



An Introduction to Cable Wakeboarding

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Synopsis

Wakeboarding and water-skiing are activities traditionally associated with the participant being towed behind a boat. Cable wakeboarding uses an elevated cable system to tow the participant. 'An Introduction to Cable Wakeboarding' aims to give information on wakeboarding and wakeboard cable systems to people new to the sport.



Wakeboarding – What is it?

Wakeboarding is often described as being similar to water-skiing in the same way as snowboarding is to snow skiing.



The wakeboarder is secured to the wakeboard by bindings attached to their feet. They rotate their upper body to face the direction of travel whilst their feet remain sideways to the direction of travel.

Safety equipment includes a buoyancy vest and a safety helmet when using a cable system. In colder climates a wetsuit can be worn.

Cable Systems – An Explanation

Wakeboarding cable systems comprise of an elevated cable system that normally stands 9 meters above the water surface and is driven by an electric motor. There are two possible formats to cable systems – either a straight line cable system or a 5 pylon continuous system.

Cosmeston Lakes Wake Park will use the straight line cable system.

The system has a tower at each end of a course which supports an 8mm running cable that tows the rider up and down the course between the two towers. The system takes the rider from the start pontoon, stops at the far end of the course and returns the rider to the start pontoon. The system accommodates one rider at a time. The electric driving motor for the system is located at the top of the pylon nearest the start pontoon (seen in red below).



A straight line cable system at JB Ski, Surrey

The cable system has an operator who is located on the start pontoon and has full control of the system via a handheld control box. The system is capable of being driven forward and in reverse and at variable speeds depending on the requirement of the rider.

Cable Systems – The History

The first cable water-ski system was designed and developed by a graduate engineer, Bruno Rixen, in Germany in 1961. Bruno was an addicted water-skier and always asked himself why this magnificent sport was not more popular. He discovered that water-skiing at that time was considered very expensive due to boat and fuel costs and people had few opportunities to ski due to boat management and time waiting for your turn on the boat.

Following two years of design work that resulted in 37 patented inventions the 5 pylon cable system was born. Several water-skiers could now ride continuously at the same time on the one system. Bruno and his team worked for five years to perfect all of the intricate internal systems within the cable system and in 1966 the first commercial Rixen water-ski cableway was built in Benidorm, Spain. 50 years later and over 60,000 operating hours, the cableway in Benidorm is still successfully running.



Mr Bruno Rixen cable water-skiing at the company's 50th year celebrations

The first ever cable water-ski championship was held in 1969 which has now evolved into National, International and a World championships.

Water-ski use of cable systems was overtaken when wakeboarding became the new trend in the early 1990s and wakeboarding is now the predominant sport practised at cable system parks.

The two pylon cable system was developed to allow a controlled one to one training system for wakeboarders, but as the system technology improved it became apparent that the two pylon system was great for one-to-one tuition for all levels of wakeboarder and a cost efficient way of setting up smaller cable park facilities.

Wakeboarding – The Sport

Wakeboarding developed into a sport in the late 1980s and early 1990s when a number of pioneers merged techniques and equipment from skiing and surfing and the first mass produced wakeboard was developed in 1991.

Wakeboarding competitions soon began to emerge in the USA in the early 1990s and the World Wakeboard Association (WWA) was founded in 1993. The International Waterski and Wakeboard Federation (IWWF) is today the governing body for 7 water-ski and wakeboard disciplines and is part of the International Olympic Committee. Cable wakeboarding was shortlisted to the final 8 sports to be included in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

The 2016 IWWF Cable Wakeboard World Championships were recently held in Morelos in Mexico.

Wakeboarding has now developed to being the fastest growing sport world-wide and thanks to cable systems, is now accessible to everyone.

Wakeboarding and Water-skiing is governed in the UK by British Water Ski and Wakeboard (BWSW).

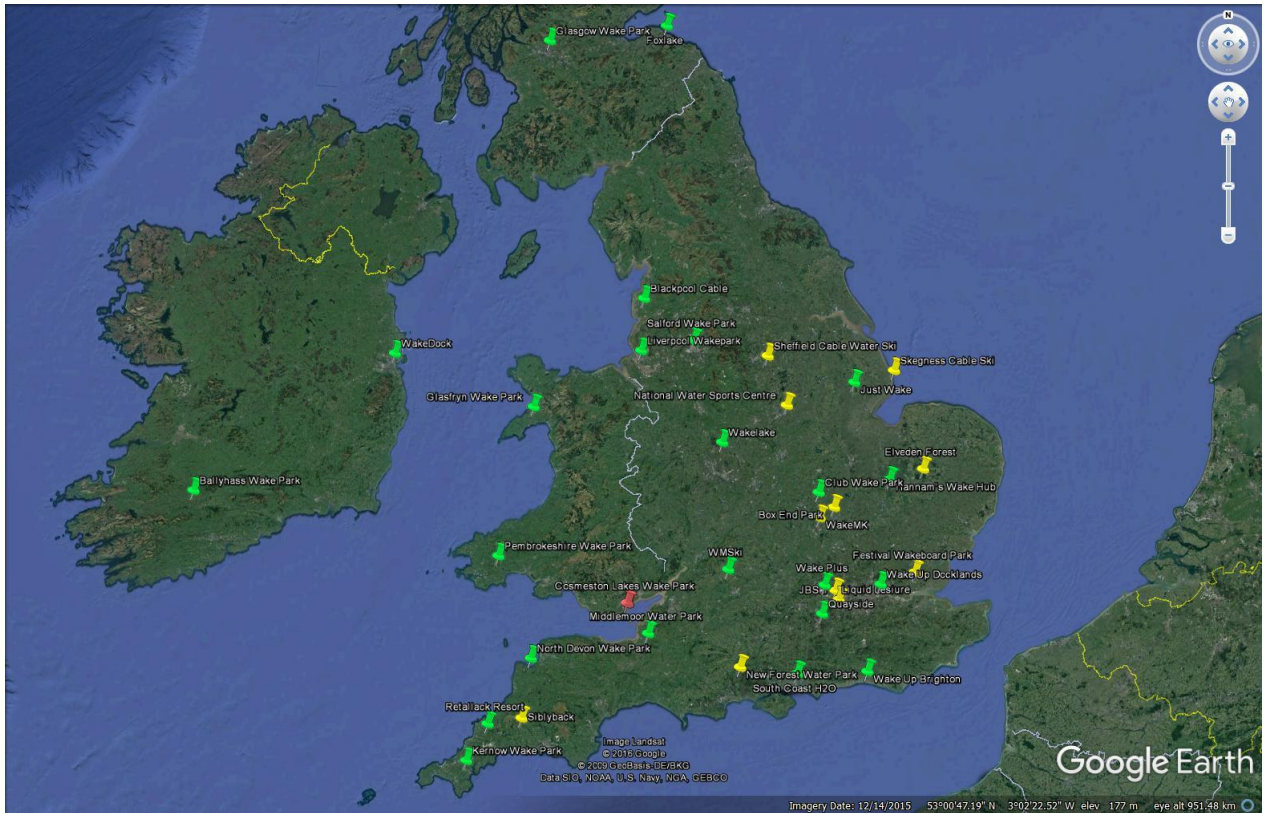
Sport Wales provide support for water skiing and wakeboarding in Wales and recognise wakeboarding as a sport that is eligible for funding opportunities.

Wakeboarding can be enjoyed by everyone with the youngest participants being around six years old all the way through to participants in their eighties.

In the UK the British Disabled Water Ski Association (BDWSA), based at Heron Lakes in Staines, aim to introduce newcomers to the fantastic sports of water-skiing and wakeboarding, regardless of physical or learning ability. Participants from South Wales regularly travel for over 2 hours to use the Heron Lakes facility. Cosmeston Lakes Wake Park will work with the BDWSA to give access to participants from the South Wales area to water-skiing and wakeboarding at Cosmeston.

UK Wakeboard Cable Parks

There are 22 straight line and 11 five pylon cable wake parks in the UK and Ireland as of November 2016.



There are currently no wake parks in South Wales, with the nearest wake park to Cosmeston Lakes being 72 miles and 1.5 hours away by car

In 2017 Cosmeston Lakes Wake Park will be the one of two new wakeboarding cable parks in South Wales, with a plan to open Pembrokehire Wake Park near Narberth in early 2017.