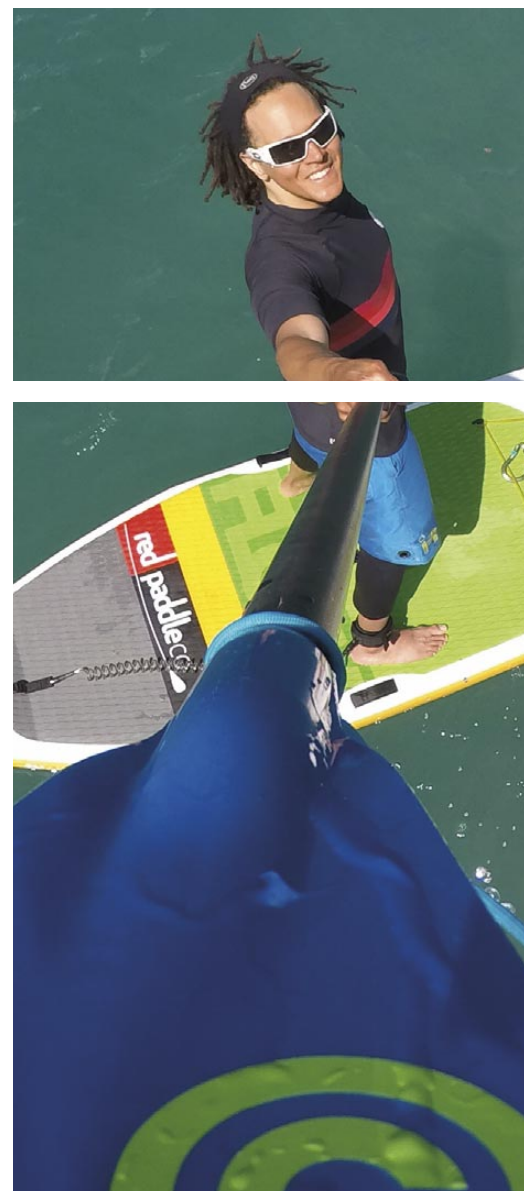
## Consider

- Is my board suitable for the trip distance/duration?
- Have I checked the condition of my board and paddle?
- Have I checked the condition of my leash (including the velcro)?
- Will I be wearing a PFD?
- Is my clothing suitable for the trip and will I be warm enough if I fall in?
- What emergency equipment do I have?
- Can I carry this equipment on my board?
- Can I give my location if I need to?

## What will I do if there is a problem?

Even with the best planning and preparation, you could still come into difficulties along the way. If you have chosen a more straightforward journey with a sheltered environment, then the solutions to problems

If you're planning to head out for a longer trip, it can be worth considering if your board is suitable for the distance.





## Chris Brain Coaching

Chris has been kayaking, canoeing, SUPing and coaching for the last 15 years and runs his own business, Chris Brain Coaching, delivering paddlesport coaching, safety and rescue courses and REC First aid training.

Chris would like to thank Red Paddle Co, Pyranha kayaks, Palm Equipment and Go Kayaking Northwest for making fantastic kit and their continued support.

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are likely to be fairly simple. However, if you have been more ambitious with your trip then you may have some bigger challenges on your hands. Time spent practicing paddling whilst kneeling or helping someone back onto their board before you go on your trip, will be time well spent.

Making sure you have covered some of the basics like telling someone where you are going and what time you are setting off and coming back will go a long way towards the trip being successful.

### Ask yourself

- Can I paddle to the side and leave the water easily?
- Can I get myself back on my board and could I help someone else if they are struggling?
- Have I practiced towing another paddler if they need it?

- Can I paddle kneeling/prone in case I can't stand up?
- Have I told someone where I am going and what time I aim to return?
- Does this person know what to do if there is a problem?
- Is my phone/radio close to hand?
- Have I considered how I would handle an emergency?

Do bear in mind that every SUP adventure on the water will hold an element of risk and the checklists above cannot account for everything that you may face on your journey. Reflecting and learning from your experiences will be key to being able to head out on more remote trips in more challenging situations.

**Good luck heading out on your first SUP adventure!**



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# SUP SAFETY

## Choosing the correct leash

The leash is a key source of safety when paddleboarding. It keeps you and your paddleboard together when things don't go to plan. To stay safe it is essential to choose the right kind of leash for the environment and conditions you are paddling in. Failure to do so could put your safety at



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

### 1. Quick release belt system

#### Suitable environments for use:

Moving/flowing water including, rivers, tidal rivers and estuaries, tidal races, white water rivers, where there is a risk of snagging or entrapment.

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

#### Important

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

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

On this section of the Thames it has caused paddlers to collide with fixed obstacles such as pontoons, moored boats and buoys. Both paddler and paddleboard have been swept either side of the obstacle and have been unable to free themselves. Through this experience the Port of London

Authority (PLA), who manage the Thames Tideway, now require all SUP paddlers to use a quick release belt system rather than ankle leashes.

### 2. Calf and ankle leashes

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

#### a. Ankle Cuff Leashes

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

#### b. Calf Cuff Leashes

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

#### Important

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

**SUP LEASHES**

**QUICK RELEASE BELT SYSTEM**  
For use on any moving/flowing water where there is a risk of a snag/entrapment.  
COILED

**CALF LEASH**  
For use on lakes, canals, sea / coastal bays, surf, where there is NO risk of a snag / entrapment.  
COILED = General SUP  
STRAIGHT = Surf

**ANKLE LEASH**  
For use on lakes, canals, sea / coastal bays, surf, where there is NO risk of a snag / entrapment.  
COILED = General SUP  
STRAIGHT = Surf

**coiled or straight?**  
Leashes can be coiled/curly or straight. The type of leash is important depending on the environment you paddle. Talking about the environment...

**your environment...**  
Where are you paddling? What are the conditions? Depending on where you're paddling and the conditions you face, you might need to wear your leash in a different place for safety and security. Take a look at the diagram to see which leash system suits the environment you paddle.

### Safety checklist for SUP paddlers



As well as choosing the right leash, remember to prepare properly for any trip on the water. Head over to the Go Paddling website for some tips on how to

enjoy your paddling and staying safe.

<https://gopaddling.info/stand-up-paddleboarding-safety-checklist/>

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



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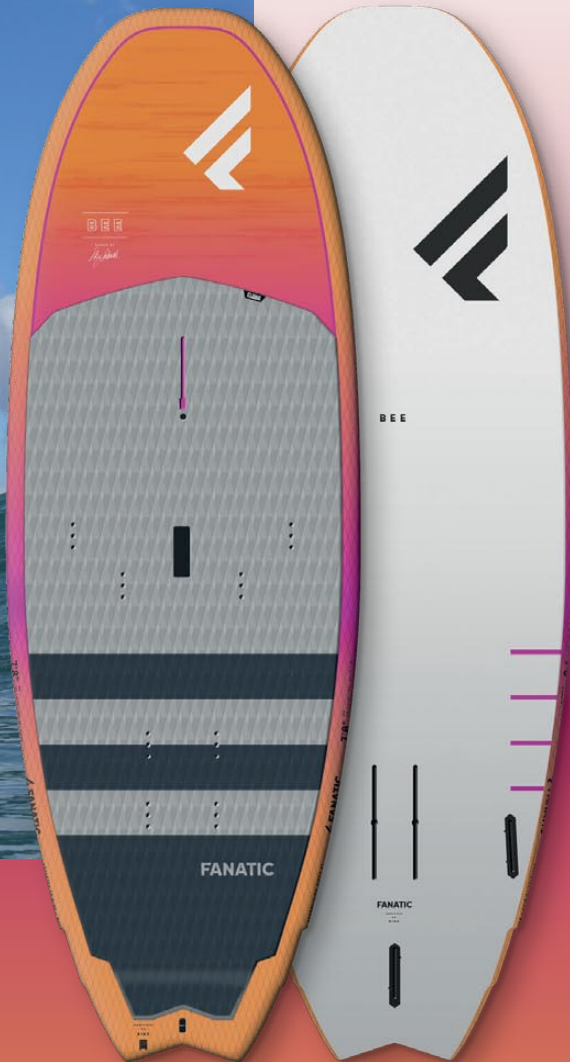
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# #ShePaddles

Whether you're new to stand up paddleboarding or you've been doing it for years, it's always great to link up with other female paddlers. British Canoeing's #ShePaddles community is all about creating a thriving female community that inspires individuals to pursue a passion for all forms of paddling; for health, enjoyment, friendship, challenge and achievement.

**Each year our #ShePaddles project is spearheaded by ten inspirational female ambassadors covering the length and breadth of paddlesport, including stand up paddleboarding. In this extended issue of SUPM UK, we would like you to hear the stories from two of our ambassadors that have been tackling the rapids on their SUPs.**

Emma Love. Photo: Tom Clare



Emma Love. Photo: Del Read



## Emma Love

#ShePaddles Ambassador  
WW SUP Coach & Mentor

When I think of rivers, lakes and the forever expanse of the sea I think of the history and the forgotten stories interwoven within these waterscapes. Of adventure, heroism, romance, laughter and community.

On the 29th April 2020 at 12.26 pm, I received an email, I had been chosen to be a #ShePaddles Ambassador. My jaw dropped in amazement; my application had been so last minute! My good paddling friend Beth had encouraged me to apply. "You'd be great," she said.

*"But I don't have enough experience! What would I have to offer? Who would be inspired by my story? I am not a good enough paddler! There are many more amazing women out there than me..."* You get the drift.

***Speckles of light flickering and dancing across the ripples, blown by the wind.***

And then I thought about my story. In my mid-40s, I discovered SUP, and within a few months of being on the flat, I was trying to SUP on white water. It's now five years later, and I am still playing. Some days are more successful than others, highs and lows, adrenaline rushes, building and breaking down skills. And so much laughter. I sent the application.

***Water feeds the soul, uplifts our spirits, washes away the grind of our day to day lives.***

When I think about WW SUP, I think community. WW SUP is the bad boy; no let's change that phrase, it's the bad 'girl' on the block. It's the rebellious sister, the maverick, the raucous woman who drinks

life deeply, laughs out loud, always has your back and doesn't give a damn about what others think.

***I float, staring at the blue sky.***

***Scuttering clouds.***

Lockdown! How do we respond as ambassadors? The word that looms large for me is again, community. Our discussions continue as paddling is halted, but now we meet online. I go to the women's paddling community, where the conversations are wide-ranging and across the paddling disciplines; who uses period cups when out on the water? Menopause and its impacts. Celebration. A seal photographed perched on the end of a kayak. How much food do you need to eat and when? Spotting puffins. Can anyone find a drysuit that fits? The holy grail, a BA for those with boobs. Does such an item exist? Who designs these things? Nothing is off-limits, and discussion is thoughtful, informative, positive, supportive and fun.

***The cold is ice sharp, I go under, and I feel alive.***

WW SUP photos shared are not of bikini-clad women, pert bottom centre stage, created for the male gaze. We are tough, courageous, adventurous, dressed for all weathers, clad in padding, chasing our dreams within the unforgiving dark waters that swirl and beckon.

***We return to the water, and the spirits welcome us back with open arms.***

The WW SUP community grows and its women who are leading! We are a discipline that has more qualified female coaches than male. And more are coming! Women are shaping and moulding the future by being here and now and active.

What's it like to be a #ShePaddles Ambassador? It's one of pride! About sharing your journey and inspiring others to follow, no, scrap that! It's about inspiring others to create their journey, celebrate and laugh so very hard.

If you fancy getting involved with WW SUP, then Emma working with Beth Kirby will be delivering Women's Intro to WW SUP clinics later this year and in 2021.

# A thriving female community



**Jessica Philip**

**#ShePaddles Ambassador for the Scottish Canoe Association**

When first learning about river SUP, I thought, *"That sounds ridiculous!"* Then a friend took me on a trip to the River Avon (A'nn) after I still thought it was ridiculous but so much fun, so my interest grew from there. Coming from a white water kayak background SUPing on rivers appealed to me most as a way of adding a new element of challenge to lower graded rivers.

At first, it felt like there wasn't a white water SUP community or even many paddlers out there. Still, the more I got out and paddled with people and joined groups online I realised that although small, WW SUP is a passionate and friendly community to be part of. There is also a lot of interest in the sport which is exciting to see.

Recently I was part of a WW SUP coach training based down in Wales on the River Dee. This course brought together seven WW SUP paddlers from a range of different areas, which was beneficial to learn from and paddle with other WW SUPers. It allowed us to share tips and play around with our technique.

#ShePaddles aim to encourage more women into paddle sport and also provide a supportive community to help keep women wanting to continue paddling. Work is also being done in Scotland as part of the female equality group that was set up earlier this year.

Being a #ShePaddles Ambassador this year feels quite odd. All I want to do is meet as many people as possible and get out paddling with them, sadly the Covid outbreak made that harder but being able to meet online has been a significant benefit. Using Facebook groups, such as the Scottish women's paddling community and the women's paddling community for the UK, it has been amazing to see the rapid increase in members and engagement within these groups over the last few months.

As restrictions in the UK lifted, it has been great to get out on some incredible adventures with friends new and old. I have recently been playing around with how I can take my SUP on expeditions so if anyone is interested in joining for a paddle any time it would be great to meet you.



**Paddling friends who were curious about giving WW SUP a try. Photo: Catherine Ince**

## Supporting paddlers

#ShePaddles is just one of our many success stories. Thanks to the enthusiasm and commitment from our 60,000 plus members, we can continue supporting a whole host of projects and campaigns. If you would like to be part of our thriving paddling community, visit [www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/join](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/join) today!



**Jessica Philip on expedition down the River Spey in September. Photo: Catherine Ince**

# WWW

conversations

Photographer: Graham Woollven



Emma in slalom action

### **Interviews:** Emma Love

On August 1st 2019, British Canoeing launched the Stand Up Paddleboard White Water Coach Award. In 2020, five women gained this award, and four more are now on route to qualifying. In a series of interviews, Emma Love grabbed some Zoom time with these extraordinary women to chat about their individual journeys and why the incredible paddlesport that is white water SUP is attracting so many women.

Emma Love is a British Canoeing stand up paddleboard white water coach and #ShePaddles ambassador. Emma will be launching her own SUP business Wotbikini later this year.

[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2019/shepaddles-spread-the-love](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2019/shepaddles-spread-the-love)  
[www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2019/become-a-stand-up-paddleboard-coach](http://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/news/2019/become-a-stand-up-paddleboard-coach)

# Jessica Phillip

[www.facebook.com/DipperPaddleBoarding](https://www.facebook.com/DipperPaddleBoarding)



I was thrilled to interview Jess, one of five women to have qualified in 2020 as a British Canoeing Stand Up Paddleboard White Water Coach. Based in Fort William on the west coast of Scotland, Jess had just returned from three weeks sailing on the tall ship, Tenacious. We grabbed an hour to chat about her journey, the openness of our sport and the projects she is currently involved in.



**#ShePaddles**



Jessica Phillip Photo: Paul Klym

## **Tell me about your very first experience of paddling**

It was probably when I was about 11 years old, at Loch Park with the Keith Swimming Club. They were doing sessions during the summer, and I just really enjoyed messing around in the kayaks. The group I was with were supportive, and I enjoyed being around them – it was a fun environment to develop my skills.

## **I know you paddle lots of different types of craft, what are you typically paddling at the moment?**

It's quite a range, for work, I paddle open canoes, so river and flat water, plus I do a bit of sea kayaking. For fun, I like white water kayaking and then, of course, white water SUP.

## **Describe for me your very first white water SUP experience?**

I was at university at the time, and I had come back to stay with my parents for Christmas. Jim Gibson had got really into paddling SUP, and he asked my brother and me if we would fancy going for a paddle on the river A'nn. I thought yeah why not let's give this a go! I felt confident having paddled this particular river in my kayak, but when we arrived, and I saw Jim in all his body armour, I thought oh gosh, what have I got myself into? When I got on the water, I thought this is ridiculous! Lots of falling off but also, really fun. It made what I consider an easy river challenging again, which was nice.




Jessica Phillip

**Photo:** Denise Pentland

You definitely need to be able to read the water, every ripple and wave – the board doesn't allow you to muddle through.





**What's motivated you to continue playing on white water using a SUP?**

I suppose for me; it started off being about community because I paddled with friends. Later on, it additionally became about making the rivers challenging again and pushing myself.

I find WW SUP interesting because it punishes you if you get things wrong, but this means you learn quickly and I like the fact that you have to get it technically right whereas with kayaking I find you can get away with a lot more. You definitely need to be able to read the water, every ripple and wave – the board doesn't allow you to muddle through.

**Huge congratulations on becoming a British Canoeing SUP white water coach. 2020 has been an incredible year with so many women qualifying and more on route to becoming qualified. Why do you think we are seeing such a significant uptake?**

I think we are seeing a lot of women qualifying because WW SUP is new and exciting! More women are taking up the sport, and so there are more developing and moving through. Also, because our sport is completely new, we don't have a stereotype attached to it as of yet.

**I think that is a really interesting perspective, do you think other paddlesports come with a stereotype attached?**

Yes, just because they have been set up a lot longer. For example, with white water kayaking, the image that comes to mind is typically a guy dropping big waterfalls; canoeing is maybe a big guy with a beard. I suppose even flatwater paddleboarding has a bit of a stereotype – a person in a bikini. WW SUP has not got a stereotype yet; it feels open.

**What words of encouragement would you give to women who may be interested in becoming a coach but may feel unsure whether to take the next steps?**

I'd say give it a go! Our community is supportive, and I found the actual assessment itself was the least stressful

I've done, it just felt nice. The sessions you complete running up to your assessment and the ideas you work through because of doing these, make you feel ready – it gives you lots of experience which is good. I also recommend having a mentor or another paddler to chat with. For me, I valued Paul Klym, who was on the same pathway; it was cool sharing ideas with him and adventures out on the river. I also continued to have support from Jim Gibson (my mentor) plus Phil Hadley, Alex Tonge and Anthony Ing who delivered the two-day WW SUP discipline-specific training, which was helpful.

**2020 has had some real high points for you. Alongside gaining your coaching qualification and setting up your own business, Dipper Paddle Boarding, you are currently a British Canoeing #ShePaddles ambassador and part of the Scottish Canoeing Association 'Female Equality Group'**

As an ambassador, I have found it pleasant connecting and getting to know people. I am excited to be involved in the new female equality group here in Scotland. It is very similar to #ShePaddles. Our main aim is to support women who are wanting to gain higher coaching qualifications, something we currently see a deficit of in Scotland. We also want to support and increase the number of women entering paddlesports at grassroots.

**I know you have just come back from three weeks volunteering on a tall ship, have you also managed to have local adventures?**

Last year, I was planning to head off abroad, but instead, I have been exploring little bits of water locally. In the summer I did a mini-expedition along Loch Treig from Corour to Tulloch Station, and more recently, I paddled the length of the Burn of Boyne right outside my parent's house. It is usually a very small rocky burn, but the levels had come up, so I thought, why not! It was a lot of fun, and I even saw a Kingfisher which I never thought I would see on this river. I have enjoyed exploring new places in Scotland and my local area; there are many more trips I still want to do!

[www.canoescotland.org/female-equality-group](http://www.canoescotland.org/female-equality-group)



# Jenna Sanders

<https://flyinggeckooutdoors.co.uk>

Chatting with Jenna Sanders was really interesting. Not only is Jenna a paddler, a British Canoeing coach, leader and coach educator, but she is also now on route to taking her white water SUP coach assessment! We discussed what originally made her fall in love with paddling, her experience as a student completing the white water SUP discipline specific training and what advice she would give women interested in starting their journey to becoming white water SUP coaches.

Jenna Sanders

**Photo:** Sophie Dollar



**#ShePaddles**

### **Which craft do you paddle?**

First and foremost, I am a canoeist, that's where I have the majority of my leadership and coaching qualifications. I used to play canoe polo and white water kayak, but I much prefer white water canoeing. I got into paddling SUP (on flat and open water) quite a few years ago when it first became popular.

### **Describe your first ever experience of paddling**

I was about 20 years old and on holiday in France with my parents. We visited the bottom of the Verdon Gorge, I decided to hire a kayak and paddle up the gorge, and it was just beautiful! On my return to Warwick, I joined the university kayak club, and it went from there.

Exploring that gorge was formative. For me, the primary driver for getting on the water is being able to access beautiful places. Interestingly with lockdown, it has made me realise that while I enjoy paddling in the countryside, I would rather be out on a river up in the mountains.

### **You started paddling white water SUP last year. I immediately assumed this would be an addition to your business portfolio, so I was very intrigued when you described your primary motivation as 'creating space for you to have fun'.**

Yes, my first time playing on white water using a SUP was in spring 2020 just after the first lockdown was lifted, and it was just great to have time to mess about and coach myself. I've got all the basic principles; I know how to deal with white water and how to SUP, so it was really good fun to join these up, experiment, play and see what would happen.

If you're going to be a coach and if you're going to be a coach educator, it is really useful and essential always to have something going on which is new, that's difficult, and you're not good at. If you're always a beginner at something, you retain that bit of understanding of how hard it is to learn and this then benefits your students.

Will I coach this discipline? I genuinely don't know. The majority of my work through my business, 'Flying Gecko', is coach education and leadership. I don't have huge amounts of time for just pure coaching, but it would be nice.

### **What encouragement and advice would you give to women who may be interested in qualifying as a coach but are feeling unsure if they are good enough?**

If you are already SUP'ing on white water, then there is absolutely no reason not to start on your coaching journey because the qualification pathway is so open, there are no time limits, and there is no stress. You can go and complete the first stage (core coach), see how you get on and if you enjoy it, then take the next step and complete the WW SUP discipline specific training. If you want to re-visit core coach at a later stage, you can, and the same goes for the two-day discipline-specific training. I would absolutely encourage women to go, give it a try and do it for your own fun and enjoyment. And if you get to the point where you are ready to do the assessment – awesome!

### **What would you advise women who are thinking 'I can't even envision getting to the Core Coach stage, let alone putting myself forward for the final assessment'?**

I would recommend coaching and observing other WW SUP Coaches, going and chatting with them, getting on the water, playing, and seeing what is going on. When I am running a core coach, I want to make sure my students understand this is their space where they can make mistakes. Yes, there's a lot of theory because coaching is a skill set, but the course shouldn't be intimidating. I want to think that everybody running these courses are doing so in the atmosphere of let's try stuff and if it works, cool! If it doesn't work, cool! It doesn't matter, because you have learnt something.



**For many women, we have an expectation that we need to be perfect before we can even attend these courses. I know I did! Why do you think this happens, and how do we change this?**

I find a higher proportion of women who come on my courses are self-deprecating, they will say, "I don't know if I am good enough to be here" and are visibly worried. Whereas I find men are much more likely to come and give it go. It is really hard to change this expectation, but as a coach educator, I make sure the environment is set up to be positive, kind and ego-free. The space needs to allow people to relax and get what they need out of the day. As a paddling community, we still need to be better communicators and say, "It is just a training course for you to come along, enjoy and take away new skills."

**How did you find the two-day discipline training from the perspective of being a student rather than coming to it in your usual role as a coach educator?**

I went knowing full well my WW SUP skills were somewhat lacking and what I needed from those two days was to understand the discipline better! I was purely there to learn. I was delighted to say to everyone, "You know what guys, I'm not very good!"

Running the training course were Anthony Ing, Alex Tonge and Phil Hadley and they are just so informative. I had so much technical and tactical input, and I just kept asking all the time, how do you do this and what about that? It was such a fun time, learning.

Jenna Sanders **Photo:** Andy Cass



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The International magazine for recreational paddlers  
Issue 63 Winter 2021/22

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# SUPPM

Stand Up Paddle Mag UK

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## IMPACT

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## WW conversations finale part 4

Emma Love speaks to Louise Royle & Joyce Johnston  
Stateside SUP chat with Kristin Thomas;  
SUPJunkie GBSUP Reports by Sarah Thornely;  
SUP Scotty technique: catching waves and Gear reviews.

# WWW

conversations

Photographer: Graham Wooltven



Emma Love

## Interviews: Emma Love

On August 1st 2019, British Canoeing launched the Stand Up Paddleboard White Water Coach Award. In a series of interviews, Emma Love grabbed some zoom time with eight of the extraordinary women to have qualified or are on route to qualifying. All with unique stories and interests but all with one passion in common – the incredible paddlesport that is white water SUP!

Emma Love is an Ambassador for both British Canoeing #ShePaddles and California Watersport Collective.

<http://www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk>



# Lisa Boore

[www.outdoorcoachingandguiding.co.uk](http://www.outdoorcoachingandguiding.co.uk)



Lisa Boore is a professional outdoor practitioner. Based in the Brecon Beacons, 2020 was a busy year for Lisa, including becoming a British Canoeing WW SUP Coach and setting up her own business, Outdoor Coaching and Guiding. Lisa is a founding member of South Wales Whitewater SUP, one of the most exciting peer paddling groups to have developed last year.



#ShePaddles



Lisa Boore Photos: Dan Thorne

## Can you tell me about the very first time you had a go at paddling?

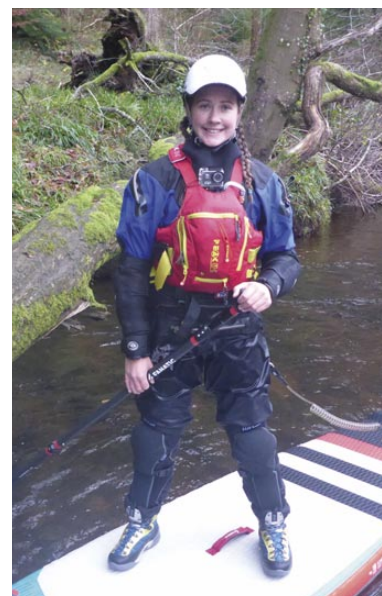
It was when I was ten years old. We went on a week-long school trip to a residential centre in Somerset called Mill on the Brue. We had the opportunity to go to lots of different activities, including open canoe, and I recall we had a female instructor called Kate, who I found really inspiring. On reflection, it was because of her that I studied outdoor education at university and then went on to work in the outdoor industry as a practitioner.

## I always think of you paddling white water on your SUP, but I recently spotted some photographs of you in an open canoe.

Other than paddling SUP (sea, open and white water), I spend most of my time in an open canoe, either on the white water or on multi-day expeditions both here in the UK and worldwide. I love the experience of being self-sufficient in the wilderness. It is an environment I always find so inspiring.

## Can you describe your very first experience of playing on a SUP, and then what led you to think about taking a board on the white water?

I remember first seeing SUP on the paddling scene around 2013. My first paddling experience was hiring a board on the coast; I had previously tried regular surfing, and, frustratingly, I found I could not get the board to match the speed of the wave. But with SUP, I discovered that by combining my open canoe skills with my ability to read the wave, I suddenly had success! Sadly,





I live over an hour away from the sea, making regular SUP surf trips challenging to do. I can easily access a lovely section of the river Usk; it is only a five-minute walk from where I live, and because I have this water so close, it just made sense for me to join up both my white water and surf SUP skills. I just mixed them all to see what would happen!

**I love the journey you describe; how being restricted geographically plus the mixing of inquisitiveness with your skillset takes you naturally to think about the possibilities of playing on white water. Can you describe your very first time paddling a river on a board?**

It was 2015, and a friend of ours, Alex Tonge, brought over a couple of boards; I was on mine and my partner, Dan Thorne, joined us. There were the three of us paddling SUPs together on the Glasbury to Hay (River Wye) at what was our canoe club reunion, and we thought it was amazing! I had always thought paddling on this particular bit of river was quite boring just because I teach on this section

every week – it is easy for me to visualise the water, and I know what to expect. Getting on a SUP board has given me an absolute love of this section of the river.

**What drives you to keep ‘playing’?**

What drives me to keep getting on a board is that it is just so great to be learning! Whereas with a canoe, I know I can scrape across rocks and get away with it. I can’t do this on a board as I will land on my face, which hurts! White water SUP is a skill that I still have to master, and that is exciting.

**2020 was an incredible year with five women (including yourself) qualifying as WW SUP coaches – why do you think this has happened, and do you think this is unique to our discipline?**

I believe women are happy to explore different disciplines and how they come to WW SUP breaks down into two different routes; firstly, there are those (like me) who are white water paddlers, who think ‘that looks cool’ and want to learn something new. Secondly, some women have no prior paddling experience, and

initially, they learn flatwater SUP skills but then think what is next?

If you want to learn, the natural progression with SUP would be either racing, the sea or white water. I think we are seeing women coming through within the WW SUP community because we are such a friendly group of people, and it is a supportive and encouraging environment to learn in. I don’t think the increase in women coaches is limited to WW SUP, and I can now see women leading the way in other white water paddling disciplines.

**To me, it feels such a special time to be part of the WW SUP community. Do you share this sentiment?**

Yes, I like the sense of community; our sport is open, not at all egotistic, and we are all still learning. It’s where I feel we were with paddlesports 20 years ago. I wonder whether this lack of ego is because we don’t have a competition element to our sport, so there is no jealousy. It will be interesting to see if SUP X takes off and whether our



## South Wales Whitewater SUP



I think we are seeing women coming through within the WW SUP community because we are such a friendly group of people

community will change as it becomes competitive. Let's chat in 10 years and see where it is at!

### **You are one of the founding members of South Wales Whitewater SUP. How did this group come about?**

I didn't want to own or be responsible for a club, and I knew people in the area who paddled, including outdoor instructor friends who were also keen to start a group. I had been following 'Nottingham Whitewater SUP' on Facebook for quite a while, and I liked how that peer-led group was set up. So, we decided to use this model, and in June of last year, we created our own Facebook page, 'South Wales Whitewater SUP'.

We currently have 159 members, which is a nice size. It works because any of our members can put up a post asking who wants to meet for a social paddle, and then they organise themselves. I think, on average, around ten paddlers meet at these socials. We have had some great trips down the river Usk and, last summer - when the Usk and Upper Wye

were closed for fishing only- we met regularly at Symonds Yat. It is a lovely little park and play spot. We are very happy for anybody to join us as long as they have some white water experience and deem themselves safe on the water.

### **What are your words of advice to anyone keen to try WW SUP?**

I don't think 'just go for it is the right attitude, but, sadly, you see it a lot on social media like YouTube, Facebook etc.; these platforms are not always the best source of guidance. First and foremost, the question you have to ask yourself is, what experience do these paddlers have, and what qualifications do they hold? Every river you paddle has to be respected. Yes, it is a great playground, but you need to have both the ability to do dynamic risk assessments and make good decisions; these abilities only come with experience. My advice is, go paddle with someone who knows what they are doing and you can trust. Failing that, get some professional coaching.





# Charlotte Louise

@supwithcharlotte

Based in the East Midlands, Charlotte Louise is currently working towards qualifying as a British Canoeing WW SUP Coach. Here we chat about her first experience trying out WW SUP, working towards her qualification and her ever-growing passion for the need to create a bathing status for all our rivers and lakes.

Charlotte Louise

**Photo:** Zac Allin



Charlotte Louise

**Photo:** Beth Kirby



**#ShePaddles**



**Matlock  
Whitewater SUP**



### **Do you have a specific memory of falling in love with paddling?**

I clearly remember this as one of my best days ever! My uncle is a kayaker, and he was determined I would become one too. When I was around 13 or 14 years of age, he decided to take me to a kid's club in Thamesmead, London. I remember, we pretty much just played games all day, including canoe polo, running across the bows of the boat, capsizing, jumping in, and I thought, "this is amazing" - I just loved it! From then on, I continued going every weekend for the rest of my teenage years, mainly because I loved the social side - I made so many friends there. It was this initial experience that ignited my love for paddle sports.

### **Alongside Stand Up Paddle Boarding, do you paddle any other craft?**

I am qualified to teach kayak and open canoe, so when I am working for other outdoor companies, generally, this is what I will be teaching as taster sessions. I don't paddle these types of boats as much as I used to because I like playing on stand up paddleboards, plus I have my own business, SUP With Charlotte, which keeps me busy.

### **How did you discover WW SUP?**

I initially saw it first on social media quite a few years ago; I think it was someone paddling somewhere in America, and I remember thinking it was ridiculous, it looked fun, but it looked crazy! I think all the videos I saw were from the USA, and I didn't know if it was a thing in the UK. It wasn't until I worked at Holme Pierrepont Country Park that I came across the peer paddling group, Nottingham Whitewater SUP. I watched them playing on the WW course, and I thought it looked so much fun, so I messaged them asking if I could have a go.

### **Can you describe that first experience paddling a SUP on white water?**

Because I kayaked, I thought some of those skills would cross over but, it was nothing like I imagined it would be! The Nottingham crew made it look really easy, plus they were having so much fun, so I thought it couldn't be that hard. I expected to stand up straight away on my board, but I found it was the complete opposite! I spent more time swimming, but I remember that the

few seconds I was standing felt amazing. Barry Hughes (who alongside Beth Kirby had supported me that evening) sent me through the washing machine, and somehow, I don't know how, I made it through! That first experience was enjoyable, and it made me realise just how addictive WW SUP is.

### **What is the driver that keeps you wanting to SUP on white water?**

For me, it is the experience as a whole. There is the social aspect; getting on the water with a group of friends and having a laugh. I like being outside in nature and exploring places I wouldn't usually see on foot. I also love it because it is good for your mental and physical health!

### **How has the experience of working towards your WW SUP orientation been over the past year?**

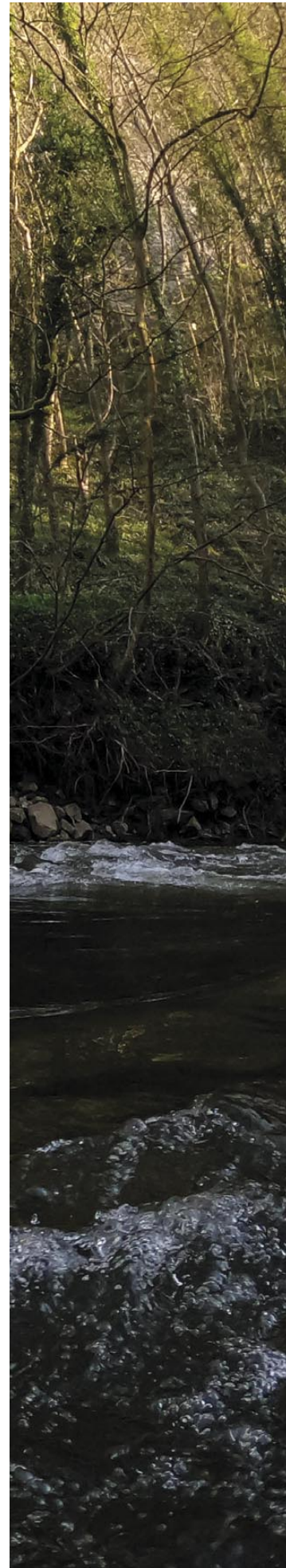
I think it has been a positive time getting out on the water with friends to practise my skills within a peer-led group environment. This is helping me to prepare for the British Canoeing White Water SUP Orientation and the assessment. I find instructing and coaching a really interesting circular process. Even when I am the lead, I am learning how to coach, which, in turn, informs how I lead.

### **You mentioned you have a mentor?**

Yes, and I would recommend having one if you are interested in coaching. My formal mentor has recently qualified as a British Canoeing WW SUP Coach, which means I can ask questions and talk through ideas if I am not too sure or not confident in what to expect about the process. I also have informal support from peer groups, Matlock Whitewater SUP and Nottingham Whitewater SUP, from friends I paddle with and even my manager for the organisation I work for in Derbyshire.

### **Let's talk about the environment for which I know you have a passion, focusing on the poor quality of our waters in the UK. Where has this developed from?**

Right from the beginning as a paddler, it is ingrained in us to look after the environment. For example, if we see rubbish on the water, we pick it up and take it with us. We are taught about cross-contamination and why we should always



[www.facebook.com/nottswwsup/](https://www.facebook.com/nottswwsup/)  
(@nottswwsup)



Charlotte Louise **Photo:** Beth Kirby

wash our boats and boards before transferring between different rivers and lakes. Very sadly, I, like so many other paddlers, have witnessed plastic pollution first hand, and, even more recently, I experienced several severe bouts of illness due to the poor water quality of my local rivers. I now have to avoid certain places I love to paddle because I am so scared of getting ill

again. With so many of us accessing our waterways for numerous leisure activities, I don't think it is ok that our health should be put at risk. I firmly believe that all rivers and lakes should be safe to use and awarded bathing water status. It should be a human right that we can safely go in and on our water, so for this reason; I feel I have to do something about it.

**I know you have been proactive in contacting local newspapers and key agencies about the poor water quality. What has been the response?**

I have contacted many agencies and companies, both national and local, who are associated with the river and have an interest in it being safe. I've signed petitions, contacted MP's and my local council - the latter two I never got a response from! I found that I kept being passed from one organisation to another. My impression is that no one knows who has responsibility for the water quality and, to my mind, they should all come together to solve this. I genuinely feel that the people who have the power to do something are not responding or showing any concern. There just seems to be this wall, and while I know I will continue to raise awareness of this issue, I am now unsure what to do next other than going out and standing on the street with a sign! Perhaps it is a case of getting as many paddlers out on the water, at the same time, to wave banners and protest so we can get all these organisations to pay attention!



Charlotte Louise **Photo:** Zac Allim



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# WWW

conversations



Emma Love **Photographer:** Graham Woolfven

## Interviews: Emma Love

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Emma Love is an Ambassador for both British Canoeing #ShePaddles and California Watersport Collective.

<http://www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk>



# Beth Kirby

Facebook: Beth-K-SUP-Coaching



Photo: Beth Kirby

It was lovely to catch up with Beth Kirby and discuss SUP! Beth is a raft coach and medal winner, a kayaker and more recently, a qualified WW SUP coach based in the East Midlands. We chatted about Beth's passion for paddleboarding on white water and her predictions of how she thinks our amazing sport will develop in the next few years.



#ShePaddles



Photo: Chris Kippers Bond

## What was your first paddling experience?

My first paddling experiences were when I was a kid. We used to go on lots of water sports holidays, and I then went on to achieve my one star (kayaking) with the Girl Guides. But it wasn't until I went to university in Nottingham that my interest in paddling took off, and I now paddle pretty much anything I can on white water including, rafting, kayaking and of course SUP!

## What was it about white water SUP that sparked your interest?

Partly from seeing other people do it on the course and thinking to myself that having a go would be a bit of a laugh. I also came across it when I was not massively enjoying kayaking, mainly because of hating being stuck inside a boat. White water SUP felt like a perfect way of getting my enjoyment back. Interestingly, I have found that spending time playing on a paddleboard has helped build my confidence for getting back in a kayak.



Photo: Beth Kirby



**What's your primary motivation for paddling white water on a SUP?**

I enjoy the challenge of it, the feeling is fantastic when you successfully paddle down a rapid, and WW SUP is very different from the other paddling I do. There's a massive technical aspect to it that interests me, and I like the fact that it removes the barrier between male and female paddlers. We all have to work hard to stay on our boards!

**I know you are incredibly competitive when it comes to paddling and have accumulated lots of competition experience with rafting. This culminated in winning bronze and gold medals (in 2017) at the Worlds in Japan. Do you find your drive to win is transferring to white water SUP?**

I have not had a huge chance to have a go at the competition side, but I would love to one day. Some tremendous white water SUP competitions are happening in the USA that I would like to participate in. For the moment, I am focusing on building up my paddling skills; I would

describe my competitive edge as currently being focused on being the best I can be within the industry.

**What is your prediction for how our sport will grow and its direction in the next few years?**

As a sport, it is progressing pretty quickly in the UK. Since British Canoeing launched the coaching qualification (and with that, an increase in paddlers becoming qualified), we have seen a lot more people coming to try WW SUP. So already the sport is much bigger than it was a year ago. I predict we will see WW SUP progress in three directions, SUP X, river surfing and river running.

SUP X is excellent for mass participation and showcasing the sport – it is especially accessible on lower grade sections of the river. I think we will see SUP X competitions being held on artificial courses around the UK in the future.

With river running, I think we will see this split into those paddlers who are mainly interested in surfing on the wave and

those who love to paddle a stretch of a white water river. We witnessed a lot of interest in river surfing in August of last year where paddlers were heading out on the Thames. I think this will grow, particularly with freestyle kayakers wanting to have a go at something a little bit different. What would help develop this side of the sport is having artificial waves purposely built for WW SUP, as we have seen across the US.

**How did you find the process of becoming a qualified white water SUP coach?**

I enjoyed the process. I had previously not done any 'intentional' coaching and instead had just helped people out with little bits here and there. I found the 15 or so sessions you have to complete post orientation and prior to the assessment helped me think about how to structure support for paddlers ranging from beginners and up to advanced levels. It also made me reflect on how to understand different individual's motivations for getting on the water.



Photo: Ewan Vernon



Photo: Ewan Vernon

Since British Canoeing launched the coaching qualification we have seen a lot more people coming to try WW SUP

**With the British Canoeing WW SUP coaching qualification being relatively new and significant uptake of women becoming qualified or on route to being qualified, what advice would you give women who may be interested in going down the coaching route?**

Go for it! Attend the WW SUP two-day coach orientation; go and enjoy the experience and remember it is pitched at all levels of paddlers and up to grade two water. So, this is not about getting down big grade three rivers and stoppers; it is about focusing on the technical aspects of paddling. Keep in mind; women are better at the technical aspect of paddling because of our size and strength. Also, talk to the ladies who have already qualified or are on that journey; they will be able to give you lots of advice. And finally, think about having a female coach mentor to support you; they will help you on your path to instructing and coaching.



Photo: Ewan Vernon



Photo: Ewan Vernon



# Julie Vigor

@Julie.Vigor.SUP

The last 12 months for Julie Vigor have been full of successes, including representing British Canoeing as a #ShePaddles Ambassador, qualifying as a Sheltered Water Coach, launching her own business Phoenix Paddlesport and completing her WW SUP Coach Orientation. What is even more impressive, she only started paddling four years ago!

Julie Vigor  
**Photo:** Martin Harrall

Julie Vigor  
**Photo:** Phil Hadley



#ShePaddles



**Tell me about the very first time you had a go at paddling.**

My very first experience of paddling was about 25 years ago. I was working in IT sales, and one of my clients invited me to paddle at Symonds Yat. We spent an afternoon going down the rapids in kayaks, and I think I swam every single time! I didn't paddle again until four years ago when my sons joined the Air Cadets. They had both decided to have a go at kayaking; I was invited to join them. I can only sum up the first couple of months as paddling around and around in circles, but then I was introduced to a fantastic coach. Suddenly we found ourselves being taught in a range of craft, including kayaks, open canoes and slalom boats – it was such a great way to get lots of paddling experience. I even entered a slalom C1 competition and much to my surprise, I won!

**What is it about white water SUP that has got you so excited, and what drives you to keep playing?**

My first ever attempt was last year at Cullum Lock with WW SUP coach Louise Royle. Louise was kind enough to meet and help me with understanding how to paddle a board on white water. I fell off, swam lots and immediately fell in love with the sport! I now own my own white water specific board, a Tambo Core (10.5 Lady), which I adore experimenting on. You will often find me playing with pivot turns, breaking in and out etc. and trying to do all of this as fast as possible! What drives me to keep having a go? I enjoy the challenge of white water, and I love paddling SUPs. The combination of putting a board on white water makes that challenge even more significant. I love it!

**It has been a challenging year for so many of us in the UK, and I know you had lots of plans, including becoming qualified as a white water SUP coach. How did the year turn out for you in the end?**

I found it tough not to get on the water, especially as I had by then decided I would like to become a SUP Coach. Lockdown made me focus on completing some of the British Canoeing online courses, including Safeguarding, Paddleability and Coaching the Mind. I also began learning yoga because I would love to teach this on SUPs eventually. When lockdown lifted, I was lucky enough to get out on the water and complete my Core Coach qualification. This, in turn, opened the door to completing some of the coaching orientations and getting ready for exciting assessments, and I am now a qualified Sheltered Water SUP Coach! So yes, what started as a challenging year, on reflection, turned into a positive and a very busy year! .

**I have heard you describe your SUP journey as several stages, including qualifying to coach sheltered, open and white water. Can you tell me more about this?**

I guess to put it into context; my life has changed drastically in the past three years. I left my relationship, moved into my own home, stabilised myself financially, found an entirely new set of friends (through paddling), and I am now seriously thinking about living on a canal boat! But the most exciting aspect of all this change is that I can now follow my passion – being on the water! Before SUP, I loved paddling, but it was very much a hobby. Now it is much more! The pandemic has made me realise how important it is to follow dreams. My dream is to share my passion, and my goal is to teach SUP, whether on a river, a lake, via wellness sessions, SUP yoga, or white water. I love it all! So yes, qualifying to coach on sheltered, open and white water is very much part of my plan to be able to offer SUP in all its variety!



Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall



Julie Vigor Photo: Phil Hadley



Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall



Julie Vigor  
Photo: Phil Hadley



**Outside of your desire to coach SUP, do you have any white water rivers you would like to paddle in 2021 and beyond?**

I recently joined lots of European SUP groups on Facebook, and it has made me aware of the lovely rivers over there. My dream is to buy a campervan, go to Spain, to Northern Italy and head over to Slovenia to paddle on the Soca. I want to meet different people and do different things – I don't want to be tied down anymore. So many new adventures and opportunities are presenting themselves, and I am loving life!

**And do you have a favourite river in the UK you like to take your board on?**

Symonds Yat on the River Wye is a great favourite of mine. From a novice's point of view, it is fantastic because it is a relatively short bit of rapid, and you know you will come out of it at the bottom. It is a great park and play, easy to access, in a beautiful part of the world, plus there's an excellent pub for when you get off the water! And, if you want to carry on paddling (downstream) from the rapid, you can easily follow the river to Monmouth and Redbrook. It is such a gorgeous stretch of water to experience.

Julie Vigor Photo: Martin Harrall



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# WWW

conversations



Photographer: Graham Woollven

Emma coaching

## Interviews: Emma Love

Following the launch of the British Canoeing Stand Up Paddle Board White Water Coach Award in 2019, Emma Love interviewed four incredible women who were the first to qualify and four who are currently on route to qualifying. Since conducting these interviews in February 2020, many more women have started their own coaching journeys. A wonderful testament to the inclusivity of the incredible sport that is White Water SUP!

[www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk](http://www.wotbikinipaddleboarding.co.uk)



# Louise Royle

[www.facebook.com/louise.royle.9](https://www.facebook.com/louise.royle.9)



Photo: Louise Royle

Louise Royle was the first woman to qualify as a British Canoeing white water SUP coach. Already a very accomplished WW kayaker and now in her sixties, Louise is an absolute tour de force in the WW SUP community. She is a constant on the SUP X podium, an ambassador for Tambo SUP and a highly qualified coach who mentors many current and aspiring British Canoeing WW SUP coaches.



#ShePaddles



Photo: Sarapiqui, Costa Rica by Ian Royle



Photo: Socca, Slovenia by Ian Royle

## How did you discover paddling?

I was a qualified scuba diving instructor when I was still at school, I then ran the parachute club at university. I moved to Oxfordshire for work and was getting bored when a friend at work recommended joining Kingfisher Canoe Club. I went along for a kayak session and really enjoyed myself. At the end of the session, we had a go at capsizing and, much to the surprise of the coaches, I came up grinning and asked if I could do it again! That was in 1983 when I was only 24 years old. I am still a member, I have been on the committee nearly every year, and I'm currently a trustee and senior coach.

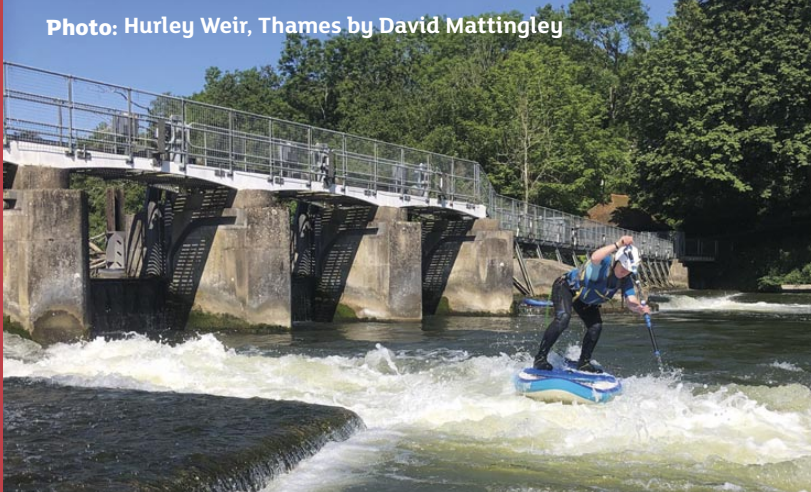
## What sparked your interest in paddleboarding?

In 2016, my friend Jen suggested that, rather than being classroom-based, we should get Phil Hadley to come and do the British Canoeing SUP Discipline Specific Module for our coaching update. It was so much fun that we immediately went and bought our first paddleboards! I was approaching retirement, and I felt that SUP was perfect for my core and could help me continue with WW kayaking. But within two weeks, I was taking it to my local weir to play on

Photo: Sun Kosi, Nepal by Ian Royle

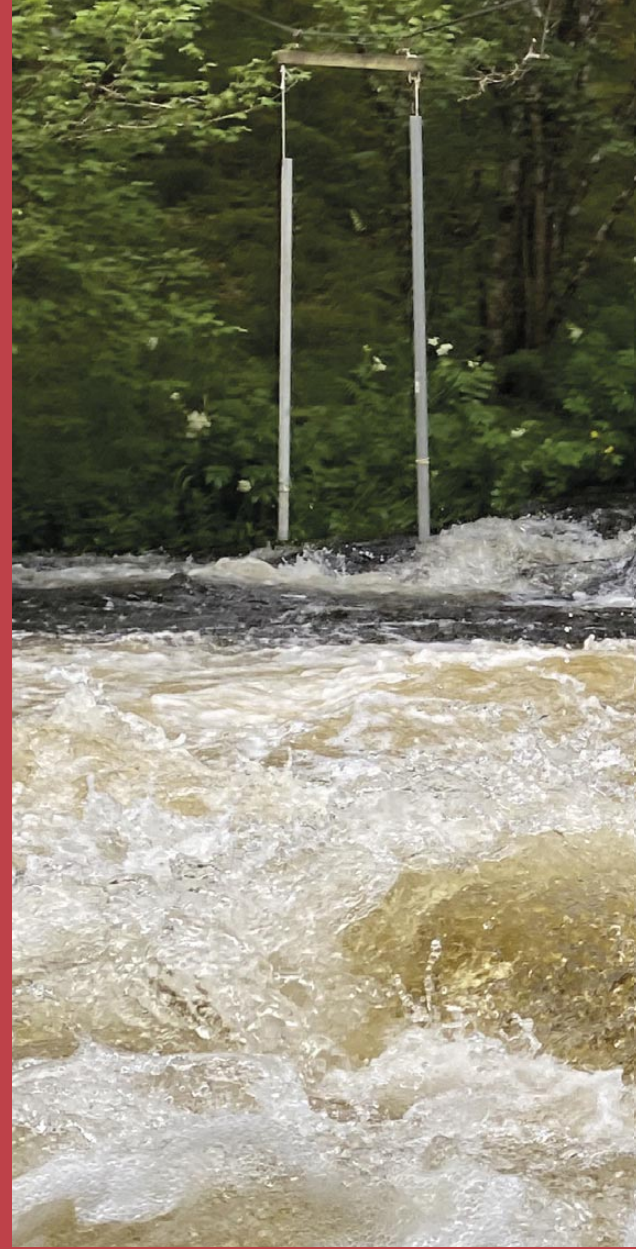


Photo: Hurley Weir, Thames by David Mattingley



In my 50s I kayaked the Zambezi and the Grand Canyon. When I was 60, I paddled the Sun Kosi in Nepal with Darren Clarkson

Photo: Sutton Courtenay Weir, Thames by Ian Royle



the white water wave trains. My immediate thought was, "Wait a minute, Louise, this is a lot of fun. You're not too old to enjoy this, and you don't have to think about paddling purely flat water yet!" A few months later, I met Barry Hughes (Nottingham White Water SUP) – he let me have a go on his board on the upper part of the Tryweryn and gave me my first lesson!

**Would you now say your white water water craft of choice is a SUP?**

Yes! SUP has given me the 'challenge' to continue to push myself in the white water environment. It gives me the challenge of working with the water plus the challenge of a new craft, so I can have all the 'fun' without having to push myself above grade four. Continuous grade four kayaking is too much for me now.

**Which rivers have you paddled?**

In my 50s I kayaked the Zambezi and the Grand Canyon. When I was 60, I paddled the Sun Kosi in Nepal with Darren Clarkson; this was a raft supported trip where I could SUP as much as possible, including the grade three-plus and four-minus sections where it



was pool drop. When it was continuously above grade three, I kayaked. I have also WWSUP'ed in Slovenia, Austria and Costa Rica with Davide Sartoni. Although I enjoy park and play, my main aim is white water SUP exploration! I love getting out into the wild and paddling natural rivers, enjoying the challenge, the adventure, the places it takes me and the people I meet.

**Which of the WW SUP communities do you regularly paddle with?**

It is fantastic how much the WW SUP community in the UK has grown over the last few years. I paddle locally with Kingfisher Canoe Club, Nottingham WW SUP, White Water SUP UK, South Wales White Water SUP, as well as with Davide Sartoni (USA) and with Honza Rott and the Tambo family from Prague when I can.

**What are your recommendations for women who may be wondering whether to go down the coaching route?**

To be a good coach, I think you need to be passionate about the sport. There is no point in trying to coach something

unless you absolutely love it. You have also got to enjoy learning. If you enjoy learning, then you will pass that on to the people you are coaching. Be confident enough in your abilities. One of the things that I know people struggle with is thinking that they are not a good enough paddler. There's no need to strive for perfection – aim at being effective, not perfect because nobody's perfect and everybody is different.

Work on your skills so that you can paddle consistently, effectively and comfortably in the environment in which you wish to coach. Paddle with other coaches, observe and help with coaching other people. Everybody has their own style, their things that work.

Develop various soft skills which you probably already have but don't realise the importance of, e.g. interpersonal skills, connecting with people, treating people as individuals. Work out their specific needs and goals; how you can use your knowledge of not just the technical side, but the tactical and everything else to help them progress.

Remember, there's no such thing as a perfect coach; it's a journey. The best coaches are the coaches who are forever changing, updating, adapting, and evolving.

**And in terms of personal progression - what would you recommend?**

I'm a great advocate of paddling 'up, down and sideways'! In other words, paddle with as many different people as you can rather than with the same people all the time. You can learn a lot from more experienced paddlers, but you can become too dependent on them if you're not careful.

Paddle with people who are not as experienced as yourself, and you'll find that you're probably better than you thought you were. Paddle with peers to consolidate your skills and learn how to lead a group. Combing all of these things together will help you to progress and have FUN.



# Joyce Johnston

[www.facebook.com/groups/moraysupclub](http://www.facebook.com/groups/moraysupclub)

Joyce Johnston has been white water stand up paddle boarding since 2017, when she was introduced to the sport in the depths of a Scottish winter. Currently developing her coaching practice, Joyce's enthusiasm for SUP is as infectious as her passion for The Moray SUP Club community she paddles with.

**Photo:** John Roberts



**#ShePaddles**



### **Tell me about your paddling background.**

I don't have a background in paddling; I'm not a kayaker or a canoeist. SUP is the only paddling I have ever done. I used to almost apologise for this, but now I am at a point of saying, actually, what I am doing is as legitimate as any kayaker coming into this discipline.

### **How did you get into WW SUP?**

In 2017, Jim Gibson put up a post on Facebook asking if people were interested in stand up paddleboarding. For those of you who don't know, Jim ran Aquaplay (now retired), is a well-known paddler in Scotland, and he lives just down the road from me! As I say, I had no paddling experience, but I had previously done some enthusiastic but not terribly skilled surfing on a foamy board. So, when I saw Jim's post, I thought, well, that's going to be worth a go!

A few weeks later (in January), we met at Tamdhu on the River Spey. I looked at the water, and my immediate thought was, *"Oh my goodness, I'll go in this river. I'll be pushed down to Craigellachie before they know it!"* That is not what actually happened, (well there was a bit of washing), and the feeling was great, just great!

### **What made you decide to continue with paddleboarding post this WW SUP initiation in the depths of a Scottish winter?**

It is something to do with the time of my life I am at – I am 55 years old. It's not some kind of midlife crisis, but there's something about my having a demanding full-time job and knowing how to do it, whereas, with SUP, I am an absolute beginner. Paddleboarding is, for me, an opportunity to try something new that I have no experience in and is about being able to allow myself to learn - that complete immersion is where the thrill is for me.

### **Do you have rivers local to you?**

It takes me seven minutes to walk down to the river. To drive up to Tamdhu, it takes 12 minutes or so. The river Spey is also very close. This last year I have been driving up to Aberlour, paddling down to Craigellachie, which is about two miles in total, locking up my board and then walking back to get my van. The question would be, why would you not go out on the river with it being so accessible? I am so very lucky to have all this close by.

### **Is the community you paddle with important to you?**

Fundamentally, yes! Community is as important as the new knowledge and skills that I have learned. As I say, I knew Jim before (we used to work for the same council), but without SUP, our paths would never have crossed again. Because of paddleboarding, I now have a whole community of people around me and they are all really dear to me now.

### **Tell me about the club you paddle with.**

The Moray SUP Club was the first paddleboard club to be affiliated with the Scottish Canoe Association. The essence is if there is water, we will paddle it! You just have to make sure you have the kit you need for the different environments. We have lovely sandy beaches at Lossiemouth on the Moray Firth. We have the sea, the estuary, slow-moving rivers, white water, the lochs and the white water course at Grantully.



**I understand SCA were very keen to talk to the club about the membership?**

We did a kind of ‘wee’ podcast with SCA because they were particularly interested in our membership’s growth rate and gender profile. To put it into context, we became an official affiliated club two weeks before the lockdown in March of last year, but, even so, our membership continued to grow. Our profile of membership is fundamentally different to existing clubs because we have more women than men.

**And why do you think you have a higher ratio of women to men?**

I think this is because of the sense of ‘community’ – paddle boarding is an activity that has not already been ‘claimed’, and I wonder if that’s something that has encouraged women to find a space. It is not one of those sports where you have to nudge blokes out of the way; it is just a space that is already there that women can come into.

We know through research that if women see other women (who look like them)

having a go at a sport, they feel more encouraged to have a go.

**Do you think that your being on the water and on social media has helped other women to think about white water SUP as a sport for them?**

Yes! This is something that is quite important to me with my paddling. I am a feminist, and a social worker and equality is very important to me. It is nice to be able to inspire other women to do positive things. For example, one woman, Jacqui, comes to mind who I surf with now as well. She had seen a post that Jim had put up of me going through the Washing Machine on the River A’an, and she said, “I want to be able to do that; I want to be just like Joyce!” I thought, how lovely, I have inspired another woman – it was such a nice feeling!

So yes, if women look at me and see that my hair is grey and they also see that I can really shift my board and this inspires them, that is a lovely gift to give to women.



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# COACH

## or can I do it myself?

**Words:** Dana at Active360 **Pics:** Active360

We don't need to say again that SUP took off massively last year with thousands of people buying their boards and joining the ever-growing community of SUP paddlers in the UK.

**Easy and accessible – finally a totally no fuss paddlesport that almost anyone can do and more – look good doing it without never drying neoprene, unflattering waterproof outer gear, helmets, throwlines, towlines and other endless bags of bits and pieces you cannot go without.**

Anyone can buy an inflatable board – there is a board for every budget and any colour preference, so to say (!). So we're not surprised the attention is diverted from the technical aspects of SUP to the purely aesthetic ones like the scenic backdrop and the design and/or the colour of outfit (often relatively minimal and photographed from certain angles) matching or contrasting the board.

Get a board! Lots of online deals available. But do it quickly. Everyone seems to be running out of stock. No special requirements need to be considered as an all-rounder 10.4' - 10.8' seems to be 'one size fits all' in this department. Just make sure the colour is nice. And you're set to go paddling!

### **So if that's all there is to SUP... do I need to get some coaching?**

Humans have mastered much more complicated things than SUP, so, of course, you can teach yourself. But whether you can do it well depends on many factors: aptitude for sports learning, previous experience of sports requiring good balance, exposure to watersports, your observational skills, how much time you are willing to put into it, how resourceful you are in finding sources of help, how analytical and self-reflective you are, and many more.

It might also be wise to consider your paddling aims – how much paddling you want to do and how good you want to get – as developing bad habits is the easiest thing to do and the hardest thing to undo. And you need to have the right board and paddle for the type of paddling you will do.

### **The Tideway**

We operate on a very specific body of water – the tidal Thames in London (known as the Tideway) – a beautiful and powerful urban river, bustling and potentially hazardous at times. Rowers, cargo boats, passenger cruise boats, sailing boats, barges and sports cruisers of all sizes mix on the river. Tidal currents can be powerful, and heavy rainfall adds fluvial flows to the mix, making the Tideway at times a river tricky to navigate and best avoided. This happens only at certain stages of the tide and in specific weather conditions but can unexpectedly change and catch you out when you are out there.



# NEEDED —

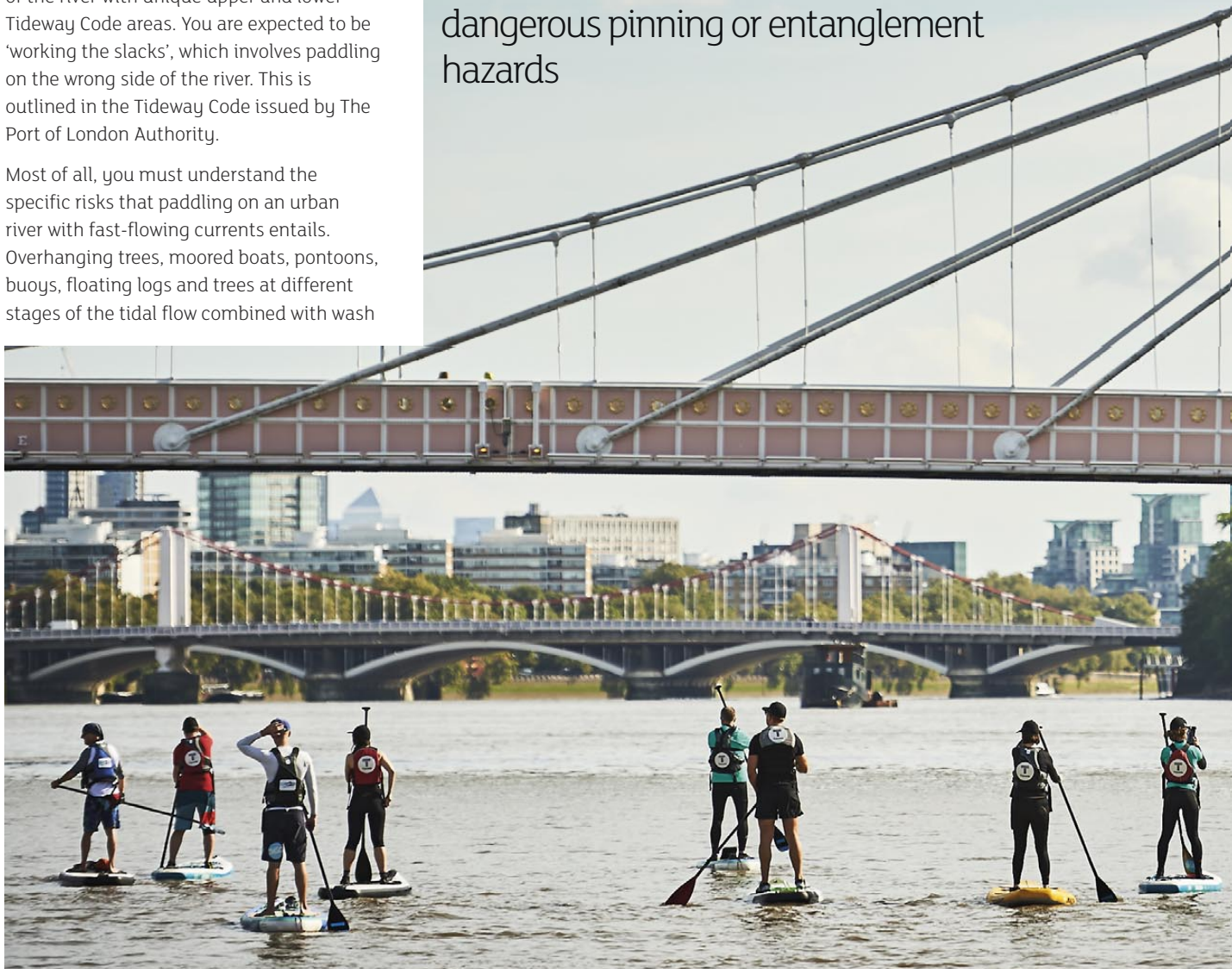




To paddle safely on the Tideway, you not only have to have good personal skills to deal with wash, currents, the tide against wind, chop etc. It would help if you had the right equipment. You need to understand the unique navigation rules on this stretch of the river with unique upper and lower Tideway Code areas. You are expected to be 'working the slacks', which involves paddling on the wrong side of the river. This is outlined in the Tideway Code issued by The Port of London Authority.

Most of all, you must understand the specific risks that paddling on an urban river with fast-flowing currents entails. Overhanging trees, moored boats, pontoons, buoys, floating logs and trees at different stages of the tidal flow combined with wash

Overhanging trees, moored boats, pontoons, buoys, floating logs and trees at different stages of the tidal flow combined with wash from passing traffic create serious and very dangerous pinning or entanglement hazards





from passing traffic create serious and very dangerous pinning or entanglement hazards. Understanding why a leg leash is not appropriate on a moving water is vital. We explain these to everyone who comes paddling with us and teach these skills more in-depth in the Thames Skills and Knowledge course.

The demand for paddlesports increased further by Covid 19 lockdowns, attracting more inexperienced paddlers to the



Tideway. We welcome it – but based on long 30+ years of experience paddling this stretch – we advise all novice paddlers to get some training to improve their paddling competence and understand moving water.

### Quick-release leash

We employ SUP instructors and coaches, and we were frustrated for years not having found a SUP training provider that would properly prepare people to teach in Tideway conditions. Extensive local training is always required, and some basic safety principles need to be understood and adapted – the main one being the ‘golden rule of safety’ – a leg leash. Most existing training programmes do not consider that a leash is useful and often essential in some situations but that a leg leash can be deadly in flowing rivers. In contrast, a quick-release leash adds to safety in most situations.

Frustrated with the lack of a SUP ‘training the trainers’ programme we could have complete confidence in, we started on a route to develop our own. We piloted a course in 2017 and were considering how to develop it further in 2018. We soon realised our time and resource limitations and decided to focus on the top-up local knowledge training. This was our strength, and we could offer it to both coaches and directly to paddlers themselves.

### British Canoeing

Last year’s surge in demand for paddlesports made us realise we urgently needed more instructors and coaches. We needed to train them reasonably quickly and to a high standard – and that’s always a tough call. The Directors of Active360 are all long-standing BC coaches coming from whitewater backgrounds. After checking out other SUP training providers, we turned to what we knew well years ago – British Canoeing (BC). We had for years loosened our links with BC as SUP was not high on their agenda.

British Canoeing (BC) came late to SUP and developed things slowly in this area. However, it seems it was worth the wait! The new coaching pathways programme is flexible and enables participants to skill up to coach different paddlesports. It is also comprehensive with an in-depth insight into the psychology of learning and coaching.

To go with BC wasn’t a hasty decision for us. It came after some months of trying things and considering options. We first teamed up with Alex Tonge, a BC trainer and a SUP white water coach, in 2019. He was recommended by our technical advisor and a long-standing whitewater kayaking mentor and friend Jacko (Andrew Jackson).



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### Hurley Weir

Alex first took us to Hurley Weir on the Thames to properly try SUP white water fun, and we loved it. It's a great way to improve your SUP skills quickly by pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. We now offer these sessions to our customers as Rough Water SUP Confidence Building Workshops run by Alex. Then in August 2020, Alex took four of us through SUP DST (Discipline Specific Training), and we decided that BC is the best fit of all the SUP training courses available. Alex introduced us to his mentor and very experienced national BC trainer Phil Hadley who agreed to help us out. So in December 2020, we were well on the road to making BC our training programme of choice.

We kicked off with one face to face classroom-based course just after lockdown and days before the next December lockdown, followed by a series of online training courses re-designed (first in the country!) and delivered by Phil Hadley. By early April 2021, we set up a very ambitious coaching programme putting 24 people

through BC Core Coach training (upskilling existing coaches/ instructors and starting new ones on a coaching journey). The majority on the programme are women still underrepresented in paddlesports coaching.

Between late April and late May 2021, we ran four sets of SUP DST (Discipline Specific Training) courses on the river from our Kew



Bridge base, with the first assessments running over June and July. Aspirant coaches are now clocking up hours helping and shadowing our experienced coaches and getting ready to be assessed and fully join our coaching team later in the summer or next season.

We were delighted to see our Kew Bridge river base working perfectly as a venue for the SUP Sheltered Water Coach Award, giving just the right amount of challenge to make it demanding (as it should be on a coaching course) and safe the same time. Both Phil and Alex now appreciate the unique setup on an urban tidal river and make their training fresh, fun and thorough adapting, if needed, to take the weather and tidal conditions into account.

British Canoeing is the only NGB involved in SUP in the UK. Their coach training pathway for SUP is comprehensive and, to our knowledge, currently the only one that sits within the UKCC framework regulated by OFQUAL. It is flexible, so different stages can be undertaken as and when the participant is ready. It emphasises 'coaching' rather than 'instruction' which we like, and takes it

seriously, going in-depth into coaching philosophy. To add – BC is perhaps the only organisation with enough experience across paddlesports to recognise that the leash policy needs to be adapted according to conditions. All exciting and well worth it!

Apart from raising coaching standards, we aim to develop a wider SUP community of confident and competent paddlers on the Tideway. They are advocates for the sport and will contribute to the development of SUP locally. BC offers personal skills development routes through various paths, one being the SUP Personal Performance Award which we will be offering this summer. We would like to see the SUP season-extending this year well beyond warm summer months and sunny weather. Come on – we live in the UK! There is potential for SUP to become much more of an all-year-round sport, but good training and personal skills progression routes are needed for this to happen. BC seem to have it covered.

We will still welcome new team members who have been trained by ASI, BSUPA, WSA, ISA, and ACA, and we will be happy to train them up for the Tideway conditions.

The majority on the programme are women still underrepresented in paddlesports coaching



# Three ways British Canoeing is supporting the SUP community!



Over the last 85 years British Canoeing has always had the focus on creating a paddling community that inspires individuals to pursue their paddling passion; for health, enjoyment, friendship, challenge and achievement. Now British Canoeing are committed more than ever with supporting the continued growth and development across all areas of the very enthusiastic stand up paddle boarding community.



Here's just three of the great ways we are supporting SUP boarding...

## 1. Places to paddle, advice and resources

Go Paddling with Gill is a fantastic resource for recreational SUP boarders looking for information about places to paddle. With over 175 paddling trails and an interactive PaddlePoints mapping resource that helps you find and share paddling locations, you'll never be without somewhere to explore. Plus, there's the ability to find your nearest SUP boarding centre, club, course provider or retailer.



There's also regularly produced SUP boarding content focusing on providing top tips, safety advice and other great SUP content! Here's some

of our top articles:

- SUP board leashes. Which one's right for you?
- SUP yoga: the basics
- Top five SUP boarding city adventures in England
- Tips for beginners paddling on the sea: know before you go

Discover more by visiting [gopaddling.info](http://gopaddling.info)

## 2. Developing personal skills

**Paddle Awards** – our three Paddle Awards - Start, Discover and Explore – are designed for any SUP boarder just starting out and wanting to gain recognition of their learning and development, to feel confident paddling independently or with friends, a club or the wider SUP community.

**Personal Performance Awards** – SUP boarders can also progress beyond the paddle awards as we have developed a number of personal performance awards which recognise a SUP boarder's ability to paddle independently within more diverse environments.

Personal performance awards available are:

- Sheltered Water Award
- White Water Award
- Paddle Surf Award

You can find your nearest provider for these awards by visiting [gopaddling.info](http://gopaddling.info)

## 3. SUP coaching and leadership qualifications

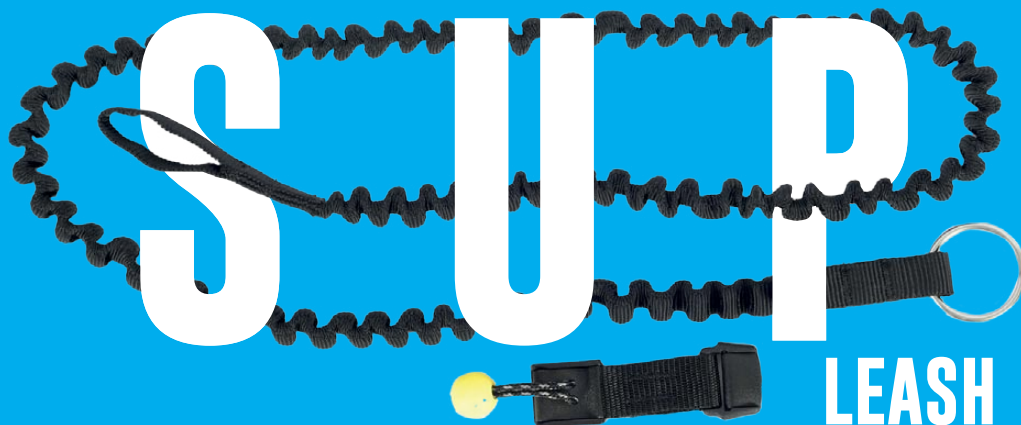
We have used our 40 years of experience and knowledge, of providing paddlesport qualifications, to craft a selection of wide reaching SUP boarding coaching and leadership qualifications.

We are excited to be able to offer the following UK and internationally recognised SUP boarding qualifications:

- Inland Open Water Leader
- Coastal Leader
- Sheltered Water Coach
- Open Water Coach
- White Water Coach
- Race Coach

You can find more information on each course by visiting [www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk](http://www.britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk)

# SUP LEASH




A must have for any SUP paddler. Tough elasticated tubular-webbing leash that can be used / worn in two ways.

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Using the quick release section of our Guide / Gear Belts makes for a comfortable waist mounted leash.



Pull the cam buckle's toggle and the SUP Leash will release, leaving the belt in place.

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COVID CHATS WITH...

# Pearson

Travel presenter, SUPYoga teacher and #ShePaddles ambassador

**Interview:** SUPM

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## **Before we start – let our readers know a little about yourself, background, family, etc...**

Hi! I'm a travel presenter and yoga teacher based on the Kent Coast. I grew up in Surrey, but have always felt most at home by the sea so now live on the coastal town of Hythe with my boyfriend Barney and dog Merlin.

## **The first question is inevitable – what have you been doing to keep yourself sane during the current Covid-19 crisis?**

Finding new adventures close to home! I have always loved exploring and travelling, but the crisis has made me realise I don't need to venture to new and exotic places to do this. I am lucky to live between the coast and countryside so have kept busy finding new walks and routes on my SUP. Finding adventures just moments from my home has been amazing, and given me a new found appreciation for where I live.

## **You came to SUP later in life after working in London - what did you do in London?**

I was working as a dancer and commercial model, going to auditions and trying to

book performing jobs. I had done a dance degree at uni, so felt I 'should' work in the industry and London would be the best place for this. The busy city life and unforgiving pressures that can be felt in the performance industries were not for me and after what felt like a 'mid 20's crisis', I changed my mindset and started focusing on what fuelled my soul, instead of what felt expected. I left London, moved to the Kent coast, trained as a yoga teacher, found a job with a local company as a travel presenter and learned how to surf, skateboard and of course SUP – phew! Finding yoga and SUPyoga was so enlightening for me, I found a place where I could move with the grace and power like I did as a dancer, but without any judgement.

## **So where did the inspiration to change and live in Kent come from?**

I spent most of my childhood holidays down in Cornwall and have always felt a connection with the sea. I knew I needed to live by the sea but Cornwall felt too far away from my family in Surrey, so Kent seemed like a great option. I also already had friends from uni who lived down this way so that helped too!







## So you learned to surf and skateboard but you say more importantly, SUP. What's special to you about SUP?

Paddleboarding is a form of meditation for me. Meditation is about clearing the mind, to let go of thoughts and feel completely present in the here and now – paddle boarding does this so well. You are so focused on staying on the board, becoming aware of your breath, your body, the sounds of nature around you, that during your time on the board – nothing else matters.

## When and why did the idea of tackling plastic pollution first come to mind?

As a travel presenter, I have seen the impact tourism can have on a destination both good and bad. In 2018 I made a film in Cape Verde about the impact of tourism on such a small island and it opened my eyes to the devastating effect of plastic pollution on an island that didn't have the infrastructure to recycle properly. This experience has never left me and I felt a need to not only change my own lifestyle choices but also encourage others to do the same. I believe small acts can amount to big changes, so regularly run beach cleans at my local beach in Hythe and in June paddle boarded the 28-mile stretch of the Royal Military Canal, collecting litter as I went to raise money for a '2-Minute Beach Clean Board' on Hythe Beach.

## What effect do you think the Covid-19 crisis has had regarding pollution?

To begin with I thought it would have a positive effect, with more people spending time walking and connecting to nature I

hoped it would encourage people to want to look after our environment more. But sadly I feel it is quite the opposite. As lockdown restrictions were lifted more people started venturing to parks and beaches and the devastating images of litter with overflowing bins was so sad to see. I have also seen so many disposable masks on the beach recently, which will end up in our seas and cause harm to marine life – it is very worrying.

## We have all seen the recent images of over crowded beaches during the crisis and the mountains of litter left behind. What more can be done to drive the message home?

I believe in spreading the message 'take your rubbish home with you', as even if rubbish goes in the bin, it can be blown out

by the wind or seagulls can get to it. As I mentioned earlier I am a supporter of the 2-Minute Beach Clean movement by a charity called The '2-Minute Foundation'. Their '2-minute beach clean stations' do not ask you to clean the whole beach, it doesn't make you feel guilty for not being able to make every organised beach clean or for that matter solve the entire crisis. It simply says, "Do what you can," two minutes on every trip to the beach or in fact anywhere, just pick up a few pieces. I think we need more litter pick stations like these ones to encourage local communities to 'do their bit!'

## How can we as paddlers get more involved?

Every time you go out paddling do a two-minute litter pick, its so simple! You can also join organised paddle litter picks, the environmental organisation Plastic Patrol, run loads of these all over the country and they are free to join! After every event they ask the volunteers to register the rubbish they find into the Plastic Patrol app. This helps to gather crucial data that would help conduct the world's largest survey of inland plastic pollution that can be used to approach brands that are causing the pollution from the source.

## What does it mean to you to be an @ShePaddles ambassador?

I am so proud to be one of ten #ShePaddles ambassadors for British Canoeing. Paddle boarding has changed my life in such a positive way, and I want to encourage other women to do the same. My SUPYoga classes attract mostly women, and it can be a great introduction to SUP. The boards are clipped to a buoy so there is no danger of floating away and you can learn to find





your balance on the board too. I love receiving messages from women after my lessons saying they now feel like they want to try paddle boarding properly.

### **Why do you think there's been an enormous influx of women to SUP?**

I have always found the world the SUP world very welcoming, accessible and open to all levels and abilities. Paddle boarding is a very un-intimidating sport, as you can start at a very gentle pace and slowly build up your skills without feeling defeated. I think this is a big reason there has been more women on SUPs, and it's awesome!

### **Anything you would do to bring more women to the sport?**

I would like to see more paddle boarding brands using marketing images with women of all different shapes and sizes, to show how accessible SUP is to everyone. I think this would inspire so many more women to 'have a go' if they see images they can relate too.

### **Does living outside of the big city provide balance and self-awareness?**

For Sure! Being able to walk on the beach with a cuppa after a day work is the best way to switch off.

### **We know you love dogs, as do we – do you take your dogs out to SUP?**

Yes! I have a Jack Russell called Merlin, who regularly comes on my SUP with me. He quickly learned that if he leans over the board to drink out of the canal he will fall in – so now keeps all four paws firmly on the board!

### **What piece of kit do you rely upon the most?**

My waterproof phone case. It means I can always take my phone with me as a safety measure, and gives me confidence when I am paddle boarding by myself.



**You are a yoga teacher, do you teach on SUPs and why is that an advantage? I love teaching SUPYoga!**

It allows you to take your yoga practice off the mat and onto water so your SUP becomes a floating yoga mat! Whether you're a seasoned paddle boarder or experienced yogi this practice gives a whole new experience on the water as it's a fun way to keep fit, maintain a healthy mind and connect with nature. I have many people attend my SUPYoga class who have never done yoga or paddle boarding before.

I tell them we are all beginners once, this sport is for everyone, just go at your own pace – even if you stay on your knees and stay attached to my board for the whole lesson – you are still doing it! I also believe paddle boarding can have a huge positive impact on the mind and body.

**If you could head anywhere in the world to SUP, where would it be and what appeals about that location?**

I would love to SUP in Norway through the fjords and wild camp at night! The scenery looks so dramatic!

**What's the most enjoyable encounter with wildlife that you've had whilst paddling?**

I was once paddle boarding just off Folkestone Harbour and was joined by two seals! They were so inquisitive and wouldn't stop staring at me – it did feel quite intimidating at one point!





**Are there any issue that stops you sleeping at night?**

The throw away culture we live in. If something is broken, why don't we look to fix it instead of going out to buy something new and creating more waste for this planet. I am big believer of the 3 'Rs'... reuse, recycle, repair.

**If you could paddle with anyone in the world, dead or alive, who would it be and why?**

Sir David Attenborough, he has inspired so many of us to love and care for the planet. I would like to say thank you to him for that, and then listen to stories about his travels!

**What do you do to relax?**

Other than taking my SUP out I love walking my dog along the beach, whilst listening to a podcast.

**What would we find in your fridge right now?**

A lot of courgettes! I started a veg patch in my garden over lockdown and am now overwhelmed with courgettes!

**If we came to your house for dinner, what would you prepare for us?**

A vegetarian curry inspired by my trip to Kerala in India at the start of the year. I would make it outside in my garden over a fire – you can't beat alfresco cooking and dining!

**Who are your SUP buddies?**

I love going paddling with my boyfriend Barney, we have a campervan and love packing up the boards and going on SUP adventures together!

**Any final shout outs?**

I would like to give a shout out to Cadi Lamber and Rebecca Loveatt from British Canoeing and say thank you for all the hard work they put into the a amazing #ShePaddles innovation. Another shout out goes to Jo Moseley, who inspired me to do my litter pick paddle trip after watching her efforts last year as she paddled and litter picked 162 miles between the two north coasts of England. Jo is also the person who encouraged me to apply to be a #ShePaddles ambassador, and for that I am always grateful!

**As you paddle off into the sunset, we thank you India for your time and the very best of luck for the future:)**



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# Quick release belts for SUP LEASHES

WORDS BY LOUISE ROYLE

**Photos:** by Louise Royle, Lisa Boore, David Mattingley, Davide Sartoni and Tony Bain



Why would you want to use a leash with a SUP? – Because it could save your life

Why would you not want to be attached to your SUP? – Because it could save your life.

**This article provides information on the types of quick-release belts that are currently available; the features of the different kinds of a belt with their pros and cons; and how this relates to the environment you intend to paddle. It is essential to understand that there are different opinions and options. You need to decide for yourself, which is the most appropriate and safe option for you, given the conditions that you intend to paddle in on the day.**

## Why use a leash?

Because you do NOT want to become SEPARATED from your SUP, it is usually safer to be on your board than not. Your paddleboard is your craft; you can get to where you want or need to be (e.g. in an emergency) faster than if you were not on the SUP. Water (in the UK anyway) is often cold, sometimes dangerously so, therefore you do not want to be in the water for too long, or you could get hypothermia.

Even in a light breeze, your board can travel out of reach within seconds; the leash allows you to get back in contact with your board quickly; this can be a lifesaver particularly in open water situations. A leash also will enable you to swim to a riverbank without having to worry that you are going to lose your board.

## Why do you need to be able to release the leash and board in an emergency?

There are, however, also situations where you do NOT want to be ATTACHED to something that can trap you or pull you under the water, such as tree branches, rocks, buoys or other snag hazards. In the white water SUP paddling community, there is plenty of debate about when, where and even if you should even wear a leash.

Still, if you do, everyone agrees that there MUST be a quick-release mechanism so that you can quickly and easily detach yourself from the leash and board. However, there is a general lack of awareness of anything other than ankle or thigh attachments for leashes within the general SUP paddling community. Even on a canal, there are plenty of snag hazards, everything from tree branches to shopping trolleys; some of these hazards hide underwater, and you may only find them if you fall in and get caught up.







When touring on rivers, estuaries, or coastlines, there are plenty of hazards, including trees, moorings, and buoys. It only takes a gentle current, wind or the tide, and you could easily be in a situation where you cannot quickly release yourself from your board. Except in very calm conditions, you will NOT be able to reach any attachments that are on your ankle or leg. There is a great video that demonstrates this, that I recommend you watch by Barry Hughes: <https://youtu.be/-NJEYNWaD8Q>.

Although filmed on a white water course, this is the type of flow you would expect to find on popular touring rivers such as the River Wye at Symonds Yat in the summer at low flow levels. In tidal estuaries, the flow can be substantially faster than this.

## QR system

Unless you're only paddling open water with no potential snag hazards, then I would highly recommend getting a quick-release (QR) belt for attaching yourself via a leash to your board. This also helps keep the leash out of the water preventing drag or snagging; most people use coiled leashes except for surfing where a long straight leash minimises recoil. The QR system is worn at waist height or above, where it can easily be reached and should release efficiently both with and without tension on the leash (as you can get tangled with objects even in still water). Avoid material on material release fittings where possible: a metal fitting (D-ring or carabiner) will release quicker and with less resistance and chance of entanglement than material (e.g. ankle cuff) from material webbing.

The QR belts should be adjusted (where possible) or trimmed so that only about 15cm of webbing protrudes from the buckle when closed; longer belts will take longer to release and may tangle. You should be able to find and release the QR mechanism without looking with either hand (practice this with your eyes closed on the land and in the water in a safe environment with supervision).

Leashes come with different fixings for attachment (left): ankle or thigh cuffs; carabiners (you should only use screw gate carabiners in SUPs because open gates carabiners can become snagged); D-rings; or quick release shackles (NRS and Hala make leashes with a D-ring attached plus a QR shackle with a carabiner).

You can remove ankle or thigh cuffs using an FCS Allen key then replacing with a rail saver (the bit that is attached to the other end of the leash and is used to attach it to the board); thread either a screw gate carabiner or a D-ring through the Velcro on the rail saver. This rids you of the bulky cuff allowing you to attach any leash to the belts discussed below via metal rather than material.

I have chosen a range of quality belts currently available to give you some ideas of the types of quick-release belts available. Which system is best for you will depend on what sort of paddling you do and your build (I am a small female with short arms; I paddle touring rivers and lakes as well as white water). These pros and cons are my opinions from what I have found using these systems. Also, be aware that manufacturers often update, so always check out the features of the current models before you buy.

I would not recommend attaching a leash directly to a buoyancy aid or rescue vest. The quick-release belt on a rescue vest is threaded through side panels and designed to release under tension only; keep this for what it is intended.



## Palm quick release belt

A simple QR belt with a leash attachment point at the back, you can attach the leash by threading the webbing through a D-ring, screw-gate carabiner or ankle cuff.

### Pros:

- Has two QR buckles – one at the front which releases the whole belt; one at the side which just releases the leash.
- QR toggles are easy to find, hold and pull. They are different shapes and colours.
- If the belt moves around the waist, you can always reach at least one of the QR toggles.

### Cons:

- Cannot be used for both carrying a throwline and attaching a leash on the same belt.
- Has no built-in fail-safe, so will not break under excessive tension.
- Not adjustable; once fitted, cut the webbing to size for quick release.

### Environment:

- Suitable for easy white water rivers, touring rivers, estuaries, coastlines and open water.

## Soul safety leash

This is a belt and leash system all in one, which uses a large strip of Velcro as the belt.

### Pros:

- Can be worn around the waist or chest.
- The belt is adjustable if different people need to use it.
- Big ball toggle that is easy to find a hold and pull for manual QR.
- Velcro tension regulator at both ends of the leash. You can adjust the amount of Velcro so that the leash releases under high or low tension. In an environment with no pin hazards (e.g. big volume rivers), you attach the maximum amount of Velcro, so your board does not release as you do not want to lose it. Where there are pin hazards in a rocky river, and you want the board to release, you set less Velcro overlap so that it will release under less tension.
- Has several built-in fail points (in the coil and the fittings) so that it will snap and release under excessive tension.

### Cons:

- If worn around the waist, there is no option to carry a throwline on the same belt (it is not good practice to wear multiple waist belts each with separate release systems).
- If worn around the chest, under tension, the manual QR ball can be pulled behind you where you cannot reach it.
- Lots of Velcro, which gets caught in long hair.
- The coiled leash is relatively thin and difficult to hold on to when pulling back

the board towards you when swimming in powerful water.

- Comes with open-gate carabiners; these can be replaced with screw gate carabiners to avoid the possibility of them opening and snagging.

### Environment:

- Designed for white water rivers, but also suitable for touring rivers, estuaries, coastlines and open water.

## HF SUP belt SUP buddy

A QR belt with a leash attachment point at the back, where you attach the leash via a screw-gate carabiner or ankle cuff.

### Pros:

- Has two separate and different release mechanisms – one manual buckle, and one automatic Velcro release.
- The toggle on the front QR buckle is easy to find, hold and pull; this releases the whole belt.
- The leash attaches at the back of the belt around a small ring of webbing attached to a D-ring. This D-ring threads through more webbing that attaches via Velcro to the waist belt. You adjust the amount of Velcro overlap so that the belt will release automatically under either low or high tension. The D-ring provides a clean metal to material release when the Velcro releases if you are attaching via an ankle cuff.

### Cons:

- Cannot be used for carrying a throwline as well as a leash attachment.
- If the belt moves around during use, it could be challenging to reach the manual release toggle with just one hand.
- Not adjustable; once fitted the webbing should be cut to size for quick release.
- The open webbing at the back of this belt could get tangled or snagged; a tidier system is more suitable for white water (see Synergy Belt).

### Environment:

- Suitable for easy white water rivers, touring rivers, estuaries, coastlines and open water.



HF Buddy with Carabiner



Palm belt with ankle cuff



Palm belt with ankle cuff



Soul safety leash



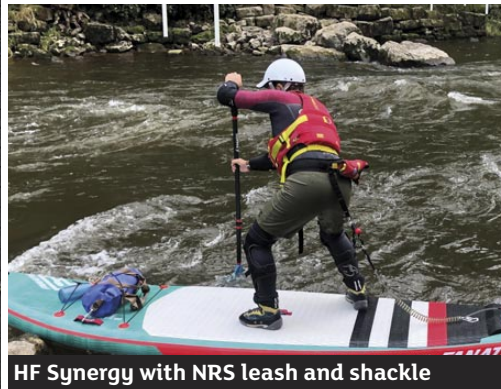
Soul safety leash chest mounted

### HF Buddy with ankle cuff





HF Synergy with NRS leash & shackle



HF Synergy with NRS leash and shackle

### HF SUP Belt Synergy

A padded QR belt designed for white water use, you can attach the leash via a screw-gate carabiner, or QR shackle.

**Pros:**

- Has two separate and different release mechanisms – one manual buckle, and one automatic Velcro release.
- The toggle on the front QR buckle is easy to find, hold and pull; this releases the whole belt.
- The leash attaches to the back of the belt via a strip of Velcro, with a D-ring to attach the leash. You adjust the amount of Velcro overlap so that the belt will release automatically under either low or high tension.
- Can attach a throwbag as well as a leash.
- The leash can also be attached via a QR shackle (such as provided with NRS or Hala leashes), this adds a second manual QR point, thus allowing you to reach a manual pull even if the belt has twisted around.

**Cons:**

- If the belt moves around during use, it could be challenging to reach the single manual release toggle with just one hand.
- If the leash is attached via a QR shackle to the end of the Velcro: this additional QR is some distance from your waist making it a bit difficult to feel for and find, especially if you have short arms.
- Not adjustable; once fitted webbing should be cut to size for quick release.

**Environment:**

- Suitable for white water rivers, touring rivers, estuaries, coastlines and open water.

### Whetman water belt

A waist belt with a buckle quick release at the front and D-ring anchored to the belt at the back.

**Pros:**

- Has two QR buckles – one at the front, which releases the whole belt; one at the back which just releases the leash.
- The toggles are easy to find, hold and pull.
- You can attach the leash either (1) via a screw-gate carabiner, or ankle cuff to the

rear webbing with the buckle release or, (2) via a QR shackle (such as provided with NRS or Hala leashes) to the D-ring. Either way, you have two manual QR systems.

- If the belt moves around your waist, you can always reach at least one of the two QR mechanisms.
- If you attach the leash via a QR shackle to the D-ring, you can also carry a throwbag on the rear of the belt.
- Adjustable, useful if more than one person needs to use.

**Cons:**

- Has no built-in fail-safe, so will not break under excessive tension.
- QR shackles are useful, but I have found that the split ring can open up and fail after continuous use. So QR shackles must be checked each time before use.

**Environment:**

- Suitable for white water rivers, touring rivers, estuaries, coastlines and open water.

### Whetman SUP water belt rig

A waist belt with a buckle front quick release for the whole belt and an extender on the side with a separate QR for attaching the leash via a D-ring. It also has QR webbing on the back for holding a throw line.

The SUP water belt has a buckle release extender QR stitched to the belt. The standard extender is 22cm long and has a D-ring at the end for attaching the leash. It is also available with a shorter SUP attachment extender and can be made for left or right-handed access/release.

**Pros:**

- You attach the leash to the extender via a D-ring, this has a buckle type QR which is preferable to using a shackle. It is much easier to release and reattach the leash and less prone to fail than a shackle.
- There are two manual QR systems for the leash (plus one for a throw line).
- If the belt moves around your waist, you can always reach at least one of the two QR mechanisms.
- The toggles are easy to find, hold and pull. This front toggle releases the whole belt. The side toggle releases the leash. As I have short arms, I use a short extender so that the QR sits next to the belt where it is easier to reach.
- Adjustable, useful if more than one person needs to use.

**Cons:**

- Has no built-in fail-safe, so will not break under excessive tension.

**Environment:**

- Suitable for white water rivers, touring rivers, estuaries, coastlines and open water.



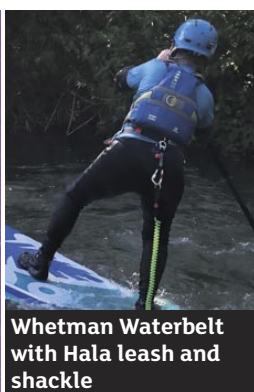
Whetman SUP Waterbelt with D-ring



Whetman SUP Waterbelt with D-ring



Whetman Waterbelt with ankle cuff



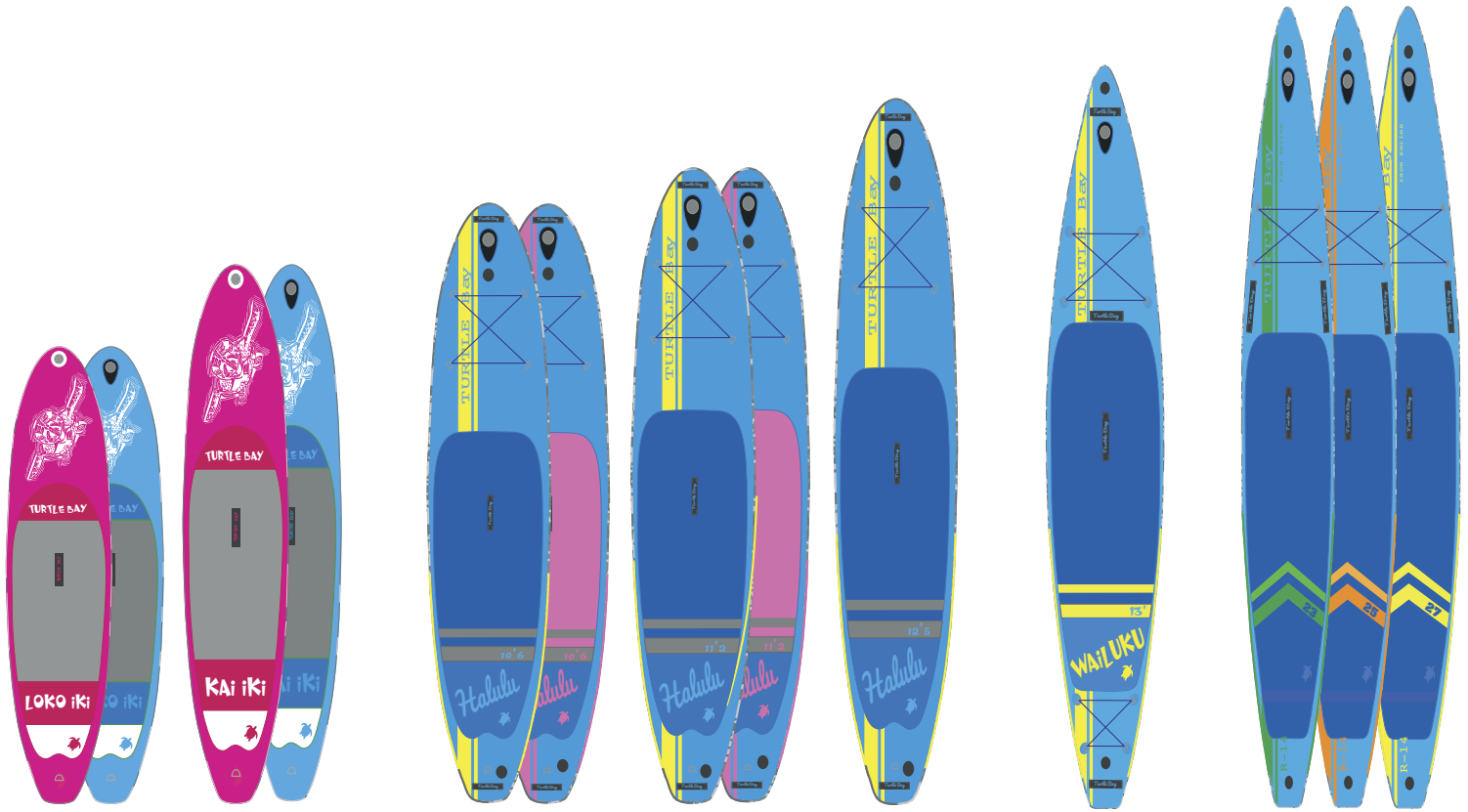
Whetman Waterbelt with Hala leash and shackle



Whetman Waterbelt with carabiner

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