

**RYA**  
SCOTLAND

# Impact Report Year 3

2024-25

People, Places and Communities



 **sport  
scotland**  
LOTTERY FUNDED

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Royal Yachting Association Scotland (RYA Scotland) is the recognised Scottish Governing Body for all forms of recreational, competitive and professional boating.

We represent the interests of Scotland’s diverse boating community, including dinghy, motor and sail cruising, all forms of sail racing, RIBs and sports boats, windsurfing and personal watercraft. We are also the leading representative body for inland waterways cruising.

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 purpose

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

## Our vision

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

## Our mission

We will foster sustainable and inclusive people, places and communities who are empowered to develop themselves, support others, celebrate successes and share the enjoyment of boating in Scotland.

## Our core values



Inclusivity



Excellence



Integrity



Respect

# Welcome

The launch of **People, Places and Communities**, our strategic plan for 2022 to 2025, signified a landmark for a governing body of sport, taking a community-centred rather than a corporate approach.

In this third Impact Report, we showcase highlights from across the Scottish sailing and boating community that bring to life the essence of that strategy – creating positive and lasting outcomes for people, places and communities around Scotland.

Some of the stories in this report feature recipients of our Impact Awards. Impact remains a central strand in all that we do, and during this reporting year (2024-25) we've sustained our recognition of valued volunteers throughout Scotland with these awards.

Celebrating volunteer contributions in this way also allows us to share good practice and great ideas with the community. They exemplify the fantastic work happening around coastal and inland waters to change lives and build healthier, more connected communities.

Nevertheless, we are acutely aware that all clubs and organisations face challenges to remain active and viable. There is a sense of having to comply with ever more complex and

constraining regulations, which volunteers need to understand and implement. This is where RYA Scotland has a clear role to play by working alongside our community to support their needs, reduce barriers and protect opportunities for everyone to enjoy being on the water.

The RYA Scotland team of staff and volunteers has been revitalised with new appointments across the organisation in 2024-25. These new volunteers and team members bring a boost of energy, fresh ideas and a desire for us to be visible and connected within the community.

We welcomed three new members to our voluntary Board of Directors, who support and guide the work of our 15-strong staff team. They are Hannah Ladd-Jones as Independent Director, Peter Robinson as Director for Cruising and General Purpose, and Jill Reid as Under-25 Director (see [page 8](#)).

Throughout this reporting year, we've been engaging partners and individuals from across Scotland to help refine our strategic thinking and hone our future direction.

The outcome is a clearer approach to what we do and with focused priorities. We want to have an even greater impact at a time when funding for governing bodies is seeing significant decline in real terms.

Our ambition to stimulate and support positive outcomes is as strong now as ever, as



Visit the RYA Scotland Impact Awards playlist on YouTube for inspiring stories of exceptional contributions within the Scottish sailing community

reflected in the refreshed iteration of our strategy for 2025 onwards, which we've called **People, Places and Communities – Together on Water.**

Our commitment to you from the RYA Scotland team is that we want to be more relevant and visible across the community so that we can collectively have a greater impact on those who take to the water.



*Brian Wilson*  
**Brian Wilson, Chair**  
 RYA Scotland



*Finlo Cottier*  
**Finlo Cottier, CEO**  
 RYA Scotland




Take a look at our refreshed strategy **People, Places and Communities – Together on Water**



Meet the RYA Scotland Board, including the new members for 2024-25

# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



What we said in  
our strategic plan.  
And what we did  
this year.

**Our dedication to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) underpins all we do. It means we strive to respond to the specific needs and aspirations of different groups, to understand the barriers to participation in boating, and stay informed about wider societal changes.**

**For us, EDI is not an end point, but a continuous journey. This year, we've showcased best practice and celebrated role models for diversity and inclusion in Scotland's boating community. As an organisation, we've continued the process of self-examination to hone our approach to EDI.**



**We believe disability is no barrier to participation.**

## New experiences, new friends and new skills

In spring 2024, RYA Scotland supported a series of Sailability sessions at James Hamilton Heritage Park, East Kilbride. Eight youngsters with a range of cognitive and communication challenges came together from two local schools to get afloat and gain new skills.

Held over six weeks in May and June 2024, our involvement in the series was led by Regional Development Officer (West) Laura Cowan, with support from South Lanarkshire Active Schools and South Lanarkshire Disability Sport.

The sessions saw young participants develop a range of transferable skills, confidence and of course practical sailing capabilities. In addition, staff at the hosting watersports centre benefited from RYA Disability Awareness Training.

It was fantastic to see the participants' journey throughout the programme, with instructors Tess and Stuart noting rapid progress – not only in sailing skills, but also general confidence, demeanour and attitude to new challenges.

Also in June 2024, RYA Scotland ran a Disability Awareness Training Day at Lochore Meadows

in Fife, giving instructors the knowledge and confidence to deliver training to disabled individuals who may encounter specific barriers to participation.

The day focused on a person-centred approach to teaching – based on asking not assuming, as well as listening and adapting. Training was well received by participants, who left with a host of new ideas to feed into their sessions moving forward.

*“There were two different groups from different schools. When I first went on the boat with them, they weren't as chatty with each other, they weren't as chatty with me...”*

*“But by the end, we were all doing high fives and handshakes. They were all chatting to each other, interacting on the water.”*

**Tess Crooks, Instructor at the Sailability sessions**



Find out more about the series of Sailability sessions at James Hamilton Heritage Park



## Surprise World Champs win for role model Rory

A chance pairing led champion Scottish para-sailor Rory McKinna to gold at the Hansa and Para Sailing World Championships, held at Pittwater in Australia at the end of March 2025.

A serendipitous turn of events had brought Clyde Cruising Club's Rory and Sydney's Jess Wong together. Their successful partnership started with a chance meeting during the Pittwater Regatta and saw them sail to victory in the World Championships.

"I was originally only going to sail in the 303 One Person event and decided late that I would also sail in the Two Person event," 23-year-old Rory explained.

"I asked Chris Symonds if he knew anyone... Through him, Jess (an Australian) came to sail with me, and she is new to sailing Hansas. We'd not met, let alone sailed together before. You know after five minutes in the boat whether it will work out or not – and I knew it would."

Rory is also dedicated to inspiring more people to get on the water through work with RYA Scotland's Participation and Development Committee, and back at the Clyde Cruising Club Dinghy Section.



*"Pretty much as soon as we pushed off the pontoon, I knew we'd get along and that we weren't going to be tripping over each other in the boat. We got into rhythm quite quickly."*

**Rory McKinna, Hansa and Para World Champs gold medal winner**





**We have a focus on engaging women in boating.**

## Margaret's mission to inspire women and girls

A dedicated volunteer, a forerunner in women's sailing and a talented race official... Margaret Tait has been a stalwart at Port Edgar Yacht Club for four decades.

In autumn 2024, we presented Margaret with an RYA Scotland Impact Award in recognition of her outstanding dedication.

In her early days of sailing, Margaret would often find herself the only woman at sailing events. But instead of being deterred, she made it her mission to inspire more women and girls to take up the sport.

Among the young women she's encouraged on her journey in sailing is her own granddaughter, Abby. Now a dinghy and powerboat instructor, Abby is a valuable presence at both Dalgety Bay Sailing Club and Port Edgar, having inherited her grandmother's passion to give back.



Watch the video of Margaret's Impact Award

*"I suppose I was a bit stunned [to receive the award]. I do it because I love it. I don't do it for recognition, but it's nice to be recognised too and I hope it does inspire others to follow along."*

Margaret Tait

*"My Gran likes to tell me that when she was younger, there weren't many females [doing what she did], and she was one of the only [women] to crew on these boats. It's amazing to see how it's all changed, with so many more females coming into sailing roles."*

Abby Tait



Listen to our Off The Water podcast featuring Maggie Adamson

## Shetland's offshore sailing superstar

A member of Lerwick's RNLI crew, a Swan 76 Skipper, talented musician and now offshore World Champion – Maggie Adamson certainly has a few strings to her fiddle.

In October 2024, Shetland's Maggie Adamson and Montrose's Calanach Finlayson scooped gold at the Offshore Double Handed World Championship on French waters, following a nail-biting final leg. Maggie even managed to take the sounds of home with her, entertaining fellow competitors with some Scottish music after racing.



**We will increase the diversity of our workforce and highlight role models.**

### A new voice for young sailors

In February 2025, the RYA Scotland Board welcomed Jill Reid as our new Under-25 Director.

Jill brings a wealth of experience from her time on the University of Aberdeen Sailing Club committee – including as Commodore – and before that as instructor at her local club near Nottingham. She currently works in student sport and is also a member of the RYA Scotland coaching pool.

Her appointment followed a competitive recruitment process during which her passion for our sport shone through, as did her dedication to championing young sailors' perspectives. Jill will work closely with our new Youth Voices working group (see [page 19](#)) to amplify those perspectives.

*“Young people are the future of the sport, and I want to ensure they feel heard, valued and supported in an inclusive and accessible sailing community. Coming from a small sailing club, I understand the challenges young sailors can face, and I’m eager to help represent their voices and create opportunities for them to thrive.”*

Jill Reid, Under-25 Director

### Great strides in gender balance

This reporting year saw further progress in the recruitment of women to key roles in RYA Scotland:



**2/3**

of new Board members are women



**50/50**

male female split in our Senior Leadership Team (at time of publication)



**60%**

of the overall staff team are women

Our coaching team has also achieved a more balanced gender ratio:



**50/50**

male female split in our Head Coach team



**8**

female coaches at the 2024 Giant Academy



**7**

male coaches at the 2024 Giant Academy



Watch  
the video  
'Spotlight on  
volunteers'



*We challenge ourselves to ensure the way we work is inclusive and when something is not inclusive, that we commit to redressing the balance.*

## Speaking up to fight financial exclusion of volunteers

As one of the foremost volunteer-led sports in Scotland, we appreciate the invaluable contributions made by those who give up their time across the country.

In May 2024, RYA Scotland responded to a consultation from the Scottish Government around changes to fee structures under the Disclosure Scotland Act 2020. Proposed changes would have seen a cost increase for many required to become a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme. Crucially, the proposed changes would also introduce a fee for volunteers, for whom a PVG check is currently free of charge.

We shared our response to help inform and encouraged others across the sector to submit their own views. Good news came in January 2025, when the Scottish Government announced it would uphold the PVG fee waiver for volunteers – a U-turn welcomed across the sector.

Financial inclusion is equally important when it comes to developing the workforce of instructors and coaches throughout Scotland – see [page 16](#) for more.

## Continuing our move to inclusion

We believe Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a continual journey, not a fixed destination. This year, we continued with work began in the previous reporting year to adopt the new EDI framework for sport.

The [Moving to Inclusion Framework](#) guides sports organisations in developing inclusive practice through self-reflection and embedding EDI in all aspects of work. It is challenging us to think of our sport and our organisation in a fresh way.

We have formed an EDI working group comprising several RYA Scotland staff and volunteers to help develop our approach – both internally and within the Scottish boating community.

We have already begun to shift the way we work, for example splitting a full-time role between two excellent staff members who preferred part-time working. And when recruiting, we now provide interview questions in advance, so that candidates can prepare and put their best foot forward.

By embedding principles of the Moving to Inclusion Framework across the organisation, we're confident we'll continue to move in the right direction.



What we said in  
our strategic plan.

And what we did  
this year.

# Sustainability

Welcome to  
The Falkirk  
Wheel



Environmental sustainability and the protection of marine habitats are priorities close to the hearts of many in the boating community, and also lie at the core of our ethos.

This year, we have continued our push to reduce our environmental impact as an organisation. In addition, we hope to inspire our members and affiliates to do the same by showcasing fresh solutions and celebrating success stories.





**Control our own impacts and lead by example.**

### Clean-up for Clipper

In mid-July 2024, the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race descended on Oban, marking the first Scottish stopover in race history. We made sure the environment benefited too.

In anticipation of the yachts' arrival, RYA Scotland coordinated a Clipper Clean Up mission in partnership with the GRAB Trust around the Dunstaffnage foreshore and headland, a key vantage point for the Oban departure.

Despite looking fairly clear of litter at first glance, we managed to collect a staggering 35kg of rubbish, mainly small plastics, with the help of 46 litter pickers.

The race stopover also offered a great opportunity to share some valuable resources and guidance from The Green Blue with sailing enthusiasts and passers-by alike.

*“When places look quite clean, it is important to look closely and look for little things. Looking along the high tide mark and looking into the bushes – you can be amazed at what you might find.”*

Kerry Mackay, GRAB Trust



**Engage fully in the RYA Carbon Pathway to Zero by 2050.**

### Mindful travel

As an organisation, we are always looking for opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint, particularly when travelling.

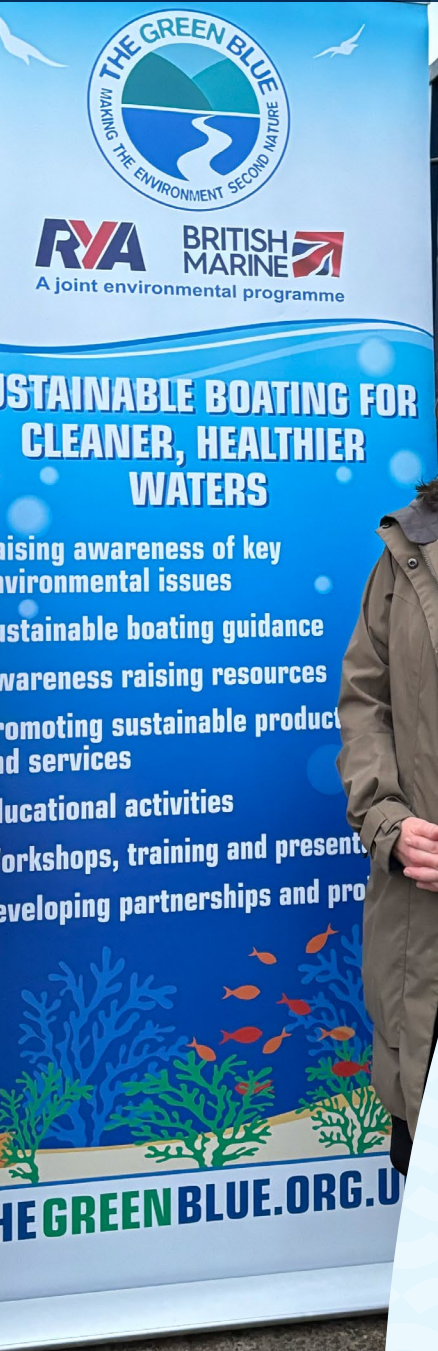
In autumn 2024, three members of the RYA Scotland staff team made the trip to Belfast to attend the annual RYA Home Countries conference for team members from around the UK, this time hosted by RYA Northern Ireland.

By utilising shared and public transport and taking the ferry, rather than travel individually by plane, the team were able to save an estimated 789kg of carbon emissions, equating to an 85% reduction.

With the journey to Belfast just one example of our mindful approach to travel, we're focussed on reducing and limiting our footprint year round.



**85%**  
reduction in  
carbon emissions  
thanks to travel  
choices to Belfast



  
 Join the sustainable boating community by taking The Green Blue Boating Pledge



*Influence others through active conversations with our members and networks, direct actions, and promotion of The Green Blue.*

**Promoting The Green Blue**

With 2025 marking 20 years of The Green Blue, we remain dedicated to sharing the campaign's many valuable messages and resources with the Scottish boating community.

We displayed and shared resources with the public at a stand in the Clipper Race FanZone in Oban in July 2024 and proudly showcased the

campaign to Maree Todd MSP when she joined us at Forth Corinthian Yacht Club, Edinburgh, for a visit during Scotland's Climate Week (see [page 24](#)).

In March 2025, we also were sure to make some noise about the campaign at Scotland's Marine Tourism Conference (see [page 31](#)), encouraging leaders within the marine tourism industry to make The Green Blue Pledge.



*Manage the impact of our events and activities to demonstrate best practice.*

**Giving old items a new lease of life**

The need to vacate RYA Scotland's longstanding office base prompted a responsible decluttering and re-use drive.

The move out of our offices in sportscotland's Caledonia House in December 2024 followed the sale of the building. Team members are now working flexibly, with more time spent out in the community.

Before the move, we undertook a serious office clear-out, during which a small library

of books, resources and sailing literature was collated. This was taken to the RYA Scotland Youth & Junior Championships and our Connected Scotland Conference to be shared out to our community.

With a similar principle in mind, we have remained dedicated to minimising waste following the RYA rebrand in 2023, and have continued using resources and clothing featuring the old brand where appropriate.





How we said we'd make it happen. And what we did this year.

# People

Being on the water can have a transformative impact on people's lives – their health and wellbeing, self-confidence and sense of belonging.

Our ambition is for everyone in Scotland's boating community – participants, volunteers, members and staff – to feel successful, supported, included and valued, no matter where they live.

This reporting year, we have listened to a wide range of people within the boating community to evolve our strategic direction, and have continued to build the Changing Lives approach into everything we do.



**We will listen to feedback from people in the boating community and review our plans on a regular basis.**

## Community conversations map our next chapter

In autumn 2024, we unveiled a refreshed iteration of the RYA Scotland strategy, called **People, Places and Communities – Together on Water**, to guide us from the 2025-26 reporting year onward.

While described as an ‘evolution’ rather than a ‘revolution’, we were keen to involve the wider boating community as we reviewed and refined our original People, Places and Communities strategic plan, which guided us from 2022 to 2025.

So, to gauge thoughts and attitudes from those involved in the boating community and beyond, we ran a public survey and sought input from our volunteer Board and committee members who are our ‘ears on the ground’.

Through both more formal strategic engagement and informal conversations with the community, we have chosen to include greater recognition of some of the challenges felt and perceived across the Scottish sailing landscape.

In some cases, we are able to share work that is already underway to tackle specific challenges. In other instances, we hope to show that concerns have been heard.

We know our approach to strategic thinking should not remain stationary. We are eager to keep assessing our priorities and listen to diverse voices from around the Scottish boating community to make sure we’re tuned into what matters most.



### What we’re hearing

**“Too many young sailors are leaving their home clubs to pursue training opportunities elsewhere.”**

### What we’re doing

The RYA Scotland Performance Pathway programme is evolving, amongst the changes the team are adding bespoke Club Racing Academies to the programme, allowing sailors (across a much wider geographical spread) to access high-quality training from RYA Scotland coaches without leaving their home club.

**“The refreshed strategy draws on the interactions and conversations we’ve enjoyed with the Scottish boating community over the last few years when communities have been readjusting to significant societal change. I feel the strategy is fresher and with clearer intentions, which will help us prioritise our actions in the future.”**

Finlo Cottier, RYA Scotland CEO



**We will encourage and promote the Changing Lives approach, so that more people in more places can experience the physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits of boating.**

## Championing the Changing Lives mindset

The Changing Lives approach is about intentionally harnessing the power of sport and physical activity to improve the wider health and wellbeing of people and communities.

Over recent years, we have continued to build a Changing Lives mindset within our own organisation and among our team members. This approach and its four key principles increasingly underpin RYA Scotland's own activity, as well as informing the support we provide to affiliate organisations.

Six team members are now alumni of the Changing Lives programme: our three Regional Development Officers (RDOs) and Training Development Officer, as well as our Coach Education Manager and Development Manager (both of whom have also completed the Managers' programme). RDO (North) Brian Pahlmann has gone on to support the delivery of the programme to others.

*"Embarking on the Changing Lives programme has been eye-opening. It encourages deep thinking, and I can already see how many of the learnings will shape future conversations with clubs and help develop a better understanding of their purpose in the community."*

**Rhys Gorman, Regional Development Officer (East)**

### Changing Lives principles

- 1. Intention to be inclusive and impactful**
- 2. Responsive to the needs of people and communities**
- 3. Work in collaboration with partner organisations**
- 4. Support organisations to be strong and effective**





**We will take instructor and coach development out to our communities and support people to develop their skills through tailored opportunities in localities as close to them as possible.**

## CPD opens doors to opportunity

Throughout 2024-25, the RYA Scotland Coach Education team ran an impressive total of 56 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for instructors, coaches and trainers all around Scotland, from Galloway to Moray.

Highlights included the RYA Scotland Aspiring Senior Instructor programme, which supported 29 candidates to become Senior instructors. Tailored development days for the OnBoard programme (see page 27) were held at various new venues across Scotland, with over 30 people benefiting. Other CPD opportunities included pre-course entry support, bespoke pre-course practical days, online updates and discussion topics for all levels, from instructor to trainer.

Venues ranged from Port Edgar Boat Station and Royal Tay Yacht Club in the East region, Blairvadach Outdoor Education Centre and Stranraer Water Sports Association in the West and Chanonry Sailing Club and Loch Insh Outdoor Centre in the North.

Financial inclusion is a key priority for us. Thanks to financial support from sportscotland's coach education subsidy funding, over 60 people were able to gain new qualifications, allowing them to upskill and play an even greater part in their communities.

*"Receiving the subsidy has really helped me out financially, especially as a student. It has eased some of the costs and allowed me to focus more on gaining experience and developing my coaching skills."*

Coach education subsidy recipient

## Continuous Professional Development in numbers



**20**

venues and online

**North**  
5 venues  
8 sessions



**56**

CPD opportunities

**West**  
8 venues  
18 sessions



**60+**

people benefited from coach education subsidy funding

**East**  
7 venues  
20 sessions

## Annual Trainer Gathering

In late October 2024, we brought together 37 trainers and aspiring trainers at Port Edgar Boat Station for our annual gathering. The busy schedule included revalidations and selections for new trainers, supported by the RYA's Training Chief Instructors.





*We will encourage people to be curious and take responsibility for their own learning.*

## Aspiring to a person-centred approach

Over the past year, our Coach Education team has focused on intentionally taking a person-centred approach across all RYA Scotland training and coaching activity, aligning with the ethos of Changing Lives.

This heightened effort to promote adaptable training models to match individual requirements has coincided with the development of the new RYA Scotland Aspire Programme, a new approach to supporting workforce development that also clarifies the various pathways for instructors, coaches and race officials.

Aspiring coaches and instructors may have already spotted some of the new Aspire language and principles. A larger launch of the Aspire Programme follows in summer 2025, when an online resource bank will be made available.



### What we're hearing

*"Lack of senior instructors to run more advanced training."*

### What we're doing

Supporting new cohorts of senior instructors, equipping them with the skills to deliver high quality sessions.



Watch the video about our Senior Instructor course in April 2024.



**Our Class Academy programme will continue to provide high-quality coaching to more people in more places.**

## Eye on the future at Class Academies

**Our 2024-25 Class Academy winter training programme for youth and junior sailors kicked off in style with our second annual RYA Scotland Giant Academy, hosted by Largs Sailing Club and Peterhead Sailing Club in mid-September 2024.**

This year's Giant Academy saw the five dinghy pathway classes – Optimist, Topper, ILCA, Feva and 29er – gather at Largs, while the two windsurf classes (Techno 293 and IQ Foil) met in Peterhead.

For many younger sailors, the Giant Academy offers a key opportunity to see other classes in action – useful to those who may be transitioning to a new class in seasons to come.

Young female sailors also had super role models supporting them out on the water – the 2024 Giant Academy featured a record number of female head coaches leading sessions, with over half the head coaches being female (see [page 8](#)).

The winter training season saw seven venues host a Class Academy, with a total of 132 individual sailors from 30 clubs taking the opportunity to hone their racing skills with the help of expert coaching.

Aspiring young sailors haven't been short of motivation, with two junior class Nationals being held on Scottish waters in 2025: UK Feva Nationals at Dalgety Bay Sailing Club in spring 2025 and the UK Topper Nationals at Largs Sailing Club in August.

***"I'm hoping to eventually go into 29ers after Toppers, so it's nice to see them out there and it does show you that there is a real progression. It's nice to have all the classes together at start of the season."***

**Lotte Kohn, Topper sailor**

***"We've had a real mix of abilities at the Giant Academy – it's really cool to see a lot of transitioning boats coming through from Oppie, Topper and Feva."***

**Ben Ibbotson, 29er head coach**



**Watch the short video clip about the Giant Academy on our Facebook page**



**We will implement the structures necessary to engage young people across all levels of our organisation through an action plan designed by young people for young people.**

## Youth Voices initiative gets underway

Following a successful Young Sailors Chatroom at our Connected Scotland Conference in March 2024, the RYA Scotland team has been busy developing a new approach to and format for youth engagement, which we're calling Youth Voices.

Throughout summer 2024, we gave young people the space, voice, audience and influence to share their opinions and help shape our approach to youth engagement. This was done through informal conversations, activations at events, online sessions and a digital survey.

In particular, we used the opportunities afforded at events – including the RYA Scotland Youth & Junior Championships in June, the Clipper Race stopover in July and a Water Safety Scotland open day at Loch Lomond – to ask a diverse range of young people what they love about sailing and whether they feel their voices are listened to by adult decision makers.

By inviting young people into the process from the outset, we have taken onboard their perspectives, challenges and ideas to develop our engagement model. The newly formed Youth Voices working group welcomes aboard its first cohort of motivated young changemakers in 2025.

*"I feel free when I am on the water, it makes me feel better when I've had a bad day. I can forget about the regular strains of my life and just focus on sailing."*

Survey response on how sailing helps with health and wellbeing

*"A fun and welcoming space to me is when instructors can adapt the RYA framework to work with any group of people and learning style, not going for 'stages' but self-development."*

Survey response on what makes safe and welcoming spaces

*"I think the expectations of sailing being associated with wealth and status can be off-putting until people try it and realise this isn't the case."*

Survey response on the barriers to sailing



**80%**

of young respondents to our survey agreed that 'A method of gathering youth perspectives is important for the future of our sport.'



## Championing child safety

We are proud to report that RYA Scotland, as an organisation, continues to sustain 100% compliance with the Standards for Child Wellbeing and Protection in Sport. We are here to support boating organisations around Scotland to do the same.



How we said we'd  
make it happen.  
And what we did  
this year.

# Places

Our places are where people and communities come together to get out onto the water for the first time, or share and develop an existing interest in boating.

Whether an emerging centre in a rural destination or an established club near

the city, we undertake to support facilities across Scotland to be successful, accessible, inclusive, valued, flexible and sustainable. We also support our Pathway athletes to train and compete in a range of places.



**Our regional planning will directly support the evolution of places from which boating is facilitated.**

### Stranraer set to shine in the southwest

In mid-February 2025, Stranraer Water Sports Association (SWSA) celebrated the start of works on site to develop its new watersports facility on the town's shore at the head of Loch Ryan.

A turf-cutting ceremony marked the start of the exciting next phase to bring a decade of planning to fruition. Throughout the evolution of the project, RYA Scotland has provided the SWSA Board and project team with organisational support, technical insight and design advice for the new facility. We will continue to support the project as it progresses.

In recent years, Loch Ryan has become a growing destination for boating and sailing, including hosting significant events such as the first two Scottish Fin & Foil windsports weeks. The project to create a fully equipped hub is an important new chapter for the ambitions of SWSA, the town of Stranraer and the wider region.

The new facility will also provide a base for SWSA's ongoing work to engage local schools and youth organisations, and grow participation among local youngsters. It is expected to be complete by the end of 2025 and in full use for the 2026 season.

*"We've had a very long gestation period... now that the workmen are onsite, people know that it's real."*

John Fenwick, former SWSA Chair

*"The quality of Loch Ryan as a venue should not be underestimated, and so for work to have begun on creating the onshore infrastructure to match is fantastic. We see this project as a key step in cementing Loch Ryan's status within the watersport and wider community."*

Finlo Cottier, RYA Scotland CEO



**What we're hearing**  
*"Aging facilities with unequal access for women and people with disabilities."*

**What we're doing**  
As venues look to access facility funding, our RDOs are on hand to write supporting letters and help with the facility funding process.



**Watch the short Facebook video about SWSA's new facility**

## Creative thinking to support rural affiliates

Given Scotland’s particular geography, we are aware that many Scottish RYA affiliates operate in rural environments, where connection to an active wider network can be more of a challenge.

In December 2024, the RYA Scotland staff team came together for a rural planning session in Aberdeen. The session was a chance to put our heads together in a range of contributions and exercises, with an aim to think laterally and identify ways of providing better access to opportunities for those in more rural locations.

With plenty of ideas to build on, we hope to take more RYA Scotland activity to more places, while helping to build connections between affiliate organisations operating in rural areas.

One exercise in our Rural Planning session saw members of the staff team mark up a map of Scotland with all the areas they’ve delivered or visited over the past year.

## Crucial funding for Kintyre

The Rural Growth Deal secured for Argyll & Bute in March 2025 will see transformative funding allocated to Campbeltown’s Kintyre Sea Sports, which is already making waves and changing the lives of local young people, as featured in our [Impact Report Year 2](#).

Funding will support a new watersports hub on site, allowing the project to reach and positively impact even more youngsters in this rural West Coast community.





**We will develop a performance environment to deliver our Performance Programme as well as higher level training and qualifications.**

## Promising young sailors spread their wings

For many sailors involved in the RYA Scotland Performance Pathway programme, attendance at larger national events offers a key stepping stone to gain experience and push their own boundaries.

To support Pathway sailors in these larger environments, the familiar faces of the RYA Scotland Pathway Team are on hand to offer coaching, mentoring and guidance. The Eric Twiname Championships, held at Rutland in May 2024, and the Celtic Cup at Killyleagh in Northern Ireland were two such events.

In the case of the Celtic Cup in February 2025, the weekend proved a key learning opportunity, not just in terms of the competition. While crossing from Cairnryan to Belfast, 11 young sailors and their support staff enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour of ferry operations.

This unique experience gave them a glimpse of various roles in maritime travel, from navigation and engineering to hospitality and logistics. For many, it was an eye-opening opportunity that highlighted potential career paths within the marine industry they may not have previously considered.

*“What an amazing group of talented young sailors we have in Team Scotland, what stands out above all factors is their sense of team, camaraderie and willingness to support one another.”*

**Jamie Rogers, RYA Scotland Pathway Manager**





**We will support clubs and training centres to make more sustainable choices in their operation to protect the places that are the foundation of our sport.**

## Ministerial visit highlights climate challenges

During Scotland's Climate Week 2024, RYA Scotland coordinated a visit from Maree Todd MSP, Scottish Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, to Forth Corinthian Yacht Club in Granton, Edinburgh.

On hand to welcome the Minister for her visit in mid-September were members of the RYA Scotland staff team, **sportscotland** Partnership Manager Charlotte MacBeath and Peter Robinson, our Board Director for Cruising and General Purposes, alongside Forth Corinthian Commodore Peter Douglas.

The evening saw a wide-ranging discussion on the climate-related challenges relevant to boating and sailing, as well as some of the innovations, actions and initiatives in place to help minimise impact.

*"If you reflect on the evening, it's been fantastic...what haven't we touched upon!"*

*"We've gone from innovation, to materials, and some of the challenges within our sport in terms of sustainability right through to adaptation and mitigation. Ms Todd was very receptive to the discussion and had a lot to contribute."*

**Peter Robinson, RYA Scotland Director for Cruising and General Purposes**



## Royal Tay celebrates eco success

Dundee's Royal Tay Yacht Club is an inspiring example of a club embracing the drive to go green, as featured on page 27 of last year's Impact Report. Watch Royal Tay receive an Impact Award for its ethos of sustainability and volunteer involvement.



# Communities



How we said we'd  
make it happen.  
And what we did  
this year.

**Communities are about a sense of belonging and identity. They connect people through a common interest or can be rooted in a particular location.**

**Whether boosting access to sailing for island communities, rolling out more**

**life-changing opportunities for young people or connecting boating organisations through our in-person and online events, we work to help make Scotland's diverse boating communities successful, inclusive, valued, sustainable and collaborative.**



**We will bring together the aspirations and challenges of local communities and communities of interest....**

### Games legacy for Orkney's community

In mid-July 2025, Orkney hosts the 20th International Island Games, which will see the 24 member islands of the International Island Games Association (IIGA) compete in 12 sports, including sailing in ILCA class dinghies.

With this week-long event set to be the largest ever hosted in Orkney, it is bound to boost tourism. To ensure it also leaves a strong sailing legacy, RYA Scotland has supplied 24 new ILCA dinghies for the Games, made possible by a financial award from **sportscotland**.

All these boats will remain on Orkney at local sailing clubs, meaning more boats in more communities throughout the islands. This will hopefully help ease barriers to participation in sailing for scores of local people in coming years.

Along with the boats, Orkney clubs are benefiting from RYA Scotland coaching and mentorship ahead of the Games, including delivery of a Dinghy Instructor course to help upskill the local sailing community.

*"We're confident that recent collaboration amongst peers combined with continued development support from RYA Scotland will add depth, quality and sustainability to sailing activities on Orkney."*

*"Now, we look forward to seeing more people from the community experiencing the substantial benefits of water-based activities – from improved wellbeing to confidence, independence, skill development and fun."*

Brian Pahlmann, RYA Scotland Regional Development Officer (North)

## Black Isle's sailing stalwarts

For many years, Helen and Richard Jenner have been invaluable members of Chanonry Sailing Club on the shores of the Moray Firth. Between them, the couple have taken on a wide range of voluntary roles over the years, supporting the Black Isle community to get out onto the water.

The pair have been instrumental in fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for sailors of all ages and abilities. As long-serving Principal of the Recognised Training Centre (RTC), Richard has helped nurture many newcomers on the water.

Getting parents involved hands-on with junior training has been a game-changer. "We realised early on that the instructors simply couldn't do it all. So, we've harnessed 'parent power' – we've trained up parents to help on safety boats or onshore. Some of those parents have gone on to sail themselves."

The Jenners' incredible impact has extended beyond the club itself. They have actively contributed to conversations across the wider Scottish boating community, strengthening the community ties so crucial for boating organisations in rural locations.



Watch Helen and Richard receive their Impact Award

*"Almost anything at the club has had one of the Jenners associated with it at some point... They've taken on so many roles between them – from commodores to social secretaries to sailing secretaries. They've been just about everything on the committee."*

Marisa Astill-Brown, Chanonry Sailing Club Secretary



We will further develop our delivery of Changing Lives learning opportunities to grow a sense of community and support continued learning.

## Surge in OnBoard venues to change young lives

This reporting year, momentum has continued to grow as we shift our focus towards the Changing Lives approach (also see page 15), which harnesses the power of sport to improve the wider health and wellbeing of people and communities.

The Changing Lives approach is also at the heart of OnBoard – the RYA's sailing and windsurfing programme for children and young people. OnBoard aims not only to teach sailing skills, but also to nurture invaluable life skills, such as problem solving, confidence and teamwork.

We've been hard at work to further expand the provision of RYA OnBoard throughout Scotland by supporting Recognised Training Centres (RTCs) to join the programme. As reported in our **Impact Report Year 2**, the previous reporting year saw a substantial cohort of new OnBoard tutors deployed, which led to significant numbers of instructors being trained to deliver the programme.

This year, our growth plans for OnBoard bore further fruit as we welcomed a whopping ten new RTCs as OnBoard venues. These include established outdoor centres like Blairvadach near Glasgow, Loch Insh near Aviemore and Whiteadder Watersports in East Lothian, and sailing clubs including Prestwick, Oban and Solway.



10

new OnBoard venues  
this reporting year



1,739

new OnBoard participants  
around Scotland this year



5

practical OnBoard  
development days delivered,  
with 30+  
people benefiting



**We will actively connect communities in boating with others around them, by sharing good practice and examples of successful collaborations.**

## Connecting with the community

In early November 2024, we welcomed representatives from a wide range of organisations and backgrounds to our free Connected Scotland gathering at the Regional Performance Centre in Dundee.

The jam-packed weekend programme featured workshops, carousel sessions, plenary talks and guest speakers' contributions on a wide range of topics that matter to Scotland's boating community. And thanks to sponsorship from Freedom Boat Club Loch Lomond, we were delighted to make the event free of charge for attendees.

There was plenty of opportunity to network, ask questions, exchange learnings and best practice, and spark new ideas. Kam Raval from the youth sport charity Scottish Sport Futures led discussions around creating connected spaces and communicating effectively between generations.

With representatives of clubs and organisations all around the country – from Chanonry Sailing Club in the Highlands and Newburgh SC in Fife, to Stranraer and Galloway Activity Centre in the south-west – the weekend was certainly testament to the value of bringing people together.

## Keeping connected online

In addition to the annual Connected Scotland conference, our Development team leads a series of online Connect Calls throughout the early off-season into the spring.

Often featuring special guests, these discussions focus on a range of topics, including RYA affiliation, how best to promote activities, and considerations around governance and legal structures for clubs.

When planning the 2025 series of calls, we took onboard feedback from the community and shifted our calls from a Wednesday to a Tuesday – a slot less likely to conflict with club nights. As a result, we are already seeing higher numbers, which means more sharing, learning and growing.



**47**

delegates at our Connected Scotland gathering, representing **34 organisations**



**3**

Connect Calls in this reporting year



**42**

total attendances on these calls

*“Great to be surrounded [at Connected Scotland] by likeminded people sharing our success, our challenges and exploring ways in which we can continue to grow and develop.*

*“Big thank you to the RYA team, their board members and volunteers who all contribute to the running of a great event.”*

Stranraer Water Sports Association





How we said we'd  
make it happen.  
And what we did  
this year.

# Partnerships & Communications

By collaborating and partnering with others, we continue to be a trusted voice for Scotland's boating community, as well as help deliver wider societal benefits.

We also work to engage a diverse audience of people and communities

in more places by crafting relevant, accessible and inspiring content for a range of communication channels. And by partnering with others for joint campaigns, we seek to further amplify our reach and impact.



**We will maintain a presence at key national discussions, cultivate further avenues to increase our influence and use these to advocate on behalf of Scotland's boating community.**

## Speaking up for Scotland's boating community

As the governing body for sailing and boating in Scotland, RYA Scotland adopts a key representation role as part of its purpose to promote and protect safe, successful and rewarding boating in Scotland.

In the last couple of years, we have been a trusted voice for the interests of the Scottish sailing and boating community in matters including the Oban Harbour Revision order, the Scottish Visitor Levy, a proposed conservancy fee for the Clyde, as well as the recent purchase of Sanda Island off the Mull of Kintyre.

In each case, we rely on the input of dedicated volunteers such as our Planning and Environment Officer, members of our Cruising and General Purposes Committee, and our network of dedicated coastwatchers. We also collaborate closely with a host of other organisations in the marine sector.

### Response to MCA consultation

In December 2024, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) launched a consultation on its new Sport or Pleasure Vessel Code, which aims to update legislation in line with the rapidly changing needs of the small commercial vessel sector.

Though this new code would mainly apply to commercial operators, there was the potential for impact on the activities of community clubs and their Recognised Training Centres (RTCs). The RYA head office in Hamble had already been heavily involved in the drafting of the code and provided a technical critique as part of its consultation response.

At RYA Scotland, we fielded a number of enquiries from sailing clubs concerned that the code would affect them. Our response was focused on obtaining clarity to help non-specialists interpret how the code might apply



to community and volunteer-led club settings. We were also concerned about impacts on small commercial businesses, freelance professionals and volunteers.

When responding to government consultations, we believe RYA Scotland has a key role to play in championing the vital role of volunteers in our sector and reducing the administrative burden on them.

***"Each year, the paper burden placed on volunteers and the requests for documentation and legislation seems to increase. As our umbrella body, RYA Scotland has a clear role to help us reduce the administrative burden with clear and pertinent guidance."***

Volunteer at a Recognised Training Centre

## Scotland's Marine Tourism Conference

In early March 2025, we headed along to Scotland's Marine Tourism Conference in West Kilbride, hosted by Sail Scotland. The Conference was an opportunity to connect, share and learn with other organisations across the sector. Our CEO, Finlo Cottier, gave a brief overview of RYA Scotland's role as a governing body, as well as our revised strategy for 2025 onwards.



*With partners, we will create and participate in campaigns to reach a wider audience and help inform our diverse community on issues and topics important to them.*

## Rousing support for Scotland's Olympic sailing stars

Summer 2024 saw excitement like no other for Olympic sailing fans, with sailing events at Marseille featuring not one, but two Scottish stars in Team GB.

Anna Burnet took to the waves alongside partner John Gimson in the foiling Nacra 17 Class, while Fynn Sterritt paired James Peters in the 49er fleet.

Despite neither Scottish athlete coming away with a medal this time, they delivered performances to make us proud – exemplified by the masses tuning in to cheer them on from home.

While they were out there competing, the RYA Scotland team was kept busy supporting and collaborating with the wider RYA and British Sailing Team to coordinate content and press coverage of the pair's Olympic adventures.

For both their medal races, we were sure to join in watch parties with Loch Morlich Sailing Club and Royal Northern and Clyde Sailing Club for Fynn and Anna respectively. Medal or no medal, both are stellar role models for the next generation of aspiring athletes.





*We will create and deliver relevant content in a variety of formats across various platforms that our boating community can enjoy and learn from.*

## #WhereCouldSailingTakeYou?

Ahead of the RYA Scotland Winter Championships in December 2024, we spoke on camera to several leading lights from different corners of the sailing world and created an inspiring video series aimed at young sailors.

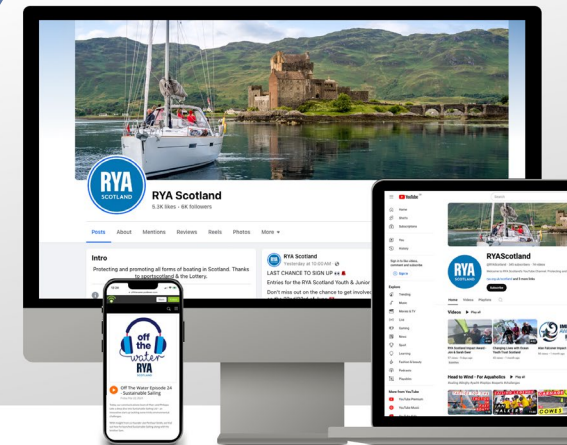
We reached out to professional sailors, sail makers, media professionals and RYA Scotland staff to ask them where their own sailing journey has taken them, and what advice they have for current Pathway sailors and the wider community.

The resulting video series attracted an impressive amount of social media engagement. We hope it has helped highlight just some of the alternative pathways and routes available in our sport, and that it will inspire young sailors to stick at their own journey, whatever that may be.



# 25,771

total views across Facebook and Instagram for our #WhereCouldSailingTakeYou series



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Lloyd Images, Wavelength Image

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