



Photo: Simon Winkley



Photo: Sam Ross

Foiling: re-lighting the fire

RYA Coach/Assessor and Windsurf Trainer Simon Winkley, finds foiling has fired his enthusiasm and desire to push his own development on

Foiling is neither a fad nor will it replace regular equipment. Rather, it is a significant parallel development which is gaining traction for all the right reasons.

And with everyone talking about foiling and its appearance in regular (not just palm-fringed) coastal and inland locations, magazines and social media feeds, I knew that I had to get involved.

As instructors, we sometimes suffer from not getting afloat enough for our *own* pleasure and development as much we might like. One reason could be that despite us being very committed to teaching others, the glow may have faded in terms of our desire to participate or we may feel that we have reached a ceiling with our progression.

With personal development being so key to our own continuing enjoyment and engagement in watersports, I believe that foiling may be a route to re-lighting the fire for many coaches and instructors.

My own journey with foiling began last year. I went to Sam Ross at the OTC in Weymouth for some training in the summer and used demo kit before committing to the purchase of my own.

To continue my progression and personal development, I took part in two CPD opportunities set up by the RYA. In the autumn I returned to the OTC with a group of Windsurf Trainers and we became qualified as some of the first RYA WindFOIL Instructors. Towards the end of the year I headed out to Pro-Vela in Spain with a bunch of Coaches/Assessors to try dinghy foiling.

Both venues had great setups and inspiring tuition and before long we were up and flying.

So what does it feel like?

Well, from those of us who learned last year, here's the answer:

'It is totally exhilarating, genuinely addictive and we can't wait to further our

progression. The feeling of flying over the water – either sitting down or standing up – is just incredible. I always enjoy getting out on the water yet the kind of thrill and fulfilment that foiling gives is something else.'

Taking a positive step

As both an instructor and coach, ongoing CPD is so important in terms of staying current, learning new skills and remaining connected to sailing in general. The key to this with foiling is how we can make it accessible for ourselves. Currently, as I have less access to foiling dinghies than windfoil kit, I am looking carefully at my options for progressing dinghy foiling skills.

I enjoy the speed, acceleration and lightness of the normal RS Aero so I will be looking to try an Aero with a Glide Free foil. I am also planning to return to Pro-Vela for further tuition. I know a number of instructors who are accessing kit by training to

become foiling instructors in their own centres, and this is their way of moving forwards.

As my different experiences have shown me, foiling does require a level of technical knowledge to ensure that equipment is set up and maintained correctly, which is why the RYA getting involved is key at this time.

The commitment to becoming technically proficient, which a number of us have taken, will support the accessibility and growth of foiling for Training Centres and instructors.

The determined push by the RYA, its Training Centres, coaches and instructors – together with the development of appropriate kit – is normalizing foiling and has the potential to bring renewed energy into instructing as well as personal time afloat.

» Want to get involved? Express your interest in getting trained to mollieknowlden@rya.org.uk