

Calls to progress surf talent through government funding

FOUR GENERATIONS of surfers gathered in Newquay on Thursday to highlight the need for Government funding to progress surfing talent in Britain - writes Warren Wilkins

Despite the sport's huge importance on the economy, surfing is not recognised by Sport England, which results in the British team struggling to secure funding to attend European and world events.

Jed Stone legends master, Alan Stokes, the current English and British champion, Lee Bartlett; four-times British champion and 11-year-old Tom Good, the Rip Curl Grommets search champion gathered alongside the English Surfing Federation (ESF) at its headquarters at the Cribbar Green Rooms in Headland Road to highlight the need for continual grass roots funding.

mentoring

The ESF believes more money needs to be poured into mentoring if the country is to produce more world class surf champions.

The national surfing body plan to submit a paper to the Sport England board and the National Investment Panel later this year, which will review the criteria against which sports are considered.

Rob Barber, ESF head coach, said: "With over a quarter of a million British people taking surf lessons every year and UK surfers like Russell Winters holding their own on the international circuit, you'd think that surfing would be a sporting priority for the Government.

"Currently, however, not a penny UK sporting body funding goes

into supporting English surfing.

"The ESF currently provides one of the only sources of support funding for young English surfers, the majority of which is created from the profits of its own surf school.

"The flagship school, which has just moved to a new location on Headland Road, Newquay, provides top quality instruction in a fun, supportive atmosphere and profits, generated from lessons sales, are ploughed straight back into supporting promising English surfers."

To make it on a domestic and international circuit, young surfers need the funds to be able to travel, pay for accommodation, and cover contest entry fees and equipment costs.

Many are subsidised by their parents and the lucky few get sponsorship from commercial companies.

But even with this, they often struggle to be able to afford to attend key contests and gain the experience needed to shape them into future champions.

promising

Since its inception in the 1970s, the ESF has provided funding, plus a recognised mentoring structure, for all of England's promising young surfers and all of today's key English stars - Russell Winter, Alan Stokes, Robyn Davies and Lee Bartlett - have received ESF support throughout their careers.

In the last year alone, it cost the



© Bridging the generation gap. (from left) Lee Bartlett, Jed Stone, Alan Stokes and Tom Good (front) show their support for more surf funding

ESF over £25,000 to provide its support network, funding, programmes, contests and events. This backing paid for members of the English team's entry into international contests and membership to the European Surfing Federation.

The English Surfing Federation volunteers run continual surf clinics around the country, have created specific workshops for recognised talent, managed a grommet

tour and organised and run the English National Championships.

Current English champion Alan Stokes, from Newquay, said: "I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the ongoing support that I've had over the years from the ESF.

"Their English National Championships have been a key plank in my career and the structure and funding system of the organisation is vital for young surfers."