

EAST KENT KITESURFING COMMUNITY

# WIND FUTURES

## SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

The journey from first opportunity to first ride — what the 2026 pilot is teaching us about access, confidence and belonging.

| 33 | 12 | 6 |
|---|---|---|
| applications | taster participants | first funded riders |

# More than a first lesson

A year of making access possible, putting young people on the water and listening closely to what changes.

Wind Futures was created by East Kent Kitesurfing Community (EKKC) to make professional kitesurfing instruction achievable for young people who could not ordinarily afford the sport. In 2026, the idea moved from a pitch into a working pilot: outreach, taster experiences, funded coaching and a structured feedback programme.

**33**
applications from two rounds

**12**
young people at first tasters

**6**
first funded cohort riders

**The early impact is tangible:** 32 of 33 applicants reported the £600-plus tuition cost as unaffordable or financially difficult. After their first lesson, seven respondents reported an average confidence increase of 2.0 points out of 10. Later reflections describe water starts, longer rides and greater confidence with the sea.



### WHAT THIS REPORT DOES

It brings together application surveys, five stages of participant reflections, professional instructor feedback, family testimony and independent evidence about youth opportunity in coastal communities. The analysis is candid about both progress and sample size.

# From idea to first rides

A community programme built on local knowledge, trusted instructors and feedback at every stage.

APR–MAY 2026

## Listen and recruit

Two application rounds revealed strong interest and substantial affordability barriers.

JUNE 2026

## First opportunities

Two taster events introduced 12 young people to equipment, wind awareness and safe kite handling.

SUMMER 2026

## Progression begins

Six selected young people began structured professional tuition. EKKC reported first rides by August.

AUTUMN 2026

## Learning in depth

Young people and instructors documented new skills, confidence, obstacles and continued interest.

2027 AND BEYOND

## Make participation last

Build a post-programme equipment pool and expand local opportunities, particularly in Ramsgate.






# The barrier is not motivation

The first question is not whether young people want to take part. It is whether they can afford to start.

**32 / 33**
found £600+ tuition unaffordable or financially difficult

**25 / 33**
had never previously paid for watersports lessons

APPLICATION-ROUND RESPONSES



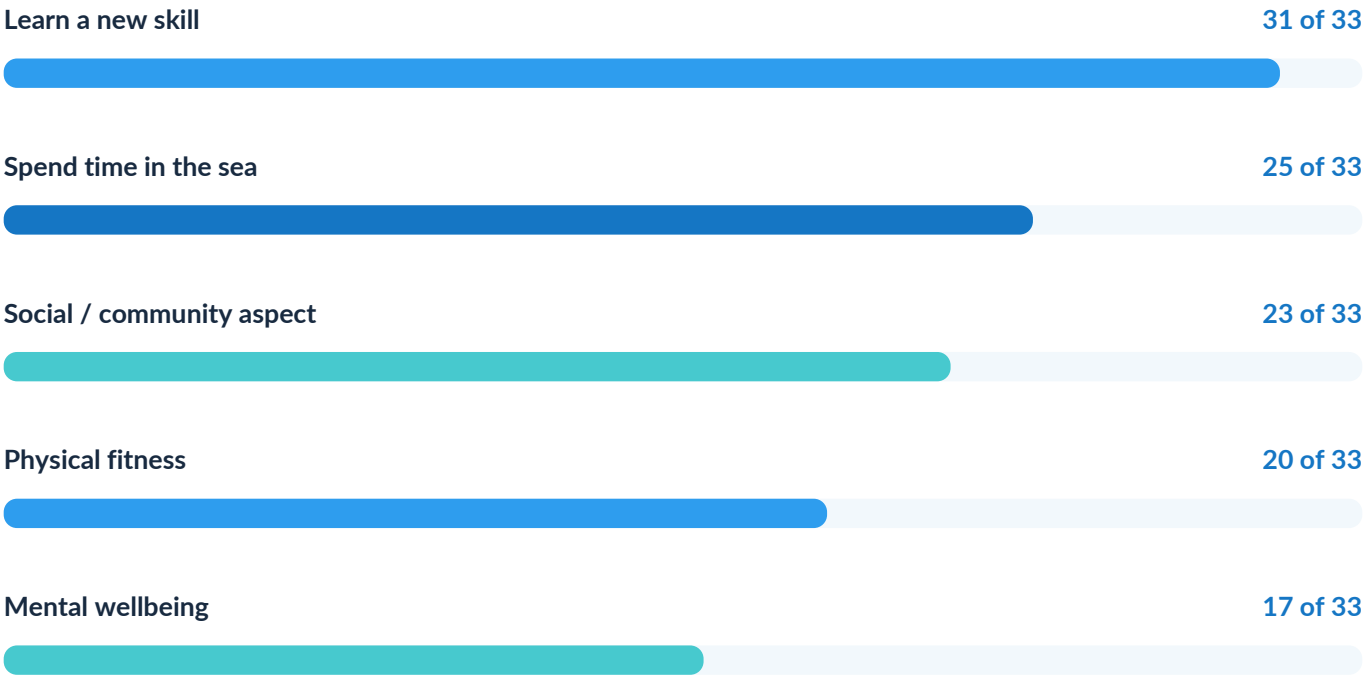

> *"I am very lucky for any option that I get to do water sports, otherwise I do not usually get out off the house to do things."*
>
> APPLICANT • RECRUITMENT SURVEY

Financial need and the desire to spend time outside appear together in the applications. The submissions also describe wanting to meet people, try a challenging new skill and make better use of living close to the sea. These are self-selected applicants, not a representative sample of all local young people.

# What young people want

Interest goes beyond learning a technical sport: applicants also sought sea access, social connection and wellbeing.

Motivations selected by the 33 applicants; each person could select more than one option.



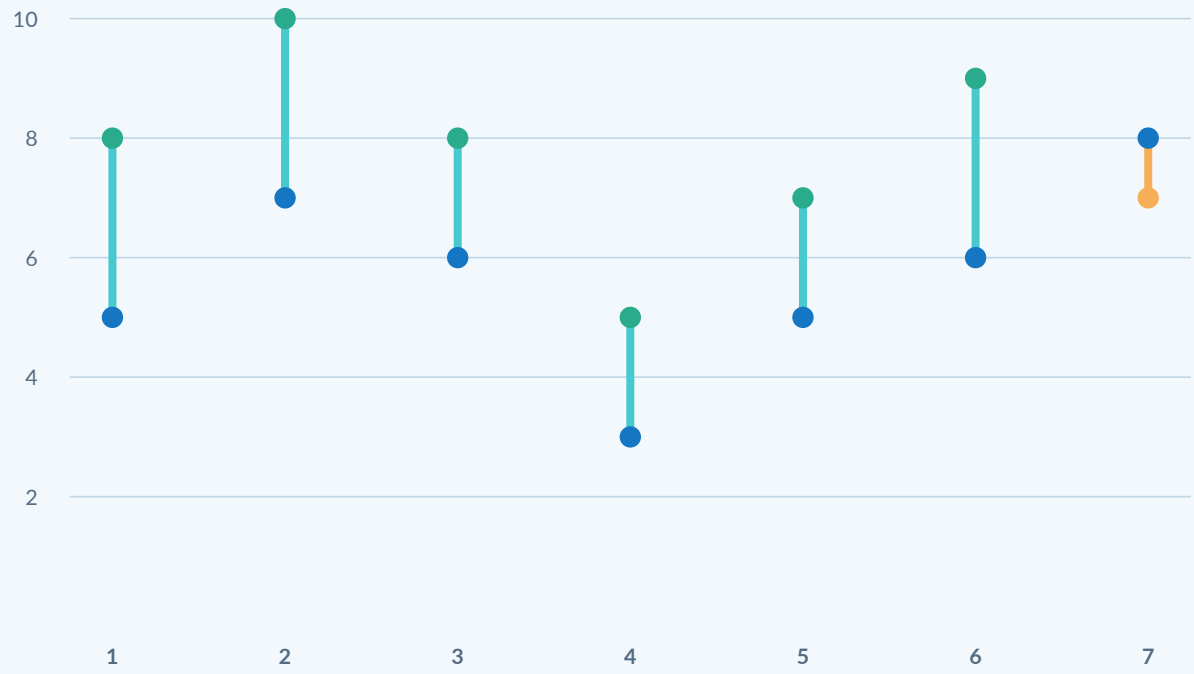

> *"Taking part in this programme will help me build my confidence and meet people with similar interests ... it will also encourage me to go out more and feel less isolated."*
>
> APPLICANT • BEFORE JOINING

Interpretation: financial support can unlock an opportunity that applicants expect to provide both challenge and connection. These motivations should not be mistaken for measured improvements in mental health or social outcomes.

# Confidence can change in one lesson

Seven participants rated their confidence about learning kitesurfing immediately before and immediately after their first recorded lesson.

PAIRED CONFIDENCE SCORES (1–10)




EACH LINE IS ONE PARTICIPANT; NAVY = BEFORE, GREEN / AMBER = AFTER

**5.7**
before / 10 average

**7.7**
after / 10 average

**+2.0**
average-point change

**6 of 7** reported higher confidence immediately afterwards; one recorded a one-point decrease. This is a short-term self-reported change within a small group, not a causal estimate of wider programme impact.

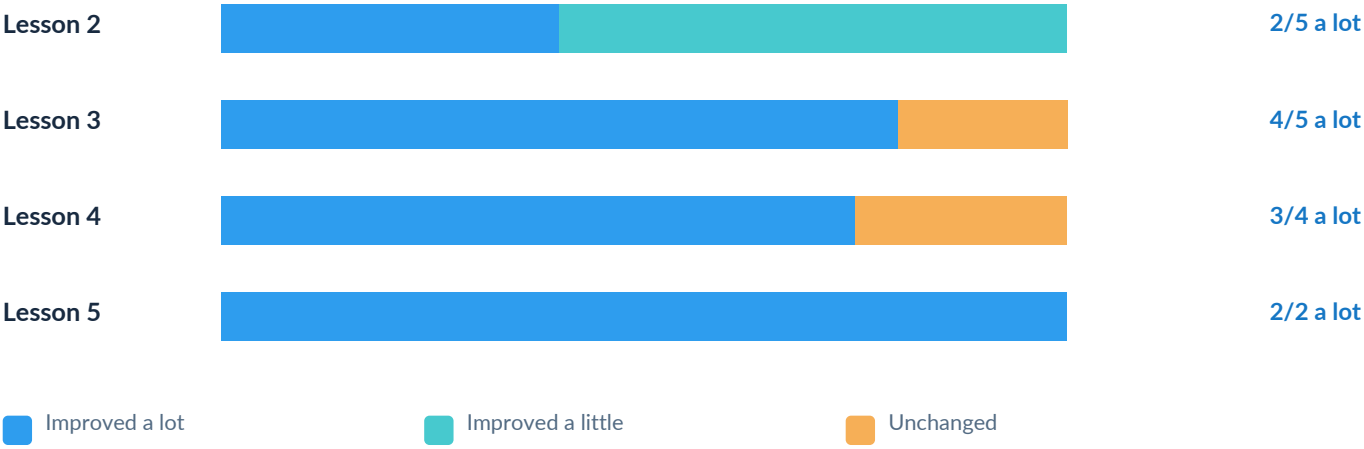
# Progress is reported again and again

Later lesson questionnaires ask participants to compare their confidence and skills with their first lesson.

### SELF-REPORTED CONFIDENCE COMPARED WITH LESSON 1




### SELF-REPORTED SKILL IMPROVEMENT COMPARED WITH LESSON 1




**Across Lessons 2–5:** 13 of 16 reflection responses reported higher confidence than Lesson 1. The same participants may have answered several times, so 13/16 is a proportion of responses—not unique young people.

# Hard work, genuine enjoyment

Enjoyment remained high even as participants encountered setbacks, weather changes and difficult board starts.

AVERAGE ENJOYMENT / 10 BY LESSON




**7 / 7**

felt at least a little more connected to the outdoors / sea after Lesson 1

**4 / 4**

Lesson 4 respondents said participation helped them feel they belonged to something

The enjoyment data cover **23 lesson responses** from eight distinct young people; later lessons have fewer submissions. The belonging question was introduced later in the programme, so it is not a measured before-and-after comparison.



# From first starts to longer rides

Anonymised participant journey A • reflections from Lessons 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

| | |
|---|---|
| LESSON 1 | First little ride; water starts still difficult |
| LESSON 2 | Successful water starts and short rides in both directions |
| LESSON 3 | Described a roughly 100-metre run |
| LESSON 4 | More consistent water starts and longer runs |
| LESSON 5 | Water starts, edging and short rides both ways |

> *“That I get a bit frustrated when progress isn’t linear, but it’s definitely helped me confidence wise to keep trying things over and over until they work”*

PARTICIPANT A • LESSON 5

What this illustrates: progress is not always smooth, yet practice and continued coaching can turn early frustration into emerging independence.





# From uncertainty to riding upwind

Anonymised participant journey B • five stages of reflection reveal practical and personal change.

| | |
|---|---|
| LESSON 1 | Nervous of the sea; proud to show up and practise body drags |
| LESSON 2 | Reported growing confidence in the sea and in themself |
| LESSON 3 | Reached the board and reported stronger self-belief |
| LESSON 4 | Riding around 10–20 metres across the water |
| LESSON 5 | Reported riding upwind and longer distances |

> *“my confidence in myself, I feel so pumped to go out and learn even more hobbies because its so fun being able to improve at something and feel that sense of achievement.”*

PARTICIPANT B • LESSON 5





The strongest outcome here is not a race to advanced riding. It is the participant’s own account of greater self-belief and enthusiasm for new experiences. Further follow-up is needed to test whether those changes last.

# Instructors see the progress too

Kite Pirates' coaching logs provide a second perspective on learning, setbacks and the importance of safe progression.

**18**
instructor feedback entries

**6**
named learners in the logs

**13**
entries documenting achievements

## PRACTICAL MILESTONES OBSERVED ACROSS THE PILOT

**01**

### FOUNDATIONS

Equipment, safety, launching, landing and controlled body drags

**02**

### TRANSITION

Board positioning, power control and water starts

**03**

### RIDING

Short rides, longer runs, edging and early upwind technique

> *"Used the correct safety procedures whenever she felt she was losing control."*
>
> INSTRUCTOR • LESSON 1

> *"Struggled at first with stronger wind, so went back to basics and built up progress and confidence"*
>
> INSTRUCTOR • LESSON 4

Instructor notes capture both capability and challenge: gusty conditions, board starts, relaunching and body positioning. They support an interpretation of tailored learning rather than a simple pass/fail result.

# Young voices, real changes

Short excerpts from application and lesson surveys show the human side of an unfamiliar and demanding sport.

> *“Kitesurfing no longer feels so out of reach and i can really see myself becoming a regular kiter in the near future.”*
>
> PARTICIPANT • AFTER LESSON 1

> *“I feel much more able to step outside my comfort zone”*
>
> PARTICIPANT • LESSON 3

> *“I feel like I am so much more confident and I am no longer intimidated by the kite.”*
>
> PARTICIPANT • LESSON 4





These voices point to the next challenge. A free lesson removes the first barrier; reliable equipment access, encouragement and peers are needed if young people are to stay involved after they can ride.

# What families notice

A parent's message adds a valuable perspective on confidence and aspiration beyond technical progress.

The following message was shared directly with the programme after a participant progressed to independent riding during tuition.

> *"His confidence has just soared through this programme it's so wonderful to see his progress!"*
>
> PARENT OF A WIND FUTURES PARTICIPANT • SHARED WITH EKKC

The same parent emphasised that the programme's difference was *"so much more than on the water"*, recognising encouragement from instructors and the wider EKKC team. This is a qualitative account from one family, not a quantified whole-cohort result.

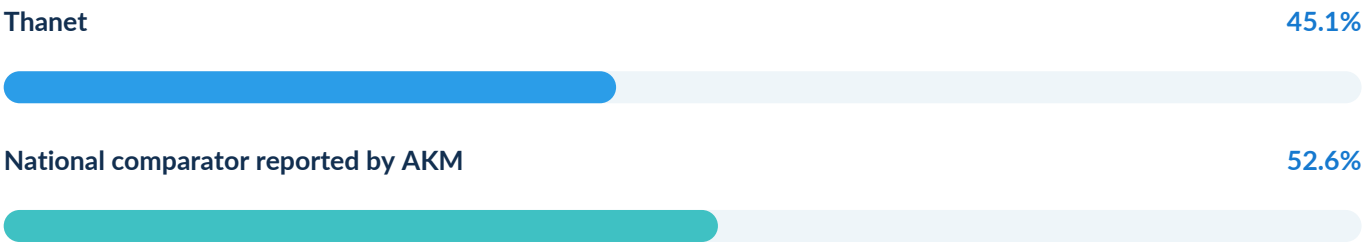


**Why it matters:** the people closest to a young person can sometimes see confidence and motivation changing before those changes are captured in structured surveys. Future cohorts should keep inviting brief, voluntary parent or guardian feedback.

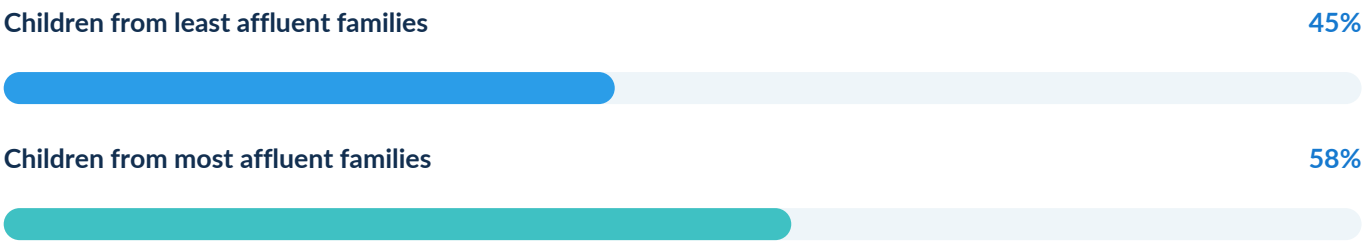
# A coastal community still needs access

Independent research supports the case for affordable, well-supported opportunities in Thanet and similar coastal areas.

### CHILDREN AGED 5–16 MEETING ACTIVITY GUIDELINES IN 2023




### ACTIVE LIVES 2024/25: ACTIVITY BY FAMILY AFFLUENCE, ENGLAND




**Coastal access ≠ opportunity.** UCL research with 50 coastal policymakers and youth practitioners found that high costs and limited local leisure provision can make activities difficult for young people aged 15–20 to access. This resonates with Wind Futures applicants' accounts of wanting to get outside but facing barriers.



NATIONAL INTEREST

**82%**

of 16–34-year-olds reported participating in watersports **or coastal activities** in 2025.

Context, not a comparison group: the activity figures describe children aged 5–16, while Wind Futures focuses mainly on ages 16–21. The 82% figure includes beach visits and coastal walking, so it is **not** a kitesurfing participation rate. [3–6]

# Skilled hands. Local roots.

Experienced coaches, local volunteers and a long-standing commitment to Ramsgate.

## GRAEME ROLBIECKI / KITE PIRATES

Senior kitesurf instructor | Kite Pirates | EKKC trustee



An established instructor bringing decades of experience across the team, professional coaching and deep knowledge of East Kent's coastal conditions.

Kite Pirates has delivered kitesurfing and SUP tuition in Ramsgate since 2018, alongside free introductory kite days with Active Ramsgate. Its instructors provide the practical expertise behind the Wind Futures pilot.





Through professional instruction, safe progression and encouragement, Kite Pirates helps turn an unfamiliar sport into something young people can realistically pursue.

# Lewis Crathern

Professional kitesurfer, multiple British champion and champion of youth opportunity.




**ATHLETE / RECORD BREAKER / FUTURE SCHOOL OUTREACH**

Lewis is a four-time British kitesurfing champion, a former Big Air vice-world champion and a 42.6-metre jump record holder. His sporting journey shows how an early introduction to kitesurfing can open up ambitions, community and lifelong opportunity.

> "Getting into kitesurfing when I was a teenager definitely changed my life and shaped the person I became. It's great to be part of a project like this which removes one of the biggest barriers of getting into the sport in the first place."
>
> **LEWIS CRATHERN / WIND FUTURES SUPPORTER**

Lewis is supporting the programme's future school outreach. He is not presented as an instructor on the 2026 pilot.

# Build a pathway, not an event

The pilot points towards a repeatable sequence that turns first interest into the chance of sustained participation.

1

## Open the door

Free outreach and taster sessions

2

## Make learning possible

Fund professional tuition and safe equipment

3

## Allow time to improve

Multiple lessons and flexible progression

4

## Build belonging

Instructor encouragement and a local peer community

5

## Remove the next barrier

Pool equipment access after graduation

> *"if it was available to rent for cheap or to borrow it would definitely get me out on the water"*
>
> PARTICIPANT • LESSON 4, ON EQUIPMENT ACCESS

The equipment-pool approach responds directly to participant feedback. It turns a capital purchase into a shared community asset, available to graduates and future cohorts rather than only to one set of learners.

# What comes next in Ramsgate

A 2027 expansion is proposed. These are targets, not activities already delivered.

**3**
school visits planned

**4**
free community kite tasters

**15**
funded young residents

THE COACHING PROPOSITION

## 75 + up to 15

Up to 75 funded professional lessons, with up to 15 optional complimentary lessons from Kite Pirates where an individual needs additional practice.

**A lasting legacy:** graduates would be able to use EKKC's shared pool equipment free of charge for 12 months, with equipment managed and maintained by Kite Pirates. This gives young people a viable route to continue after funded instruction ends.




The next ambition is a community with double-digit numbers of young people regularly on the water, future young instructors, local role models and, eventually, competitive or sponsored riding opportunities. These are ambitions, not promised 2027 outputs.

# What we know. What we still need.

### THE DATA REVIEWED

- Two application rounds: **33 distinct submitted responses** (East Kent-wide, not Ramsgate-only).
- Participant lesson reflections: **23 forms from eight identifiable respondents** across Lessons 1–5.
- Professional instructor feedback: **18 records spanning six learners.**
- One parent testimonial and EKKC activity updates; original pitch deck and supplied photographs.

### WHAT THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTS

Clear demand and financial barriers among applicants; short-term first-lesson confidence changes; perceived improvement in later lessons; technical milestones described by learners and instructors; and individual examples of pride, belonging and motivation.

### WHAT IT DOES NOT ESTABLISH

These are small, self-selected samples with differing response counts, voluntary questionnaires and no control group. Later survey figures count **responses** rather than different people. We do not claim that every funded participant reached the same riding level or that Wind Futures caused a measurable population-level improvement in mental health or physical activity.

### STRENGTHENING THE NEXT EVALUATION

- Track funded participants through completion and follow-up after three to twelve months.
- Retain comparable baseline and end-of-programme confidence and progression questions.
- Monitor use of shared equipment, continued riding and community connection.
- Collect brief voluntary feedback from parents and professional instructors.



# Sources and further reading

Primary programme data and external context are shown separately. Sources were reviewed on 12 November 2026.

## PRIMARY EKKC PROGRAMME EVIDENCE

- Wind Futures applications: two Google Forms CSV exports, 33 distinct submissions.
- Participant reflections: Lesson 1 to Lesson 5, 23 survey records.
- Kite Pirates instructor notes: 18 feedback records.
- Parent testimonial provided to EKKC, November 2026.
- [1] EKKC, first youth taster sessions (12 June 2026).
- [2] EKKC, first six riders progressing (16 August 2026).

## EXTERNAL EVIDENCE AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

- [3] Active Kent & Medway (2025/2026), Thanet Street Sports Test & Learn evaluation; citing Kent Public Health Observatory 2024.
- [4] Active Kent & Medway (Dec 2025), Active Lives Children & Young People 2024/25 summary.
- [5] UCL, Coastal Youth Life Chances: practitioner perspectives (July 2025).
- [6] Paddle UK / British Marine, 2025 Watersports Participation Survey (July 2026).
- [7] British Kitesports Association, instructor register: Graeme Rolbiecki.
- [8] EKKC; Isle of Thanet News (2019), Kite Pirates and Graeme Rolbiecki in Ramsgate.
- [9] Lewis Crathern, official athlete biography and honours.
- [10] Sussex Express (27 Oct 2026), Lewis Crathern's 42.6m jump record.

## LINKS / VERIFICATION

ekkc.org/events/wind-futures-youth-kitesurfing-taster-sessions-kent/

ekkc.org/events/wind-futures-kitesurfing-programme-first-six-riders/

activekent.org/place-partnerships/thanet-street-sports-test-learn-summer-2025/

activekent.org/2025/12/12/progress-made-gaps-remain/

ucl.ac.uk/news/2025/jul/young-people-growing-englands-coastal-communities-face-unique-obstacles

paddleuk.org.uk/survey-shows-growth-in-paddlesports-and-coastal-activities/

britishkitesports.org/training/instructor-list/

lewiscrathern.com/athlete

# A community effort

Wind Futures is possible because people, organisations and local partners invest in young people.




## EKKC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

CHAIR

**Stephen Rawlings**

TRUSTEES

Stefano Biagini
Graeme Rolbiecki
Layla Stevens
Sarah Dorking
Chris Joy
James Roe

## WITH THANKS TO

Vattenfall - investment in the pilot

Broadstairs Town Council - funding to continue our work in 2027

Andrew Hastings - photography

Liam Smith - videography

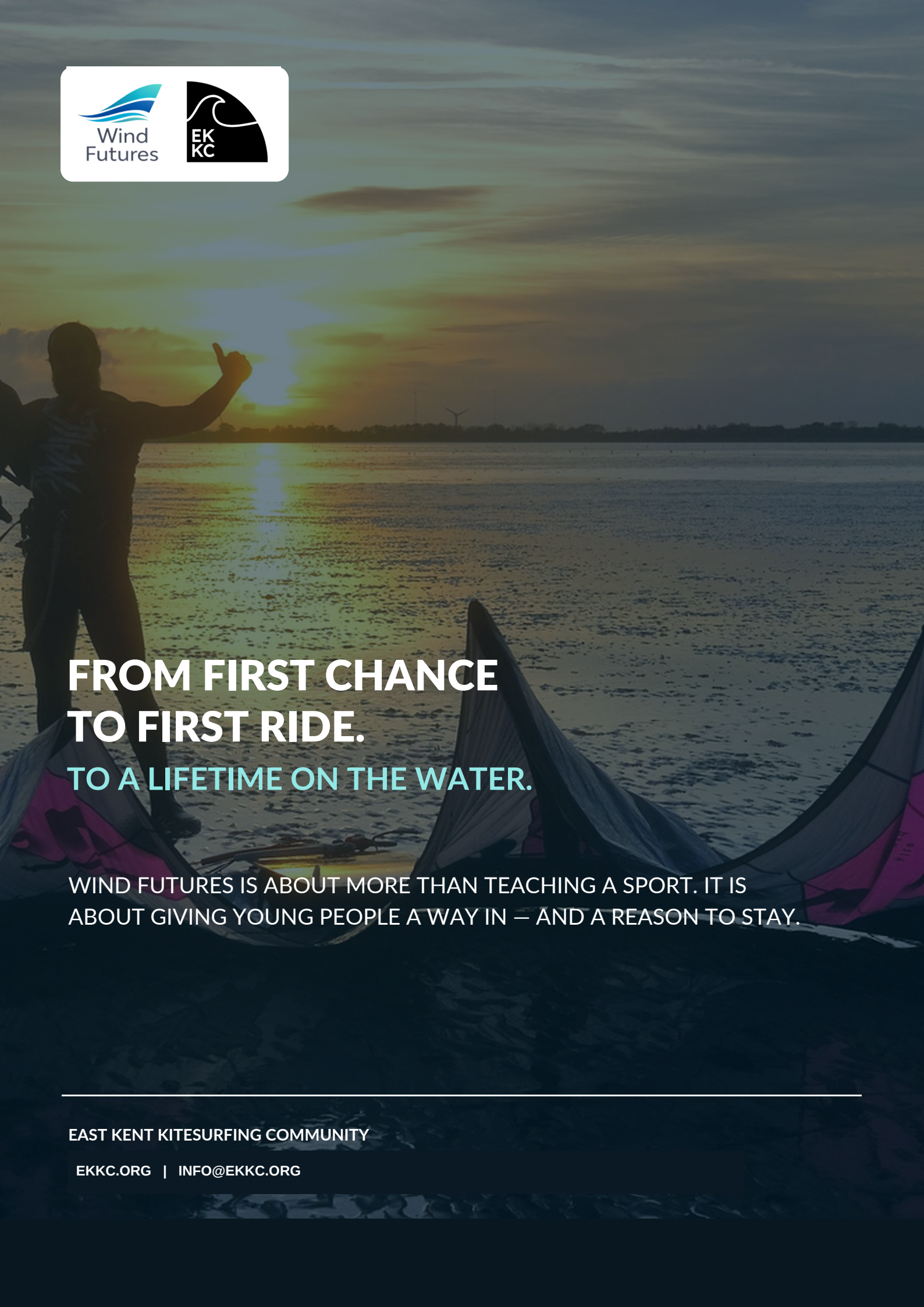
King of Watersports

Lewis Crathern - support for Wind Futures

Kite Pirates - professional instruction and project delivery

Our kitesurfing community - volunteers, encouragement and equipment donations

And most importantly, thank you to the young people and families who put their trust in Wind Futures.



# FROM FIRST CHANCE TO FIRST RIDE.

## TO A LIFETIME ON THE WATER.

WIND FUTURES IS ABOUT MORE THAN TEACHING A SPORT. IT IS ABOUT GIVING YOUNG PEOPLE A WAY IN — AND A REASON TO STAY.


EAST KENT KITESURFING COMMUNITY

EKKC.ORG | INFO@EKKC.ORG