

# **Scottish Marine Recreational Resources: Assessment of the Sport of Surfing within Scottish Waters**

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## Foreword

The sport of surfing<sup>1</sup> is one of the many Marine Recreational Activities that takes place around Scotland's coastline. Although the sport has been in existence within Scotland for almost half a century recent years have seen an exponential increase in the sport's popularity. It is not only however the sport of surfing that has expanded over Scotland's shores, the demand for the use of the coastal waters around Scotland have never been so great and ambitious plans lay ahead for Scotland's seas to support oil and gas, fishing and the new Renewable energy sectors.

It is recognized that as each of the sectors grow and compete for use of Scotland's seas there may be conflicting demands between recreation, wildlife, tourism, heritage and industrial growth.

The plans for Scotland's Seas are developing quickly and changing rapidly as is the legislation which will manage potential conflicting demands. As of January 2013 there are commercial development plans in place which may have a direct impact at some of the following surfing sites:

- Fraserburgh Beach,
- Aberdeen Beach
- Nigg Bay,
- Sandford Bay,
- Spey Bay,
- Carnoustie,
- Burghead,
- Gills Bay,
- Farr Bay.

Broader plans also exist that could affect the sport of surfing along all of Scotland's main surfing coastlines:

- Lothian,
- Fife,
- Aberdeenshire,
- Moray Firth,
- Highland,
- Orkney,
- Shetland,
- Inner and Outer Hebrides,
- Tiree, Islay and the Macrahanish peninsula.

This document forms is to capture the fundamentals that make up what is known as Scottish Surfing today to act as a feed for the Scottish Governments National Marine Plan.

Further documentation will be available soon to:

- 1) Raise awareness with potential developers of the surf environment and its impact to the local communities.
- 2) Provide Scottish surfers a perspective on the potential development that lays ahead and what the future potentially holds.

The information captured is simply a snapshot in time taken as of January 2013. It is hoped that raising awareness will allow any potential conflicts of demand to be identified and rectified early in the planning phase for future developments offering harmony between recreational and commercial development across Scotland's Seas.

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<sup>1</sup> The sport of surfing referred to within this document specifically includes waveriding in the nearshore environment and excludes kitesurfing and windsurfing.

## 1) The Impact of Surfing in Scotland on a National Level

As a sport a recent survey estimated over 1500 regular surfers with an estimated further 8500 non-regular surfers residing within Scotland <sup>(Appendix 1)</sup>. Directly supporting the sport there are 14 surf retail businesses <sup>(Appendix 2)</sup> including 2 surfboard shapers and 13 surf schools <sup>(Appendix 3)</sup>. Within Scotland there are several surf clubs varying from loosely formed associations through to well regulated organizations including 6 University Surf Clubs <sup>(Appendix 4)</sup>. The Scottish Surfing Federation (The SSF) is the main body for the sport within Scotland.

The demographics above are but the tip of the iceberg. Over and above the businesses which directly benefit from people participating in the sport the secondary benefits is by far further reaching. The surf sites along the coast of Scotland have inspired filmmakers, frequently feature in different forms of surf media and offer national promotion for the country. Some of these sites have been home to numerous national and international events with many attracting numerous visitors both from within and outwith Scotland. In certain areas holiday homes and hostels have been specifically geared towards the surf tourism market with many local businesses in out of reach communities supported by the trade the sport brings.

Indirectly surfing has attracted new residents to out of reach communities where demographics indicate an otherwise declining population and the sport has provided the backbone for an underlying street culture with many popular surf brands such as Billabong, O'Neill, Rip Curl, Hurley and Quicksilver. With nearly a 50 year history these 'surf sites' make up what is part of Scotland's Marine Recreational Heritage.

Through interviews with many of the Scottish Surfers they acknowledge that surfing is much more than just a sport - it's a way of life.

## 2) The Impact of Surfing in Scotland on a Regional Level

There are numerous surf breaks and surf communities across Scotland which all have their own distinction. The Scottish Government as part of the development of a National Marine Plan has provisionally outlined Regional distinctions within Scotland for Marine Planning purposes. It is possible to adopt a similar regional structure to describe the makeup of Scottish surfing:-

Within each of these **Regions** there are distinct **Areas** which make up the different geographic surf communities across Scotland. Each area is made up of one or more '**surf sites**' or surf breaks that the local surf communities utilize.

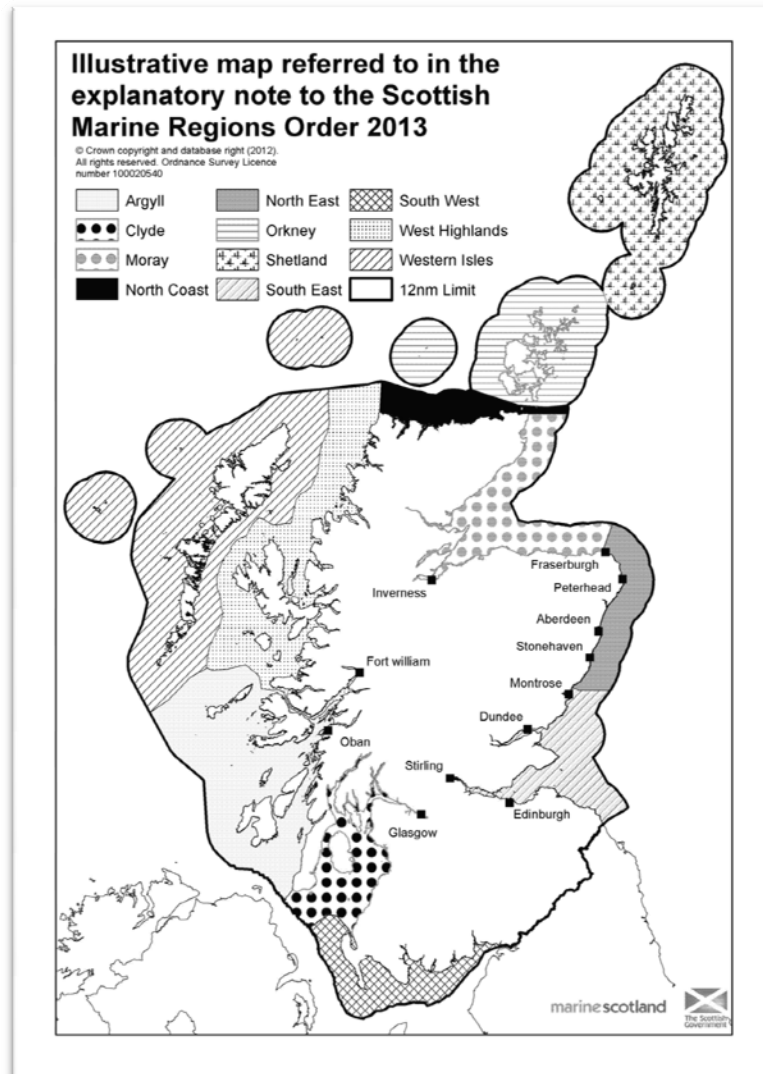


Figure 1 Scottish Marine Regional Breakdown as presented for the Scottish Marine Regions Order 2013.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.1) South East

The region deemed as the 'South East' encompassing the coast lines of the Scottish Borders, Lothian, Fife and Angus has by far the largest population of surfers within Scotland and consists of many different surf communities with some of the most densely populated surf sites at Dunbar, Pease Bay and St Andrews. This generally reflects the demographics of Scotland where 70% of the population live within the Central Belt meaning the Lothian coast is by the far the most accessible. The East Lothian Coast was the location for approximately 10 annual Scottish Surfing Championships in the later half of last century and the area has saw many local surf competitions and events since. Compared with the surf sites of the other areas within Scotland the area lacks the consistency and quality of other Scottish regions but it offers a quick escape to many city and land dwellers. Out of all the regions within Scotland the Southeast has the majority of surfer related businesses where people are directly employed by the industry. Supporting surf shops such as 'Momentum', 'Boardwise', 'St Vedas Surf Shop' and Freeze Pro Shop' as well as surf schools provided by 'Momentum', 'Oceanics', 'St Vedas Surf Shop' and 'C2C Surf School'. Within the area there are two dedicated surfboard shapers 'Pro Liberty Surfboards' and 'J Surfboards' a surf clothing company 'Staunch Clothing' and the area attracts the main student base with University clubs located in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, St Andrews and Stirling. The area has saw the surfer fold widen dramatically within recent years bulging to a point where it has exceeded the limited parking and existing beach facility capacity.

## 2.2) North East

The region identified as the 'North East', geographically commencing at the beginning of the North Esk Estuary (North of Montrose) spanning through Aberdeenshire as far as the West Phingask Shore (West of Fraserburgh) is home to some of the most well established surfing communities within Scotland with a nucleus of activity in the Fraserburgh and Aberdeen areas. Outwith Fraserburgh and Aberdeen there are frequently surfed locations on the stretches between Stonehaven and St Cyrus as well as the coastal regions surrounding the Peterhead area. As a town Fraserburgh is almost surrounded three quarters of the way by water and was home to a surf shop known as 'Point North East' which was in operation throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Fraserburgh is one of the few towns within Scotland where a consistent surfing beach is within short walking distance of the local schools. Changing facilities which were once available through until the late 1990s which helped attract newcomers to the sport at a young age many who have went on to form a tight surf group informally recognized as 'The Broch Surf Club.' Fraserburgh offered the right environment for a surf community to flourish. The setting and strength of the surf community pushed the standard of the sport with the area becoming known as the epi-centre of surfing performance for Scotland. Although today closure of facilities meant fewer newcomers are taking up the sport within the town it is not surprising that the majority of Scottish Surfing Champions over the last 40 years have originated from the Fraserburgh area. Fraserburgh has seen its fair share of surfing competitions hosting local events through to Scottish Surfing Championships as well as the Scottish Surfing Federations annual 'Gathering of the Clans' event in more recent years. Fraserburgh Bay has been home to the British Surfing Championships in 1992 along with the UK Professional Surfing Festival in 2010. Aberdeen is also home to a bustling surf community with a dedicate university surf club as well as the largest surf shop within Scotland (Granite Reef) that provides a locally run surf school. The 'Granite Reef Open' was a surfing event frequently planned on a yearly basis and was previously run by 'Granite Reef' and the 'Granite City Boardriders.' As well as those surfers who live and have grown up in the area the Universities and oil and gas industry offer Aberdeen a transitional home and this has bolstered the number of surfers within the area over the years.

### 2.3) Moray

The Moray Firth Coast is home to many different surf communities scattered along its numerous different coastal towns and villages. The region as outlined by the Scottish government spans from the foreshores west of Phingask to Duncansby Head and captures the coastline of Aberdeenshire, Moray and the East Highlands. The main nucleus areas are Banff, Sandend, Lossiemouth and Tain where the communities are served by local surf businesses, ESP and the Surfers Attic respectively. There are also a number of surf schools within the area such as 'Surf and Watersports Club Scotland' situated at Banff as well as 'New Wave Surf' a mobile surf school situated along the Moray Coast. Banff has hosted several surfing events over the years with part of the Scottish Surfing Championships held at Banff links in 2005. On the right conditions it is not uncommon for many surfers to flock to specific breaks within the region which is also within the catchment area for Aberdeen and Fraserburgh areas.

### 2.4) North Coast

The North Coast of Scotland has been deemed by the surfing world as a 'Coldwater Surfing Mecca' and has been instrumental to the development of the sport both within Scotland and the UK as a whole. Surfers first started visiting the North Coast of Scotland over 40 years ago and in 1973 the first Scottish Championships were held at Bettyhill near Thurso. Since the first Scottish Surfing Championships there has been numerous surf competitions focused in the Thurso area both at local and national level. The area has also seen a plethora of international events such as the Eurosurf competitions which were held at Thurso in 1981 and 1993. The UK Pro Surf Tour (formally known as the British Professional Surfing Association) has held annual events in the region over the last 10 years. Between 2006 and 2011 O'Neill sponsored huge mainstream surfing events as part of the World Qualifying Series (WQS) for the World Circuit Tour (WCT). The competitions were amongst the biggest surfing events in the world and saw many of the current top professionals within surfing from across the world flock to the area. It is also noted that since 1984, the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA) has held their National Surfing Championships in Caithness each year since the mid 1980s along with the International Canoe Championships and European Wave Ski Championships in 1987 and 1991 respectively as well as the World Kayak Championship held in 1991 and 1997.

The area is home to the loosely formed Caithness Boardriders, there is a small surf shop at present 'Surf Wrath' along with a dedicated surf school 'Thurso Surf'. Throughout its 40 year history surf media has been attracted to the area with frequent features in surf magazines but it has been the last 10 years that have really put the area on the world surfing map with advances in internet media technology combined with the international surfing competition publicity. As a result there has been a direct increase in the number of new participants as well as the number of surfers visiting the region. In some cases families have been inspired to relocate and choose surfing on the North coast of Scotland as a way of life. As has been the case with many other surfing destinations across the world there are the early signs of friction developing at some spots due to a bolstering water population over a limited area tainting which once was deemed an empty surf wilderness. Many 'soul surfers' are now more frequently spreading their search further afield to the western fringes of the North Coast and the Scottish Isles.

## 2.5) Orkney and Shetland Archipelagos

The Orkney and Shetland islands may be battered frequently with waves and swells but are often also over exposed to wind and harsh weather conditions. Beach/ break access, road networks, tidal currents and reduced winter daylight all play a significant factor in the surfing environment on these islands with many breaks requiring significant effort to reach. It takes years of local knowledge to understand the interaction of such conditions which has meant the small but tight knit dedicated surf population within these islands are some of the most dedicated and committed throughout the world. The islands may have no surf shops at present but do get the occasional surf tourists and in island communities of a declining population trend the lifestyle commitment made by some of the surfers within the area goes well beyond that of the traditional surfer.

## 2.6) Western Isles

There are a number of surfers scattered across the Western Isles with the majority residing on the Isle of Lewis but others spread down through Harris as far south as Barra. Although access from the mainland is restricted via ferry the Outer Hebrides have hosted in recent years international surf events with the Celtic Watersports Festival held in 1999 consisting of teams from Cornwall, Isle of Man, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Galicia, Asturias, Euskadi (Basque Country) and North Portugal along with a further International Hebridean Surf Festival in 2001. The islands which are home to the 'Outer Hebrides Surf Association' receive quite a bit of surf tourism in particular over the summer months and have a locally run surf school provided by 'Surf Lewis; Like the other out of reach Scottish Surfing destinations the Isles have attracted families to move to the area and adapt the surf lifestyle.

## 2.7) West Highland

Although the Outer Hebrides and Western Scottish Isles block the majority of swell from the mainland there are numerous 'nooks and crannies' between islands that allow swell to travel through offering good surf on some secluded west mainland areas. The Isle of Skye also has one of the youngest developing surf communities within Scotland.

## 2.8) Argyll

The region identified as Argyll encompasses a variety of different surf regions both mainland along the Kintyre peninsula and the isles to the west such as Islay and Tiree. Due to its relatively close proximity to Glasgow and the central belt the region offers a close escape for weekend and short visits and the surfing scene supports a healthy tourist industry offering conditions for all levels. Glasgow itself has two surf businesses 'Clan Skates' and 'Boardwise' and is home to the Glasgow University Surf Club. Tiree has become renowned for its windsurfing and kite surfing potential with numerous surf, windsurf and kite surf schools such as 'Suds Surf School' and 'Wild Diamond.' The island has a tight community of water sport enthusiasts, where 'Wild Diamond' surf shop provides hardware and has been home to numerous watersport competitions. Likewise on the Kintyre peninsula where 'Breaks surf shop' is well stocked and surf instruction provided by 'Live on the edge' and 'Kintyre surf school'.



## APPENDIX 1 – Current Estimated Number of Surfers Within Scotland

Sub Region	Marine Region	Number of Surfers
Aberdeen (University)	North East	65
Dundee (University)	South East	35
Edinburgh (University)	South East	58
Stirling (University)	South East	18
St Andrews (University)	South East	40
Glasgow (University)	Argyll	57
Aberdeen City	North East	100
Peterhead area (from Newburgh to Scotstown)	North East	4
Fraserburgh area (covering from St Combs to Phingask)	North East	45
Banff area (from Phingask to Sandend)	Moray	33
Moray Coast (Cullen to Findhorn)	Moray	38
Inner Moray Firth (Nairn to Helmsdale)	Moray	17
Caithness East Coast (Helmsdale to Duncansby Head)	Moray	3
Caithness North Coast (Duncansby Head to Sandside)	North Coast	40
Sutherland North Coast (Melvich to Cape Wrath)	North Coast	9
Outer Hebrides	Western Isles	25
Inner Hebrides	West Highlands	12
Tiree	Argyll	20
Islay	Argyll	14
South West Mainland	Argyll	34
Edinburgh to Eyemouth	South East	770
Fife	South East	43
Dundee to Stonehaven	North East	26
Orkney	Orkney	16
Shetland	Shetland	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1533</b>

**NOTE: Estimate conducted by SSF during December 2012.**

Criteria used to identify 'Regular Surfers' were those that would typically surf a minimum of 4 times per year and would own maintained equipment suitable to participate in the sport at anytime.

Surveys conducted with the Scottish Surf Schools identified the provisional figure of a further 8000 non-regular surfers within Scotland.

Marine Region Overview	Number of Surfers
South East	963
North East	240
Argyll	125
Moray	90
North Coast	49
Western Isles	25
Orkney	16
Shetland	13
West Highlands	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>1533</b>

## APPENDIX 2 - List of Scottish Surf Shops (January 2013)

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### **Boardwise**

**Region 1:** South East

**Address 1:**

Lady Lawson Street  
Edinburgh, Midlothian

**Tel:** 01312 295887

**Website:** [www.boardwise.com](http://www.boardwise.com)

**Email:** [admin@boardwise.com](mailto:admin@boardwise.com)

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### **St Vedas Surf Shop**

**Region:** South East

**Address:**

Coldingham Bay  
Coldingham  
Berwickshire  
Scotland  
TD14 5PA

**Tel:** 01890 771679

**Website:** <http://www.stvedas.co.uk>

**Email:** [info@stvedas.co.uk](mailto:info@stvedas.co.uk)

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### **Freeze Pro Shop**

**Region:** South East

**Address:**

165 Bonnington Road  
Edinburgh  
EH6 5 BQ

**Tel:** 01312 609677

**Website:** <https://www.freezeproshop.com>

**Email:** [sales@freezeproshop.com](mailto:sales@freezeproshop.com)

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### **Momentum Surf Shop (Shop, 'Pro Liberty' Surfboard Shaper and Surf Instruction)**

**Region:** South East

**Address:**

P.O. Box 28801  
Edinburgh  
EH14 2WR

**Tel:** 07796561615

**Website:** <http://momentumsurfshop.com>

**Email:** [post@momentumsurfshop.com](mailto:post@momentumsurfshop.com)

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### **J Surfboards (Surfboard Shaper)**

**Region:** South East

**Address:**

Access Via Facebook

**Tel:** 07775636112

**Website:** <http://jsurfboards.blogspot.com/>

**Email:** [jasonjsurfboards@googlemail.com](mailto:jasonjsurfboards@googlemail.com)

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**Staunch Clothing (Scotlands own surf clothing brand)**

**Region:** South East

**Address:** Contact Via Website

**Tel:** Contact Via Website

**Website:** <http://www.staunchclothing.co.uk>

**Email:** Contact Via Website

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**Granite Reef**

**Region:** North East

**Address:**

45 The Green,  
Aberdeen  
AB11 6NY

**Tel:** 01224 252752

**Website:** <http://www.granitereef.co.uk>

**Email:** [info@granitereef.com](mailto:info@granitereef.com)

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**Boardwise**

**Region 2:** South West

**Address 2:**

1146 Argyle Street  
Glasgow, Lanarkshire  
**Tel:** 0141 334 5559

**Website:** [www.boardwise.com](http://www.boardwise.com)

**Email:** [admin@boardwise.com](mailto:admin@boardwise.com)

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**Clan Skates**

**Region:** South West

**Address:**

Clan Skates,  
45 Hyndland street  
Glasgow  
G11 5QF

**Tel:** 0141 339 6523

**Website:** <http://www.clanskates.co.uk>

**Email:** -

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**ESP**

**Region:** Moray Firth

**Address:**

Moss Street Elgin, Morayshire IV30 1LU

**Tel:** 01343 550129

**Website:** -

**Email:** -

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### Surfer's Attic

**Region:** Moray Firth

**Address:**

2 Duke Street  
Tain  
Ross-shire  
IV19 1BT

**Tel:** 07913002632

**Website:** <http://www.surfersattic.co.uk>

**Email:** [surfersatticness@gmail.com](mailto:surfersatticness@gmail.com)

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### Breaks surf shop

**Region:** Argyll

**Address:**

The Putechan,  
Bellochantuy, □  
Argyll,  
PA28 6 QE.

**Tel:** 01583 421400

**Website:** <http://www.breakssurfshop.com>

**Email:** [info@breakssurfshop.com](mailto:info@breakssurfshop.com)

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### Surf Wrath

**Region:** North Coast

**Address:**

Sunnybank, Burn Road,  
Scarfskerry,  
Caithness,  
KW14 8XT.

**Tel:** +44 (0) 7752501333

**Website:** [www.surfwrath.co.uk](http://www.surfwrath.co.uk)

**Email:** [jdriis@surfwrath.co.uk](mailto:jdriis@surfwrath.co.uk)

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### Wild Diamond

**Region:** West Highland

**Address:**

Burnside Cottage,  
Cornaig,  
Isle of Tiree,  
PA77 6XA.

**Tel:** (0)1879 220399

**Website:** <http://www.wilddiamond.co.uk/category/shop/>

**Email:** [info@widdiamond.co.uk](mailto:info@widdiamond.co.uk)

## APPENDIX 3 - Scottish Surf Schools (January 2013)

The following Surf Shops also provide surf tuition:

- **St Vedas** – South East,
- **Granite Reef** – North East,
- **Clan** – South West,
- **Momentum** – South East,

As well as the Shops above there are also the following Surf Schools within Scotland.

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### Coldwater Surf School

**Region:** North East and Moray

**Address:**

2 Broom Cottages  
Sandend  
Portsoy  
Banff  
AB45 2UD

**Tel:** 07792651854

**Website:** [www.coldwatersurfschool.co.uk](http://www.coldwatersurfschool.co.uk)

**Email:** [dee@coldwatersurfschool.co.uk](mailto:dee@coldwatersurfschool.co.uk)

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### Live on the Edge

**Region:** Argyll

**Address:**

(As previous – contact details below specific for Surf School)

**Tel:** 07909 661857

**Website:** [http://www.liveontheedge.co.uk/Surf\\_Lessons.html](http://www.liveontheedge.co.uk/Surf_Lessons.html)

**Email:** [peter@liveontheedge.co.uk](mailto:peter@liveontheedge.co.uk)

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### Surf School Scotland

**Region:** West Highland

**Address:**

Suds Surf School ,  
Tiree,  
Hebrides,  
Scotland

**Tel:** 077930 63849

**Website:** <http://www.surfschoolscotland.co.uk>

**Email:** [suds@surfschoolscotland.co.uk](mailto:suds@surfschoolscotland.co.uk)

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### C2C Surf School

**Region:** South East

**Address:**

13 High St,  
Dunbar,  
EH42 1EN

**Tel:** 07971990361

**Website:** <http://www.c2csurfschool.com>

**Email:** [surfing@c2csurfschool.com](mailto:surfing@c2csurfschool.com)

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**Surf and Watersports Club Scotland**

**Region:** Moray

**Address:**

PO Box 11323,  
Banff,  
AB45 2YU

**Tel:** 01261 815228

**Website:** [www.surfandwatersportsclub-scotland.com](http://www.surfandwatersportsclub-scotland.com)

**Email:** [davie@surfandwatersportsclub-scotland.com](mailto:davie@surfandwatersportsclub-scotland.com)

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**Thurso Surf**

**Region:** North Coast

**Address:**

Thurso  
Caithness

**Tel:** 0844 802 5750

**Website:** <http://www.thursosurf.co.uk>

**Email:** [info@thursosurf.co.uk](mailto:info@thursosurf.co.uk)

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**Surf Lewis**

**Region:** Western Isles

**Address:**

Isle Of Lewis  
Outer Hebrides

**Tel:** 07920427194

**Website:** <http://www.surflewis.co.uk>

**Email:** [info@surflewis.co.uk](mailto:info@surflewis.co.uk)

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**New Wave Surf**

**Region:** Moray

**Address:**

Moray Coast (Mobile)

**Tel:** 07818 238 781

**Website:** <http://www.newwavesurf.com/index.html>

**Email:** Contact via website

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**Oceanics Surf School**

**Region:** South East

**Address:**

West Sands  
St Andrews  
KY16 9AZ

**Tel:** 07983 800 049

**Website:** <http://www.oceanics.ie/saintandrews.php>

**Email:** [standrewssurf@gmail.com](mailto:standrewssurf@gmail.com)

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**Kintyre Surf School**

**Region:** Argyll

**Address:**  
Mid Argyll Swimming Pool,  
Oban Rd,  
Lochgilphead

**Tel:** 01546606676

**Website:** <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/fraz.watt/KintyreSurfSchool/kintyresurfschoolPages/location.htm>

**Email:** -

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## **APPENDIX 4 - Scottish University Surf Clubs (January 2013)**

**Glasgow University**

**Website:** <http://www.gla.ac.uk/clubs/windsurfing/info.html>

**Email:** glasgowsurf@googlemail.com

**Dundee University**

**Website:** <http://www.facebook.com/groups/Dundeeunisurfclub/>

**Napier University**

**Website:** <http://euwsc.eusu.ed.ac.uk/clubinfo/>

**Aberdeen University**

**Website:** [www.facebook.com/groups/abdnsurf/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/abdnsurf/)

**Email:** abdnsurf@gmail.com

**Stirling University**

**Website:** Contact via facebook 'Stirling University Surf Club'

**University of St Andrews**

**Website:** <http://surfing.saints-sport.com/>

## APPENDIX 5 - List of References

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<sup>1</sup> Consultation on the Draft Scottish Marine Regions Order 2013, Marine Scotland 6 Dec 2012.