



Canoe Wales

Strategic Plan 2024-2028

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 Canŵ Cymru
Canoe Wales

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Foreword

We're incredibly proud to share our 2024–2028 four-year strategic plan with you, the paddling community in Wales. The plan is the result of an extensive consultation and planning period where we have reached out to as many of you as possible to understand your wants, needs, and consequently, where we should best focus our limited resources.

The world has changed significantly over the past few years, and our plan aims to build on the progress which has been made previously, while also harnessing the opportunities and navigating the challenges which we will undoubtedly face as we move forward.

We have set some ambitious goals that will continue to develop Canoe Wales over the next four years into an even more progressive organisation – with better services for our members, increased advocacy for access to waterways, more support for recreational and non-Olympic paddlers, and an ever-growing, more inclusive paddling community.

To achieve this plan, we'll rely on your support, feedback, and generosity. Ultimately, Canoe Wales is the paddlers, coaches, leaders, volunteers, staff and supporters who make it possible for people to get on the water every day, and we're very excited to work with you all over the next four years to bring this plan to life.



Kerry Chown
Canoe Wales Chair



Alistair Dickson
CEO



What does this plan mean for me?

Canoe Wales is a company limited by guarantee and a membership organisation. The Board is accountable to the members for managing the strategy for paddling in Wales and does this through the production, delivery, and review of the strategic plan.

It is also imperative that Canoe Wales publishes a strategy with a clear purpose, vision and measurable outcomes. It is also important that Canoe Wales reports back on progress to members via the Annual General Meeting and other member engagement events. This ensures that our members can hold the Board accountable with regards to progress towards the aims and objectives within this plan.

The actions in this plan are the result of extensive member consultation and they should therefore be of benefit to paddlers in Wales. While many members may not see an immediate change to their paddling experience, a strategic approach will help the organisation and community to move towards our long-term ambitions. This will

ensure that the paddling community in Wales continues to become more inclusive and progressive.

Canoe Wales is also a voluntary organisation, made up of a community of clubs, centres, committees, volunteers, coaches and officials working alongside the Board and staff. It is therefore important that Canoe Wales coordinates the work and efforts of such a wide stakeholder group with an effective plan clarifying roles and responsibilities and working towards a shared purpose and vision.

Canoe Wales is additionally a publicly funded organisation with associated obligations and requirements. It is important we generate confidence and clarity with our funders with regards to aims and objectives, which will help protect and develop the investment into paddlesport in Wales. This will ensure the paddlers of Wales continue to benefit from public investment and support.



Purpose:

Why we do what we do.

'To support our members, advocate for responsible paddlesport in Wales and service Welsh paddlers at every step of their paddlesport journey.'

Vision:

What we want to become.

Wales to be the best place to go paddling, supported by:

- World-class facilities
- Tailored support & education
- A strong, supportive and inclusive paddling community
- Fair and transparent rights for access and participation

Mission 2024-28:

How we will turn our vision into reality.

'Reach, engage and educate more paddlers in order to further develop our inclusive, responsible and environmentally-focused paddling community here in Wales.'

Strategic context

Through our dedicated strategy consultation in 2022 and from the feedback attained from member engagement events (like our annual Roadshows), it is clear there are some major challenges and opportunities for us to focus on throughout this 2024-28 strategy period. Some examples of these challenges and opportunities are detailed below.

Challenges

Pressure on member discretionary spend	Environmental impact on waterways	Continued access issues
Complexity of coaching scheme	Increasing separation between recreational and competitive paddling	Decreasing volunteers in clubs

Opportunities

Increasing numbers of people paddling in Wales	Wellbeing impacts of paddling better researched and evidenced	SUP governance
Large number of paddling locations in Wales	Increased reach and influence	Progress made through inclusivity programmes like #ShePaddlesCymru

Priorities (2024-28)

In implementing our strategy, we have four priorities that will run across all functional areas of the organisation. We have ensured that these priorities are referenced in each part of our strategy (please see the icons below the Key Performance Indicators). Focusing on these priorities will help to align our work across all areas of the organisation and make tangible progress towards these important goals. The four priorities are detailed below.



Environment & sustainability

We, as the Canoe Wales community, will take extra care of the environment and educate others on how to do so too.



Safety & wellbeing

We will work collaboratively to ensure paddling in Wales is a safe and enjoyable activity for all.



Engagement & education

Engaging all new paddlers and supporting them through a lifetime of participation in paddlesports.



Partnerships

By working collaboratively with other organisations, we will broaden our reach and influence.



21,000
Welsh residents go canoeing and/or kayaking each year
(Source of data - National Survey for Wales 2022)



36%
female membership
An 8% increase since 2019



Development & Participation

Our work in this area focuses on increasing participation of paddlesport in Wales and ensuring our paddling community best represents the Welsh population. This includes promoting opportunities for underrepresented groups and supporting clubs and other organisations to increase the opportunities for people new to paddling.

We have seen a significant number of new people coming into our sport since 2021. Many have been introduced via the more accessible formats (stand-up paddleboard and sit-on-tops) and are paddling independently and less frequently. Therefore, we need to work harder to connect people to existing structures like clubs and providers and give people the information to paddle safely and responsibly.

Club Development

- Provide more support to club committees with club development, grant applications, safeguarding and club governance
- Strongly promote the opportunities for new paddlers to join paddling clubs
- Create meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships between clubs and centres via the implementation of the Clubs & Hubs proposal

KPI >>
Number of club members of Canoe Wales Affiliated paddlesport clubs



Engagement and Connection

- Further promote the impacts of paddling on health and wellbeing
- Promote and publish more information about places for people to paddle
- Engage with schools and youth groups to encourage and support paddling as part of their regular activities

KPI >>
Number of Canoe Wales Members



Equity, diversity and inclusion

- Develop a programme for those with disabilities to support the less able bodied into paddlesport
- Further increase diversity in paddling through targeted programmes and promotional activities to attract under-represented groups

KPI >>
Number of people engaged with CW 'E, D & I' programmes



Coaching, Leadership & Safety

With the increase in participation of paddlesport and incidents such as the Haverfordwest tragedy, safety has been thrust into the forefront of our minds. We need to work harder to promote clear and simple safety messaging widely and collaborate with other organisations to further our reach and influence.

The BCAB qualifications and awards framework is the only regulated and recognised qualifications for paddlesport and provide world-leading training for those looking to develop their skills and experience. Our consultation with members suggests that we need to continue working to clear up the confusion with the qualifications and awards. We should ensure that coaches and leaders are supported to deliver them in a robust but clear and transparent way. We also recognise that people are gaining more and more information online and so we need to balance practical delivery with information that can be gained digitally and more informally.



1290 BCAB
1290 Canoe Wales members have a current BCAB qualification and/or award

Coaching & Leadership

- Provide high-quality and value for money qualifications and learning opportunities for coaches, leaders and instructors
- Provide more pathway clarity for aspiring coaches and leaders
- Increase the practical opportunities to develop member coaching and leadership skills
- Improve the digital, online and elearning offers for instructors, coaches and leaders that they need to support their professional development
- Strengthen the membership benefits for coaches & leaders

KPI >>

Total number of certifications



Safety

- Raise public awareness across all aspects of paddling safety to reduce the risk of watersports related accidents
- Further collaborate with the RNLI and other safety-related organisations
- Increase the number of safety training opportunities across all stakeholders

KPI >>

A decrease of 'high-risk' incidents reported through British Canoeing Incident Reporting System



Access & Advocacy

Canoe Wales is committed to advocating for improved access to waterways throughout Wales. While we are disappointed to see little progress in this area politically, we are optimistic that our continued advocacy and work in this area is becoming harder and harder to ignore, and we are beginning to see pleasing progress and awareness in many areas. We will persist to promote the rights of paddlers in Wales to access waterways in a fair and transparent manner whilst advocating responsible paddling practices to those new to the sport. We will broaden our reach and influence by working collaboratively with other organisations whose objectives are aligned to ours. We will also continue to communicate access issues in a proactive and constructive way.

< 3%

Less than 3% of Wales' 10,800km of rivers and canals have undisputed right of navigation

Access

- Promote the updated Clear Access, Clear Waters charter through our membership and community to promote fair, shared, sustainable, open access to Welsh waterways for all
- Initiate a second round of paddle trails around Wales to help members and our paddling community to both understand and abide by local rules and restrictions
- Promote the Paddlers' Code in Wales to maintain responsible and safe paddling activity

KPI >>

Number of access incidents reported to us (on an annual basis)



Advocacy

- Continue to represent members on relevant and influential access groups & forums – promoting members' interests wherever possible and raising concerns in a constructive and representative way
- Continue to proactively engage with relevant Welsh politicians to highlight the need to resolve the access question once and for all
- Work collaboratively with other access restricted NGB's and activities, sharing resources and working collaboratively where possible

KPI >>

Gain a new policy commitment from the Welsh Government which improves access to inland water by 2028



Environment & Sustainability

A growing area of our work Paddlers often see firsthand the impact we as humans are having on the planet. We have focused on a three phased approach to this work:

1. Increase awareness of the environment around us.
2. Build engagement in environmental campaigns and policy work.
3. Build further promotion and engagement through environmental ambassadors, and the upskilling of influential people like coaches and leaders.

We are also committed to leading by example and ensuring that Canoe Wales is an organisation working towards more sustainable ways of providing the services we offer. This will mean extensive work to account and measure our carbon emissions and working hard to minimise and offset them where possible.



700
rubbish sacks filled from waterways in 2022 "The Big Paddle Clean" UK

Environment

- Develop an Environmental Policy
- Implement an awareness drive across the Canoe Wales community to increase the understanding and appreciation for the environment that surrounds us when we paddle
- Create an opportunity for the Canoe Wales community to pledge support for a broader environmental campaign
- Create an environmental ambassador programme where by environmental leads/ambassadors can be educated and supported to share educational messaging more broadly
- Champion improvements in water quality and be a voice against the discharge of sewage and industrial/farming pollution into our waterways
- Promote the Paddlers' Code to further encourage responsible paddling activity



KPI >>
Number of members who have pledged support for environmental campaign



Sustainability

- Develop a new Canoe Wales Sustainability Plan
- Commit to UN Global Compact principles
- Collaborate with Sport Wales, British Canoeing and the national associations, RYA and other sporting associations to further reduce our impact
- Promote ambitions through strong and blended communications to members and other stakeholders



KPI >>
Compliance with UN Global Compact



Membership & Communications

First and foremost, we are a membership organisation committed to delivering a valued service to our members. We have welcomed a significant number of new members into our community since 2021 but we know that the cost-of-living crisis and other challenges mean that we need to work hard to retain our members moving forward.

We resolve to better understand our members wants and needs and develop tailored member services and communications which better match our varied membership portfolio. Improving how we communicate what we are doing and why is a big part of this. Additionally, we will continue to develop our membership benefits such as discounts and partnerships.

- Carry out a deep dive into membership data to better understand our membership characteristics leading to enhanced member insight and segmentation
- Utilise insight to deliver more tailored and relevant member benefits
- Better promote the direct and indirect benefits of CW membership
- Develop and deliver enhanced retention communications – including better communication of our work around environment, access and advocacy
- Further engage new paddlers towards CW membership via enhanced communications and engagement campaigns



KPI >>

1. Annual member satisfaction
2. Total CW membership



Governance & Financial Sustainability

As an organisation, we benefit considerably from government funding via Sport Wales which we use to develop paddlesport opportunities in Wales. Therefore we need to work to remain compliant with funding requirements and expectations, and to ensure we are one of, if not the, best performing NGB in Wales.

Rising inflation means that the value of this funding is decreasing, so we also need to find, where possible, other sources of income to supplement our activities for members. It's important that this is done carefully and complements our services to members.

Canoe Wales owns and operates the National White-Water Centre, Canolfan Tryweryn. We will also continue to develop the centre as a service to paddlers in Wales and ensure it remains a centre of excellence.



Governance

- Annually achieve a green rating for CW governance as part of the Sport Wales Governance Assessment Process
- Maintain a positive relationship with Sport Wales
- Ensure Canoe Wales has a positive and constructive relationship with the other canoeing national associations in the UK

KPI >>

Annually achieve a 'green' rating as part of the Sport Wales Governance Assessment Process



Financial Sustainability

- Develop at least one new income stream for Canoe Wales to reduce reliance on Sport Wales funding
- Secure new annual funding agreements with Sport Wales in support of ambitions within this strategic plan
- Further collaborate and support the National White-Water Centre to support and engage with the paddling community within Wales

KPI >>

Balance of grant funding vs income from other sources



Performance & Talent Pathway

Our performance and talent pathway provides unique opportunities for young people to develop their paddling skills and represent Wales and Great Britain on the international stage. It is heavily subsidised by Sport Wales and the funding is ring-fenced for these purposes.

We are committed to ensuring these opportunities provide the best experience for all involved and are accessible to as many people as possible.

Therefore we will work harder to manage and promote athlete welfare, safeguarding and equitable opportunities while also enhancing the links into clubs and other organisations contributing to the pathway. We are also very aware of the impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on the programme, so we need to work to be more efficient and provide more cost-effective opportunities.

Engagement

- Create more taster sessions for children interested in paddlesports
- Create more opportunities for young people to enter the performance programme in Wales

KPI >>

Number of athletes within performance programme



Development

- Launch a coach development programme for aspiring club coaches in performance disciplines
- Create more clinics to communicate performance paddling techniques to recreational paddlers
- Improve the sharing of best practice between coaches in clubs
- Share best practice amongst non-competitive disciplines

KPI >>

Number of Welsh athletes competing nationally within competitive disciplines



Performance

- Support our athletes to attend World & Euro Championships and events
- Develop and manage strategies to continuously improve athlete welfare within our performance programmes
- Develop an independent performance plan to create more long-term strategy and direction for the programme
- Better utilise and integrate sport science within the programme to enhance the performance of all athletes

KPI >>

Number of Welsh athletes on GB programme



Nearly **100** athletes compete internationally for Wales in paddlesport

Stand-up Paddleboarding

In May 2023, Canoe Wales officially became the sole governing body for the discipline of Stand-up Paddleboarding (SUP) in Wales. The decision was in response to the recommendations within the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) Report where the governance, safety standards and training standards were identified as being in need of urgent review. We have been successful in gaining some funding to support us in meeting the recommendations and this has resulted in us recruiting a new member of staff to lead on the developments. We look forward to achieving further progress and influence in this area.

SUP has been a growing discipline within paddlesports for some time and we know that many of our clubs use SUP as an entry level discipline for people new to paddling. Likewise, through the British Canoeing Awarding Body (BCAB) qualifications and awards scheme, we have been offering SUP training for some time.

We recognise that with the significant increase in SUP participation, responsible and safe SUP paddling will be a benefit for all paddlers. It will help to negate any restrictive legislation or restrictions and ensure our community benefits from an influx of new, responsible and safe paddlers who can benefit from a lifetime of participation within the sport.



Governance

- Establish a new SUP sub-committee and industry-wide forum to help engage the SUP community and effectively steer the governance of SUP forward
- Work collaboratively with British Canoeing to implement nationally recognised frameworks and standards
- Work collaboratively with other influential SUP training providers in Wales to establish a network which can provide a forum of mutually beneficial support and help

KPI >>

New SUP Forum (connecting all areas of the Welsh SUP community) formed and operational by April 2024'



Training Provision

- Work collaboratively with BC and other SUP training providers to develop a national qualification & award competency framework
- Implement quality assurance processes for training providers in Wales

KPI >>

National Award and Competency Framework developed and launched by July 2024'



Communication, engagement and messaging

- Work collaboratively with the SUP network to design and implement consistent SUP messaging frameworks
- Work collaboratively with other safety organisations (RNLI, Maritime Coastguard Agency, etc.) to capture SUP safety incident reporting
- Implement a safety group within Wales to consider safety incident reports and turn into messaging and learning
- Work collaboratively to design and implement public safety campaigns within Wales

KPI >>

Number of Welsh SUP incidents as reported on the British Canoeing incident reporting system



Key Partners

Sport Wales



Outdoor Partnership



Plas-y-Brenin



British Canoeing



Scottish Canoeing Association



CANI



Towergate insurance



National White-Water Centre, Canolfan Tryweryn



Disability Sport Wales



Talent Pathway ID



Adventure Smart



RYA Cymru Wales

