



## Press Release: Young and old enjoy a life on the ocean wave

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Sailors young and old are set to have a swell time on the water thanks to the latest community donation from ExxonMobil Fawley.

A donation of £3000 to Wetwheels Hamble will see dozens of children with disabilities as well as local care home residents with dementia enjoying the sensation of being out on the water.

The funding will enable the community interest company (CIC) to host six days of power boating targeted at youngsters from local schools as well as care home residents who have experienced loneliness and isolation due to the Covid pandemic.

And, with up to four trips a day and ten sailors on each trip, around 200 participants will be fully immersing themselves in the boating experience.

“For some it is a very sensory experience – feeling the sensation of bouncing around on the water and the spray on their faces, while for others inclusivity is important - getting themselves on board in their wheelchairs and driving the boat,” explained Jennie Austin, director of Wetwheels Hamble.

“Whatever the reason, disabilities or worries are left behind on the shore, and the families and carers can relax and laugh together.”

The Wetwheels Foundation was set up 10 years ago to enable everyone to enjoy the thrill of power boating. Wetwheels Hamble has been around for six years and relies on a dedicated band of volunteers to keep it running.

It runs and maintains one of six specially-designed catamaran power boats around the country, with others in Portsmouth, Jersey, Whitby, Dover and Falmouth, and more in the pipeline.

“Covid did affect us quite a bit, but we set ourselves a target of getting 1000 people out on the boat this year, and we are already at 1250,” added Jennie.

“This generous donation from ExxonMobil is simply amazing and the Wetwheels Hamble team can’t wait to get more people in the local community out to benefit from our confidence-building and life-affirming experiences.”

Angharad Vaughan, Community Affairs Adviser at ExxonMobil Fawley, said: "Given the difficult time many people have had recently and the effect it may have had on their mental health and wellbeing, this is a great way for them to enjoy themselves and get out in the fresh air with other people.

"We are happy to be able to facilitate this for both youngsters and the elderly in our neighbouring communities."

Pictured: Chloe Parr from The Harbour at The Hamble School enjoying a Wetwheels outing, with ExxonMobil Fawley in the background.