

#WePaddleTogether: The Annual Report

A progress report for Year 1 of Paddle UK's strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion

Introduction

The first year of delivery of *#WePaddleTogether* has seen a significant amount of delivery across the breadth of Paddle UK's (formerly British Canoeing) operational delivery. Teams and individuals across the organisation have been committed to weaving the 'golden thread' of inclusion into the fabric of their day-to-day responsibilities, ensuring widespread and consistent impact. Equality, diversity and inclusion are critical components of our values, and are underpinned by a culture which celebrates diversity and ensures everyone is valued and respected. The progress against our strategic actions have been coordinated and consistent, and Paddle UK is delighted to share the progress made so far in this report.

We continue to see consistent engagement in our commitments and actions from across the paddlesport community, from clubs and delivery partners, to coaches and instructors, and beyond into the membership. Equality, diversity and inclusion is not something that we only talk about at an organisational level, but that we see influences throughout the paddling community. Throughout this document, individual accounts of where our strategic actions have made real impact show the widespread approach across Year 1 of this Strategy.

Our work has continued to be underpinned by the three core principles of building insight and knowledge; excellent governance and systems; and championing diversity.

Through actions committing to **building insight and knowledge** about the communities accessing our sport and activities, particularly for underrepresented communities, this report contains, for the first time, benchmarking data underpinning our measures of success. As identified in *#WePaddleTogether* this information is incomplete and the systems which collect it are not robust enough - this area still requires work, but we are pleased to be able to present data in this annual report that begins to evidence our strategic progress.

Excellent governance is a key objective throughout our organisational strategy, *Stronger Together*, and is no exception in regards to inclusion. Paddle UK has now successfully submitted its Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan as part of our compliance with the Code for Sports Governance, and its first submission to the Moving to Inclusion Framework is also complete. The Board, IAG and SLT have all been supported to connect on multiple levels, and challenge one another on the accountability and delivery of the strategic actions.

Championing diversity was an area that we recognised, through widespread feedback and consultation insight, that we were not doing enough to support prior to the publication of *#WePaddleTogether*. Our membership still has a way to go to becoming representative of the general population, and we have been striving to improve the representation of diverse role models through initiatives such as the Paddler Spotlight, and delivering projects such as the Community Paddling Hubs in inner city sites, connecting diverse communities with accessible paddling opportunities. We have also taken significant steps to review our recruitment processes to ensure we are recruiting from pools of diverse applicants, and drive improved representation at the organisational level.

#WePaddleTogether is a three-year strategy, and we recognise that progress takes time. Much progress has been made in Year 1, and the reflections in this annual report shed light on where our next steps must be.

Strategy progress snapshot

Below is an overview of the actions we committed to in #WePaddleTogether - A Strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion published in 2022. The RAG rating indicates the completion of this action with the following key: Green: on track or completed for Year One; Orange: Work started but not on track; Red: Not started

Ambition 1: Engaging recreational paddlers and attracting new paddlers	
We will create and activate partnerships, campaigns and targeted programmes to attract new participants from under-represented groups to increase diversity in the paddling community (from 2023) (G)	
More opportunities for people with a range of disabilities to paddle will be created, through the delivery of disability-specific programmes and improved accessibility to paddling opportunities (from 2023) (O)	
We will identify core cities with a range of local and regional partners to establish Community Paddling Hubs, which provide local and accessible paddling opportunities (from 2022) (G)	
The quality and amount of equality monitoring data will be improved to understand the reach of programmes and initiatives run by Paddle UK to engage recreational paddlers and attract new paddlers (from 2023) (O)	
Ambition 2: Increasing membership and improving member services	
Insight into the views, demographics and interests of our members will be improved through enhanced tracking, data collection and surveys (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will continue to review and identify opportunities to embed inclusive opportunities into the membership offering, such as through Carers Membership, youth and family memberships (from 2023) (G)	
We will deliver campaigns and embed approaches which drive the ongoing completion of equality monitoring data in the membership (from 2023) (O)	
Ambition 3: Promoting access, places to paddle, and environmental awareness	
We will ensure inclusion themes are highlighted through the updated Clear Access Clear Waters Charter and supported by case studies (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will embed accessibility considerations into trails guidance and the facilities strategy, working closely with the Canoe Foundation on funded projects (by 2026) (O)	
We will ensure that Paddle Points has clear, standardised accessibility information across the tool (by 2025) (O)	
We will recruit and engage with volunteers from a greater range of backgrounds across the environmental and access programme (by 2026) (O)	
Ambition 4: Supporting clubs and delivery partners	
We will develop and promote the Clubhouse digital platform, to support the work of clubs on a range of issues, including governance, safeguarding and equality, diversity and inclusion (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will develop an inclusive paddling offer for clubs which supports them to attract and retain paddlers who reflect the diversity of their local community	

(by 2026) (G)	
We will support delivery partners in promoting their activities within their local communities, promoting their health benefits and attracting participants from under-represented groups (by 2026) (G)	
We will continue to deliver learning opportunities for the club and Delivery Partner networks to further their understanding of inclusion topics (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will share best inclusive practice across the club and Delivery Partner network through case studies to improve engagement with under-represented groups and communities (annually from 2023) (G)	
Ambition 5: Developing and supporting coaches, leaders, instructors and guides	
More opportunities will be created for continued learning on topics around equality, diversity and inclusion will be continually supported through the online Digital Library resources, based on learner needs (annually from 2023) (O)	
We will share and spotlight instructors, coaches, leaders and providers from a range of backgrounds and identities to highlight both diversity and examples of good inclusive practice (annually from 2023) (O)	
We will support deliverers through CPD and other learning opportunities to understand practical, implementable approaches to inclusive practice, that ensures all paddlers can participate in paddling activities (annually from 2023) (O)	
We will develop and implement opportunities that encourage and support individuals from under-represented groups to become active coaches, leaders and providers (by 2026) (O)	
Ambition 6: Developing and supporting volunteers	
We will provide training and support for volunteers working within clubs and discipline committees in areas including equality, diversity and inclusion (by 2026) (O)	
Initiatives will be designed and implemented to encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to become volunteers within the paddling community (by 2026) (R)	
We will create more robust systems for the collection of equality monitoring data to understand the demographics of those involved in volunteering in paddling (by 2026) (R)	
We will support volunteers, such as Discipline Committees and club committees, to implement inclusion strategies and initiatives in their communities (by 2026) (O)	
Ambition 7: Developing talent and achieving international success	
We will develop and deliver the talent pathways, national team plan and talent inclusion plan in each of the competition disciplines (by 2025) (G)	
We will support the development of more inclusive environments within Talent Club Partners (in Olympic and Paralympic disciplines) through the delivery of the EDI requirements of Quality Club (by 2025) (G)	
We will gather and monitor appropriate diversity data for programme coaches, those involved in selected Junior GB teams and athletes involved in squad activity (annually from 2023) (G)	

We will increase the use of equality impact assessments on all major programmes, procurement and recruitment processes and partnership engagement to drive inclusion (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will deliver a fund for athletes requiring financial support and to address socioeconomic inequalities (by 2023) (G)	
Ambition 8: Providing excellent championships, competitions and events	
We will use the Slalom World Championships in 2023 as a platform for social impact programmes targeted at women and girls (2023) (G)	
We will support discipline committees to develop and implement inclusion strategies and initiatives into their plans (by 2026) (O)	
We will encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to volunteer at competitions and events (by 2026) (G)	
We will implement a revised transgender competition policy (above entry level events) and support discipline committees and event organisers with implementation (by 2023) (O)	
We will deliver education and resources to event volunteers and supporters to further understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion topics in an event context (by 2026) (G)	
Ambition 9: Focussed on governance, people, equality and sustainability	
We will attain and maintain compliance with the new Code for Sport Governance (by 2023) and Equality Standard for Sport (by 2024) (G)	
We will revise and regularly review key policies and ensure there are robust systems and processes for reporting and addressing discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour (annually from 2023) (G)	
The Paddle UK Board will publish a new Board Diversity Action Plan and report annually on its delivery and the delivery of this strategy (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will support our people to champion diversity through enhanced EDI training, staff initiatives and the establishment of effective EDI working groups, appointment of EDI Board Champion (annually from 2023) (G)	
There will be an organisation-wide increase in the use of equality impact assessments on all major programmes, procurement and recruitment processes and partnership engagement to drive inclusion considerations (annually from 2023) (O)	
We will continue to gather and consistently monitor diversity data for all staff and board recruitment (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will continue to work with the Inclusion Advisory Group and recognised organisations promoting inclusion and diversity to help us implement this strategy (annually from 2023) (G)	
We will ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded within our People, Safeguarding and Welfare, and Sustainability strategies (by 2023) (G)	
Ambition 10: Improve digital services and communications	
We will launch and develop a new Paddle UK website with improved accessibility options, including across documents, other organisational websites and digital platforms (O)	

We will enhance and develop communications plans to further support the organisation's equality, diversity and inclusion ambitions across teams, and support national and international campaigns with relevant programme leads (G)	
We will share more case studies and stories to improve representation, and the diversity in imagery and content across our websites, digital platforms, social media channels, advertising and promotional materials (G)	
We will support staff and volunteers to showcase activity through the creation of an equality, diversity and inclusion content guide (G)	
There will be an organisation-wide increase in the use of equality impact assessments on all major programmes, procurement and recruitment processes and partnership engagement to drive inclusion considerations (O)	

Letters shown in brackets in the table above reference the colour rating for each action for accessibility purposes. G references green, for on track or completed for Year One; O references orange, for work started but not on track; and R references red for work not started.

Ambition 1: Engaging recreational paddlers and attracting new paddlers

Overview on progress against the strategy during 2023

We have made significant progress across all our programmes embedded within the strategic plan during 2023. This is evidenced by a growth in the number of community paddling projects to include London, and Keighley, with a number of in the pipeline projects for Brent in London. We have also created partnerships with key organisations such as StreetGames, the Black Swimming Association and the Canal and River Trust, to help boost and bring sustainability to our campaigns aimed at attracting new participants from under-represented groups and increasing the diversity in the paddling community.

Data benchmarking

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition, and provide an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes programmes and initiatives such as #ShePaddles and the Community Paddling Hubs.

The #ShePaddles Ambassador programme has been running since 2019, with Ambassadors appointed across England, Wales and Scotland. As the programme has developed, we have taken steps towards improving the diversity of the Ambassadors to become more representative of the general population. In 2023, a total of 17 ambassadors were appointed for the 2023/24 cohort, and the demographics of those Ambassadors are shared below.

Appointed #ShePaddles Ambassadors		2022	2023	Percentage change
Age	18-24		29%	
	25-34		24%	
	35-44		29%	
	45-54		12%	
	55-64		6%	
Disability or long-term health condition	Yes	Data for this cohort is currently being collected retrospectively, and will be added to future reports.	18%	We will share our progress in future reports, once data has been collected retrospectively.
	No		76%	
	Prefer not to say		6%	
Ethnicity	Asian or Asian British		12%	
	White background		88%	
Sexual Orientation	A gay woman or lesbian		18%	

	Bisexual		6%	
	Heterosexual or straight		71%	
	Prefer not to say		6%	

The Ambassador programme regularly receives over 100 applications each year, and only approximately 10% of those applications are appointed into Ambassador roles. Efforts to capture data for those applying to become an Ambassador have been improved for the 2023/24 cohort, so that we are able to better understand both the demographics of those applying, but also the conversion and representation of those then appointed. For the 2023/24 cohort, additional shortlisting was implemented to try and increase the number of applications from those with disabilities and from ethnically diverse backgrounds reaching final shortlisting. This process will be implemented in all future Ambassador recruitment.

#ShePaddles Ambassador Applicants		2022	2023	Percentage change
Age	18-24		21%	
	25-34		21%	
	35-44		33%	
	45-54		12%	
	55-64		11%	
	Prefer not to say		2%	
Disability or long-term health condition	Yes		15%	
	No		81%	
	Prefer not to say		4%	
Ethnicity	Asian or Asian British	Data for this cohort is currently being collected retrospectively, and will be added to future reports.	5%	We will share our progress in future reports, once data has been collected retrospectively.
	Mixed ethnic backgrounds		3%	
	White		92%	
Sexual Orientation	A gay woman or lesbian		4%	
	Bisexual		5%	
	Heterosexual or straight		77%	
	Other		2% (Queer)	

	Prefer not to say		12%	
Religion or belief	Agnostic		10%	
	Atheist		29%	
	Buddhist		1%	
	Christian		35%	
	Jewish		1%	
	Muslim		4%	
	No religious belief		4%	
	Other		5%	
	Prefer not to say		12%	

Stronger Together Fund

The Stronger Together Fund (STF) was launched in 2023, using funds from the increase in membership to support community-based projects in England. Applicants had to demonstrate that their project would support paddlers to get out on the water; reflect a need in the local community; and benefit wellbeing. Projects that targeted young people, women and girls, people from under-represented communities, and people with disabilities, to get paddling were considered a priority. In total, 48 projects were awarded STF support, and to a range of organisations, including affiliated clubs (52%), charities and not for profit organisations (15% each), uniformed groups (12.5%) and schools (6.25%). Of the 48 awards, 33 of these projects specifically aimed to engage with under-represented groups, including young people (76%), ethnically diverse communities (48%), and disabled people (18%), among other groups.

	2023
Body awarded funding	
Affiliated club	52%
Charity	15%
Not for profit	15%
School	6.25%
Uniform group	12.5%
Project focus	
Ethnically diverse communities	48%

Disabled people	18%
Mental health and wellbeing	24%
Vulnerable groups	12%
Women and girls	30%
Young people	75%

Progress against the measures of success

We will create and activate partnerships, campaigns and targeted programmes to attract new participants from under-represented groups to increase diversity in the paddling community (2023); We are working with the National Trust to co-create a community paddling hub at East Riddlesden Hall (ERH) in Keighley (Bradford), through an initiative that will help both organisations increase their engagement with local communities and help to make ERH a more accessible and welcoming space. The first community engagement session was held in April, attended by key stakeholders including the local council, Sport England, Canal and Rivers Trust, local schools, the Active Partnership, and local community members, including Scouts, clubs and activity centres. Next steps involve building connections within the local area and identifying individuals to start the training process to deliver activity.

As part of the wider stakeholder engagement around the Canoe Slalom World Championships, Hertfordshire Sports Partnership became the event's [Social Impact Partner](#), and discussions on establishing a community hub to help deprived and disadvantaged schools in the County access paddlesport began. Alongside this, the women and girls arm of the social impact programme was very successful, and all identified instructors are now qualified and supported to deliver paddlesport activity beyond the event.

More opportunities for people with a range of disabilities to paddle will be created, through the delivery of disability-specific programmes and improved accessibility to paddling opportunities (from 2023); Work has begun on the development of an action plan for disability paddling, and transitioned to creating a suitable role for a contract for services. In the meantime, we have continued to support and platform community initiatives which have supported more disabled people to get into paddling. One such project was the [Power2Inspire 108 mile paddling challenge](#) from Cricklade to Eton Dorney along the Thames between the 23rd and 30th July 2023. Power2Inspire is a charity whose primary aim is to raise awareness around inclusive sport in the sporting, education and community landscapes, and support was provided to promote the event, link up with local clubs and partners, and spotlight the work Power2Inspire does across local communities.

We will identify core cities with a range of local and regional partners to establish Community Paddling Hubs, which provide local and accessible paddling opportunities (from 2022); The 7 Community Paddling Hubs across Birmingham continue to go from strength to strength under the guidance of [Andy Train](#), and in partnership with the National Trust, StreetGames and Canal and Rivers Trust. The Hubs successfully bid for Stronger Together funding, securing £49,960 of funding to purchase equipment, substantially improving their ability to get more people from their communities out on the water. Central to this delivery is the initiative to qualify 26 Community Activators across the 7 sites to be able to lead activity. Over the Easter half term a number of the hubs ran a pilot engagement with the HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) programme. This was a resounding success, and as such we will see a greater involvement across the hubs during the summer campaign. Alongside the city of Birmingham, plans are in progress to replicate this work in London and Keighley.



I'd never been in a canoe before I started with Andy. I initially started at Ackers Centre in Sparkbrook then I moved to the Port Loop hub. I would really like to commend Andy Train, he has been amazing, he works effortlessly to support all in his session, especially those who feel scared of water and find it difficult getting in and out.

Shahida Raza, Port Loop Community Hub

We all take part as a family and are in the process of setting up a community initiative with Andy to allow over 300 families to take part in kayaking and bellboating throughout inner city Birmingham. Andy's efforts will be forever cherished and extremely valuable.

Mohammed Naveed, Community Hub Participant



Ambition 2: Increasing membership and improving member services

Our progress in 2023

Paddle UK has experienced significant growth in its membership in recent years, which has more than doubled to over 87,000 (correct as of December 2023). The focus for our organisation has focussed on retention of members, and creating and improving member services that serve a larger membership base, with more diverse needs and experiences. As a result, we were pleased to finalise the details of a Carers Membership, which enables paddlers with a full On The Water membership to affiliate a carer in a second craft for a nominal fee. We continue to score highly on Members Survey questions related to equality, diversity and inclusion, and members continue to feel that their membership provided them with an excellent experience and service.

Data and insight continue to be a challenge from a membership perspective, which means we continue to lack robust insight into the demographics of our members, and therefore cannot currently make more informed membership decisions. However, for some demographics, we have seen a tenfold increase in the completion rates of equality monitoring data through the GO Membership system, which is hugely encouraging. Efforts will continue to ensure as many of our members as possible complete this information and empower all areas of the organisation to make targeted efforts to improve the representation of the membership through community and grassroots engagement.

Data Benchmarking

Membership

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition and provides an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes membership data and Membership Survey results.

All waterway users who require a licence are members of Paddle UK, and members are able to provide equality monitoring information to us for the purposes of ongoing monitoring, as well as providing us with specific insights on the demographic breakdown of our membership, enabling us to provide services that are fit for purpose and help to improve the delivery of our programmes and initiatives as an organisation to ensure our sport is open and accessible for all. As the table below shows, completion rates for this information is still very low, although even within the last two years, this has risen by a significant amount. However, even for the most recent figures, as much as 91% of the membership has not provided any information to us at all, which severely limits our ability to make strategic decisions based on membership alone.

The membership data that can be shared indicates that there are still significant areas of under-representation. While it is encouraging to see that the percentage of women in the membership has steadily increased, which was particularly pertinent in new SUP paddlers joining as members, numbers of disabled paddlers and paddlers from diverse ethnic backgrounds still remain low.

Membership figure as of December each year		93,211	90,745	87,396	
		2021	2022	2023	Percentage change
Age	Overall completion	100%	100%	100%	0%

	Under 18	6%	10.92%	12.08%	+6.08%
	18-24	5%	4.53%	5.77%	+0.77%
	25-34	11%	8.30%	10.78%	-0.22%
	35-44	16%	13.46%	17.27%	+1.27%
	45-54	25%	22.63%	24.29%	-0.71%
	55-64	21%	24.01%	20.11%	-0.89%
	65-74	9%	12.29%	7%	-2%
	75+	3%	3.86%	2.54%	-0.46%
Disability or long-term health condition	Completion rate	0.78%	7.07%	12.13%	+11.35%
	Yes	0.06%	0.46%	0.94%	+0.88%
	No	0.7%	6.46%	10.92%	+10.22%
	Prefer not to say	Negligible*	0.13%	0.2%	+0.2%
	Not provided	99.24%	92.95%	87.87%	-11.37%
Ethnicity	Completion rate	0.76%	6.84%	11.63%	+10.87%
	Asian or Asian British	Negligible*	0.06%	0.09%	+0.09%
	Black or Black British	Negligible*	Negligible*	0.03%	+0.03%
	Chinese	Negligible*	0.02%	0.03%	+0.03%
	Mixed ethnic background	0.02%	0.11%	0.17%	+0.15%
	Other ethnic background	Negligible*	0.03%	0.05%	+0.05%
	Other white background	0.04%	0.44%	0.78%	0.74%
	White British	Negligible*	6.02%	10.22%	+10.22%
	Prefer not to say	0.67%	0.11%	0.18%	-0.49%
	Not provided	99.27%	93.21%	88.37%	-10.9%

Gender	Completion rate	100%	100%	100%	0%
	Man (including trans man)	65.91%**	62.5%**	60.97%	-4.94%
	Non-binary	-	-	0%	-
	Woman (including trans woman)	34.01%**	37.5%**	38.67%	+4.66%
	In another way	0.08%**	-	This option is no long used	-
	Prefer not to say	-	-	0.37%	+0.37%
	Not provided	-	-	-	-

*Negligible data points indicate percentages below 0.01%

**Results from 2021 and 2022 reflect old membership demographic question options, which were updated in reporting from 2023 to more inclusive options. These options were Male, Female or In another way. These older reporting options have been allocated into the rows they most closely represented at the time of collection to the updated options.

Members Survey Results

Members are given the opportunity to provide feedback annually on the benefit of membership, as well as the initiatives, programmes are key areas of work we are delivering on strategically. In regards to questions related to equality, diversity and inclusion, we have scored consistently and highly. In 2022, 52% of respondents felt Paddle UK promotes equality, diversity and inclusion either a great deal or a lot. In 2023 we increased the number of questions asked, and on average 47% of respondents gave one of the higher scores.

Members Survey Questions and Results	2023
Over the last 12 months, have you been aware of Paddle UK's work on and commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion?	
Very Aware	9.25%
Aware	38.55%
Not Aware	43.31%
Very Unaware	8.88%
I feel that Paddle UK prioritises equality, diversity and inclusion	
A great deal	14.36%
A lot	36.31%
A moderate amount	40.06%
A little	8.25%
None at all	3.73%

I feel that Paddle UK listens to the views of diverse groups from the paddlesport community	
A great deal	11.49%
A lot	33.77%
A moderate amount	42.64%
A little	8.82%
None at all	3.28%
I feel that Paddle UK delivers on equality, diversity and inclusion goals	
A great deal	11.55%
A lot	34.01%
A moderate amount	42.72%
A little	8.63%
None at all	3.09%
On a scale of 0-10, How satisfied are you with the services we offer to disabled paddlers?	8.01 / 10

Progress against our measures of success

Each year we will increase the proportion of members who have completed their equality monitoring data: As evidenced in the above benchmarking data, the completion rates for equality monitoring is steadily increasing each year. However, we need to significantly improve these rates in order to have a robust enough understanding of representation across the membership. In year two of this strategy, we will be considering how we can use the systems we have available to us to improve this completion rate, and begin to set ourselves internal targets against these benchmarks to improve our data and insight.

Annually improve representation in the membership across currently underrepresented demographics: Due to the insufficient level of data completion, it is very difficult to know what the full demographic breakdown is, and therefore how representative or unrepresentative the membership is of the general population. Anecdotal evidence indicates that we expect there to still be under-representation for particular communities, particularly disabled members, members from ethnically diverse backgrounds and some younger age groups.

We are working with the membership system to require all members to complete equality monitoring data from January 2024, with a “Prefer not to say” option included to improve the level of data completion and provide a better understanding of the demographic breakdown of members. This will vastly improve the data available to us, while ensuring member’s right to not provide this information is respected.

Ranking highly each year on equality, diversity and inclusion questions within the Members Survey: In 2022 52% of respondents felt we promote equality, diversity and inclusion either “a lot” or “a great deal”. In 2023, 51% of members feel Paddle UK prioritises equality, diversity and inclusion either “a lot” or “a great deal”. Additionally the demographics of survey respondents has changed with an increase in the percentage of women and non binary respondents.

Ambition 3: Promoting access, places to paddle and environmental awareness

Our progress in 2023

2023 has been a big year for the Clear Access, Clear Waters campaign. In June, we launched our new Clear Access, Clear Waters Charter in Westminster, making our case for 'fair, shared, sustainable open access to healthy waters'. The new Charter document was published alongside a series of new short films around 'Why Blue Space Matters'. The films included a range of stories that dealt with issues of depression, participating in paddlesport later in life and post natal depression, and aimed to represent a wide range of communities and perspectives.

From the 27th May to the 11th June, the second annual Big Paddle Clean up fortnight was held, attracting over 2000 volunteers across the UK and removing more than 1200 sacks of rubbish from our rivers. When distributing the limited allocation of kits, care was taken to prioritise clubs who were from areas with a higher indices of deprivation. This helped to ensure that we platformed stories about the campaign that centred people from often under-represented groups, which we hope will inspire others to support the Big Paddle Clean Up in future.

A key area of focus in Yorkshire and in the Lee Valley Region has been on training and equipping volunteers to undertake Floating Pennywort removal days. This work is hugely important to prevent navigation channels being clogged with invasive plants. It has engaged a diverse range of volunteers from local communities as well as clubs and outdoor centres.

Data benchmarking

There is a recognised lack of equality monitoring data or data which allows us to measure our impact across under-represented communities which is collected across the programmes that are run within the environment and access work Paddle UK delivers. We are committed to improving this data during the delivery of this strategy, so that we can understand more about where our initiatives are making impact, and where we need to focus our attention in representation, delivery and engagement. This includes collecting Indices of Multiple Deprivation data from the locations of clubs and volunteers involved in our programmes.

The Big Paddle Cleanup continues to reach into the hearts of our communities, engaging thousands of paddlers across the country to come together and take collective action to remove rubbish and plastic pollution from our treasured blue spaces. A key aim of the Big Paddle Cleanup 2023 was to engage a large number of our community to take action on plastic pollution, highlighting the need for inclusive access to enable everyone to connect with nature for our own health and wellbeing whilst protecting the places we paddle from plastic pollution. In 2023, 2,121 volunteers committed over 4,000 hours worth of volunteer hours, logging 1,326 sacks of rubbish removed from our waterways.

Through Ambition 3 of #WePaddleTogether in 2022, we committed to engaging with more partners and volunteers from under-represented communities. Over 240 clubs, community groups and Delivery Partners engaged with the Big Paddle Clean Up, as well as 27 uniform groups (such as the Sea Cadets or Scouts). An early bird Big Paddle Cleanup kit offer was made to 22 clubs who had not previously received kit and scored low on IMD data, resulting in 3 requesting kit. After reviewing the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (where address data was available) of the affiliated clubs involved in this year's campaign, we were able to understand more about where these clubs were situated. The table below shows that the majority of clubs who participated in the

Big Paddle Clean Up 2023 were based in less-deprived areas of the country - Paddle UK will be continuing to target and work with communities and clubs based in areas of more deprivation, and engage with volunteers from more diverse and representative backgrounds.

IMD of affiliated clubs involved in the BPCU in 2023	2023
1	3
2	3
3	6
4	7
5	6
6	11
7	18
8	12
9	8
10	9

The [Big Paddle Cleanup Flagship event](#) was hosted by Friends of Allonby Canoe Club, a club located within an area scoring 1 on the overall IMD, working with over 70 volunteers and collecting 23 sacks of rubbish, alongside their MP, Kim Johnson. Some volunteers had never paddled before, and came with families and friends. Rosie, 9, said: "I had never been in the open canoe before, today was my first time. I felt happy doing the Big Paddle Cleanup because the fish aren't getting hurt now by the plastic." Neil Fletch, Coach at Friends Of Allonby Canoe Club said "The Big Paddle Cleanup event will enable the kids to take back their experience from the club here today to their school and share their experience."

The 2024 Big Paddle Clean Up event will look to build on these successes, bring the environmental campaigns to more people across the country, and improve on the data and insight about the programme that will help us to make it a more accessible campaign for everyone.

Progress against our measures of success

We will ensure inclusion themes are highlighted through the updated Clear Access Clear Waters Charter and supported by case studies (annually from 2023): The new CACW Charter was developed with support from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead, alongside consultation with the Inclusion Advisory Group, in order to ensure that the campaign had representation, inclusion and accessibility built into its fabric. In order to bring the Charter to life, short videos were produced to share lived experiences of how important our blue spaces are to people from across the country. The videos were specifically produced to include people from a range of backgrounds and represent issues that currently present a barrier to certain people participating.

We will embed accessibility considerations into trails guidance and the facilities strategy, working closely with the Canoe Foundation on funded projects (by 2026): The Canoe Foundation has funded a range of projects that support accessibility or aim to directly support under-represented groups and communities. Examples include the installation of a dipper hoist at Wistlandpound Reservoir, made possible by a £4,000 Canoe Foundation grant on behalf

of the Calvert Trust Exmoor, which will provide a safe, controlled environment for wheelchair users and others requiring assisted access to the water to participate in paddling sessions. A £10,000 Foundation grant was awarded to Cardiff International White Water Centre to improve pontoon access to the water, expanding the access to flat water, as well as expanding paddling routes for local paddlers by expanding canoe trail access into Cardiff Bay, and Rivers Tay and Ely. The project will also help the Centre expand its flat water initiative to work with inner city communities and introduce more people to the joys of nature and paddling.

The final version of the Paddle Trails Guidance document has been completed and includes guidance on how to make trail infrastructure accessible. The document will continue to be updated in the future and will contain additional information on specific modifications for disability access as we continue to learn more about this area. We will be focussing on how we can build examples of best practice into these documents as we see them, and will be striving to embed this in future publications.

We will ensure that Paddle Points has clear, standardised accessibility information across the tool (by 2025): Our PaddlePoints points tool has enabled users to add information to specific launch points which provide insights on how accessible it might be for a paddler. The ‘Ease of access’ tool enables individuals to add information including ‘Easy get in for most boat types’, ‘Moderate, needs care to launch/land’ and ‘More challenging access to the water’, and also selecting whether a launch site is “Wheelchair Accessible”. However, we recognise that more specific options and more relevant information is required in order to make this tool more useful, and help provide more information to paddlers wanting to access paddling opportunities local to them. In the coming year, we will be taking actions such as: including drone film footage to showcase where possible what the access and egress points are to give the paddler a clearer view of PaddlePoints around the country; conduct a focus group to understand what we can do to improve the language, tool information, and how we can make more places more accessible; and promoting to PaddlePoints users the benefits of including ‘How to’ videos to improve the information available on the tool.

We will recruit and engage with volunteers from a greater range of backgrounds across the environmental and access programme (by 2026): There is still work to be done on creating a robust system for capturing and reporting on the demographics of the volunteers involved in the environmental campaigns Paddle UK is responsible for, as well as ensuring people have more accessible opportunities to access paddling activities. In future iterations of this report, we hope to be able to provide more substantial data and insight in this space.

Ambition 4: Supporting clubs and delivery partners

Our progress in 2023

During Year 1 of the strategy, several new templates have been added to the Clubhouse specifically aimed at supporting the essential delivery of clubs, including ensuring good governance, good safeguarding and welfare practice, and understanding and embedding of inclusion topics. Currently in development are both a Safeguarding and Organisational Risk Assessment Template, a template membership form (including demographic information) and a Chair handover document, all of which have direct links to good governance and equality, diversity and inclusion practice.

Alongside this, Quality Club was relaunched in September 2023, using a digital platform to enable easier use for those undertaking the process, but also improved access to data pertaining to the club's progress. However, the lack of complete membership data, and specifically across the club network and club members means there is still significant challenge in supporting clubs with baseline data to help them take steps towards improving the diversity and representation of their club membership. Therefore, the focus has been around equipping and educating clubs, including members and Committees, on key inclusion topics.

An example of this is the Club Inclusion Webinar Programme, a series of virtual learning webinars which have been run in partnership with Inclusive Employers over the 2023/2024 winter period, and will include learning topics such as, an introduction to inclusion, inclusive culture and behaviours webinar; mental health and wellbeing; and the role of inclusion allies. These learning opportunities are crucial components of improving club's knowledge and awareness, as well as equipping them with the tools to create more inclusive and welcoming paddling environments. Inclusion topics also continue to be a central and regular feature at the Delivery Partner Conference, the conference has been restructured for 2024 with session running monthly from January - August, this includes opportunities for new partners to watch past content as well as working with Inclusive Employers to deliver 6 EDI topics related to Partners needs.

Data benchmarking

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition, and provide an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes our newly develop #ShePaddles Club programme.

#ShePaddles Clubs are a new component of the #ShePaddles programme, and were introduced in 2021. These clubs are committed to womens and girls participation in their club by developing one or more of the following areas:

- Improving the imagery representation and visibility of women on their website/social media platforms
- Increasing the availability of women only sessions/events
- Increasing the availability of women led sessions
- Improving the understanding and awareness of the need for suitable amenities for women and girls, such as toilets and changing facilities
- Improving representation of women in leadership positions in the club.

ShePaddle Champion clubs are clubs that have actively engaged women and girls continuously over a period of time and have achieved specific milestones. In total, 36 clubs are engaged in the #ShePaddles Club programme.

	2023
Number of #ShePaddles Champion Clubs	2
Number of #ShePaddles Clubs	11
Number of clubs engaged in becoming a #ShePaddles Club	23

IMD Decile of #ShePaddles clubs* (1 = most deprived, 10 least deprived)	2023
IMD 1	1
IMD 2	0
IMD 3	1
IMD 4	0
IMD 5	2
IMD 6	3
IMD 7	1
IMD 8	1
IMD 9	0
IMD 10	3

*One is a delivery partner with multiple locations so has been removed from the data set.

The ambition is that similar information and data will be shared for Quality Clubs; Clear Access Clear Waters Champion Clubs; and Talent Champion Clubs in future iterations of this report, and we can report on an ongoing growth in the diversity of clubs.

Progress against our measures of success

The membership of affiliated clubs will be more reflective of their local communities: Data continues to be a challenge for the organisation, particularly in regards to the Clubs and Delivery Partners. While we can extrapolate information about Delivery Partner sites based on their location, we do not have information about the demographics of their customers, or the impact initiatives are having on its diversity. With clubs, more work needs to be done in order to create a robust system for Paddle UK to collect and understand topline demographics across the club network, without relying solely on membership data. As shown within Ambition 2, completion rates of this information for members is low, and does not provide a suitable insight into whether clubs are reflective of the wider population, or their local communities.

Case study: Community Paddling Hubs (amended from StreetGames' Birmingham Community Paddle Sports Project report)



The [Birmingham Community Hubs](#) are driven by canoeist Andy Train, and supported by Paddle UK in partnership with the Canal & River Trust and StreetGames. The project attempts to reach into the most underserved communities, increase access and encourage participation in paddle sport across Birmingham's canal network. Only a small proportion of the 1.1 million Birmingham residents have historically taken part in paddlesport activities on the city's extensive canal network. Reasons include concerns for personal safety and fear of criminal activity in the inner city, but more significantly, a lack of role models, ownership and sense of belonging in green and blue spaces.

The partner collaboration and funding has enabled the rapid development of seven community organisations to add paddling to their local youth, community and family offerings. This is now reaching deep into local communities with a wide range of ethnic and social diversity. People who otherwise would not be accessing the water are now taking up paddling for the first time and being coached, helmed and organised by local people in locally trusted organisations (LTOs) within their own community. Insight indicates that the Birmingham Paddling Hubs have reached 3,487 people across the city so far.

StreetGames plugged the Birmingham paddlesport initiative into the city-wide Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme that reaches tens of thousands of children annually via more than 350 local HAF providers. Easter HAF introduced Bell Boating as an enrichment activity by way of ['Into the Green and Blue: Testing the waters – Bring it on Brum!'](#) and together with the summer programme, 30 HAF providers have now introduced over 1,000 young people to

the sport across the seven hubs in more than 50 Bell Boat paddle sessions.

Project insight shows that the Hubs have reached communities vastly under-represented elsewhere in paddling. In 2023, the number of the paddling hubs that have progressed to Paddle UK affiliation include 7 in Birmingham, and 1 each in Manchester, London and Keighley. Data collected during the Easter HAF programme with bell boating indicates that across the 811 young people engaged, 18% had white ethnic backgrounds, as opposed to a majority of 76% coming from either Asian (38%), Black (31%) or Mixed (7%) backgrounds. Additionally, 81% of attendees lived in an area within the top three most deprived deciles. You can read more about the impact of the [HAF project here](#).



Ambition 5: Developing and supporting coaches, leaders, instructors and guides

Overview on progress against the strategy during 2023

Since the publication of the strategy, Paddle UK has focussed efforts on continuing to create a broad suite of equality, diversity and inclusion learning resources for inclusion in the BCAB Digital Library, providing the opportunities and incentives for the paddling community to understand more about core inclusion topics. We have also been working to identify and deliver opportunities for underrepresented groups to take part in Provider recruitment and National Trainer recruitment events, and for coaches from underrepresented communities to become qualified via the Coach Bursary scheme. To centre and highlight experiences of coaches, leaders, instructors and guides from all backgrounds, we have increased the number of case studies we have shared on the Paddles Up Training website, with the ambition of creating more diverse role models. We were also delighted to be awarded Podcast of the Year at the UK Coaching Awards 2023, recognising the great work that has been delivered by the team.

Data overview

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition, and provide an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes data we currently collect about our learners, and people who interact with our resources.

The table below shows all of the learners that have completed British Canoeing Awarding Body qualifications in specific craft and discipline criteria. Data provided as part of this qualification process is provided voluntarily, but completion rates are on average around 50%.

British Canoeing Awarding Body qualified learners		2022	2023	Change
Total Learners (<u>not</u> Start, Discover, Safer)		13803	12499	-1304
Age	Under 16	6.05%	9.8%	+3.75%
	17-24	26.8%	27.4%	+0.6%
	25-34	18.5%	20%	+1.5%
	35-44	14.5%	14.3%	-0.2%
	45-54	16.4%	16.4%	0%
	55-64	13.9%	11.4%	-2.5%
	65-74	3.3%	2.5%	-0.8%
	Over 75	0.3%	0.19%	-0.11%
Disability	Yes	2.5%	2.6%	+0.1%

	No	48.6%	46.1	-2.5%
	Prefer not to say	1.2%	1.1%	-0.1%
	Not provided	47.6%	50.2%	+2.6%
Ethnicity	Asian or Asian British	0.68%	0%	-0.68%
	Black or Black British	0.91%	0%	-0.91%
	Chinese	0.19%	0%	-0.19%
	Mixed ethnic background	1.9%	1%	-0.9%
	Other ethnic background	0.2%	0.9%	+0.7%
	White British	47.9%	44.8%	-3.1%
	White Irish	0.6%	0.6%	0%
	White: Other	2.9%	3.2%	+0.3%
	Not provided	39.7%	48.2%	+8.5%
	Prefer not to say	5%	1.3%	-3.7%
Gender	Female	33.8%	34.6%	+0.8%
	Male	64.8%	63.9%	-0.9%
	Prefer not to say	1.4%	1.5%	+0.1%
Religion	Buddhist	0.15%	0.2%	+0.05%
	Christian (any denomination)	14.4%	15.6%	+1.2%
	Hindu	0.08%	0%	-0.08%
	Jewish	0.13%	0.10%	-0.03%
	Muslim	0.13%	0.5%	+0.37%
	Sikh	0.01%	0.1%	+0.09%
	No religion or belief	23.2%	20.8%	-2.4%

	Any other religion or belief	1.3%	1.2%	-0.1%
	Prefer not to say	11.2%	11.4%	+0.2%
	Not provided	49.3%	50.1%	+0.8%
Sexuality	Asexual	0.2%	0.3%	+0.1%
	Bisexual	1.4%	1.3%	-0.1%
	Gay or lesbian woman	0.8%	0.7%	-0.1%
	Gay man	0.3%	0.3%	0%
	Heterosexual or straight	36.6%	34.7%	-1.9%
	Other	0.6%	0.7%	+0.1%
	Unsure	0.7%	0.7%	0%
	Prefer not to say	9.8%	9.2%	-0.6%
	Not provided	49.5%	52.1%	+2.6%

The table below shows all of the learners that have completed the Start, Discover and Safer qualifications, which refers to introductory qualifications that help to develop fundamental skills on sheltered water environments to achieve independence on the water. Data collected as part of this qualification process is limited and provided voluntarily.

Start, Discover, Safer Learners		2022	2023	Change
Total Learners		17,455 (61% have completed monitoring information)	18,941 (58% completed monitoring information)	1486 more learners but a 3% reduction in monitoring completion
Age	Under 16	22%	21%	-1%
	Over 16	78%	79%	+1%
Gender	Female	37%	39%	+2%
	Male	47%	46%	-1%
	Other	2%	2%	0%

	Prefer not to say	14%	13%	-1%
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Please note:

- Table 1 Data is taken from Membership records. Members give diversity data voluntarily (and are prompted annually to update), and therefore some datasets may be incomplete.
- Table 2 less data is collected for Paddle Start, Paddle Discover and Paddle Safer, records are not linked to membership databases.
- Some events are open to non-members (e.g. Safety courses, Personal Development, SESA, First Aid courses as well as events and webinars. In these cases, we only collect data on the age of participants.)

Data on those engaging in EDI training and resources

New resources are created annually to support coaches, leaders, instructors and guides with ongoing learning about equality, diversity and inclusion topics, and creating more inclusive coaching environments. The engagement with these resources have been significant, and data collected is shown below.

Resource	2022 (to year end)	2022 (year to date - Q1 and Q2)	2023 (year to date- Q1 and Q2)	Change 2022-2023 YTD (%)
EDI podcast episode downloads	48	Data unavailable	122	N/A
Neurodiversity podcast episode downloads	0 (launched in 2023)	0 (launched in 2023)	222	N/A
Total EDI-related Podcast Episodes	48	N/A	344	+616.6
Introduction to EDI eLearning (all National Associations and non-members)	709	406	279	-31.3
Inclusive Language eLearning (all National Associations and non-members)	0 (launched in 2023)	0 (launched in 2023)	467	N/A
Total EDI related eLearning	709	406	746	+83.7
Grand Total	757	N/A	968	N/A

Please note:

- The EDI podcast episode statistic is for year end in 2022 as we have no access to monthly data for that year. As a result, we can only report the % change at the end of 2023. The 2022 to year end statistic is replacing the year-to-date figure to calculate the percentage change so far this year as a temporary measure.
- The EDI podcast episode statistic for 2023 includes total downloads for a rerun of the episode which was launched early that year. There is no way of recording whether people downloading podcast recordings are BC members or holders of BCAB qualifications.

Progress against the measures of success

An annual increase in the diversity of those holding British Canoeing Awarding Body qualifications (annually from 2022): Evidence in the tables above shows that there has been some progress in improving the diversity of learners completing both qualifications and starter awards, but as with other areas of this report, the rate of completing monitoring data has limited full understanding of these demographics. In future iterations of the report, we will look to share the progress for providers and National Trainers, although anecdotally, we have seen increases in diversity in both cohorts.

The number of coaches, leaders, instructors and guides that have engaged in equality, diversity and inclusion training and resources will increase each year (annually from 2022): The total number of people engaging with inclusion related content created by British Canoeing Awarding Body has grown

substantially this year, as seen above, supported by the launch of a new eLearning, a new podcast episode, the relaunch of a former podcast episode. We continue to add external resources that are made available to us to our Digital Library and further consolidate the learning opportunities for all coaches, leaders, instructors and guides.

Ambition 6: Developing and supporting volunteers

Our progress in 2023

Progress against this ambition has been challenging for many reasons, namely due to a significant change in capacity within the organisation to centralise and coordinate this work. Volunteers are vital in making paddlesport happen, and are present in all aspects of the sport, whether it be as event organisers and volunteers, in club settings, or with Discipline Committees. Each group of volunteers has its own set of needs, challenges and opportunities, and so without suitable resources and support internally, it has been challenging to implement the actions we set out with in 2022.

Providing volunteers with education around equality, diversity and inclusion topics is vital to ensuring that they feel supported and empowered to create inclusive and welcoming paddling environments for all, and Paddle UK has continued to deliver opportunities for volunteers to learn and implement more. This has included the delivery of the Club Inclusion Webinar Programme, in partnership with Inclusive Employers, which aims to engage with volunteers in a range of roles and positions, to ensure more robust embedding of these approaches across club set-ups.

In lieu of a single role supporting the volunteers across paddling, in the autumn of 2023, internal reorganisation of responsibilities supporting the range of Disciplines has provided some clarity on the way forward around some actions. Paddle UK committed to ensuring Discipline and Club committees having inclusion strategies and initiatives embedded into their planning by 2026, and now that the staff support is in place for these Committees, we hope progress can be made.

Where we have seen some progress as outlined above, the challenges have prevented Paddle UK from making progress against actions to deliver specific initiatives to encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to become volunteers, or to create a more robust system for collecting the equality monitoring data of these volunteers, so that we better understand the demographics of the people engaging with our volunteering opportunities. We have taken some learnings from the processes used at the Canoe Slalom World Championships in 2023, where we saw that the workforce at the event were almost representative of the local area in Waltham Cross, and we hope to replicate our engagement with new and existing volunteers at future events.

Progress against our measures of success

In 2022, our measures of success for this area were: **A benchmark of the demographics involved in volunteering across paddling through robust equality monitoring data collection** and **An annual improvement in the diversity of the volunteering body**. Individual pools of data have been collected where the opportunity has arisen, and processes embedded for future collection. However, outside of this, no benchmark data for volunteers has been created, and therefore annual progress cannot yet be determined.

Ambition 7: Developing talent and achieving international success

Our progress in 2023

This year we have piloted annual demographic data capture across athletes within the Slalom Pathways. Through this pilot we have established a systematic and consistent process which has allowed us to collect more robust data and establish a baseline from which to monitor trends and assess the impact of initiatives. This process will be rolled out in the winter of 2023/2024 to Slalom School paddlers, Sprint Junior Development Squads and Junior Training Squads and for representative 2024 GBR teams in Olympic and Paralympic events, for both athletes and wider workforce.

Delivery of Quality Club (QC) now sits with the Club Development team who are supporting Talent Club Partner's towards completion of the accreditation or retaining their accreditation. Presently, 2 clubs have obtained and are being supported with retaining, whilst 3 clubs are in the process of obtaining QC for the first time.

Our Talent Inclusion Plan 2021-2023 has been reviewed and iterated for 2025 in order to take account of staffing and pathway structure realignments that have taken place, and to enable support to be more accessible to a greater number of clubs. Equality Impact Assessments have been conducted for our Club Support Schemes in Slalom and Flatwater.

Our Flatwater Coach Developer is working with London Youth Rowing to support the development of their coaches. This currently involves mentoring the lead coach and assisting them to obtain the Race Performance Coach. Additionally, plans are in place to observe a number of other coaches operating in their Active Paddle programme and potentially deliver a Core Coach qualification, followed by the Race Coach qualification.

Data benchmarking

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition, and provide an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes data we currently collect about our programme athletes and hardship fund awards.

Hardship Fund

A hardship fund for athletes has been established in 2023. 25 applications were received and a total of £5,120 has been awarded so far in the first year. We are committed to ensuring we can provide support for those experiencing economic hardship, and addressing barriers for athletes in the pathway who may come from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Athletes awarded hardship funding		2023
Age	Junior	Junior: 18%
	U23	36%
	Senior	46%

Disability	Yes	36%
	No	64%
Gender	Compete in the female category	54%
	Compete in the male category	46%
Ethnicity	Ethnic backgrounds denoted as 'Other'	9%
	White and Asian	9%
	White	82%

Slalom Talent Programme Squad

Work is still required to identify consistent and robust processes for collecting and reporting on equality monitoring data for athletes on the Talent and World Class Performance Programmes, but piloted data collection for Slalom Talent programme athletes can be seen below. The data shows that while some progress has been made in increasing the number of female athletes on programme, the balance is still not representative of the general population, and athletes on the programme are still predominantly from white ethnic backgrounds. As we continue to monitor this insight, we hope the impact of programmes including the club inclusion support and CPD, and working alongside partners such as London Youth Rowing begin to show in athlete representation.

England Slalom Talent Programme Squad Athletes		2022	2023	Change
Ethnicity	Any other white background	7%	5%	-2%
	Mixed White and Asian	7%	3%	-4%
	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	5%	3%	-2%
	Prefer not to say	5%	3%	-2%
	White English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Ireland or British	76%	85%	+9%
Religion	Buddhist	2%	2%	0%
	Christian	38%	42%	+4%
	Christian - prefer not to say	0	2%	+2%
	Jewish	0%	2%	+2%
	No religion	52%	50%	-2%

	Other religion or belief	2%	0%	-2%
	Prefer not to say	5%	3%	-2%
Disability	Yes	12%	19%	+7%
	No	88%	79%	-9%
	Prefer not to say/Don't know	0%	2%	+2%
Sexuality	Bisexual	0%	0%	0%
	Gay man	0%	0%	0%
	Gay woman	0%	0%	0%
	Heterosexual or straight	83%	84%	+1%
	Prefer not to say	0%	2%	+2%
Gender	Competes in the female category	31%	35%	+4%
	Competes in the male category	69%	65%	-4%
Age	10-14	33%	65%	+32%
	15-19	60%	31%	-29%
	20-24	5%	2%	-3%
	25-29	2%	3%	+1%

Progress against our measures of success

Increased diversity in athletes selected for Junior GB teams and squad activity: This data collection has been piloted in 2023, and we will endeavour to ensure ongoing measurement of Junior GB teams and squad activity. Meanwhile, our team is working with the current Talent Club Partners to have a better understanding of, and become more representative of the community on their doorstep. We are working with Inclusive Employers to deliver a series of virtual learning webinars for clubs, which take place over the 2023/2024 winter period, and will include learning topics such as, an introduction to inclusion, inclusive culture and behaviours webinar; mental health and wellbeing; and the role of inclusion allies.

An athlete fund will be available, and we will have awarded grants: Alongside the success award of grants for 2023, a review of the Hardship policy (now renamed the Athlete Support Fund) and process has taken place, with iterations focused upon making the fund more accessible and the eligibility clearer.

Case study: The Active Thames Project

[Active Thames is a partnership programme](#) in place to support the development of watersports on the tidal Thames and inland waterways in London, Kent and Essex. In the 2022/23 period, 10 paddlesports projects were successful in receiving £43,822 worth of funding, including £10,000 of Paddle UK support. Applicants to the Active Thames initiative had to ensure that they improved the diversity of participation in watersports, particularly among under-represented groups such as disabled people; people with long term health conditions; people from lower socio-economic groups; and ethnically diverse communities. Projects could also focus on developing the workforce and community activators for paddlesports.

In total across 2022/23, funding was awarded to organisations and clubs such as The Pirate Castle, South London Scouts, Tower Hamlets Canoe Club and Laburnum Boat Club. Active Thames further highlighted the great work being done by Wapping Youth, [Dittons Paddleboarding Club](#), [Phoenix Canoe Club](#) and [Black Girls Hike](#) to get more people from more diverse backgrounds out onto the water.

Laburnum Boat Club

Laburnum Boat Club is based in South Hackney, an area with high levels of deprivation. The Club itself was established in 1983 to provide social development to young people in Hackney through outdoor activities. Active Thames provided funding to support the delivery of paddling activity on the Thames, including kayaking, canoeing and stand up paddleboarding, as well as supporting the upskilling of deliverers like Adrianna. Read more about the work Laburnum Boat Club has been doing [here](#).

Wapping Youth Football Club

From one London Borough to another, Wapping Youth FC included kayaking and canoeing sessions into its summer timetable through Active Thames funding, delivered out of Shadwell Basin Outdoor Activity Centre in Tower Hamlets. Nahimul Islam, founder and director of Wapping Youth FC, said: *“It’s something we, and many communities around us, walk past and see every day and yet we cannot partake because of the cost associated with watersports. For us, it’s about breaking down barriers to encourage young people take part in a sport on our doorstep, a sport that they normally wouldn’t necessarily be able to afford.”*. Read more about the impact of the project for the young people involved [here](#).



Paddlers at Laburnum Boat Club



Paddlers at Phoenix Canoe Club

Phoenix Canoe Club

Funding and support from Active Thames and the Port of London Authority has supported Phoenix Outdoor Centre and Phoenix Canoe Club to deliver accessible paddling sessions to the local community as well as providing disability training for staff at the centre. The result has been more accessible and inclusive paddling opportunities for people in the local area, particularly young people and adults with disabilities, and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Read more about how the Centre and Club have been engaging with local groups [here](#).

Ambition 8: Providing excellent championships, competitions and events

Our progress in 2023

There has been great progress made across competition and event delivery in year one of this strategy. In 2023, Paddle UK delivered the Canoe Slalom World Championships at Lee Valley in London, and great care was taken to embed inclusive and accessible processes, focus on diversity of workforce, and drive a social impacts programme alongside the event. There was a focus on engaging with volunteers from a wider range of backgrounds than traditionally expected to engage with Paddle UK events, to positive results. The World Championships allowed us to work to engage volunteers from local communities, supporting those from diverse backgrounds and who may not have had the opportunity to volunteer before. This was achieved through partnerships with local organisations, councils, and other stakeholders such as the University of Hertfordshire.

Discipline Committees are making varied amounts of progress on embedding inclusion approaches into their work, despite capacity within the organisation to support them being low. However, more work needs to be done on supporting them to identify the opportunities, and include them in annual planning processes.

Data benchmarking

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition, and provide an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes data we currently collect about our Canoe Crew volunteers.

Canoe Crew Volunteers - 2023 Canoe Slalom World Championships

The Canoe Crew are the volunteers involved in supporting major events delivered by Paddle UK, and form a significant group of the volunteers involved in paddling every year. Previously, no data has been collected on this group of people to understand whether they are representative of the general population, Paddle UK membership, or of the local area in which the event is taking place, and processes have been piloted this year to improve this for future major events.

Equality monitoring processes were embedded into the Canoe Crew recruitment process for the Canoe Slalom World Championships, held in Lee Valley, London between the 19th and 24th September 2023, and can be seen in the table below. Efforts were made to target a more diverse workforce, through advertising across local communities, through universities, and through social impact initiatives. Volunteer interest was significant, and there were numerous factors such as availability, location of volunteers, and access requirements such as VISA challenges which meant that individuals weren't appointed, which may have had an influence on the overall demographics of volunteers.

Nonetheless, analysis of Canoe Crew members for the event shows some progress against the data available for Paddle UK membership, as it shows that the event had an overall more diverse profile for volunteers. Compared to the local area statistics, the ethnic background of volunteers who applied to volunteer more closely reflected that of Waltham Cross ethnic diversity than those who were assigned. Waltham Cross has a 65% white British population, whereas 75% of the applicants were from white British backgrounds - however, this increased to 80% for appointed volunteers. The gender split was almost even, with 50.69% identifying as men and 48.97% as women, and is encouraging to see that volunteer numbers were equitable in regards to gender.

Canoe Crew Volunteers		2023 Slalom World Championships Volunteers
Age	Under 18	1.09%
	18-24	8.36%
	25-34	14.18%
	35-44	12%
	45-54	12%
	55-64	26.9%
	65-74	20.73%
	75+	4.73%
Disability	Yes	6%
	No	94%
Ethnicity	Asian or Asian British	8.3%
	Chinese	1.4%
	Mixed ethnic background	4%
	Other ethnic background	7%
	White British	75%
	White Irish	2%
	Prefer not to say	2.3%
Gender	Woman	48.97%
	Man	50.68%
	Non-binary	<1%
	Other	<1%
	Prefer not to say	<1%

We are committed to continuing to collect this data for major events and competitions delivered by Paddle UK each year. As Paddle UK supports and delivers future events, we hope to see continued progress in improving the diversity of the volunteers at these events, as well as working to bring volunteering opportunities to more people from more backgrounds.

Data on those competing in our events and competitions is still a work in progress, however clear processes and plans to collect this are being put in place to collect and report on this data, as well as working more closely with Discipline Committees to have a better understanding of the demographics of the athletic populations across the paddling Disciplines.

Progress against our measures of success

All funded disciplines committees have EDI initiatives and strategies are part of their four-year plans: Due to a lack of internal capacity in this area, this is an ongoing ambition, however, the Discipline Committees continue to be engaged on their commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion and work will commence in a more comprehensive manner on this measure once capacity is in place.

A benchmark of the demographics involved in volunteering in competition and events through robust equality monitoring data collection:

Previously, Paddle UK has not collected demographic information in relation to Canoe Crew volunteers, and as shown above, we have established a benchmark with the 297 of Canoe Crew volunteers at the Canoe Slalom World Championships. Alongside this, we will ensure this continues to be embedded into the recruitment processes for future major international events hosted by Paddle UK. Overall, numbers of volunteers appointed as part of the Canoe Crew have increased, and the representation of volunteers against the local area has been promising for 2023.

Ambition 9: Focused on governance, people, equality and sustainability

Our progress in 2023

In the winter of 2022 through to the summer of 2023, Paddle UK have published #WePaddleTogether - A Strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Protecting the Places we Paddle - Paddle UK's Environmental Sustainability Strategy; and an organisational People Strategy; has shown our collective commitment to embedding these themes throughout our operational delivery. New members have been appointed to the Inclusion Advisory Group, improving Paddle UK's capacity to utilise a diverse group of individuals, experiences and expertise to ensure progress against the strategy is sufficient and delivered.

Our People focus has been on improving the recruitment processes at Paddle UK, by systematically working to identify points at which bias may be influencing our processes, and putting items in place to address this. Alongside this commitment, we partnered with England Hockey, Table Tennis England and Swim England in a UK Sport funded project targeting vacancy websites which aim to recruit talent from specific demographic backgrounds in order to improve the diversity of the pools of talent that have access to our opportunities. The second phase of this pilot in 2024 will be on training for hiring managers, to ensure equitable and accessible interviews.

Sustainability has been a huge component of the strategic delivery, with many ambitions across the environmental and access campaigns outlined under Ambition 3. In regards to the Sustainability component, the Canoe Slalom Championships presented an enormous opportunity to deliver on sustainability ambitions, which were embedded in the event alongside the social impacts programme for the event.

Data benchmarking

The following data provides insights into the work that is being delivered to support the outcomes of this ambition, and provide an opportunity to show our progress against the actions Paddle UK set out to achieve in this strategy. This includes data we currently collect about our staff, executive Board and staff engagement surveys.

Staff equality monitoring data

Staff data is collected on our HR system, PeopleHR, and is only collected when staff manually go in to complete this data. As part of the induction process for new starters, staff are encouraged to complete this data on the system, and we can only present data which is provided. As a result, in 2022, almost 41% of data is blank on the system - for 2023, this percentage is 30.18%. The data we currently have available on the diversity of the staff working at Paddle UK can be found below.

		2022	2023	Change
Overall completion rate		41%	69.81%	+28.81%
Age	18-24	0.94%	3.77%	+2.83%
	25-34	18.86%	22.64%	+3.78%

	35-44	12.26%	14.15%	+1.89%
	45-54	17.92%	20.75%	+2.83%
	55-64	8.49%	7.54%	-0.95%
	65-74	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Not provided	40.56%	30.18%	-10.38%
Disability	Yes	5.66%	5.66%	0%
	No	52.83%	63.20%	+10.37%
	Prefer not to say	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Not provided	40.56%	30.18%	-10.38%
Ethnicity	Black or Black British	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Asian or Asian British	0.94%	3.77%	+2.83%
	Any other white background	1.88%	3.77%	+1.89%
	White British	54.71%	61.32%	+6.61%
	Prefer not to say	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Not provided	40.56%	30.18%	-10.18%
Gender	Non-binary	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Man (including trans man)	32.07%	38.67%	+6.6%
	Woman (including trans woman)	24.52%	28.30%	+3.78%
	Prefer not to say	1.88%	1.88%	0%
	Not provided	40.56%	30.18%	-10.38%
Religion	Agnostic	8.49%	9.43%	+0.94%
	Atheist	22.64%	27.35%	+4.71%
	Christian	21.69%	18.86%	-2.83%

	Muslim	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Other	2.83%	5.66%	+2.83%
	Prefer not to say	2.83%	7.54%	+4.71%
	Not provided	40.56%	30.18%	-10.38%
Sexual orientation	Bisexual	2.83%	4.71%	+1.88%
	Gay man	0.94%	0%	-0.94%
	Gay woman or lesbian	0.94%	0.94%	0%
	Heterosexual or straight	51.88%	60.37%	+8.49%
	Prefer not to say	2.83%	3.77%	+0.94%
	Not provided	40.56%	30.18%	-10.38%

Board Diversity

In 2021 and 2022, Paddle UK participated in the Race Representation Index (RRI) as delivered by Sporting Equals. As expected, based on the insight we have on our organisation, the organisation received an F rating in 2021, although this improved marginally in 2022 to an E rating. We are committed to continuing to engage with the RRI as a measure of ethnic diversity and representation across our organisation and decision making roles, and will share our scores in future editions of this report - our next submission was in November 2023, and will be reported in early 2024.

		2022	2023	Change
Gender	Man (including trans man)	44.44%	45.5%	+1.05%
	Woman (including trans woman)	44.44%	45.5%	+1.05%
	Prefer not to say	11.11%	9%	-2.11%
Gender identity	Identify as cisgender	90%	91%	+1%
	Prefer not to say	10%	9%	-1%
Age	25-40	0%	18%	+18%
	41-55	30%	27%	-3%
	55-70	60%	46%	-14%

	Over 70	10%	9%	-1%
Disability	Yes	11.11%	18%	+6.89%
	No	77.77%	73%	-4.77%
	Prefer not to say	11.11%	9%	-2.11%
Sexuality	Heterosexual or straight	80%	73%	-7%
	Prefer not to say	20%	27%	+7%
Religion or belief	Agnostic	10%	0%	-10%
	Atheist	10%	18%	+8%
	Christian	50%	27%	-23%
	Sikh	0%	9%	+9%
	Prefer not to say	30%	46%	+16%
Ethnicity	Asian or Asian British	0%	9%	+9%
	White background	80%	73%	-7%
	Mixed ethnic background	10%	0%	-10%
	Any other ethnic background	0%	9%	+9%
	Prefer not to say	10%	9%	-1%

Paddle UK would like to collect data related to socioeconomic status and social mobility in the future as part of this benchmarking exercise, and are exploring opportunities to collect this data in a meaningful way. While socioeconomic demographics are not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, it is important that, particularly for decision-making positions, we ensure as many diverse lived experiences are involved in our organisation as possible.

Staff Survey responses

Paddle UK conducts its Staff Survey annually which is a vital insight into the culture, sense of belonging and engagement within the organisation. The Survey contains questions about several different areas of work at Paddle UK, and covers six themes; Our Culture, Clarity and Purpose, Wellbeing at Work, Teamwork and Collaboration, Feeling Recognised and Valued, and Satisfaction.

In 2023, 84% of staff completed the survey, which equates to approximately 90 members of staff. The result showed high-rating scores across all areas with 33 of the 35 questions achieving over 70%. We were delighted to see 'Our Culture' achieving an overall score of 80% and all themes scoring over 77%.

Following the survey, a Staff Engagement Group comes together to discuss the results and implement approaches to address areas where staff tell us they want to see improvement, providing ongoing staff insight into the actions taken to create a welcoming and enjoyable working environment for all staff.

Progress against our measures of success

Compliance with Code for Sports Governance and Equality Standard for Sport: Paddle UK completed its submission of evidence supporting compliance with the Code for Sports Governance in 2023 and awaits confirmation in Spring 2024. It will continue to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Code. In the summer of 2023, Paddle UK was invited to join the early adopters of the reviewed Equality Standard for Sport, now known as the Moving to Inclusion Framework, and is working to identify areas for improvement to ensure compliance.

Attain the Advanced level Equality Standard for Sport: The Equality Standard for Sport framework review has now been completed, and is now known as the Moving to Inclusion Framework. Paddle UK has not yet achieved compliance with the new framework, but an initial submission for compliance was completed in the winter of 2023. Further review will take place in 2024, and look to achieve compliance in 2024.

Increased workforce and increased Board diversity: Data showing changes in Paddle UK staff and the Board show small increases in the level of ethnic diversity and those who have a disability between 2022 and 2023, and progress in our ambitions to ensure our organisation is reflective of the wider population. We still have much more work to do, particularly in the representation of LGBTQ+ identities and religious diversity. We have continued to improve the recruitment process, and actively seek to reduce and remove bias at all stages of the recruitment process for all positions, as well as widening the networks and pools of talent we are advertising our vacancies to.

Our appointment of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board Champion will also continue to ensure that the accountability on this topic, including future recruitment of Board members, remains on the agenda, and supports greater diversity at the highest level of governance.

Year on year increase in satisfaction scores across equality, diversity and inclusion questions in organisational surveys: We are pleased to see that our internal organisational surveys have scored consistently high on equality, diversity and inclusion topics, especially in regard to 'Our Culture' and 'Feeling Valued and Recognised'. We were delighted to see high scores associated with 'Our Culture', and will work closely with the Staff Engagement Group to implement actions which continue to foster an inclusive and accessible working environment.

Ambition 10: Improving digital services and communications

Our progress in 2023

Much of our priority within our digital services has been on the development and improvement of our digital platforms and support, including the website. Within this, specific focus on personalisation and accessibility of these services. The vast majority of the assets we create as an organisation are digital, and therefore it is vitally important that we create information, resources and assets which are accessible, inclusive and representative. Capacity within the responsible teams has meant that the development of the website, which was planned for within Year 1 of the strategy, hasn't yet been completed, but work is now underway.

Across Media and Communications, work has been ongoing to ensure more representative platforms, paying particular attention to the imagery used across our platforms, channels and promotional materials. Our commitment in the publication of this strategy was to ensure more diverse and representative imagery, and one way in which we have been addressing this is through our social media campaign, the Paddler Spotlight. The Paddler Spotlight is a monthly commitment from Paddle UK to showcase case studies, events, experiences, and a broader range of stories from the paddling community to address the lack of representation of under-represented communities across paddling.

Go Paddling has continued to be a core platform and tool to reach new, recreational and more diverse paddling communities across the country. The Paddle UK digital channels remain the main platform by which we have announced the new cohort of #ShePaddles Ambassadors, while continuing to support a range of national inclusion-led campaigns, such as Black History Month, Neurodiversity Celebration Week and Mental Health Awareness Week. In the summer of 2023, Paddle UK launched its inaugural Safety Campaign, where great care was taken to ensure a wide range of images were utilised, and engaged with stakeholders and partners that could bring the campaign to a wider audience, such as the Black Swimming Association.

Data benchmarking

The data available to us through the digital platforms about those who engage with our services is very different from the equality monitoring data that is available and reported on under other ambitions. It is also more limited. Examples of information include those signed up to our newsletter, including age and preferred craft, and engagement information through social media channels. This information gives us a limited insight into the demographics of those engaging with our content and assets, and how we track progress in this space. However, the most significant traffic of interaction comes through our social media platforms, for both the Paddle UK and Go Paddling channels. Below is a breakdown of the insights for these platforms.

Paddle UK channels			
Facebook		2023	
	All age groups	Men	Women
		59.2%	40.8%
	18-24	3.8%	2.1%

Age and gender splits	25-34	13.2%	7.8%
	35-44	14%	11%
	45-54	15.2%	11.8%
	55-64	9.4%	5.7%
	65+	3.6%	2.4%

Instagram	2023		
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Age and gender splits	All age groups	Men	Women
		46.4%	29.1%
	18-24	11%	5.6%
	25-34	16.4%	11.4%
	35-44	14.9%	11.2%
	45-54	11.9%	7.5%
	55-64	5%	3%
	65+	1.4%	0.7%

Twitter	2023		
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	All age groups	Men	Women
		61%	29.1%

GoPaddling channels			
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Facebook	2023		
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Age and gender splits	All age groups	Men	Women
		43.1%	59.6%
	18-24	1.1%	0.9%
	25-34	5.3%	6.1%

	35-44	10.3%	16.3%
	45-54	15.3%	23.4%
	55-64	8.4%	8%
	65+	2.7%	2.2%
Instagram		2023	
Age and gender splits	All age groups	Men	Women
		35.3%	42.6%
	18-24	2.4%	1.6%
	25-34	9.3%	13%
	35-44	15.4%,	21.3%,
	45-54	12.3%	13.7%,
	55-64	4.6%	4.5%,
	65+	1.2%	0.7%
Twitter		2023	
	All age groups	Men	Women
		72%	28%

All data in the above tables is for the period 01/01/2023 to 01/11/2023

Progress against our measures of success

Increased member satisfaction in our communications and digital channels as measured through the Members Surveys: The 2023 Members Survey shows us that satisfaction with the digital communications remains steady, and increased up 7.9 (out of 10) from 7.78 in 2022. Comments for improvements include enhanced website navigation, ensuring accessibility of our online and digital assets, and simplifying the digital and communications offer. These suggestions will be considered internally as we strive to improve the quality of our communications and digital provision.

The launch of a new Paddle UK website, with an annual increase in the number of visitors to Paddle UK’s websites, digital platforms and social media platforms: Due to many factors, such as capacity in the team, and time allowed for the work and launch, work on the new central Paddle UK website hasn’t started to shape just yet in Year 1. However, the staff Intranet and its content has been developed and launched, and provides a central location for staff functionality and connection. A predominant feature of all website development work will be on the accessibility of the information placed on each

platform, and will be incredibly important in the public facing website platform. As an example, we will be creating a site that shares notices in a post format rather than PDFs in order to aid readability, and accessibility plugins will be added to the platform - these plugins are already in place for the staff Intranet. We are also assessing the new platform for use with Text to Speech applications. As our understanding and capability to improve these accessibility options improves, these will continue to be embedded.

An increased number of stories and features annually, with improved representation of paddlers from more diverse backgrounds: In January 2023, we launched the Paddler Spotlight initiative. This is a monthly feature and commitment to share diverse stories from the paddling community across our digital channels. These monthly features have been well received by our audience and have been among some of our top performing social content in 2023. Most importantly, it has kept the commitment and drive to improve the diversity and representation of these lived experiences central across all areas of our organisation. We covered themes such as [neurodiversity](#), [disability](#), [access to waterways](#) and Black History Month. Combined, the Paddler Spotlight has resulted in over 110,000 impressions, has a reach of over 86,000 people, and produced 2,374 interactions, including likes, comments, link clicks and shares.

In 2024, we want to continue to develop the Paddler Spotlight and inclusion led campaigns further by reaching out to new communities and following up on stories from the previous year. There will also be a focus on diversifying the type of content, including more video-led features, and identifying opportunities to increase the reach of our articles into the paddling community and through partners and stakeholders.



#WePaddleTogether is a reflection of the sheer dedication in creating an environment that celebrates the unique perspectives, backgrounds and talents of every individual across our sport. The EDI actions set out in the strategic plan clearly illustrate how we will reach our vision for a safe, open and inclusive culture and I commend the leadership team and all those involved in spearheading this important initiative.

Manpreet Sehmbi (she/her), Independent Board Director and Board EDI Champion

From the first day of joining Birmingham Canoe Club, all members have sought to understand what helps me and how I can be involved in all activities. This has involved members providing lots of one to one training, giving me easy to understand descriptive instructions (rather than relying on vision) and enabling me to paddle solo. Trips have been supported by being paired with fellow paddlers to follow, being given simple travel directions and jumping into a canoe with another member to allow me to join a night time Halloween paddle. All in all a great experience and lots of fun!

Pete, a visually-impaired club paddler at Birmingham Canoe Club

