



All on Board project summary

A plan, a pandemic and a pivot

**EXPERIENCE
WEST SUSSEX**



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SUSSEX**

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All on Board's mission:

To harness the region's potential and raise the profile of West Sussex as a watersports destination to be reckoned with.



Timeline

2018

Coastal tourism in Great Britain generates £17.1bn tourism spend and supports 285,000 tourism-related jobs.

14 November:
Publication of Brexit withdrawal agreement.

2019

January:
Samantha Smithson appointed All on Board Project Leader.

July:
Experience West Sussex website publishes new watersports landing page featuring All on Board-commissioned guides and itineraries.

August:
Sussex Prestige magazine (circulation 12,000) publishes article about the new wave of watersports in the area.

December:
A cluster of cases of pneumonia reported in Wuhan, China.

Key | White - All on Board-related news / Orange - International and national news

Introduction

Why West Sussex needed All on Board

Before the pandemic washed up on our shores, and those all around the world, there was evidence of strong growth in coastal tourism.

An opportunity grounded in hard stats

Back in 2018, the UK's £38bn tourism economy already attracted 38m inbound visitors; a figure predicted to increase 23% by 2025. The £24bn domestic market was equally healthy, with an estimated increase of 3% per year until 2025. Pre-Covid-19 figures from the National Coastal Tourism Academy showed that coastal tourism in Great Britain generated £17.1bn tourism spend and supported 285,000 tourism-related jobs.

Sport England's Watersports Participation Survey had seen its third year in a row of increasing volume of participants, with 94% of all watersports activities taking place on the coast. At the same time, travel trends pointed towards the rise of lifestyle sports, solo travel and experiential tourism – all areas that watersports operators could tap into.

West Sussex – with its 50 miles of coastline, lively professional watersports community and

underdeveloped watersports offer, all within easy reach of London – was ripe for investment.

The unexplored potential of watersports + tourism

Along with colleagues from the Local Authorities, Caroline Wood, Director of the Coastal West Sussex Partnership, recognised the opportunity, and in late autumn 2018 the Partnership announced it had successfully secured a £170,000 grant from Government through the Coastal Communities Fund towards the All on Board project:

"It's time to make coastal West Sussex the destination of choice for both new and seasoned watersports lovers. From kitesurfing to diving, paddleboarding to kayaking, there's already an incredible array of water-based sports available along our beautiful coastline but we can do more to promote our area," said Caroline.

So, in January 2019, All on Board was born and Samantha Smithson was appointed the project's Leader.

About All on Board's Project Leader

Samantha Smithson

Samantha had 20 years of experience as a business leader in the watersports sector when she took on the role of Watersports Development Officer for the Coastal West Sussex Partnership.

As Director of The Aqua Sports Company Limited, a busy watersports activity centre, she had first-hand insight into what the sector really needed. Samantha had also spent many hours windsurfing, paddleboarding and surfing on the stretch of coast between Hove and Worthing, giving her a handle on the people and places at the heart of West Sussex's watersports offer.



Samantha Smithson

Chapter One

What does success look like?

All on Board hit the ground running with four aims, summarised as:

1. To position West Sussex as a watersports hub destination for domestic and international visitors
2. To increase the visitor economy spend by extending the season and promoting overnight stays with a focus on the London and international markets
3. To create more job opportunities and sustainable growth in the local watersports industry
4. To revitalise local enthusiasm for watersports

Polishing the objectives: a team effort

The first step was to translate these aims into tangible objectives. Samantha started by mapping the region to create a comprehensive summary of coastal West Sussex's watersports providers and shops. This was then broken down into a sport-by-sport account of each activity's potential to grow; a destination-by-destination SWOT analysis; and a SWOT analysis to help identify a framework for supporting West Sussex's growth and development

by extending the season for watersports tourism.

Opportunities

Research in place, Samantha engaged key leaders and operators from across West Sussex, including Professional Kitesurfer and Coach Lewis Crathern, Simon Bassett from 2XS, Nik Baker from K66 Boardriders, The Kayak Coach's Adrian Fall and Andi Derrick and Mark Beadle of GLO Wellbeing. With the help of this ambassador group, the project started to take shape.

What does success look like?

Samantha asked the group what they thought success for All on Board should look like. In early 2019, their markers of success could be summed up as:

- West Sussex 'on the map' as a recognised watersports destination
- Better connected businesses
- Locally promoted networks
- Facilities in place to support the experience
- Events to bring people to the region
- An engaged community

With these success markers established, Samantha set to work. Using the feedback from the ambassador group and the project brief, she defined four key objectives:

1. Create a business community: connect watersports businesses to the tourism sector and the tourism organisations of West Sussex
2. Develop a marketing strategy and campaign: utilise all the existing resources to create a diverse and attractive watersports offer
3. Business support: to deliver workshops and business development training opportunities
4. Destination development: improve the 'welcome' for watersports visitors, whether with improved showers and facilities or improved/new watersports venues

SWOT analysis

Support West Sussex's growth and development by extending the watersports season

Strengths

- A range of attractive watersports
- A strong outdoor offer
- Close to London
- Eco-aspect: it's better to staycation
- Local Authority support for the project

Weaknesses

- Microbusinesses tend to be 'lifestyle'
- Inadequate beach facilities
- Lack of outdoor accommodation
- Watersports alone considered too niche for investment

Opportunities

- International footfall
- Tap into wider nature-based activities
- Out-of-season watersports destination
- Airbnb has improved accommodation offer
- Appetite for growth among some watersports providers
- No existing business network

Threats

- The cost of watersports can be a barrier
- Weather dependency/seasonality
- 'Lifestyle' businesses not wanting to grow

Case study

The growth of micro-watersports businesses: Natural Surf School

“When I first met Samantha, in 2019, my surf school was super small – something I did in the summer alongside my other jobs. Samantha helped me realise there was a need for the service I was offering, and there was an opportunity to expand. Knowing I had Samantha’s support gave me the confidence to grow my business.

Now, Natural Surf School has grown from me doing a few lessons a week into my full-time job. We have four surf instructors, one yoga teacher, a skateboarding instructor and premises in the village. In a good week, we’ll teach around 300 people!

The All on Board project played a big part in making this happen. The consistent email updates on new and relevant information, such as funding opportunities, extra free business training, webinars and promotion through Experience West Sussex, were so useful. As Covid-19 started, being able to keep in touch with Samantha about regulations and so on was reassuring. When I first started this business, I felt very alone but the All on Board project made me feel like part of a community.

The most positive difference was made by Samantha connecting me to other businesses. Without the project, I wouldn’t have been introduced to the Bunn Leisure team. We’re now in partnership with a big, exciting and progressive future bringing flat water and surf activities to their Selsey location and the opportunity to expand to their other locations round the UK. Samantha also introduced me to the Global Wave Parks team, and there is now some exciting stuff in the works.

All on Board has been vital to my business’s growth. Samantha has always been helpful, encouraging, reliable, enthusiastic and massively confidence building! It’s a shame this project has to end – I hope it’s replaced with something similar as it’s seriously wanted and needed!”
Emile, Founder, Natural Surf School

Chapter Two

Pre-pandemic successes

Before the pandemic put the kibosh on many of All on Board’s original plans, the project was well on its way to fulfilling its objectives, with the ambassador group’s markers of success in mind.

1. Create a business community

When All on Board was launched, there was no defined West Sussex tourism network. Network building to create better-connected businesses began almost immediately and by March 2020 All on Board, in partnership with Experience West Sussex, had engaged a community of watersports and tourism businesses who regularly communicated and even collaborated. The pandemic prevented local business support events from happening, hampering the outcomes of All on Board efforts in this area, but businesses that connected through the project have still managed to collaborate.

The project successfully supported some of the small and micro watersports businesses with advice and signposting, helping them to realise their ideas.

2. Develop a marketing strategy

A good portion of the project budget was allocated to the creation of marketing materials and campaigns to support them. Itineraries, guides, imagery and videos were commissioned from content creators specialising in UK tourism. The content promoted West Sussex’s great outdoors experiences, with a focus on watersports.

High-quality imagery commissioned in 2019 played an important part in the marketing. In July 2019, a section dedicated to watersports was launched on West Sussex’s official tourism website, www.experiencewestsussex.com. This was supported by a paid-for campaign and the website had 37,000 direct business leads in 2020.

By the end of 2019, All on Board’s marketing actions were undoubtedly helping to put West Sussex on the map as a recognised watersports destination.

Webinars, workshops and network zoom chats

As lockdown hit, Samantha initiated weekly All on Board Zoom chats to enable conversation and network sharing (locally promoted networks were a key marker of success).

These had a cumulative attendance of 97 people including tourism businesses, local chambers of commerce and district tourism officers. The scheme drew positive feedback as a source of information and platform for sharing ideas.

Mark Murphy of Oyster Diving said these meetings were hugely helpful for ideas on restarting his diving business as restrictions were lifted

Gwen Van Paasschen from Denmans Garden said the meetings were a lifeline when her business was dealing with redundancies and the closure of her café

3. Business support

All on Board worked hard to make this key objective a success and really delivered for the micro and small businesses that wanted to grow their business. Successes in this area included:

- Partnering with Experience West Sussex to create nine business toolkits
- Delivering a series of business workshops
- Signposting the Business Hothouse training at Chichester University and working with Economic Growth Managers across the region to foster support

From January to March 2020, All On Board planned to deliver four workshops on two subjects: business growth and the power of collaboration for business, and social media marketing.

Sadly, the fourth workshop had to be cancelled (28 attendees) as there were increasing concerns around the spread of Covid-19 in West Sussex. (This is also reflected in the low numbers for the social media workshop.)

4. Destination development

All on Board's initial mapping and conversations with local businesses highlighted a lack of high-end facilities to support the visitor experience, and concern that this could lead to a disappointing welcome for visitors.

All on Board produced the Watersports Development Project Report, constructed on the findings of the initial mapping and research.

The report looked at the visitor welcome and the coastal West Sussex area's facilities for the watersports industry and offered a range of solutions based on levels of investment and time to deliver. This was shared across the coastal Local Authorities.





2020

- 31 January: First cases of Covid-19 confirmed in UK.
- 31 January: UK withdraws from the EU and enters the agreed transition period.
- 5 March: First death from Covid-19 in the UK confirmed.
- 26 March: First lockdown begins: "no person may leave the place where they are living without reasonable excuse".
- March: Panic buying in UK supermarkets.
- 3 April: As warm weather is forecast, Health Secretary Matt Hancock warns people to stay at home for the Easter weekend.
- 5 April: Prime Minister Boris Johnson is admitted to hospital with Covid-19.
- 16 April: Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announces three-week extension of the lockdown.
- 22 May: #WestSussexWishlist campaign launches to inspire people considering future trips.
- May: Commissioned film work with Green Traveller for a series of films to promote the region's attractions is delayed by lockdowns.
- 25 June: VisitBritain's Good to Go scheme launches.
- June: News desks report on the piles of litter left at UK beaches, swimming holes and beauty spots by day trippers and staycationers.
- 4 July: Lockdown restrictions ease across England.
- 3 August: Eat Out to Help Out scheme begins.
- November: National Coastal Tourism Academy figures show the coastal impact of Covid-19 includes a £10.23bn loss in tourism spend and a loss of around 179,000 jobs.
- 5 November: Second lockdown begins in England.
- 2 December: Second lockdown comes to an end and England returns to a stricter three-tier system.
- 19 December: London, eastern and southeast England move into Tier 4 for two weeks, effectively cancelling Christmas for almost 18m people.
- 30 December: An additional 20m people in England move to Tier 4, which now accounts for 44m people.
- 30 December: A Covid-19 vaccine from Oxford University and AstraZeneca is approved for use in the UK.
- 31 December: The UK completes its separation from the EU.



Chapter Three

A pandemic and a pivot

In March 2020, as All on Board and the wider UK tourism industry geared up for their summer marketing campaigns, Covid-19 exploded across the country and the first lockdown was announced.

All on Board's marketing campaign planning was halted in its tracks. As the implications of the global pandemic became clear – and 'home schooling', 'travel restrictions' and 'social distancing' become part of our everyday lexicon – All on Board had to reassess its role in the unfolding crisis.

"Samantha responded quickly, looking at the impact current events were having on local business operators," says Caroline Wood. "After numerous 1:1 calls with businesses, Samantha launched a regular group chat over Zoom. These proved really useful in finding out the key business issues, understanding what more needed to be done and also how people were coping.

These have continued over the last year and have been really useful in capturing business issues and sharing concerns but also in helping businesses adapt to new working conditions and create new connections."

By November 2020, the Coastal Tourism Academy had crunched the numbers on the coastal impact of Covid-19. In England alone there had been an 8.27bn loss in tourism spend, 110m trips and day visits lost, and around 145,000 jobs lost. If All on Board was to continue to support West Sussex's watersports and tourism industry effectively, it needed to regroup and reposition.

The project found itself in the unique position of having to figure out how to pivot its aims and objectives – while simultaneously supporting others to do the same.

'Agile' became the word of the moment.

How the pandemic changed the plan

Some of All on Board's original objectives simply weren't achievable in the 'new normal'. After the success of the FoodPioneers' 2019 event, The Algaenarium – a weekend extravaganza dedicated to seaweed and kelp – and interest in 2019's Pier to Pier Kitesurf event (which was cancelled due

to poor weather), there had been a movement to launch a beach festival in Worthing. But plans to create new events to bring people to the region (a key success marker) were abandoned as restrictions made gatherings illegal for the foreseeable. But even before the pandemic, this area was vulnerable – to the weather and to expensive costs.

"For me, working through the pandemic was a huge privilege. I know what it's like to feel one's business hanging over a precipice so I was able to listen and offer something in support for our business community. When things began to open up in late summer of 2020 and businesses started to open their doors again, it was great to see and hear watersports growth doubling expectations. Perhaps this was one of the more hidden positives of the pandemic; watersports and the outdoors were all people wanted."

Samantha Smithson, Project Leader, All on Board



School closures and unprecedented pressures on teaching staff meant that plans to develop a watersports and STEM for schools programme had to be shelved. Instead, this aspect of the project was redefined as a Covid-19 Recovery Programme, consisting of the pan-Sussex Tourism Webinars, the Shop Sussex online business promotion campaign and further business support programmes, such as the business toolkits on coronavirus recovery, marketing and experiential tourism.

All on Board remained agile as the pandemic played out in a series of lockdowns, travel restrictions and vaccine roll outs. Alongside graphs of fluctuating infection rates, news channels streamed footage of goats roaming the streets of Llandudno, the Himalayas visible from 100 miles away for the first time in decades, and flocks of people hiking through the UK countryside; levels of engagement with the outdoors and nature were on the rise.

Interest in staycations soared as travel restrictions eased and overseas holidays became increasingly unpredictable, expensive and complicated. Throw in a growing awareness of the positive impact that green and blue spaces can have on wellbeing and stress – the ‘new normal’ was undeniably stressful – and the realisation that outdoor activities were safer, and West Sussex found itself well placed to receive an influx of visitors during the travel window that opened in summer 2020.

But by the end of the year, it became clear that there was a downside to the nation’s new-found love of staycations and the outdoors. Too many folk simply didn’t understand the countryside code, nor did they realise their impact on the marine and aquatic environments that they had fallen in love with.

The decision was made to extend the All on Board project to July 2021 and Samantha diverted some of its energy and funds into a new aim: educating and inspiring people to visit more responsibly, while continuing to get West Sussex noticed as a watersports destination.

The focus switched from the wellbeing of people in 2020 to the wellbeing of place in 2021. Many of West Sussex’s tourism and watersports operators have already taken this on board and are spreading the message; some providers are already engaging with schools on the subject.



2021

5 January: The UK records over 60,000 positive cases of Covid-19 in one day, the highest ever; over 50,000 of those cases are in England.

6 January: Third lockdown begins in England.

26 January: UK death toll passes 100,000.

9 February: England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer warns people against booking summer holidays abroad in 2021.

15 February: The Managed Quarantine Service begins, meaning travellers entering the UK from or via "red list" countries must pay for 11 nights in a designated hotel.

March: A fishing ban on inshore bottom trawling is announced to protect over 300sq km of seabed off the Sussex coast, after successful campaigning from the pioneering Help Our Kelp partnership, supported by Sir David Attenborough.

31 March: The easing of lockdown restrictions in England coincides with two days of extremely warm weather, meaning people descend on parks and beaches; people are urged to exercise caution.

31 March: Local paddle coaches take a lesson in conservation on the River Adur (the first of three).

12 April: Non-essential shops, hairdressers, gyms and outdoor hospitality allowed to resume.

29 April: Covid-19 infection rates fall to their lowest in England since September 2020.

17 May: Two households allowed to mix indoors, with the rule of six applying to pub setting. People allowed to hug again.

May: New Loop Watersports Centre and The Beach @ Littlehampton Café opens.

May: How to be an environmentally-aware paddler in West Sussex published on Experience West Sussex website.

1 June: The UK records 0 deaths from Covid-19 over a 24-hour period for the first time since March 2020.

6 June: Health Secretary Matt Hancock says the Indian variant of Covid-19 is 40% more transmissible; infection rates are rising again, although hospitalisation and mortality figures remain low.

June: A guide to marine conservation in West Sussex published on Experience West Sussex website.

June: Chichester Harbour records an increase in paddlesports in the first half of 2021.

Three All on Board-commissioned guides to promote watersports (covering wellbeing, digital detoxing and a Selsey-based itinerary) are ready for renewed promotion in 2021.



Chapter Four

Post-pandemic successes

Two and a half years and a global pandemic later, the project is coming to an end and it may not be possible to measure success in economic terms.

At the time of writing, VisitBritain estimates domestic tourism spend in 2020 to be down by 63% compared with 2019; that's a loss of £57.6bn. The forecast for domestic tourism spend in Britain in 2021 is up 51% compared with 2020, but that's still only 56% of 2019's levels. Unsurprisingly, inbound tourism spend fared even worse in 2020, with a decline of 78% on 2019 figures. The 2021 forecast is for only 22% of the 2019 level.

Perhaps too, economic growth is no longer a sustainable marker for success. For Samantha, the triumphs have been much more than economic.

They have been about business collaboration and cooperative learning, about networking and about changing mindsets for what is achievable in the region. It's also worth noting that some of All on Board's post-pandemic activity still meets the objectives established in early 2019.

1. Create a business community

By the time the first lockdown came, the network of tourism and watersports businesses was strong enough to successfully move online.

2. Develop a marketing strategy

In 2020, All on Board pushed ahead with the video work, which was fast becoming the key driver of social media engagement. The Summer in West Sussex film, which featured a range of watersports, launched on Boxing Day 2020 and has 38,000 views, at the time of writing. All on Board's West Sussex Watersports film went live at the end of March 2021 – as lockdown 3.0 lifted – and has garnered almost 20,000 views in the three months since. The films are the most popular videos on Experience West Sussex's YouTube channel.

On the PR front, in May 2021 the Worthing Herald published a piece about one of the paddleboarding instructors for conservation trips, and the May/June 2021 issue of Sussex Life included a six-page editorial on West Sussex watersports featuring the work of All on Board.

3. Business support

All on Board worked hard to make this key objective a success in difficult circumstance and really delivered for the micro and small businesses that wanted to grow their business.

- The series of business workshops pivoted to webinars on digital and social media marketing, business collaboration and growth, and experiential tourism
- Samantha's business knowledge within the industry enabled her to offer specific guidance and work with individual businesses on a 1-2-1 basis. Helping them achieve their goals has been one of the most rewarding aspects of this project
- The launch of the All on Board Network Zoom Chats. Sometimes these meetings would focus on a particular subject, such as conservation, with a guest speaker. For example, Nikki Hills guested for the Sussex Wild Coast project; this event led to more collaboration between watersports and conservation projects



Business growth & networking engagement

4. Destination development

Since All on Board's Watersports Development Project Report was published in January 2020, some inroads have been made into improving West Sussex's watersports facilities:

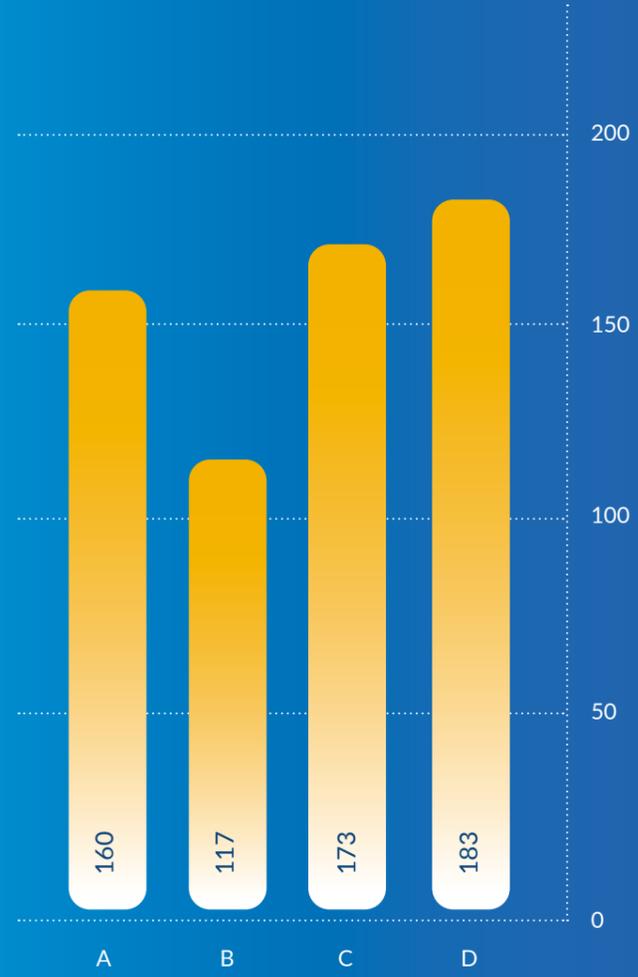
- It had been in the pipeline since before All on Board launched, but in May 2021, Littlehampton's new Loop Watersports centre and The Beach @ Littlehampton café finally opened, offering watersports tuition, equipment hire and a brand new social hub for the local community. "This fantastic venue is already sparking interest and I'm confident it will be a real hit once it's fully up and running, especially in Jamie's capable hands. Having a venture like this on the seafront will be a real boost for Littlehampton and the economy of the town," said Councillor Andy Cooper, Arun District Council's Chairman of the Economy Committee
- Container storage has been approved for a concession in West Worthing and there's openness to the idea for other concession areas
- As the All on Board project became more well known, Samantha was consulted by location providers looking for businesses to operate on their site and by providers looking for new locations

"A fantastically productive collaboration"

"The All on Board project has been a fantastically productive collaboration between the Coastal West Sussex Partnership and the Experience West Sussex Partnership. The Coastal West Sussex Partnership successfully secured a significant level of funding to improve the watersports offer and network the operators across West Sussex. By working with Experience West Sussex, the project was able to promote West Sussex as a destination of choice for watersports fanatics, beginners and visitors.

The project was managed in a highly professional manner, with Samantha Smithson being the driving force behind the delivery... I want to highlight the hard work and valuable contribution Samantha has made, ensuring that our partnership has been a success. Despite some very difficult circumstances, Samantha consistently delivered at pace a wide range of excellent and valuable projects for Experience West Sussex Partnership...Samantha made my job so much easier by being creative, hard-working, productive, proactive and professional. Her knowledge of product, the coast and watersports is exceptional."

Jo Williams, Partnership Manager, Experience West Sussex Partnership



- A Marketing and growth workshops
- B Online webinars - marketing
- C Tourism webinars
- D Zoom networking

All on Board's marketing highlights across the Experience West Sussex platforms

 <p>61,926 Google clicks/views cumulative since watersports campaigns started</p>	✓	 <p>1,188,004 Facebook impressions since watersports campaigns started</p>	✓
 <p>10,884 Landings since page began</p>	✓	 <p>453 New watersports subscribers</p>	✓
 <p>60,000 Film views</p>	✓	 <p>10.78% Click thru rate for watersports near me campaign</p>	✓
 <p>10.71% Conversion on Watersports Holiday keyword search</p>	✓	 <p>24.45% View rate Watersports West Sussex video</p>	✓

Guides and itineraries unique views



Case study

A post-pandemic collaboration

"I met Nina from The Yoga Garden on one of the early calls arranged during the pandemic by All on Board. The workshop and other work provided showed that experiences and collaboration were/are the way forward.

Nina and I collaborated to create The Ultimate Freediving Course. The idea came from my own journey and the piecemeal way in which I was handed out the information needed to make my freediving easier and more fun.

The course is designed to help people who are interested in freediving to build a solid foundation in the skills needed for the sport. It includes a half day at the Yoga Garden with Yoga for Freedivers, a Breathing Class and What to eat on freediving days, then the pool work and training sessions are certified with me.

We set it up in 2020 but couldn't move it forward. We have a new launch date for later in 2021."

Anya Frampton, Owner, Mulberry Marine Experiences

5. Support the wellbeing of place in West Sussex

Protecting our marine and aquatic environments feels like a great place to finish the project. The summer of 2021 is likely to see a collaborative marketing campaign to spread awareness about water conservation and how to enjoy watersports responsibly.

West Sussex is unique in its abundance of natural beauty spots both on and off the water and All on Board wants to help ensure that natural beauty is everlasting, for locals and visitors alike.

Having said that, despite the global downturn there has been significant growth in West Sussex during All on Board's tenure, with a reported 10 new full-time jobs now created (two more than outlined in the original project aims), a reported rise in seasonal postings and the launch of a brand new watersports centre and café on the beach at Littlehampton.

Legacy

Thanks to Samantha's work creating toolkits, workshops, webinars and industry emails, the All on Board project leaves behind a better informed, more connected and more engaged watersports and tourism industry in West Sussex.

Constant visits, engagement and marketing communication with the tourism sector helped to raise the profiles of Experience West Sussex Partnership and Coastal West Sussex as well as All on Board.

The project also leaves a physical legacy, including:

- Much-improved content about local watersports and tourism businesses on www.experiencewestsussex.com, including a new consumer-facing watersports section featuring guides and itineraries
- B2B toolkits in the industry resources section of www.experiencewestsussex.com much-increased reach, for example, the new West Sussex page on www.visitbritain.com
- Attention-grabbing footage and edits commissioned for 2021 marketing activity
- Imagery from a very short-notice Covid-19-related photo shoot

Most importantly, All on Board leaves a significantly raised profile for West Sussex as an outdoors and watersports destination. Samantha's support on the #WestSussexWishlist, #RediscoverWestSussex and England's Coast campaigns ranged from sourcing footage, editing and promotion to providing funds, content, ideas and project management, as well as building strong working relationships with everyone involved.

All On Board's successes by numbers

1 new
watersports centre

60,000
views (to June 2021) of
the 2 videos launched so
far (2 more in the pipeline)

3 major
local, regional and national
press and PR successes

3 new
watersports businesses

10 jobs
created

Over 30
businesses connected
and engaged

9 new
business toolkits

14 new
guides and itineraries

10,884
unique page views of the new watersports landing
page on www.experiencewestsussex.com

Chapter Five

What's next?

From a promising future to one in disarray to a glimmer of hope on the horizon, All on Board and West Sussex's watersports and tourism sectors have been on one hell of a journey since the project was first mooted in 2018.

"The outlook for 2021 is very positive," says Samantha. "All on Board has been all about building ties between watersports businesses and tourism, creating a sense of community and giving businesses support to build back stronger."

Beyond summer 2021, the waters are less clear. To some extent the pandemic and the restrictions on indoors activities have lessened the customer expectation but as we come out of the restrictions the new post-pandemic customer may be more discerning, particularly when it comes to facilities and welcome.

What happens next depends on future funding and, of course, the longer-term impact of things beyond our control, such as Covid-19 and Brexit.

We've come a long way since 2018, and there's yet more potential in West Sussex's watersports industry. There's no doubt that the sector benefits from having a lynchpin that's responsible for keeping watersports and tourism businesses connected and engaged. For this, the baton passes to Experience West Sussex, which will continue to promote watersports to visitors using the content provided by All on Board. The Experience West Sussex Partnership and other stakeholders will continue to explore ways to keep watersports and tourism businesses connected and engaged. Watch this space!

It feels right that the last words should go to the people at the heart of West Sussex's watersports industry.

"This project has been great in bringing businesses together and helping people realise they are not operating in isolation and not in competition - everyone has their own USP."

Lewis Crathern, Professional Kitesurfer and Coach

"Having someone that understands the watersports industry, who calls up and asks how you are doing, has been really helpful and a real asset to the region - the project has brought people together."

Nik Baker, K66 Boardriders

"Since the project began and the increase in marketing of watersports, I have seen a rise in interest in my Arun River trips which, historically, were not so popular."

Adrian Fall, The Kayak Coach

"Tourism in West Sussex is such a vital part of the economy and we are glad to have been part of this regional tourism development project. We have learnt a lot from the meetings - and through Sam's guidance - and we have seen a growth in bookings."

Simon Bassett, 2XS

"Samantha and the All on Board project gave me the encouragement and support I needed to realise my vision of expanding my dive school into a marine experiences centre with a new focus on marine education. The project's range of workshops and networking opportunities enabled me to develop new collaborations."

Anya Frampton Mulberry Marine Experiences

"All on Board has helped us to keep track of available financial assistance and to hear how other members are using their initiative to reduce the impact of the pandemic. The project inspired us to create ways to generate income and apply for grants, of which we managed to get several. We also found a few new methods of sources of income such as wild swimming and freediving. As a legacy of the project, I would like to see more networking amongst watersports companies."

Mark Murphy, Oyster Divers

Closing thoughts

The pandemic has helped to highlight how vital a thriving tourism industry is to the local and national economies, and the All on Board project has demonstrated that targeted investment brings tangible results.

There are other sub-sectors within tourism that would benefit from being better connected and more engaged through a coordinated role, just as watersports in West Sussex did under the All on Board project.

There's potential for the project model to be repurposed to support, for example, small hospitality businesses or artisans to become more involved with the tourism industry.

“Watersports has this fantastic power to build a positive relationship between visitors and the local community. The shared love of a sport brings people together.

Tourism is such a vital part of our local economy and this project has helped our watersports community realise their position and create new business opportunities, whilst helping to grow the visitor economy.”

Samantha Smithson





The project was managed in a highly professional manner, with Samantha Smithson being the driving force behind the delivery... Her knowledge of product, the coast and watersports is exceptional.

Jo Williams, Partnership Manager, Experience West Sussex Partnership

Be a part of the Coastal West Sussex Partnership so that together we can...

Promote

by raising the profile of the coastal area
through events and across media channels

Deliver

key projects that will enhance and develop
the coastal economy

Lobby

for investment into key infrastructure and
development projects

Influence

by bringing the business voice into key
investment and policy decisions

Work in Partnership

working together to champion the
coastal West Sussex area

Champion

championing the coastal West Sussex
economy and be a vocal advocate for the area



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