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Gill appoints Kara Groves as Chief Executive

Nottingham, UK – 13 November 2026 – Gill, a global leader in technical marine apparel, has appointed Kara Groves as Chief Executive, bringing more than 15 years of experience leading and growing consumer brands. Groves will lead the business with a focus on e-commerce, range planning and closer collaboration with Gill's international retailers and distributors.

Groves spent more than seven years at Joules, where, as Chief Commercial Officer, she brought buying, sourcing and wholesale closer together. During her time there, turnover tripled as the brand broadened its range and expanded internationally, including in the US. She went on to oversee finance, e-commerce and international growth as Chief Operating Officer at Mint Velvet and later led Bambino Mio and Wyse London as Chief Executive.

In 1975, Nick Gill began making sailing kit in a corner of his father's lace factory in Long Eaton, near Nottingham, UK. Gill's global headquarters remain in Long Eaton, but its reach now extends to a distribution network spanning 40 countries and a global e-commerce platform. Groves is the first woman to lead the business in its 51-year history.



Kara Groves, Gill's new CEO. Credit Gill

Commenting on her appointment, Groves said: "I've always enjoyed working with founder-led businesses. There's usually a very personal reason the founder set out to make something better. For Nick, it was wanting better kit for the dinghy sailing he was doing. You can still see that practical approach in the

products Gill makes today. I also grew up sailing with my father, so there's a personal connection for me too.

"My experience is in bringing the product and commercial sides of a business closer together. At Gill, that means listening to the retailers and distributors who know their customers best, and making sure what we learn shapes the ranges we develop and the stock we put behind them. That's where I can make a difference as the business grows."

Groves succeeds John Hibbard, who steps down after three years as Chief Executive to pursue personal interests. During his tenure, Hibbard sharpened Gill's focus on the needs of sailors and boaters – strengthening the brand and helping shape key technical collections.

Groves and members of Gill's senior leadership team will be at METSTRADE in Amsterdam next week. Retailers, distributors and members of the marine press are invited to meet the team and see the latest collections on stand 3.223 in the British Pavilion (Hall 3).

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