



F R E U I D S

PLAN B | BUSINESS UNUSUAL PRESENTS

YOU LOOK
AFTER **WHAT**
YOU LOVE



Interview with Tom Kay, founder of Finisterre

Why did you start Finisterre?

It was born out of my love for the sea. I wanted to build a brand and products that could enable that same connection for others. My belief is that when you connect someone to something, you're going to instil a sense of guardianship and protection, which is a relationship I thought needed inspiring. What started in a flat above a surf shop with a hardy fleece, back in 2003, has since grown to an 85 strong company with 10 shops. For us, there's been a reconciliation between rapid growth and good growth. In the beginning, our commitment to recycled fabrics and responsible manufacturing may have slowed us a little, but I'm proud of our journey.

From day one we've been dedicated to product, people and the environment, and focused on innovation, sustainability and transparency. We set out to affect change in an industry that sorely needs it.

Why do you have Sea Tuesdays?

Finisterre is intimately linked to the sea and comes

through everything we do. So, every Tuesday, staff are welcome to enjoy it and start an hour later. We're lucky enough to be a 2-minute walk away, so whether you want to surf huge waves or take the dog for a walk with your other half, go for it. People's relationship with the water is incredibly personal and it's important to renew as often as you can. The culture of any workplace is fundamental to its success, you need to be in tune with its wider purpose, live it, breathe it. People jump in the sea whenever the tide is right, regardless of the time, so it's an easy-going but hardworking culture.

How do you work with communities to inspire that same connection?

Through the grassroots initiative Get City Kids Surfing, we support kids in London by taking them down to the coast so they can experience it themselves. We also work with Waves of Change, a South African charity that helps disadvantaged children surf and learn about the sea. Recently, we completed our Into the Sea project and produced a Seasuit to encourage greater participation in surfing

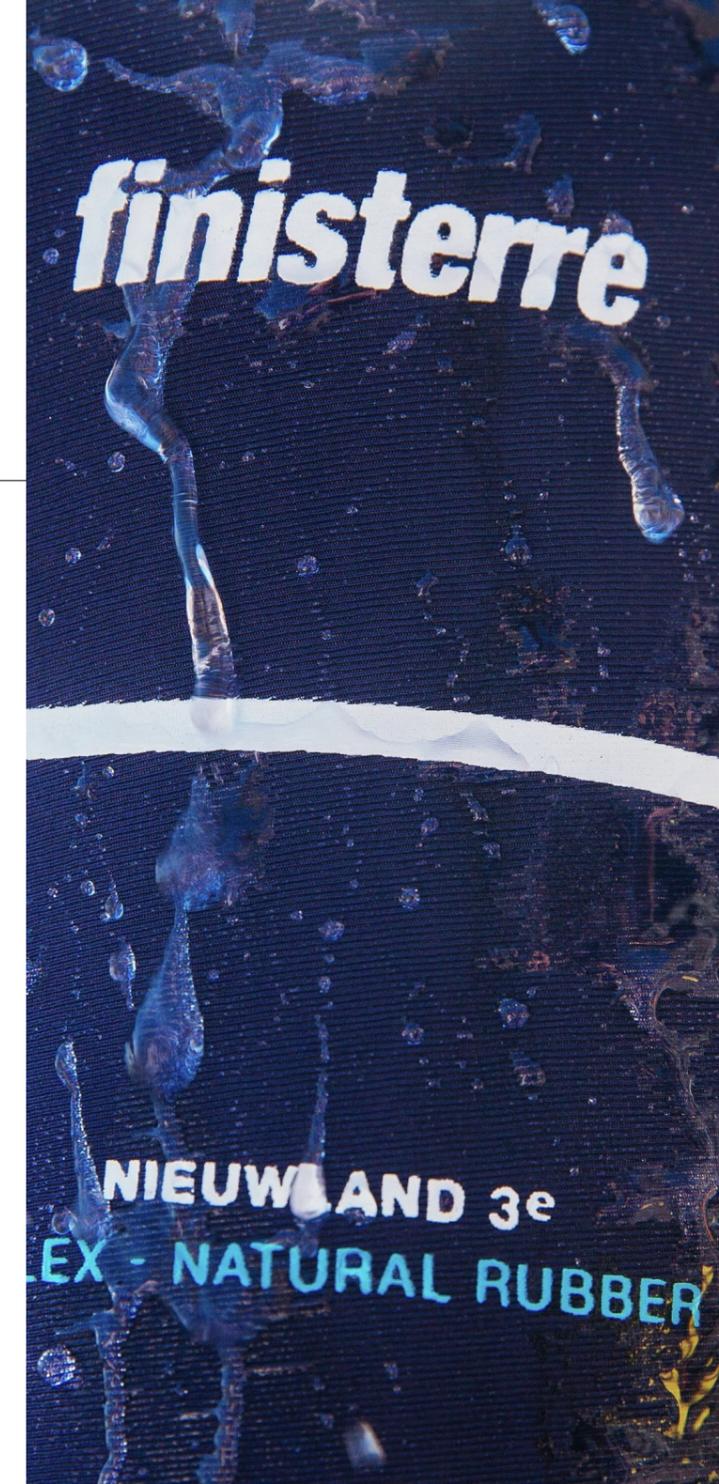
for women from all backgrounds and cultures, especially those with restrictive attitudes towards clothing. We want to improve access to the sea for everyone and our global outreach is something we're hoping to step up.

What are the benefits of an honest and open brand?

When you have a purpose beyond profit and can articulate that honestly – your customers and community will always appreciate that open dialogue. We've just released our first annual Positive Impact Report, which looks back at our work and how we can improve, with full transparency and accountability. People increasingly understand that's the way businesses should be run. With that comes loyalty and an affinity to your business.

Which sustainability initiatives over the last couple years you've been particularly proud of?

Every single one of our products has a story.





BRIGHT IDEA

When you connect someone to something, you instil a sense of guardianship. You look after what you love.

We helped resurrect a dwindling wool supply chain from the last twenty-eight Bowmont Merino sheep left in the world, use recycled fishing nets and marine waste for our swimwear, have mended over 6,000 items so they can have a new lease of life and make wetsuits out of wetsuits. We're trying to practice circularity as a business model, to really close the loop. For us, trying to be a sustainable business isn't cynical, simple PR or marketing, it's who we are and what we've been doing for over fifteen years.

What steps are needed in the next decade for you to transition to carbon net zero?

We've outlined a roadmap for what we need to do to reduce our carbon footprint, waste, water use and impact on land through agriculture. After a year in production we've finally created a new product bag that's water soluble, recyclable and completely marine safe, replacing 80,000 polybags. That's just the beginning of lots of steps – properly mapping our distribution, agriculture and transportation footprint, increasing our use of linen and hemp,

reducing microfibre release from textiles – to get us to carbon net zero by 2030.

How has becoming B Corp certified changed the company and what does it mean to you personally?

I had been aware of B Corp for a while and was keen to get certified. The process was pretty rigorous and looked at all areas of the business – from transparency to sustainability, culture to governance. We passed in 2018 the first time round, which is significant and quite unusual. For me, it was confirmation of all those years of work. Having this third-party recognition illustrates to new people, whether that's people coming to work for us or buy from us for the first time, 'this business is really doing what it's saying it's doing, rather than a bit of environmental spin'. Greenwashing is thick and fast right now and having that approval means not only that the business is growing in the right way, but is legally committed to pursuits beyond the bottom line. No matter what sector, size, or where you're based – if you're B Corp everyone knows you've

undergone proper testing of how the business is run. It's also invaluable because we now have a means to properly measure our growth, giving us a direction both internally and externally.

FACT BOX

NAME Finisterre

BUSINESS UK outdoor apparel and surfing company

MISSION Design functional and sustainable products for those that share a love of the sea

FOUNDED 2003

FOUNDER Tom Kay

EMPLOYEES 65

TURNOVER £6.7m per annum

How is life under lockdown?

We've been donating fabric for a scrubs project and have also launched a t shirt design competition called 'rainbows and swallows', with 100% of sales proceeds going to the COVID-19 emergency fund appeal. We had over 700 designs entered!

Are you optimistic about the future of our oceans and the life within it?

I'm a realistic optimist. We have a serious set of problems that need to be fundamentally addressed. There's an urgency because the ocean's future is our future, half the air we breathe comes from the sea. We are trying to lead by example by inspiring a love of the sea, because you look after what you love. It's my hope that the human spirit can be as resilient as nature itself, because we need a sea change *now*.



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TOM KAY Founder of Finisterre



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