



The
Wheelyboat
Trust



Impact Report 2022

Freedom on the Water...



Alistair Scott (Chairman).

Chairman's welcome

Over the past thirty-five years The Wheelyboat Trust has supplied more than 220 specially designed Wheelyboats around the United Kingdom so that disabled people can enjoy independent access to water-based activities. Our original focus was on helping disabled anglers, but over the years we have developed a range of highly versatile boats which have given thousands of users the chance to enjoy many different types of water-borne activities far beyond the fishing lake. They go cruising, power-boating, bird-watching, learn new skills, gain new qualifications or simply enjoy time outdoors in nature.

Wheelyboats have a huge impact on the lives they touch. Without them, disabled people are denied experiences that able-bodied people simply take for granted. The typical boat found on a lake, a canal or riverbank is inaccessible, so disabled people have to be manhandled aboard, which is unsafe and undignified,

and once on board they cannot move around and are reliant on others to helm and crew the boat. Our specially designed Wheelyboats solve these problems.

Our beneficiaries can participate in a variety of activities that improves their welfare and mental health, broadens their horizons, integrates disabled and able-bodied users, sets challenges, provides thrills, adventure and excitement and also trains, educates and develops independence.

These activities are an important factor in the quality of life Wheelyboat users are able to lead. After the restrictions on movement resulting from the COVID pandemic, we can all appreciate the value of getting out into the natural world more than ever.

The Challenges

The research* is clear that getting out into nature is for many people an important source of stimulation, improved mental health and enjoyment. And going out on the water is a perfect way to enjoy the natural environment, as millions of boat users can confirm.

But for the many thousands of disabled people with mobility problems, such as elderly people or wheelchair users, access to the water is often too daunting – there are too few suitable boats available, and country footpaths and riverbanks are challenging with natural hazards including steep banks, uneven paths and fluctuating water levels.

And it is impossible for wheelchair users to get into and operate the majority of boats, which usually have high sides, unsuitable seating and obstacles on deck.

(*See, for example, C. Twohig-Bennett, A. Jones, "The health benefits of the great outdoors: A systematic review and meta-analysis of greenspace exposure and health outcomes", Environmental Research, Vol. 166; Mental Health Foundation. (2021). "Nature. How connecting with nature benefits our mental health")

The Solution

Our Wheelyboats with their roll-on/roll-off access, open level cockpit and drive-from-wheelchair helm have been specially designed to overcome these challenges.

“ Our new Wheelyboat is the first of its kind to be launched in the region and will enable all children and young people to have an equal opportunity to experience the excitement and adventure of water sports activities. ”

CEO of Action4Youth

“ We thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We could not track down anywhere else in the area where we could get a wheelchair on a boat. ”

Wheelyboat user, Fife Sailability



“ We’re thrilled that we can now offer our disabled users the chance to powerboat for the first time. ”

Director, Kinsale Outdoor Education Centre

Image left: HRH The Prince of Wales with founding trustee Bill Buchanan.

What makes a Wheelyboat different?

The very first Wheelyboat, launched by HRH The Prince of Wales in 1985, used a bow-door which dropped down to provide a ramp for easy wheelchair access, and most of our models still use a similar system.

Our fleet has developed with changing needs. Each model is specially designed from the hull up for disabled people to operate independently – for example, the drive-from-wheelchair helm enables people with the severest of disabilities to drive a Wheelyboat. However, the need for accessibility has not compromised their looks, handling and performance.

Wheelyboats are extremely versatile; they operate on inland waters – lakes, rivers and canals – but some models are also sea-going and are used on many inshore locations including the Menai Strait, Chichester Harbour and the north Norfolk coast.

The safety of our vulnerable users is paramount and Wheelyboats conform to international standards of design and construction, while we continue to innovate to ensure we remain at the cutting edge of design and accessibility.

“The design of the V17 accessible Wheelyboat is second to none and is exactly what we have been looking for to provide inclusive access to the water, bringing accessibility to the heart of Wareham”.

Director, Wareham Boat Hire.

“The Wheelyboat gives us the perfect vessel for wheelchair users to experience independence and get involved on the water, honing both their physical skills and boosting their well-being.”

Centre Manager, Liverpool Watersports Centre.

How Wheelyboats change lives

Wheelyboats boats give users access to experiences previously denied to them. Wheelyboats unlock the barriers to participation; they improve self-confidence and self-esteem; they provide new experiences and teach new skills; they help recharge physical and emotional batteries; they integrate people and foster empathy, understanding and respect.

Wheelyboats benefit people across a broad spectrum of impairment, from those who wish to operate a boat independently to people with complex learning difficulties for whom a calming and relaxing experience helps them engage with their surroundings. Disabled people can learn to operate a powered boat, qualify as powerboat drivers and train and mentor other members of their organisation.

“Quite simply, without our Wheelyboat, our mobility impaired visitors would not be able to feel the freedom of being out on the water.” **Trustee, Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

“This boat offers each young person at Young Epilepsy amazing opportunities to embrace the outdoors and take part in adventurous activities on the water”,
Director of Education, Young Epilepsy.

“It was amazing to speed along the docks at 30 miles an hour - it felt like we were flying” **Natural Breaks, Merseyside**

“Since the launch of our first C16 Wheelyboat in 2016 we realised that there was a massive demand for people with disabilities who wanted to learn how to fish or continue fishing after a life changing event.”
Fishery Manager, Ladybower Reservoir

““ From blind people to wheelchair users, everyone gets the same sense of achievement when at the helm and it is a great teaching and learning tool. ””

Manager, QE2 Activity Centre



What is our role?

Our principal role is to help groups and organisations acquire the Wheelyboat model that best fits their needs and we do this by working in partnership with them and the project's funders. Wheelyboats are specially designed to our specifications and are built by our boatbuilding partner, Jim Coulam, with whom we have been working since 2005.

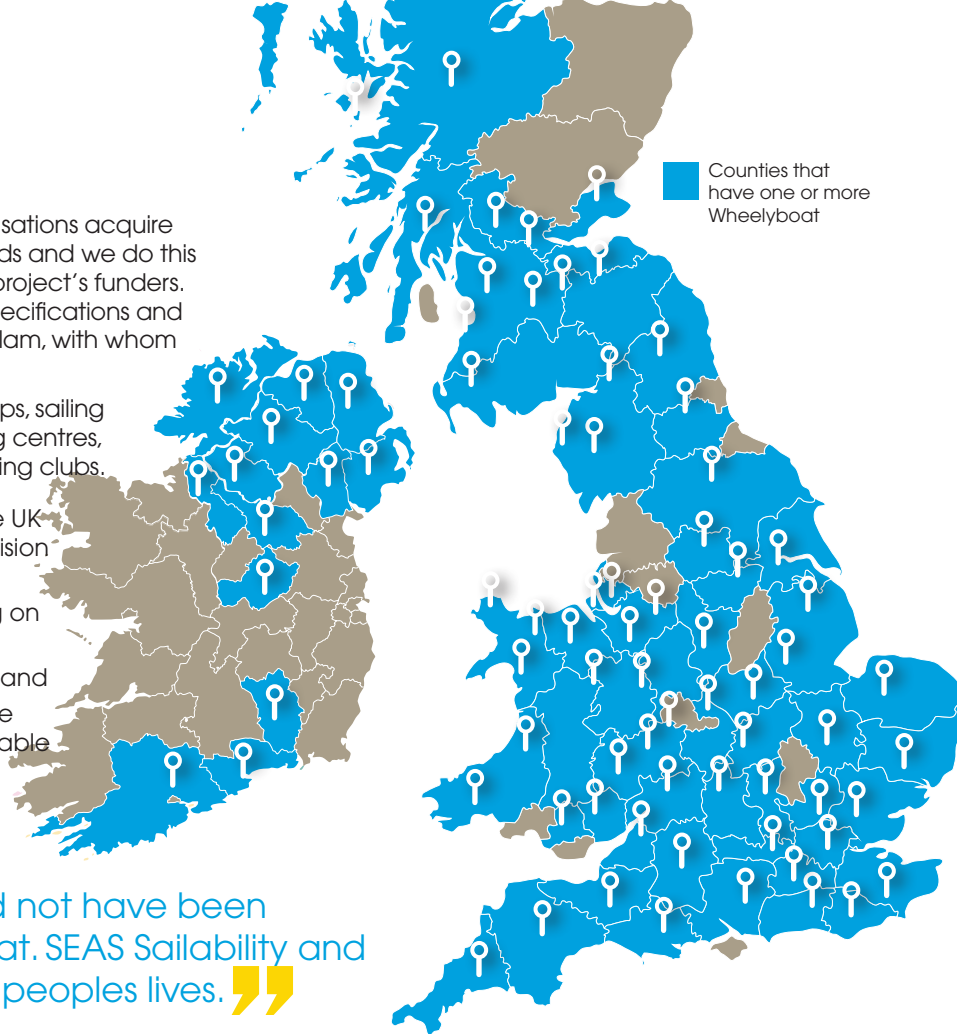
Wheelyboat operators include Sailability groups, sailing clubs, outdoor education centres, RYA training centres, canal trusts, SEN schools, Sea Scouts and angling clubs.

Wheelyboats operate in most counties of the UK and Ireland, however significant gaps in provision remain. For example:

- There are only two Wheelyboats operating on the Norfolk Broads;
- The Lake District has just one Wheelyboat; and
- There are only 18 Wheelyboats to cover the entire 2,000 mile network of the UK's navigable rivers and canals.

Our challenge is to provide Wheelyboats wherever they are needed.

“Taking this group out would not have been possible without the Wheelyboat. SEAS Sailability and the Wheelyboat are changing peoples lives.”



How our projects develop

Every Wheelyboat project we undertake is a partnership between The Wheelyboat Trust, the Wheelyboat's operator and the donors who help fund it.



Initial enquiry



Establish scope of project, location, type of water



Recommend Wheelyboat model, specification and fit out leading to initial cost



Demonstration



Final specification and quote to establish project budget



Draft fundraising Case for Support and prepare initial list of potential funders



Establish how much funding operator has in hand to begin with plus any contribution of ours



Fundraising by us and operator



Periodic survey of boat's condition, usage



Servicing/ maintenance help and advice



Official launch and publicity



Wheelyboat ordered, built, fitted out and delivered



Target reached

Wheelyboats in Action:



“ It was the best time I have spent with my son for many years. ”

Father of resident at Ething Leonard Cheshire

Independence for young people in North Wales

SEAS Sailability was formed in 2018 on the shore of the Menai Strait in Anglesey. The group's primary objectives are to enable disabled people to become physically active, improve their health and well-being and create new social opportunities by targeting inequalities in outdoor activity participation and offer greater support where barriers to regular participation exist.

In 2019 we helped SEAS add one of our new models, a V17 Wheelyboat, to its fleet. It is used for organised powerboating and pleasure boating trips, acts as a safety boat and support vessel for Sailability group sailing and boating sessions, and for powerboat training and qualifications

In 2019, the group won RYA Sailability's More Than Sailing Award in recognition of their successes at helping disabled people become more active on the water.

SEAS Sailability nominated us for the same award in 2020 which we won. The Wheelyboat project was featured in BBC1's Countryfile in March 2019.

“No-one who sees the faces of the participants of SEAS can fail to be moved. The sheer joy of being able to take part in these activities is virtually tangible, and that happiness and delight is taken back into their home lives, easing tensions in family units.” **Chair, SEAS Sailability**

“The V17 has given our instructors and volunteers the confidence to expand the SEAS offer. In turn the capability of the V17 has given our participants the confidence to push themselves to get 'in' the water and try new things...” **Chief Instructor, SEAS Sailability**

“Out of all the activities we do....it's SEAS Sailability that everyone wants to go to and looks forward to.” **Mencap Anglesey**

Canal outings for Care Home Residents

In 2015, we supplied the Overwater Marina on the Shropshire Union Canal with a Mk III Wheelyboat to run organised pleasure boating and nature watching trips for disabled and special needs children and adults.

The Overwater Wheelyboat is run entirely on a voluntary and not-for-profit basis and operates on one of the most scenic canals in the UK, providing an enriching life experience to disabled people of all ages.

The group also set up a Wheelybus service to help users get to and from the marina.

In their last year of full operation, the group ran 43 trips, mainly with elderly people from care homes across the North and Midlands. They are also starting to run trips for families with disabled children.

“Our most recent care home trip included a gentleman who is 99 years old, and who is reported to have not stopped talking about his experience, saying that if he manages to reach his 100th birthday, the trip will still be one of the highlights of his life.”

“ One old gentleman who had not spoken since arriving at the care home starting talking about his early life on the canals. ”



Wheelyboats in Action:



“ The Wheelyboat allows our residents to enjoy the thrill and experience of a speedboat in a safe and controlled environment and this certainly enhances their wellbeing. ”

Local care home manager

In 2021 The Wheelyboat Trust and Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park joined forces to provide a V17 Wheelyboat to Castle Semple Centre, a watersports and outdoor activity centre in Scotland's largest regional park.

Since 2015 the centre has benefitted from a V20 Wheelyboat but so popular are the accessible powerboating, powerboat training and pleasure boating activities provided by the V20 that it was oversubscribed and a second Wheelyboat was needed.

Castle Semple run their own Sailability group (sailing for disabled people) and Powerability, a recent RYA initiative aimed at encouraging disabled people to take up power and motor boating. It provides a structured

course that ultimately leads to disabled people gaining powerboating qualifications enabling them, for example, to participate as volunteers and operate their Wheelyboats as safety boats during Sailability sessions.



Creating equality of opportunity on the water

The important role for Wheelyboats has never been clearer. We know they have a huge impact on the lives they touch.

Despite the thousands of miles of waterways and coastline around Great Britain, many disabled people do not have access to a Wheelyboat (see map on page 6). Therefore, our main focus for the next few years is to expand the geographic coverage of our boats.

We want to increase the opportunities for disabled people, and an increasingly elderly population, to benefit from getting out into nature to improve their physical and mental health and well-being.

We aim to drive inclusivity by enabling disabled people to participate equally in and benefit from outdoor activities alongside their able-bodied counterparts;

We also want to help more young people develop new skills, earn qualifications and gain self-confidence.

To achieve this we need to accelerate the building and supply of Wheelyboats across the country, and to develop new and even more versatile models of Wheelyboat to meet the changing needs and aspirations of disabled people.



“ I have a visual impairment and love being out on the Wheelyboat as I can feel the wind and water spray on my face, it’s amazing. To me, when I’m out there, I’m like anybody else, I don’t feel like somebody in a chair, it’s one of the most positive experiences I’ve ever had since I became disabled eight years ago and I’m really grateful for getting the opportunity to do it. ”

Mary, Castle Semple regular

Supporting the Trust

The Wheelyboat Trust is a small, lean organisation with only two employees and annual running costs of about £100,000. We work in close partnership with operators and donors to get our boats on the water – the total cost of the twenty-five Wheelyboats we have launched in the past two years is £580,000.

The fundraising we undertake to help operators acquire a Wheelyboat is an essential part of our work as it removes a potential major barrier. But fundraising for a Wheelyboat project costing, for example, £40,000, can take up to 18 months, which limits the number of projects we can deliver in any one year.

To speed up the roll-out of Wheelyboats, we look for donations to support individual Wheelyboat projects.

Financial contributions for the unavoidable costs of running the Trust frees up our team to focus on accelerating the delivery of Wheelyboat projects.

If you would like to know more about our activities, or how you can support the Trust, please contact our Director.



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The Lady Anthony Hamilton

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