

# PRESS RELEASE    Blue Flag International

## Everyone welcome down by the sea

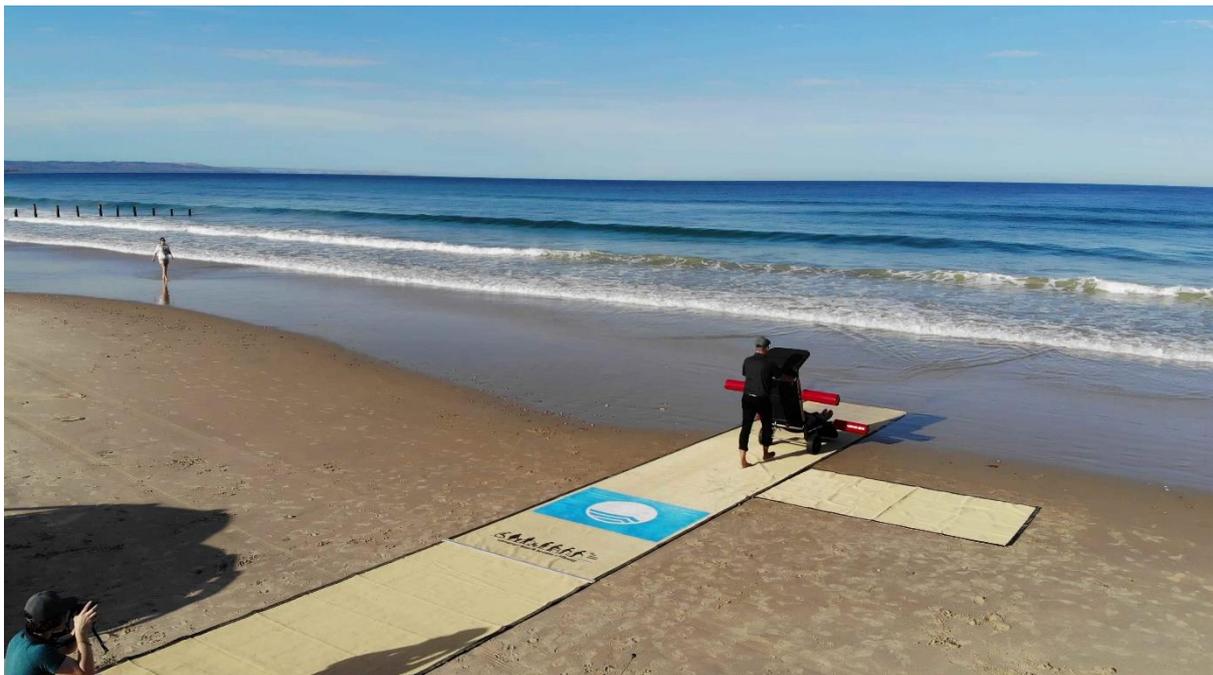
Date 25<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019 – The iconic Blue flag, the world’s most recognised voluntary eco-label for protecting our coasts, has today signed a new partnership with Total Beach Access which will change the face of beaches worldwide, by increasing accessibility and inclusivity for all, at no cost to the public.

“This ground-breaking new partnership is a real game-changer that will ensure our Blue Flag beaches are accessible to everyone including the elderly, families with baby buggies and people with physical disabilities or visual impairments. It will impact the experience of millions” says International Blue Flag Programme Director Sophie Bachet Granados.

“Blue Flag and Total Beach Access working together can change the world by welcoming those who previously struggled to navigate their way to the water. This is a necessary change so that all people have the same opportunity to enjoy the beach.” Connie Skibicki from Total Beach Access.

## How does it work?

Accessibility for all will be achieved through two integral components. A specially-made walkway system will be placed on a Blue Flag awarded beach allowing wheelchair users and families with prams easy access over soft sand or small pebbles. This will be equipped with special devices to guide the visually impaired using a phone app.





“Access to the beach is the first part, but we also wanted to make sure people with physical disabilities didn’t just have to just stay on the beach and watch others enjoy the water. So we have designed a state-of-the-art amphibious wheelchair which will allow them to go in as well.” says Connie Skibicki.



## Partnership

“Wheelchair accessibility is becoming more important for public authorities around the world. So, in response, Blue Flag and Total Beach Access are now providing beach access walkways, amphibious wheelchairs and wireless technology to councils. This is possible due to our commercial sponsors that see the humanitarian importance of equal access to our beaches and oceans!” says Connie.

Cape Verde, Colombia, Finland, India and South Korea, are currently working on their pilot sites and the first Blue Flag beach to reap the benefits will be announced this summer. There are currently more than 3750 Blue Flag beaches in 44 countries around the world.

“It’s quite simple: we have linked with sponsors who wish to increase beach accessibility.

Through sensitive advertising on both products, sponsors are contributing to this valuable change thus allowing councils with Blue Flag awarded beaches the use of walkways and amphibious wheelchairs for free”, explains Sophie Bacht Granados.

“Although there is no cost involved for the beach, we have not compromised on quality. The products all incorporate advanced design features and made to very strict quality controls as well as carbon neutral and can be re-used or recycled”, Sophie adds.

Blue Flag International Jury member, Jesus Hernández Galán, Vice President of ENAT, the European Network for Accessible Tourism, adds: “ENAT is proud to promote this global initiative, which will surely make a huge difference to family members and individuals who have mobility or vision limitations. No-one should be denied the possibility to enjoy a visit to

the beach and experience sea bathing, if they wish. This ambitious collaboration can really open up new leisure possibilities for tourists and locals alike.”

“Improving the sustainable development of local communities through tourism is one of the unique potentials of the tourism sector and creates lasting values” added Dr. Dirk Glaesser, Director of Sustainable Tourism Development at the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and member of the international jury of the Blue Flag.

“Blue Flag has always been a front-runner, and with this new global partnership, we intend to continue to strive for excellence and beyond,” concludes Sophie.

<http://www.blueflag.global/all-bf-sites>

**Video about the partnership:**

<https://youtu.be/Kzm0P2SZrnc>

Short Info about Blue Flag

The iconic Blue Flag is the world’s most recognised voluntary eco-label awarded to beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators. In order to qualify for the Blue Flag, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety, and accessibility criteria must be met and maintained.

<http://www.blueflag.global>

Short Info about Total Beach Access:

World-leading provider of universal walkway system, all terrain and amphibious wheelchairs.

<https://totalbeachaccess.com>

Short Info about European Network for Accessible Tourism

The leading non-profit membership association supporting public authorities, destinations and businesses in their efforts to develop sustainable, accessible and inclusive tourism.

<https://www.accessibletourism.org>

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