



Upton Warren Canoe Club



LOTTERY FUNDED

The Club received the wonderful news in December 2018 that Sports England had awarded the club £6,195 of National Lottery funding to acquire additional, new, club equipment. This equipment had been bid for to allow us to increase participation in kayaking by expanding our membership and additionally providing more activities to our current members.

A huge thanks to everyone who plays National Lottery games for your support!

Thanks to #NationalLottery players we've been able to purchase:

- 6x White Water Kayaks - to support development in flat and moderate water environments.
- 4x Crossover Kayaks - to use on flat and moderate water but also excellent for use on Touring Trips
- Plus the necessary paddles, buoyancy aids, spray-decks and helmets

The equipment was ordered once the good news landed and most of it has now physically arrived at the Club's base on Upton Warren Lake, ready for members to use both on trips and our weekly lake sessions. Two members have already used the white water kayaks on a lively trip down to Dartmoor!

Background to the Sports England Bid

Early in 2017 our not-for-profit club was re-energised by a change in committee and the support of our members. This began the current momentum for our coach development program and started to grow participation. The Club was keen to grow its membership and make improvements based on the requests which were being made, what the Club strengths were and what needed to happen to move things forward.

The key elements which were critical to address were:

- The Club was in desperate need of equipment - in 2018 we used our own funds to improve the inventory and make what boats we already had usable - this allowed us to move forward with our membership at the same level.
- The coaching capability needed to be updated - a plan of action was developed and is still being worked through - this includes five new paddlesport coaches and upskilling

our current club coaches. This development plan has included financial investment from the Club in support of the training costs.

- We needed to increase our membership to energise the club and bring in new blood. An open day was held and the engaging program of activity the Club provides has been continually developing - the membership has since grown from 59 to 101 and our waiting list of almost 40 people is now being addressed.

As our membership grew, it became apparent that we were once again falling short in the provision of enough equipment to satisfy demand with some members being unable to attend trips due to the lack of available equipment. We arranged a survey to measure and get feedback on many areas of the club and critically to see what activities were most desired and therefore where the club should focus its development efforts.

The Project presented to Sports England

We put together the bid to Sports England to address the shortfall in equipment and the restrictions this was placing on participation; importantly though we did this through the lens which focussed on the activities our members most wanted - namely White Water Kayaking and Kayak Touring.

At its most basic level, the acquisition of 10 additional kayaks (and the supporting equipment) would allow more people to join the club and more members to be able to experience the current White Water program. The new equipment was also to allow the Club to broaden its provision of trips and introduce a new focus on Kayak Touring for which members had expressed an interest.

The initial program for trips is currently out to our members and includes touring trips and white water. The outline for trips for 2019 is targeted to hit 20 days.

We believe that this ability to provide a more diverse range of activities will serve to increase the interest and engagement of members and this in turn will drive stronger retention and grow both a stronger and a more lasting sporting habit for all of our members. A more diverse range of activities and an increased membership also allows us to grow and develop our coaches further by providing more and more opportunities for them to gain experience.

We believe that the club provides young people and adults with both a positive social and physical environment which delivers them wider benefits than just paddling or fitness. We believe that the club encourages independence, team working and leadership skills, and that it also provides a positive social environment, all of which have positive mental health benefits. The new equipment will allow more members to benefit, more often, from our Club environment which will ensure these benefits are felt in our wider communities as our members interact throughout their day to day lives.

Looking forwards...

This project has provided equipment which will have a long life span (10 years). It is envisaged that the equipment will be used by multiple members, in multiple sessions and trips and over multiple years.

The equipment will be available to new and existing members to use (alongside our existing equipment) and it will allow for continued usage and involvement. We believe that it is also likely that this sort of early and easy access to equipment during an initial phase of membership will support a positive experience that inducts them into the sport and goes on to allow a rational decision making process (at a sensible pace) for members who choose to invest in their own equipment - such a personal investment would aid retention and participation in the sport further and free the club equipment up for further use by newer and newer members.

It is envisaged that the increased enthusiasm and participation will continue to drive the program of trips which the Club is currently enjoying and again this variety and interest will bolster the Club and serve to retain the engagement of members. The Club expressed to Sports England that we would like to continue to build on our current success and, in time, would also like to build competence in other environments and disciplines with the aim of further enhancing participation and retention.

Further Club investments and developments

The Club has this year invested in an additional Club container - this is to help with the storage of our expanding inventory of equipment. We would like to thank Marter Transport for their help in securing this container and additionally for transporting it to its new home.

We also recognise the demand of our members for Open Canoes and Sea Kayaking and we are pleased to announce the following success and progression in these disciplines:

- **Open Canoes** - we have helped fund the training of our new Canoe Leader, Kev Dillon, which enables us to run river trips. We also now have access to some open canoes and we have invested in new floatation blocks for the safe use of these so they will be available for lake sessions and trips.
- **Sea Kayaking** - we have helped fund our new Sea Kayak Leader, Ian Wilson, who is now able to run sea kayaking trips. Although we do not currently have access to our own sea kayak equipment, Ian has already run some very successful sea kayak trips by arranging hire of equipment at shops and centres near the trip venues.