

Coaching Podcast

S7 Ep11 - Paddling, Philosophy, and Play: A Conversation with George Fell

George Fell, Georgina Maxwell

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Georgina Maxwell: Hello and welcome to this episode of the coaching podcast. My name's Georgina Maxwell and today we have a wonderful guest, George Fell. Hi George.

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George Fell: Hi, Georgina. Thank you very much for having me on the podcast.

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Georgina Maxwell: Hey, lovely to have you and thanks for coming on board. Who are you and what do you do?

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George Fell: Marvelous. I live up in the Highlands of Scotland and, as you can tell from my broad Scottish accent, I'm not a local. I'm from Yorkshire originally. I guess I'm a paddler first, but then also a coach and a coach educator. I love having adventures in silly little craft. So, I guess I have adventures in white wall kayaks, in sea kayaks, in open canoes. I do spend a small amount of time falling off paddle boards on white water, committing crimes against freestyle. and years ago, I spent a little bit of time trying to make long, pointy boats go fast. but nowadays it's very much recreational stuff and predominantly in canoes and kayaks. and for me I guess adventures where it's at. So I love using silly little boats to go off on adventures.

Whether that's gorgeous in the Himalaya, whether that's trying to circumnavigate the Pharaoh Islands, or increasingly as I'm trying to factor in the environmental impact of

what I do into my choices, it's exploring bits of Scotland, which is both beautiful and a genuinely world-class place to go sea kayaking. and if you can accept a wee bit of suffering in your life, it also has some pleasingly ludicrous canoe journeys. So I kind of love that feeling of living in the moment.

when you get in a wave or you're spinning in a hole or you're paddling along rapid you're rock hopping on the sea where you're constantly kind of reading and trying to anticipate what's going to go next. and then suddenly you get surprised, so you're having to react, but then you're back on top of it and back to anticipating. I don't like being scared. I probably used to more but more 20 years ago, but I don't like being scared. I don't like being completely out of control, but I do love being close to the edge of what I can do in that kind of flow place. What else? I love the wonderful kind and often willfully eccentric people that the paddling attracts. and within tribes. So all the cool subniches that paddlesport has, the green and stick paddlers, the squirt boers, the folks ripping up at the falls, the screamer paddlers on the tay, the paddle with pride kang paddlers.

It's a really cool interlink little ecosystem we've got. so I guess my work is a mixture of guiding and coaching and qualification courses across the different recreational disciplines. and I absolutely don't have a favorite amongst those things. I mean I don't have any kids... but it feels like of what's your favorite child questions cuz all the different bits of paddle sport, all the different niches are fabulous in their own ways.

3:11

Georgina Maxwell: Excellent,...George. What an introduction, colorful. So yeah, let's have a little look at coaching philosophy then. Do you want to tell us what your coaching philosophy is and why is it important?

3.25

George Fell: for sure. So I hope you're sitting comfortably because this could take the first question so in the phrase coaching philosophy, I don't think the word coaching brings all that much to the party. because I think your coaching philosophy

is generally a reflection on your life philosophy, on who you are as a person. All those things we believe about how teaching works, how people work, how knowledge works, how the world works, about what's right and wrong. That's all that stuff informs what our coaching philosophy is. and that's true whether or not you've actually thought about it or it just is stuff that sits passively in the back of your head informing what you do and how you live your life. So if you want that in big impressive academic sounding words then I think your coaching philosophy is influenced by your pedagogy. What you believe about learning your epistemology or what you believe about knowledge ontology ethics I think your coaching philosophy is part of your life philosophy. who you are as a person. So for example, if you believe the world is all about black and white, right and wrong, and we should navigate it by rules, then odds on as a coach, you probably believe in fairly fixed technical templates, and you probably believe the coach's role is to correct the errors that you can identify in a paddler's paddling. and there's a load of merit in that approach. I'm not saying that's right or wrong. Likewise, if you believe that most things are about nuance and context and that you can generally argue things from multiple different points of view, then you're probably much more likely to believe that the coach's role is all about designing tasks to help the paddler find out what works best for them. And guess what? There's a load of merit in that point of view as so that was a bit of a political answer because I should answer what you said, which is what am I? By training I'm a physicist and then a meteorologist and then a weather forecaster. So that comes with a load of a big bundle of sciencey beliefs about how the world works and how you think about it. but as from experience of sharing minibuses with me I'm also a very mediocre musician. So one who believes that once you've done the hard work of technically learning some music then actually the fun bit is getting the feeling and expression into it. So the stuff that comes from the heart as well as from the head. so I guess yeah there's heart things and there's head things. sciencey head things first. primarily I believe that we find out whether or not stuff works by and that's trying it in the actual environment with the kit and the person. so we all have the same physics whatever craft you're in. If you waggle a paddle around close to the boat, it'll probably make the boat go mostly forwards or

backwards, but also turn a little bit. And if you waggle a paddle around a long way out from the boat, it'll probably turn more and not go backwards or forwards very much, and that's true for everyone in every craft. But, we actually find out what works for the person we've got in front of us by getting them to try it.

6.23

George Fell: So we get ideas from books, from YouTube, from each other, from how we do a move, but we only find out if it works for the person in front of us when we actually get them to do it in context in the environment. so just cuz something works for me with my kit and my body does not mean it works for you because we're different. Yeah. just cuz I believe something's true doesn't make it true and certainly doesn't make it true for you. I guess I also believe pretty fervently that the way we learn to move isn't the way we learn, I don't know, world capitals or French or mathematics or pup quiz questions. Early on in their paddling, Boers often arrive thinking that the way a course works is that I'm going to tell them stuff, they'll think that stuff, and then they'll be able to do stuff.

George Fell: And man, so I remember years ago teaching rolling to an academic in a pool in Oxford. and they were genuinely surprised that having read and understood a book about how to roll, they couldn't get in the pool and roll. The world can't see you, but I can see that sort of wry grin of acknowledgement. We know that actually having an understanding of what you're trying to do is the first part of a long journey of actually being able to do that thing. But I think there's loads of folks who believe that learning movement is the same as learning facts. So I think we learn to move by feeling as much as by thinking. Okay? and particularly on coaching courses, it's really easy to get into that habit of overthinking complicated moves and often that causes skills to break down.

I remember years ago working long-term with a really good friend on white water and I've got this great bit of video which I threatened to show him from time to time which is him running into a drop and you can totally see about it looks lovely until you're about 2 meters from a drop and then you can just totally see his thinking brain

seizing control of his body from his feeling brain and just before he hits this drop you can suddenly see him this little thought bubble appearing where it's like and now I need to simultaneously rotate this way whilst reaching this way whilst my top hand does this and whilst my and it goes from beautiful and smooth to just horrid and clunky. So what does that mean for coaching? I think it means if I'm having to use loads of words to describe what I think someone needs to do next. It probably means I'm either trying to get them to make too big a step or in an environment that's just too hard. So I feel like if we can find the right progressions in the right places, then I can often just do a thing, look back at the person, maybe raise an eyebrow, they decide if they ideally, if I've chosen the right thing, after a few goes, they succeed at it. and that doesn't have to involve tons of words and tons of thinking. So that's not to say nothing involves thinking or words, but I think overthinking it is a really big risk. other stuff that's really important for my coaching philosophy. the power dynamics of it all. so I had someone observing me coach a few months ago, which is a wonderful but also slightly scary thing. and they said to me at the end, you do realize you spend an awful lot of time getting permission to coach. and I do and it's true because people book onto coaches where they get coached, but they don't always actually want to get coached.

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George Fell: Sometimes people just want me to wave a magic wand and make them better. and unfortunately I haven't worked out how to do that yet. But it's true. I do spend lots of time getting permission to coach because it's really important to me. I'm kind of passionately anti-guru. I've seen that happen to a few coaches over the years in different disciplines. and it's really bad for their learners, but it's actually really bad for the coaches as so coaching is a consensual thing that happens between people. It's not something that one person does to somebody else. As an aside, at some point I'm going to write a spoof article about compulsive coaching syndrome. which is where someone and often but not always a man to a woman starts randomly giving feedback to someone who hasn't asked them to and was up to that point having a

perfectly nice day. Why would you do that? and also I guess I'm a rubbish mind reader.

George Fell: So if I spend a load of my time trying to guess what a paddler wants or what's important to them, I will get it wrong. so why not just ask them and why not just keep checking in to see that what we're doing is actually working. One of those models that people come across really early in coaching courses is that plan, do, review, conclude cycle. and often I think coaches will start off setting a task. The paddler does the thing, the coach then gives all of the feedback. and that's it. So, the paddler just gets to own the do bit of that and the coach does absolutely everything else. I think as coaches get more experienced, they'll often get clever asking questions or settling tasks where the feedback comes bundled up with the task. So, they still end up owning the plan but do, review, and maybe not the concluding part of it.

11.11

George Fell: But I think as paddlers become better learners, it's also great to let them own the plan. So, that could be simple as I see a couple of options we could do here. What would you prefer? It could be, so we're working on committing your body outside the boat cuz we know the water's going to push the boat back underneath you on this move. so, what move can you see if let us do that? or it could really be as simple as that key coaching question, what can I do to help? and then you sort of move away from being construtor and more to being like a consultant. Finally, this is definitely more about the heart than about the head. I think ideally coaching is playful. I'm at my happiest when a session looks less like a coach of students and just looks more like a group of paddlers encouraging each other to do increasingly silly things.

George Fell: ideally safe and attainable things. but where people can find the tasks, often the ones that are right on the edge of what they can currently do, where they can kind of get in the zone. find where failure is a source of kind of wry amusement and help rather than judgment. and I can't always achieve that dynamic, especially if

there's a syllabus involved or if there's an assessment. And often it takes me a few days to get into that place. We've worked together a little bit, and getting that group dynamic working is absolutely one of your superpowers and one that I would personally love to be better at. So that was a whole lot of words. So, I guess if I was going to try and compress that into bullet points, what's my coaching philosophy? You find out what works by trying it. Just cuz a thing doesn't work for me does not mean it's going to work for you.

Don't overthink it.

Don't hoard the power.

Keep it playful.

And if I do find myself being controlling and it doesn't feel playful, it's usually because I've gone somewhere that's too hard. So that's where I'm happiest. That doesn't mean that's what I always do. so I worry that some paddlers leave coaching courses believing that bad coaches give people answers and good coaches set rambling discovery tasks. and that's completely incorrect. A good coach does the right thing at the right time. What's the right thing for the paddles they've got in front of them? but...if my coaching role has me constantly leading to do stuff that doesn't align with my beliefs, with my coaching philosophy, then I'm in the wrong role. Wow.

13.38

Georgina Maxwell: Brilliant. Thank you, that was good. it sounds like we were just starting to go into the next question on some of them, but they definitely overlap. And the next question I've got is, what is coaching and how do we get better at it?

13.48

George Fell: Okay. Yeah.

George Fell: So people write Yeah.

Georgina Maxwell: Did we answer that or...do you want to go into that?

13:54

George Fell: No, very happy to go into that. People write books about that and I guess we've optimistically got about 5 minutes. So yeah coaching I reckon is simultaneously as complicated as the most obtrusive model in some obscure dusty coaching journal and is simultaneously as simple as one person trying to help another person. So let's stick to the simple end. I think coaching is just another word for helping. So, if I'm helping, I'm coaching. And if I'm not helping, I'm probably not coaching. So I reckon ideally coaching is doing stuff that helps a paddler achieve their goals. and I guess notice that's their goals rather than mine. Which involves them getting better. and again, that's their version of better rather than necessarily my version of better. So that could be better understanding of the river or the sea or the lock that they're on so that they can better anticipate how it's going to affect their craft and they can react and be on top of things. that could be better at all the mind games that go with paddling. So that could be less scared or not overthinking stuff or being able to change their focus even not beating themselves up about everything they did that wasn't perfect. It could be fitter, it could be stronger, it could be more flexible. and any of those things, better could mean better by the end of a session, or it could mean better in a year's time, or it could even mean just awareness. It could mean that they're not better, but for the start of a journey of becoming aware that this is actually a thing they could work on. Lots of my clients are old. I was about to say older, George. I turned 50 at the start of the year. So perhaps a better way to say it would be around the same age as how did that happen? and loads of them arrive on courses wanting a load of technical stuff. my little pinky should point here whilst I rotate about this axis. Whereas for loads of folks I work with, I think actually what would make the biggest difference is being a little bit fitter and a little bit less scared of making mistakes. So we end up finding a compromise between what they want because obviously if I don't give them anything of what they want, they won't enjoy themselves, they won't buy into it, and if they're not having fun, they're not motivated, and that's no fun. That's no good. After all, it is their version of better we're aiming for. and then I work mostly with recreational paddles who do it for fun. So there isn't an absolute metric. So, they're not trying to achieve a particular time or speed.

Sometimes they are obsessed a little bit with a particular grade or going to a particular place but generally once we've developed some level of trust between it's about making them their destiny but also maybe trying to gently drip feed in some of the stuff which I think they might need as well as what they want. or alternatively I guess sometimes folks just come in with I don't know what I need to make me better. which sort of feels like cart blanch to try and put them in what direction I think is important but still usually by a few days in they're starting to own that a lot more. How do we get better at coaching? I guess presupposes that some coaching is better than others. which I think it is like we all have days that work really well for us and other days that don't. But also we can change and improve what we do to have more great days and fewer terrible ones. So I would argue that good coaches generally have lots of ways of coaching a thing. So they got lots of options. They've got enough spare brain to be able to really notice how the paddling they're coaching is getting on. So not just notice technical things but notice how are they looking, how are they moving emotionally, how are they behaving that they've developed enough trust that they can actually speak honestly to their paddler and their paddler can speak honestly back to them and then they've got enough spare brain to make the academic uses the word decisions a lot.

17:51

The academic stuff talks about decision-m back when I work for the Met Office used to have this phrase swag. Which was scientific wild and actually guess yeah to make sure we've got enough spare brain to make a guess as to what's going to work best for our paddler next. and if you think about that that's really no different to what we want from our paddlers. We give them techniques so they've got different ways of interacting with an environment. We give them different ways to cross an eddy line, to push through a wave, to turn in the wind. We help them develop understanding of the environment, which techniques will work in which situations. And then we give them a load of practice in safe environments to let them learn to respond to cues, to make the right choices, to put the right thing into practice at the right time. Coaching is just the same as that. It's about trying to do the right thing at the right time. And to

do that, we need choice. We need multiple ways of doing things. And we need a bit of spare brain.

18:41

George Fell: I guess I feel like the difference between a coach and a paddler is that the paddler's environment consists of water, which can be quite complicated. Whereas the coach's environment consists of water and people are always really complicated. I'm really lucky, really privileged to spend about half my time working for Sports Scotland over Glenmore Lodge. so I get to work with a load of really experienced coaches, of whom you were one. and the interesting coaching challenges and conversations are almost always about the people rather than the techy stuff. Yeah. cuz it doesn't really matter whether you're a sea paddler or a supad or what you coach is people. and that's often the hard bit, but that's also where all the joy is. So where are we now? coaches make decisions and they make decisions based on the cues from the people. They choose from a range of options.

George Fell: So, how do we get better at that stuff? We get better at coaching by coaching. so we need to then think about what worked and what didn't. We need to review it. We need to invent some stories to tell ourselves about why things happened and then use those stories to help with our future decisions. I think that's probably how we mostly navigate through the world is through stories rather than spreadsheets and data. My inner physicist cries at that point, so which I guess begs the question where do things like coach education courses fit into all that? and I've now slightly taken over your podcast because I'm now starting to ask myself questions, but however, good question, George.

George Fell: So when you ask coaches from other sports what has helped them develop as coaches things like experience and reflection and mentors come really high up that list and coach education courses almost always don't and I think that's fair because coaching is a really individual thing so how could you have a two-day syllabus heavy course with 10 people on it that prov provides all 10 people with exactly the thing that they need when those things are going to be absolutely wildly

different for each person. So I guess for me coach education courses provide a common set of ideas and tools and language to discuss coaching but actually what makes people good at coaching is coaching the ability to review the ability to work with more experienced coaches because we're all stealing ideas off other people all the time. It's what we do.

20:55

George Fell: and maybe the ability to work with a mentor talk to a mentor. I guess I'm also really privileged to be involved in delivering some performance coach and this sort of links back to coaching philosophy that a big part of that is helping people to refine their own coaching philosophies which then forms a big part of their practical assessment which is pretty cool. In effect, you're getting people to write their own assessment criteria for their assessment. It's kind of a genius idea. and in that, you'll really come across people who look inside themselves and can really strongly articulate who they are. and you also come across folks who are essentially paraphrasing the words they've heard on coaching courses or the paddle UK educational philosophy because they're at a stage of development where they're going, that's what I've been told is good, therefore that's what's good.

21:45

George Fell: rather than able to really sort of critically look inside themselves, look at what other people do and go, this is what really resonates with me, but this bit's really intention with who I am and so I really buy into. this I don't." and I guess I feel like then going back to coaching philosophy it is a really important idea but it can cause problems when it's introduced to people too early in their coach development because then it becomes about saying what they think people would like them to believe rather than actually seeing what they themselves believe.

22:18

George Fell: And I guess with coaching, we should also maybe acknowledge culture and fad and fashion in coaching. So if you're trying to make a boat go fast, then you've got a stopwatch that can tell you how you're doing. Yeah. Whereas something

like art or music, one person's masterpiece is another person's truss. so I think coaching is maybe closer to music than it is to racing, and I've definitely seen fashions change. So when I first went on a coaching course, it was all about how to transfer information from the coach's brain to the paddler's brain. I reckon over the last 10-15 years, the pendulum has swung the other way. And often it's about coming up with convoluted discovery tasks that allow the paddler to discover what works for them. and I guess with all pendulums, they kind of swing from side to side and there's maybe a happy place somewhere in the middle.

George Fell: That again was a lot of words.

So how can I summarise that? How do we get better at coaching by coaching. and then hopefully having some people to be able to talk it through with.

23:22

Georgina Maxwell: Yeah,...

Georgina Maxwell: as you were talking there, I was thinking, is he going to talk You talk straight about needs and wants because that's often quite a difficult balance, isn't it? When you get somebody, I want to do this. Actually, they need that. And the other point that you brought up is that reflection on our own practice. And personally what I think Scotland does incredibly well is that community of practice and particularly places like Glenmore Lodge when all the coaches come together and discuss and they talk about that one variable that you can't just magically be there is the people. So yeah, brilliant for bringing up those big points there.

24:02

George Fell: I just come back of those the needs wants things absolutely agree and trying to find that balance of believing in people's ability to set their own course but also they have paid there's an assumption there or they come along to your club because they sort of respect your knowledge and there is something they want from you so trying to find that compromise and particularly when the the want is so far ahead of what they actually can do what they need and building the relationship to a

point... where you can go, okay, can we just bring this back a little bit and change some real fundamental things and then it's really hard.

24:48

Georgina Maxwell: Yeah. and... the other thing is it's the way they've may have been coached in the past.

Georgina Maxwell: They may have been really transactionally coach coached and then suddenly they might come to another coach who has a strong belief of developing them transformationally and...suddenly they're going to be confused. They're like my experience of being coached before is being told what to do. Now you're asking me to think.

25:15

George Fell: Yeah. Do you think coaches also go through that same thing? So I think coaches often begin with knowing how to do this thing. How do I know how to do it? Because someone who I respect told me how it is. So this is how it works. And then they go through a sort of sad place in the middle where they're like, so I tried this thing and it didn't work." And then somebody else said something but was different. And they're trying to kind of resolve all those conflicts. and eventually I think coaches come out the other side of that as sort of wearily pragmatic. I can't tell you how to do this because the thing that works for you won't work for somebody else, but I have at least emerged with some ideas that might help you.

25:56

Georgina Maxwell: I often think of micromanager to wizard... who just stands there with his big pole and just watches with his hand on his chin goes, "Yes, they're doing it well." Right.

26:12

George Fell: Excellent. ...

George Fell: I haven't got there yet,...

Georgina Maxwell: Should we move to the next question? Yeah, work on your beard.

George Fell: but I will work on the beer.

Georgina Maxwell: On your beard.

George Fell: Yeah. Yeah.

Georgina Maxwell: Yeah. ...

George Fell: Yeah. ...

26:22

Georgina Maxwell: so yeah, again you've got this beautifully flowing, George. It's wonderful so far. and the next question that we've got is about the academia, and the research and how is that informing our coaching practice? have you got anything on there or did you feel like you kind of touched on them points?

26.38

George Fell: No. Very happy. I'm sitting in my little office which is where there's two bookcases of coaching books and papers because I guess at one point in my coaching development I thought that if I read all the papers and understood all and read all the books that would make me a brilliant coach and I don't think that's how it works but it is really interesting. so I think being in touch with the research is a great source of really valuable ideas, but it's not the be all and end all. so there are such a wide range of research methods. So from what the physicist in me would recognize as hard science where you do an experiment. So you take a load of sports science students into a lab and you do an experiment and you control all the variables and you try and measure stuff. which is great but by controlling all the variables and doing the lab you end up with this situation which is so far removed from the realities of coaching. and often when you actually measure stuff you find out that correlations are really weak. So, you'd like to believe that but what you find is when I do A, B happens about 50% of the time. but about 30% of the time this other thing happens. And about 10% of the time this other thing happens. On the other end of the

spectrum, there's research that feels more like storytelling. So, it's less about measuring, it's about finding out how people themselves rationalize stuff. And I said earlier I think we mostly navigate and explain the world through stories not numbers and spreadsheets. So I think that kind of research is really important too. They just provide different kinds of information and I really encourage folks to engage with the papers which you can often get textbooks which you can often find really cheap on eBay. Other online auction houses are available. but you will never ever find something that gives you an absolute definitive answer to the question that you're trying to answer. but you will find a load of exciting new rabbit holes to explore.

And you'll emerge from those rabbit holes, still confused, but in a much more nuanced and interesting way.

28:40

Georgina Maxwell: Excellent. Thanks very much,...

Georgina Maxwell: We're going to swing this into the last topic and kind of move a little bit away. Maybe I don't know you might have some points that tie into the stuff above, but we've got a different topic here and I know it's something that you're passionate about and I have been on the receiving end of one of your lectures on this at one of our staff trainings. So, I'd like you to share some of that with our listeners. And I guess if I give it a little bit of a question there, it'd be like how do we sort of reconcile the joy of what we get from paddling? And it's a big topic right now, but how does that fit with the impact it's having on the planet as a whole in our environment that we're living in and what we actually enjoy? So, yeah,... fire away, George. Our last little bit of the topic here.

29:29

George Fell: Hey, thank you very much,...So as you say this is really close to my heart. and we are already seeing the effects of climate change in our paddling. We were chatting recently about an outbreak of slime mold that's killing fish in one of our local favorite rivers. Why is that happening? because the water's really warm. on the sea I'm finding forecasts to be less accurate. I'm finding it to be gustier. we're not

getting that nice four or five weeks of high pressure we used to get in summer. The first storms of the autumn season are coming earlier than they ever used to. So climate change isn't a problem for future us. Climate change is a problem for now. and we are already feeling those effects and we are lucky in terms of where we live in the country we live, we're lucky we're not feeling the worst of the effects. So yeah, it's a question that's really close to my heart. 20 something years ago, I used to work as a weather forecaster. and back then I thought that if you could communicate the level of certainty about climate change being caused by humans emitting greenhouse gases. predominantly carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels but also methane from agriculture, food waste landfill, oxides of nitrogen from fertilizers and vehicle exhaust, a tiny little bit from fluorinated gases used in refrigeration. I thought if you could communicate that level of certainty that climate change is that it is serious, that it is our fault, that it is bad, but that we can still do stuff about it, I thought that we'd all make sensible decisions and change our behaviors to make the planet more inhabitable for future generations. but it turns out I was wrong cuz, I just didn't understand people at that age. We all love narratives where we're the heroines or the heroes and where somebody else is the bad person who causes all the problems in the world. I mean, you look at politics around the world. You can see those messages playing out. With climate change, we're all sharing the same planet and we're all simultaneously the baddies causing the problems. but potentially also the goodies who can change our behaviors and help fix them. So what can we do as paddlers? We can car share. If you want to have your per person emissions from your car journey the easiest way to do that is to put two people in your car. So having said that I've been trying to make car sharing happen on courses I'm running and it's amazing how resistant folks can be to it. So you can have folks who are simultaneously whinging about the cost of fuel, but absolutely not wanting to have to be a little bit more organized or go 20 minutes out of the way. And I mean, and wrong here. It's not about purity and competition. because, we're all hypocrites. I'm flying off to Greenland to go sea paddling this year.

But yeah car sharing would be one thing and we can try and buy kit that lasts and then actually look after So send it away to get recycled at the end of its life. We can

try to resist the desire to buy the latest new boat. We can think about doing a trip in the UK instead of flying abroad exactly like why I'm doing in August and September. and I guess when we're making decisions about what to do, we can try and factor in the environmental cost as well as the monetary cost. and I totally get it there. I am a position of massive privilege. Yeah, I can afford to insulate my house. I can afford to get silent solar panels on my roof. I'm lucky enough to be able to organize my life that so I can often bike to work. 20 years ago, I couldn't do any of those things. But everyone can try and factor in the environmental impact of what they do. Everyone can look at their own carbon footprint. So there are loads of online calculators out there. Now I get that the whole idea of carbon footprint is a little bit problematic. BP was the company who kind of first promoted it and it's not as though if we all reduce our carbon footprints that will solve all the problems of the world, but it absolutely is part of it. So there's loads of things we can do to at least check what our carbon footprint is and then do whatever we can to reduce it. Don't underestimate the effects of things like who you bank with, which energy provider you use, if you're lucky enough to who your pension pop is with. so we can all make individual changes. and we all need to do that.

34.17

George Fell: And whatever we do will hopefully not just affect us, but will ripple out and inspire other people. the biggest predictor for people getting solar panels is someone in the next few houses to them having solar panels. have a conversation with your paddling buddies about climate change. that costs nothing and it might change people's behavior. on a bigger scale, we can get involved with campaigning. and we wield power at the ballot box. so just understanding the responsibility we have, the way we choose to act in the next decade potentially affects the planet for the next few hundred years.

George Fell: Which sounds like a suitably weighted place to stop. so

35.01

Georgina Maxwell: Thank you.

Georgina Maxwell: But, I think don't underestimate them conversations with people and I always revert back to this story. I was working at the lodge, I had two clients for a weekend. It was only a weekend and I was driving them to the river and I was having a conversation with them.

Georgina Maxwell: I was like, " yeah, last weekend I sucked across Scotland." And they were like, "What?" I said, "Yeah, I stand up paddle board from Falerk to I just went straight across the middle of Scotland." And I said, "On that journey, I picked up some plastic bottles and I got some guy to drive down the side and meet me every so often and pick up this bin bag full of plastic bottles I picked up." And I said, I picked up 330 by the end of it and I laid them all out on the grass and I counted them. They're all filthy things that are horrible. And then I got them washed and I went and recycled them. And he's like, "What?" And I was like, "Yeah, okay." And then anyway, he found me on Instagram weeks later and he messaged me and he went, " on the back of that conversation we had, I didn't tell you this, but I ran five boats. I'm in charge of five boats that work on the sea.

And on each boat I have 300 staff members and on every single day of the year they get issued a water bottle. And I was trying to do the maths going what? And I did the maths and I was like that's a lot of water bottles. And he said on the back of that conversation I've now trialled on two boat water stations and it's been a success and we're going to roll them out onto all five boats.

Georgina Maxwell: And it's like from that one conversation I had from somebody when I'm sipping across Scotland and...

George Fell: Brilliant.

Georgina Maxwell: I have all these guys going, "What are you doing?" And "I'm just picking up bottles. " the council does that." It was funny. Anyway, there we go. Thank you, George. You've been an absolute pleasure.

George Fell: Yeah. Yeah.

George Fell: Thank you.

Georgina Maxwell: That's been an awesome podcast, and I really hope the listeners have really enjoyed that one. So, great.

George Fell: Thank you for having me and...

George Fell: Happy paddling.

Georgina Maxwell: Thanks, George.