

People, Places and Communities

Together on Water

Our strategy for a
welcoming and vibrant
sailing and boating
community in
Scotland



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Welcome

Sailing and boating have a unique place in our society, giving participants the chance to experience beautiful and at times challenging environments while providing lifelong enjoyment on water.

Sailing and boating also offer a huge diversity of routes and roles to engage with – be that recreational, competitive or (through instruction and coaching) meaningful opportunities for education, training and employment.

Such diversity of activity and participation gives individuals and organisations great scope to evolve and develop their relationship with boating. It's a sport which can provide enjoyment, wellbeing and interest for life. What's more, it boosts the self-confidence, resilience and independence of even the youngest participants, to an extent that few other sports do.

This refreshed strategy continues to build on our key themes of People, Places and Communities and embraces the intention of the RYA national strategy to bring people together – **Together on Water**. Our strategy continues to align with the fundamentals of sport and the power it has to improve health and change lives.

As an organisation, we know we must be relevant to and engaged with the community, by remaining open and by listening.

Through this refresh of People, Places and Communities, we look forward to setting out our commitments for supporting the Scottish sailing and boating community into the future.



Brian Wilson

Brian Wilson, Chair
RYA Scotland



Finlo Cottier

Finlo Cottier, CEO
RYA Scotland

Changing lives

When our strategic plan **People, Places and Communities**, was launched in 2022, it signified a landmark approach for a governing body of sport.

It was outward-looking and captured the essence of the participatory environment – the people at the heart of our sport, the diverse locations where boating takes place, and the communities connected by it.

It built on the core themes of **sport**scotland's strategy **Sport for Life** and the national priorities for sport. It also reflected the **Changing Lives** agenda by embedding the principles of Inclusion, Health and Wellbeing, Communities and Skills. It is a strategy that has served Scotland's boating community well.

Over recent years, communities and organisations have had to respond and adapt to extensive societal change. In many places, they have bounced back and reshaped themselves. The positive outcomes we have achieved by working alongside organisations and communities are highlighted in our **Impact Reports**, which give the rich narrative and underpinning metrics of growth and evolution.

Recent highlights include an increase in the number of clubs offering the OnBoard programme, supported by a growing team of OnBoard tutors. We've also made a step change in the number of women engaged as coaches, committee volunteers and instructors.

As an organisation, we have become better connected with Scotland's diverse sailing and boating community. We have focused our efforts on supporting, developing and valuing participants, volunteers, clubs and affiliated organisations. In turn, they have embraced the philosophy and direction of People, Places and Communities.

However, there is always scope to hone our approach to supporting boating organisations around the country in how they respond to the challenges that affect them. These include volunteer fatigue, maintenance and replacement of equipment and facilities, climate change, ageing demographics and unequal access and opportunity.

This refreshed strategy incorporates both our own learning as well as the ongoing listening we have done with participants, organisations and stakeholders. We have increased our youth engagement and representation in particular.

Moving forwards, we will retain and build on the Changing Lives approach to sport and our three strategic priorities of People, Places and Communities. This strategy also clarifies our four strategic foundations: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Sustainability, Partnerships and Communications.

Further, we are retaining and strengthening our successful regional approach to delivering support, in recognition of Scotland's geographical diversity. In particular, we are working to grow our understanding and appreciation of the needs of rural and island communities.

Through our actions, we shall be fit for the future. This strategy guides our priorities as we continue to bring people together on water.

Who we are

Governing status and structure

Royal Yachting Association Scotland (RYA Scotland) is the recognised Scottish Governing Body for all forms of recreational, competitive and professional boating, including dinghy, motor and sail cruising, all forms of sail racing, RIBs and sportsboats, windsurfing and personal watercraft. It is also the leading representative body for inland waterways cruising.

We deliver our mission through our staff team, supported by a Board of non-executive directors and four governance committees comprised of volunteers providing specialist guidance and insight. The four committees support:

- Participation and Development
- Cruising and General Purposes
- Performance
- Coaching

RYA Scotland is a separately constituted Home Country Association of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA), the National Governing Body in the UK and a membership organisation with over 108,000 members, including individuals, families and affiliated clubs and Recognised Training Centres.



Our shared purpose

To promote and protect safe, successful and rewarding boating in Scotland.

Everything we do to support the people, places and communities we serve is undertaken with this in mind.

In numbers

A small organisation making a big impact in our communities



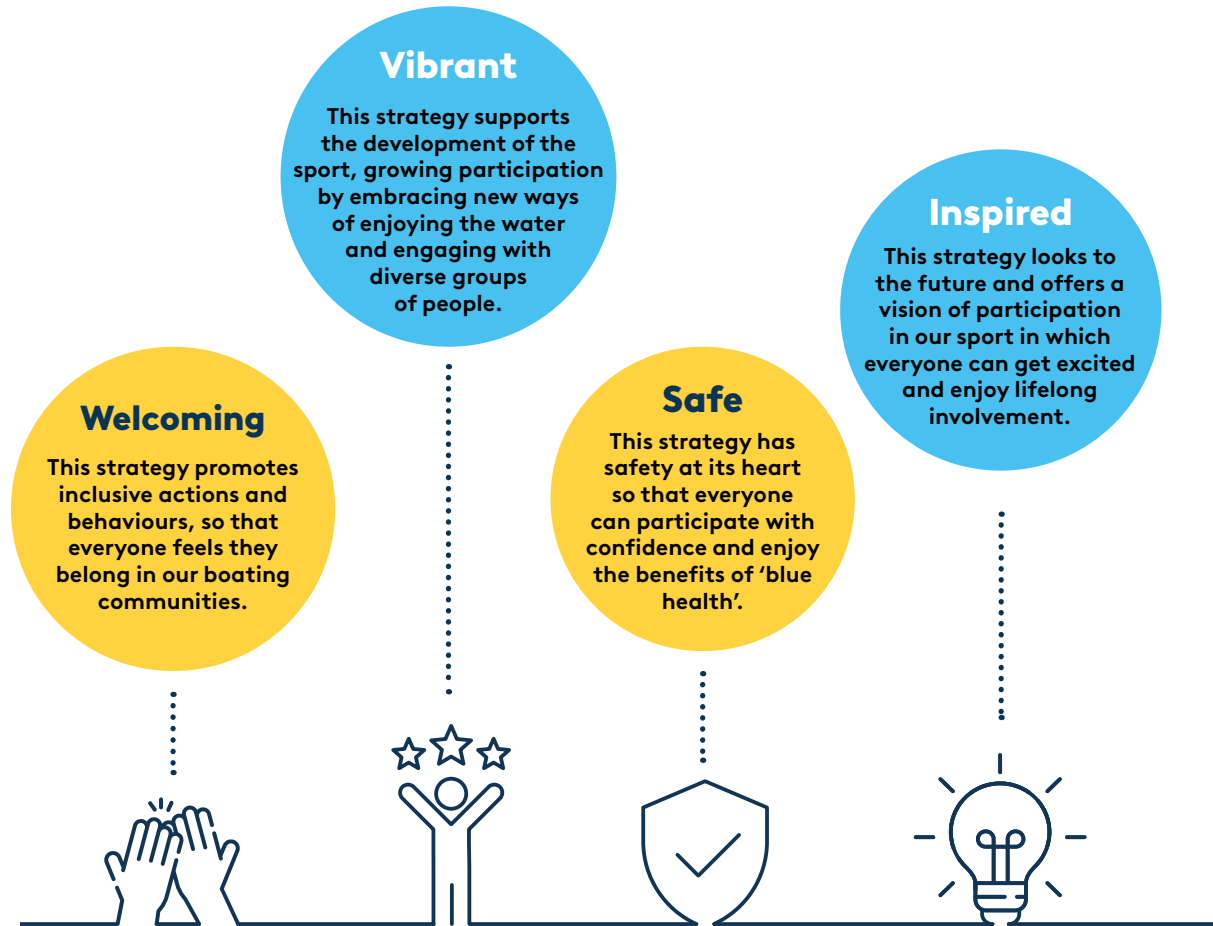
Vision

Our shared aspirational destination

A welcoming and vibrant boating community where everyone feels safe and inspired.



What our Vision means



Mission

Our route to turning this vision into reality

RYA Scotland will inspire, nurture and support people, places and communities to develop themselves, positively influence others, celebrate successes and share a lifelong enjoyment of boating in Scotland.

Values

The foundations that guide our behaviours, actions and decisions



Openness

We are welcoming, visible, accessible and inclusive, but also open to new ideas and opportunities.



Excellence

We behave and deliver to the highest standards and support others to be their best.



Integrity

We are transparent, sincere and impartial.



Responsibility

We encourage and support everyone to take ownership of their actions and be positive role models for their sport.

We will operate to a set of core values shared across our community and the wider RYA family, as well as by our partners and providers. They are universal and are to be upheld by all who operate under our banner; they are a measure by which every action we take should be judged.



Strategic foundations

Four foundations underpin all three of our strategic themes of People, Places and Communities, helping us to focus our actions and use our resources effectively. They also provide a framework for measuring progress and ensuring we stay informed and relevant.

1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



EDI is not an end point, but a continuous journey of self-examination and improvement. RYA Scotland has always been at the vanguard of meaningful EDI engagement and action.

We remain committed to learning and responding to the specific needs and aspirations of different groups, understanding barriers to participation in boating, and staying informed about wider societal changes.

Our strategic commitment

- We will work to break down the existing and perceived financial and socio-economic barriers to participation in boating.
- We believe disability is no barrier to participation.
- We will ensure that youth voices are heard in our decision-making.
- We will support the participation and contribution of women within the marine and outdoor sector.
- We will increase the diversity of our participants and workforce, and highlight role models.
- We will challenge ourselves to ensure the way we work is open and inclusive.
- We will encourage Scotland's wider boating community to continue fostering a sense of belonging for all participants, and bringing a positive approach to EDI.

2 Sustainability



Environmental sustainability and the protection of marine habitats are priorities close to the hearts of many who enjoy being on water. Therefore, it is right that we play our part to secure a sustainable future for coming generations.

Whilst the direct impact we can make may only be small, our actions can inspire much bigger change. We place sustainability and safeguarding of the marine environment at the heart of our ethos.

Our strategic commitment

Through our action:

- We will quantify our carbon impact and take active decisions to reduce it.
- We will control our own impacts and lead by example.
- We will advocate for clean and healthy recreational waters.
- We will manage the impact of the events and activities we organise to demonstrate best practice.

Through our influence:

- We will maintain RYA Scotland's role as a leading champion of a sustainable environment.
- We will influence others through active conversations with our members, partners and integrated networks.
- We will champion **The Green Blue** initiative in Scotland.
- We will promote sustainable approaches to sailing and boating.



3 Partnerships

We value and encourage partnerships where collaboration leads to synergies, whether in widening participation or amplifying the voice for boating.

Certain aspirations simply cannot be delivered without working in partnership. Equally, partner agencies may benefit from drawing on RYA Scotland's collective experience

Successful collaboration requires trust and shared values. We are committed to partnerships in line with our values, working in good faith towards mutual benefit.

Our strategic commitment

- We will be open to new partnerships where there are clear, positive and mutual benefits that align with our mission and values.
- We will be committed and reliable when we enter into a partnership.
- We will recognise the contribution our partners bring to the outcomes of our work.
- We will seek partnerships that give greater visibility and opportunity for impact beyond our traditional communities.
- We will encourage partnership building within the boating community in Scotland and beyond.
- We will build partnerships with other governing bodies of sport to enhance experiences and opportunities for participating in watersports and other outdoor activities.

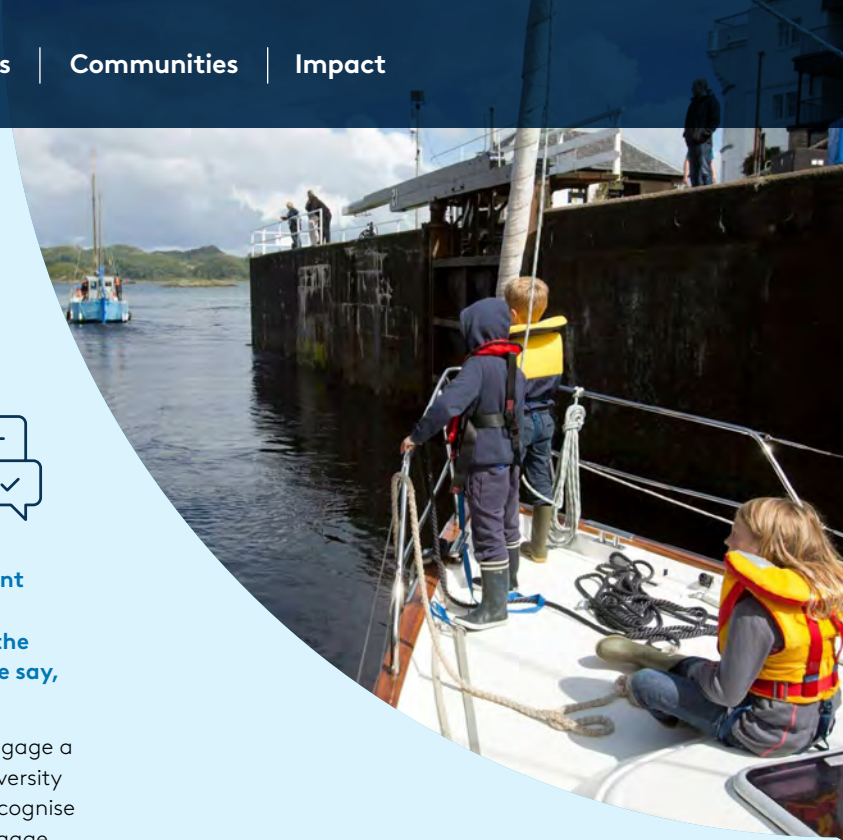
4 Communications

To deliver on our strategy, we must be relevant and connected to the people, places and communities we work with. We understand the importance of our communications: what we say, how we say it, who we reach and why.

We want our communications to inspire and engage a wide range of people, while appreciating the diversity of the boating community we serve. We also recognise that effective communication requires us to engage with and listen to people and their communities: their ideas, needs and concerns.

Our strategic commitment

- We will remain relevant, accessible and engaged.
- We will strive to be the trusted voice for advice on boating in Scotland – for RYA members, the wider boating community and public agencies.
- We will use technology to reach more people and encourage them to join our conversations.
- By hosting in-person and virtual discussions, we will encourage people and organisations to connect, share ideas and learn from each other.
- We will find opportunities and locations to actively listen to the boating community.



People

People are the very core of boating in Scotland. For many, being on the water can have a transformative impact on their lives – their health and wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of purpose and belonging.

By delivering more sessions in more places on the Changing Lives approach, we will enable more people to experience the many lifelong benefits of spending time on water. And by supporting skills development, we will encourage more people to volunteer or pursue a career in boating and the wider marine sector.

Whether RYA members, participants, volunteers or staff, we want our people to be:

Successful in their chosen path, be that enjoying, supporting, learning, competing, instructing, coaching, officiating or working professionally.

Supported in what they do, to feel encouraged and have access to excellent resources and help when needed.

Inclusive of all individual identities and committed to creating a safe and welcoming space.

And to have a strong sense of belonging and feel **included** in conversations, activities and decision-making that affect them.

Valued by their community for their successes, efforts and contributions.

Listening to youth voices

A new initiative to represent the voices of young people in boating at all levels of RYA Scotland's decision-making – including Board level – kicked off at our Connected Scotland Event in early March 2024.

The Young Sailors Chatroom captured young people's views on how they would like to engage with us, and helped shape a consultation over the summer. The result is our new Youth Voices group, which will represent young participants and allow their perspectives to be heard by RYA Scotland decision makers at all levels.

"I think it's important for youngsters to be involved in the conversation... They see things with fresh perspectives and can come up with wild and wonderful solutions to problems..."

Robyn Francis, Chief Instructor at Ancrum Outdoor Centre and Young Sailors Chatroom participant





Strategic priorities

How we will do this:

- We will encourage people to be curious and take responsibility for their own learning.
- We will implement forums designed by young people for young people to bring the youth voice to our decision-making.
- We will understand the varying needs and aspirations of people across Scotland and deliver actions to address these locally through our Regional Plans.
- We will be active in reducing economic and other barriers to personal development and learning.
- We will take instructor and coach development out to our community and support people to develop the skills they seek, as close to them as possible.
- We will be led by the needs and aspirations of participants during our coaching.
- We will evolve and promote our Volunteer Development Framework to encourage more people to get involved, and better support those who already are.
- We will continue to value and acknowledge the impact people make within their communities and sport through their commitment, hard work and exceptional achievement.
- We will aim for 100% compliance with guidelines for safeguarding in sport.



Places

Places are where our people and our diverse community come together to share their common interest in boating.

Our places include the waters we enjoy being on and the key infrastructure we use for collaboration, learning, socialising, training and competition.

We will represent the boating community to ensure our waters are clean, well-managed and accessible. We will also support boating organisations of all types and sizes across Scotland to develop their facilities, so that they become even more welcoming, functional and sustainable.

We want places to be:

Successful in longevity, delivery of vibrant activity and strength of membership to match their ambitions.

Accessible so that everyone who wants to be involved in boating can do so at a place near their home.

Open to provide a welcoming, enjoyable environment where people feel they belong, and to bring new people to boating while also encouraging lifelong participation.

Valued by RYA Scotland, their boating community and the wider communities that surround them.

Flexible so that they can adapt to social change and support the needs of their local community whilst still being the focal point for boating.

Sustainable in minimising their environmental impact and protecting their local environment.

Loch Broom evolves to serve its coastal community

With advice and support from our Regional Development Officer, Ullapool's Loch Broom Sailing Club recently changed its legal status to become a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and is gradually growing its junior sailing offering to connect more local youngsters with their sea-going heritage, while getting parents involved too.

"Ours is a coastal community with a long history of people going to sea... We feel very strongly that more local kids should be able to connect with and enjoy the sea, and feel safe on it... The help we've had from RYA Scotland has been invaluable in encouraging and supporting us to pursue our aspirations."

Gillian Meighan and Jason Leon, Junior Sailing Coordinators, Loch Broom Sailing Club



Watch Loch Broom's Impact Award video



Strategic priorities

How we will do this:

- We will recognise Scotland's geographic diversity and take time to understand the opportunities and challenges this presents, particularly in rural and island locations.
- Through our Regional Plans, we will work with organisations, local authorities and other bodies to support the evolution of welcoming, modern, innovative, safe and flexible facilities.
- We will continue to provide a series of engaging workshops, online seminars and conferences which focus on the use of [On Course for the Future](#), our development framework for boating organisations.
- Our Class Academy programme will continue to deliver high-quality coaching to more young people in more places around Scotland.
- We will continue to develop suitable environments to deliver our Pathway to Performance Programmes and higher-level training and qualifications.
- We will manage the inspection process for Recognised Training Centres in Scotland, to ensure the environment is safe, promotes learning and maintains the RYA standards.
- We will champion The Green Blue initiative and encourage boating organisations to make more sustainable operational choices to protect the places that are the foundation of our sport.



Communities

Communities give people and places a sense of belonging and connect them through their common interests, or their local, regional or national identity.

Societal shifts have seen people rediscover their local community and the many benefits that being on or near the water can bring. We will work to champion the relevance and positive impact of boating, so that it can find its place and purpose within communities around Scotland.

We want boating communities to be:

Successful in meeting the needs and aspirations of the people that make up a community, through their own efforts and with the support of RYA Scotland.

Open and welcoming to all, encouraging of learning, active in bringing new people to boating and facilitating ongoing participation.

Valued by their members for the connections, support, activity and care they provide.

Sustainable by understanding the collective impact of community action on sustainability and challenging themselves to lead by example.

Collaborative in working towards common goals at the heart of the community, sharing ideas and challenges, and providing constructive discussion and debate that supports continuous improvement.



Watch video
of Fin & Foil
Championships
2024

Bringing together Scotland's windsurfers and wingers

New wind sports association Scottish Fin & Foil, founded in early 2023, provides a home for Scotland's windsurfing and winging community. It aims to grow participation and run inclusive, welcoming race events for all ages across classes including Techno 293, Raceboard, iQFoil and wing foil.

RYA Scotland has facilitated and supported its first two Open Championships, held in Stranraer in August 2023 and 2024 – the only five-day race event on the UK windsurfing calendar. For 2024, junior training camps were added, and the event saw a 50% increase in participation.

“The purpose of the association is to have a focal point north of the border. Our aim with the Open Championships is to make it fun and welcoming for everyone, from beginners dipping a toe into racing, to the seasoned pros.”

Danny Hawthorn, Chair,
Scottish Fin & Foil





Strategic priorities

How we will do this:

- We will address the shared aspirations and challenges of local and regional communities and communities of interest through our Regional Plans.
- We will further develop delivery of Changing Lives learning opportunities around Scotland to nurture a diverse and inclusive boating community and support continued participation for all.



- We will actively connect communities in boating with others around them, by sharing good practice and examples of successful collaborations.
- We will foster connections within our coaching communities to encourage peer-to-peer interactions, support and growth.
- We will actively engage with those organisations that play key roles within our Sailing Pathway community to ensure positive experiences and outcomes for pathway sailors to support a lifelong participation.
- We will endeavour to support sailing and boating events throughout Scotland to help build communities of participants.

Demonstrating impact

This strategy builds on our belief that numbers are only part of the story and that success in achieving a target is only a momentary point on a longer journey based on a rich variety of outcomes.



Impact Reports

Take a look at our most recent Impact Reports under People, Places and Communities:

[Impact Report 2022-23](#)

[Impact Report 2023-24](#)

What does impact look like?

The depth and range of the personal and societal benefits that boating has for Scotland's people, places and communities is a narrative best told by those affected by our efforts. The difference we make to their lives is the measure by which we will judge our impact, and which we articulate in our regular communications and Impact Reports.

How do we measure impact?

There are times when the positive outcomes of our work can be measured and quantified. Behind those numbers are rich and inspiring human stories, or additional supporting evidence illustrating the difference our input has made, and how we are making progress towards our strategic outcomes.

With feedback from our partners, affiliated organisations and wider stakeholders alongside key measurable metrics, we will make greater use of the narrative behind the figures to demonstrate meaningful impact across our activities.

How do we report impact?

We will regularly share great examples of positive impact through our digital communications channels and [Impact Reports](#). We will also take opportunities to share examples of impact directly with other communities and organisations to inspire them in their own journey. We will share our impact with key stakeholders to demonstrate our relevance.

How do we reward impact?

Impact within the boating community can be recognised and rewarded in many ways, the simplest being direct acknowledgment and thanks to those involved via our communications channels.

Greater recognition of exceptional impact is given through our [Impact Awards](#), with nominations coming from the community and celebrated with the community.



Meet some of our Impact Award recipients on our dedicated YouTube playlist.

Tell us what you think

Do you have any feedback, thoughts or questions about our strategy?

Please get in touch via communications@ryascotland.org.uk

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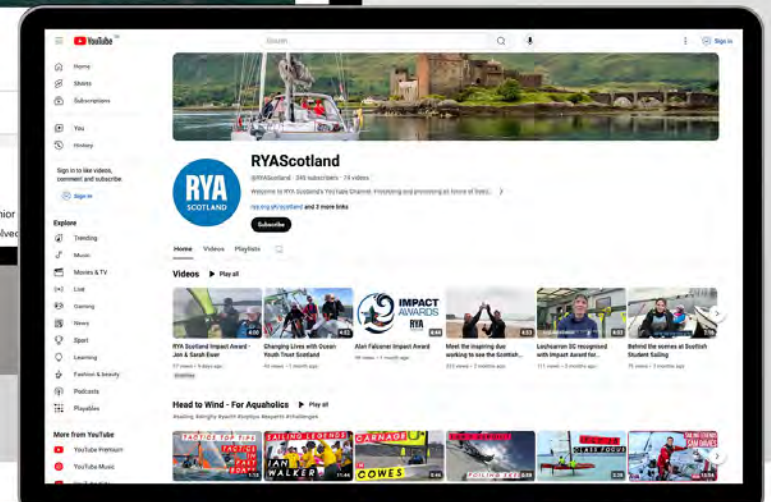
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Communications and Engagement Lead Officer:
Philippa Howie

Copywriting and editing: Ida Maspero

Design: Julie Young

Photography: RYA Scotland, Marc Turner, Dougie Bell,
Ida Maspero, Monique Greig, Bill McCandlish,
Stephen Lawson, Brian Pahlmann, Laura Cowan,
Philippa Howie, Ross Johnston