

PRESS RELEASE - 19/10/2022

"Scotland to debut in the 2022 World Para Surfing Championship"

This year marks an incredible landmark for Scottish Para Surfing. The newly formed **Para Surf Scotland** team will be heading to Pismo Bay, California, later this year to compete in the 2022 World Para Surf Championship, an annual event organised by the International Surfing Association.

In a collaboration between the Scottish Surfing Federation and SurfABLE Scotland, up and coming Scottish Para surfers Jay Edward and Paralympic Champion, Karen Darke have been on a development program towards national and international representation to fly the flag for Scottish para surfing.

After a successful trip to the [2022 English Para Surf Competition](#), Bristol, in July, both Karen and Jay competed as individuals and made their mark on the competitive stage in their debut competition. In the forthcoming World Para Surf Games, Karen and Jay will launch a long term legacy for Para surfing by representing Scotland for the first time at an international event, showing the calibre of Scottish talent and the developments being made to develop a national pathway for adaptive surfing in Scotland.

A recent newcomer to para surfing is the adventure-loving ex-Paralympic Handcycling champion, Karen Darke, who achieved a Gold medal in the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, silver in London 2012, and more recently handcycling across continents researching 'inner gold' and paths to happiness and wellbeing.



Karen Darke - English Para Surf Comp 2022. Credits: The Wave

Karen states, "It's incredible. I really didn't expect to be selected for Para Surf Scotland and had imagined my competitive life over after 13 years of Paralympic cycling. I'm super excited to be doing something I love and representing my favourite country! It will be an honour and a privilege to represent Scotland for the first time ever in Para Surfing. As a relatively new sport, but progressing fast and likely to be a Paralympic sport soon, it feels important that Scotland has representation.

"All the restrictions of being paralysed or physically limited in any way just disappear."

Having had a fear of the sea and water to a degree, especially given I am paralysed from the chest down and more vulnerable being thrown around in waves, I remember just how incredible to be in the sea after my first go, especially taking it step by step with the help of qualified instructors at SurfABLE. Moving with the waves brings a feeling of freedom and connection with self and nature and the team involved. All the restrictions of being paralysed or physically limited in any way just disappear."

Jay, a quadruple amputee aged only 10, will be attending, officially making her the youngest competing athlete of all nations. Jay, aka 'Shred', an affectionate nickname received when competing at The Wave, loves surfing, skateboarding, being outdoors and anything that has a sense of adventure.

"I don't remember being in hospital, but I'm now a quadruple amputee."

Jay was only two years old when contracting Meningococcal Septicaemia. This life threatening condition resulted in emergency treatment to remove limbs and being hospitalised for 6 months. Jay states, "I don't remember being in hospital, but I'm now a quadruple amputee.

I use a power chair to get to and from school and a skateboard when I'm out playing. At home I scoot around by shuffling on my bum. When I go surfing I feel so happy. I absolutely love it. My mum and dad say it's my 'Happy Place'. I'm not bothered what temperature the water is, as I still love it even when it's freezing. When I was told I was going to be representing Scotland at surfing,





Jay Edward - English Para Surf Comp 2022. Credits: The Wave

I felt like I was going to burst! It's an amazing opportunity that I'm really excited about. There's not many ten year olds who get the chance to do this. I can't wait to meet other surfers like me. My mum said it will be really good to be with other people with different abilities rather than always being the one who is different. I can't wait! I'm so pleased that I can surf, as I really think surfing is for absolutely everyone - The team at SurfABLE make sure that everyone has a great time and that having a disability, or a difference, is never a problem - they always find a way to get you in the water."



Credits: Sean Evans, ISA

Lead Coach, Kev Anderson, states, "It's been an enormous privilege to work with Karen and Jay from the very beginning of their surfing experience, when we first introduced them to surfing and the power it has to change lives.

It was clear from very early on that these two athletes, both from different stages of life, connected with the surf and had the talent to progress. The beginning is easy, we surf when we can and the very nature of surfing is to experience the wave and it encourages us to get better, get faster and get into the best waves. The next step was to look for pathways and opportunities to further develop their surfing and compete. It's here that we have found a community of adaptive surfers from across the world, developing and pushing the limits of the sport as the International Surf Association leads the bid for surfing to enter the 2028 Paralympic Games. We hope this year's team with Karen and Jay as two incredible ambassadors, are the first steps for Scottish para surfing, and that attending the World Adaptive Games in California, Dec 2022, will light a fire for adaptive surfing in Scotland, pushing opportunities for many more to enter the sport."

The Scottish Surfing Federation, stated, "We are extremely excited about Scotland's upcoming debut at the ISA World Para Surfing Championships and are grateful for the hard work SurfABLE Scotland have been doing behind the scenes to progress adaptive surfing in Scotland to a point where we can have Scottish representation on the world stage.

We wish all of the athletes who are selected the best of luck in California."



Notes for Editors

Para Surf Scotland - Crowdfunder Appeal

The team will travel to Pismo, California in December with their coaches and in water support crew from the amazing team at SurfABLE, who are doing so much to push para surfing in Scotland. The opening ceremony will be an amazing experience with a para surfing team waving the Scottish flag for the very first time! The competition starts on the 4th of December for the next 7 days where they will proudly represent Scotland.

Why are we crowdfunding?

We are fundraising to cover the cost of expenses to travel and stay in California for the duration of the competition. The Scottish surfing Federation covers the entry fees and training, but all other expenses are met by the competitors families, fundraising activities, donations and sponsors.

How we'll spend the money raised

The money raised will go towards the cost of flights, accommodation and other expenses related to sending a team to the 2022 ISA World Para Surfing Championships.

Crowdfunder Link -

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/first-scottish-parasurf-team-at-2022-isa-worlds>

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