

RYA
NORTHERN
IRELAND

4th
2020
2020

Annual Report

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CEO & Chair's Report

The year has seen some fantastic success and achievements across the sailing community in Northern Ireland. Firstly, we want to thank the volunteers, coaches, officials, instructors, clubs and training centres that have worked tirelessly to develop sailing over the past 12 months, your commitment, passion and dedication to the sport is invaluable.

A massive thank you to our main funding partners, Sport NI, RYA, The National Lottery and The Mary Peter's trust, who help the organisation and athletes to develop and grow and to our Board and staff team for supporting us to deliver the Navigating the Future organisational strategy.

We want to take this opportunity to highlight areas of work that we are particularly proud of linked to ambitions we set out in the Navigating the Future strategy launched in March 2023. We have seen significant increases in female and disability club membership numbers this year, of 10% and 30% respectively. With 'Improving Diversity' set as one of the organisational strategic aims it is fantastic to see the sport actively becoming more diverse. Programmes like Women on Water and Sailability have been priorities over the past 12 months but ultimately, it's the work of clubs up and down the country that are helping to make these positive changes.

We have further enhanced our impact in this area by accessing additional funding from The National Lotteries, Dormont Accounts fund that has enabled us to employ the first ever salaried and full time Sailability Officer over the next three years.

The launch of the NI Sailing Team was an exciting part of the last 12 months. When we launched the Navigating the Future strategy, we talked about how we wanted to raise the awareness, profile and recognition of sailors in Northern Ireland that help us to 'Celebrate the Sport' (one of our Strategic Foundations), alongside ensuring representing or making NI squads something to be proud of for sailors of all ages. We hope that the NI Sailing Team will go some way to doing this and you can find out more about the NI Sailing Team [here](#).

Lastly thank you to the corporate partners that are supporting some of our fantastic programmes and events. We are delighted to have been able to announce two new strategic partners, John Minnis Estate Agents and RBCA, who are sponsoring the Youth Champs and WOW programme respectively.

More information with regards to progress against the Navigating the Future strategy under each Strategic Aim and Foundation is outlined on pages 3-4.

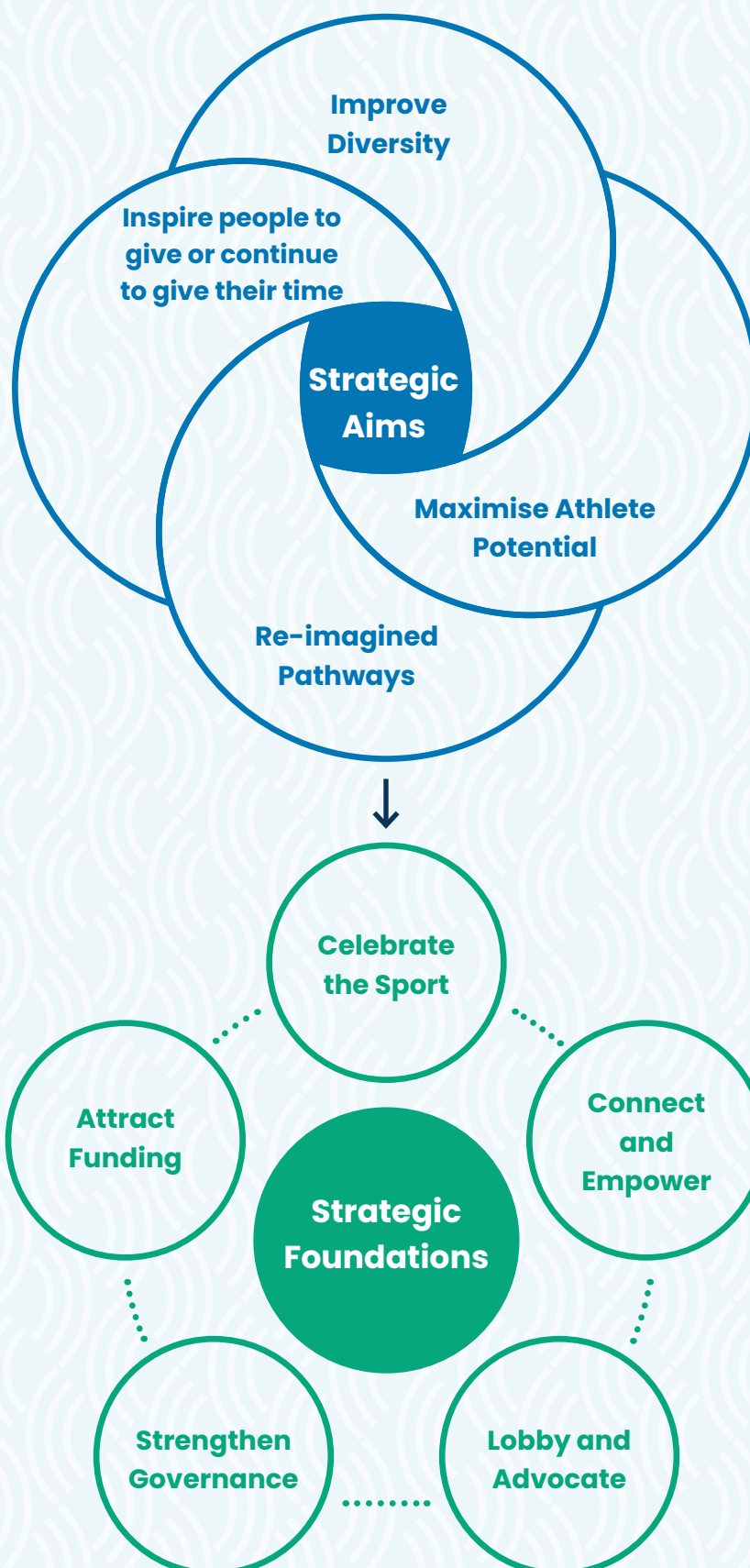
Susan McKnight Chair

Greg Yarnall CEO

Navigating the Future

The Five Year Strategic Plan

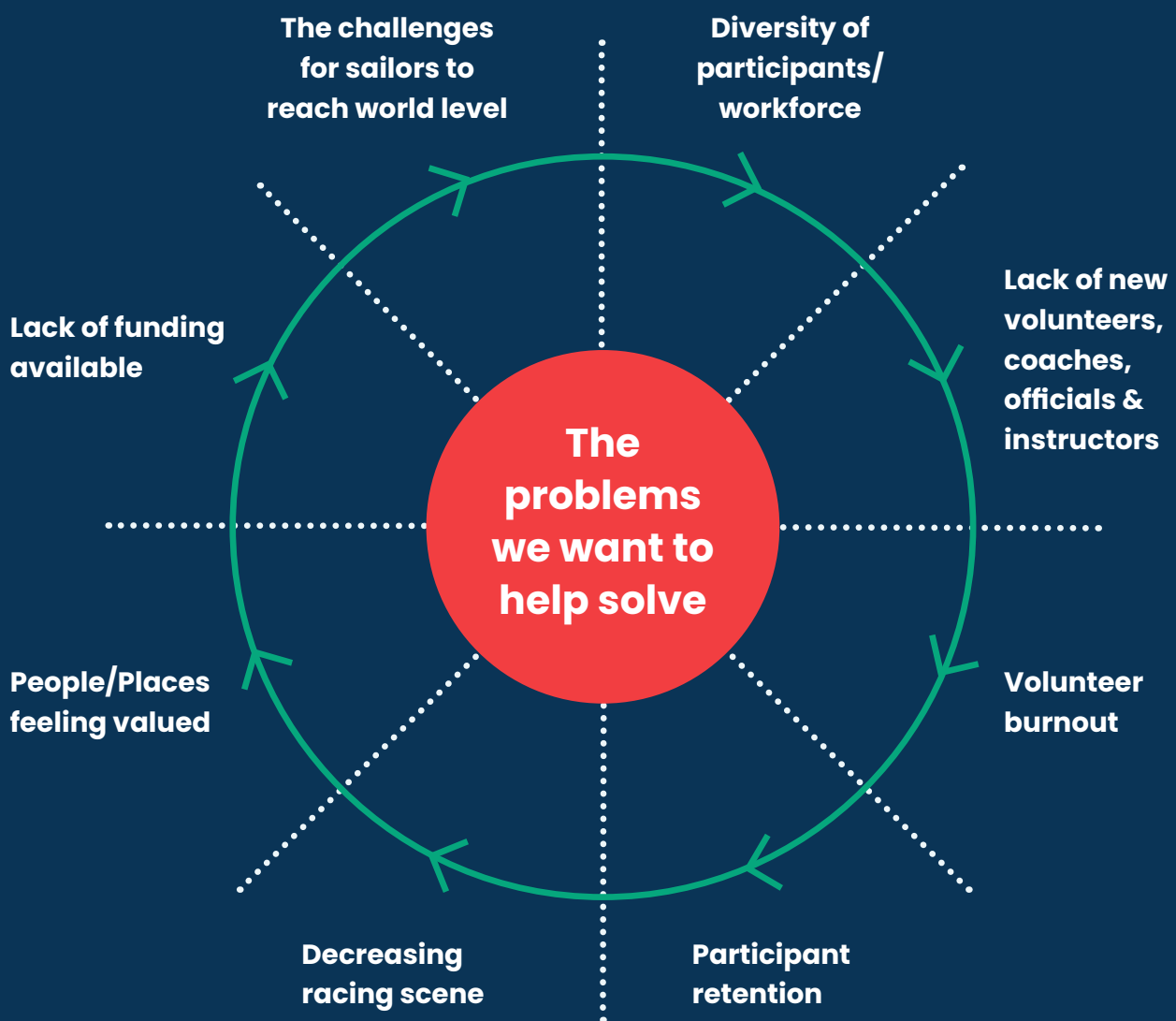
Sailing, Windsurfing and Boating in Northern Ireland





Common Challenges

An outline of the common challenges identified across the sport that we are trying to help solve through our work



Inspire people to give their time

Overview

2024–25 has seen significant progress in delivering high-quality training and development opportunities across Northern Ireland, ensuring a growing, skilled workforce to support sailing and water sports participation. Our targets have not only been met but exceeded in many areas, with increased access in rural locations and the introduction of new qualification levels.

Workforce Qualification and Course Delivery

Over the reporting period, a total of 93 new qualifications were awarded to coaches, instructors, and officials. This was achieved through the successful delivery of 15 training courses, exceeding the original target of 10. As a result, participants now hold formal credentials that equip them to take on paid roles or volunteer within clubs and training centres.

Race Coaching

- Three Race Coach Level 2 Courses were delivered, qualifying 18 new coaches.
- One Race Coach Level 3 Course delivered — the first ever to be held in Northern Ireland — with seven participants.

Dinghy & Senior Instructor Development

Three Dinghy Instructor courses were successfully delivered, resulting in 18 newly qualified instructors. In addition, 27 individuals completed the pre-entry assessment, preparing them for future qualification.

Although the planned Senior Instructor course in Northern Ireland had to be cancelled, all affected candidates were supported in finding suitable alternatives with the UK or in Dublin. This ensured continued progress in developing leadership within the instructional workforce, despite local delivery challenges.

The first ever Wingsurfing Instructor course in NI was delivered, qualifying five instructors to support growing Olympic-aligned board sports; delivered with Newtownards SC, RYA, and UK Wingsurfing Association.



Volunteers at work

Coach Development & Retention

Coach Development Programme

- 93 opportunities delivered through seven workshops, mentoring, shadowing, and CPD
- 41 female coaches (44%) participated
- One on-water CPD session delivered (one cancelled due to low uptake)
- 26 shadowing/mentoring opportunities, 14 (54%) female
- 24 paid work opportunities, nine (38%) of which were female
- Coach development included both technical training and key safety messaging

RYA National CPD

In the autumn of 2024, five coaches were funded from NI to travel to Rutland to join in with coaches from across the UK for a development opportunity. Coaches in attendance discussed teaching practices, how their programmes ran and were supported by a depth of coach tutors and RYA staff for the weekend. The feedback from the weekend was great with coaches taking a lot from it to put back into their own coaching.

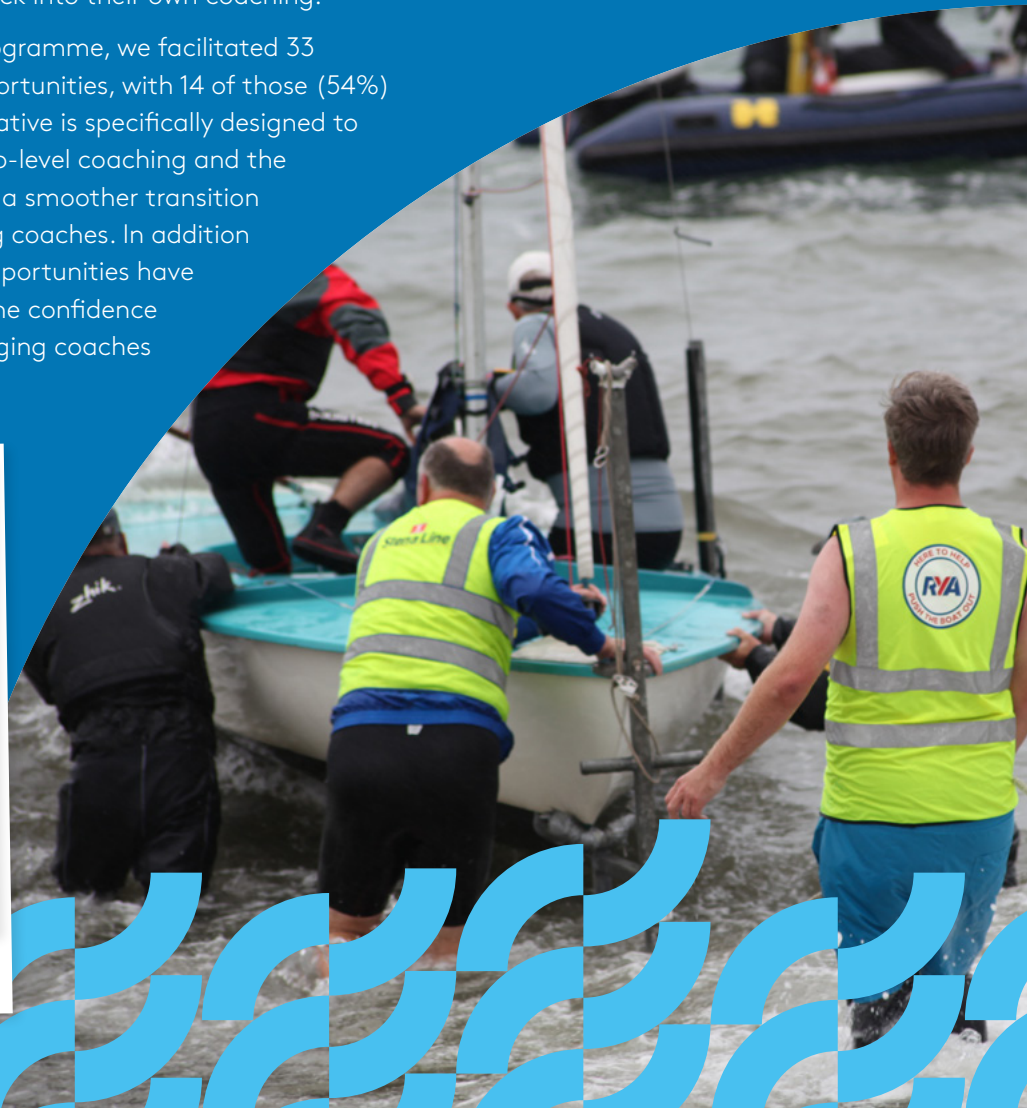
As part of our coach engagement programme, we facilitated 33 mentoring, shadowing, and work opportunities, with 14 of those (54%) taken up by female coaches. This initiative is specifically designed to address the existing gap between club-level coaching and the high-performance pathway, ensuring a smoother transition and clearer progression for developing coaches. In addition to enhancing technical skills, these opportunities have played a significant role in boosting the confidence and employability of young and emerging coaches across Northern Ireland.

// I loved the chance to use different equipment, the RS21's were great fun and it was interesting coaching each other for the weekend. I prefer these practical hands on development sessions. //

– Charlie O'Malley, BYC



Wing Instructor



Regional Training Day

- Held in March with **46** attendees, **18** female (39%)
- Covered **14** clubs/centres; attendees chose from 4+ workshops
- **67%** reported learning something new
- Key platform for disseminating RYA updates and best practices

This is our key instructor and coach engagement of the year. Ran in March to help prepare principals and instructors for the season ahead. The feedback from the day was phenomenal, with one of the key highlights being our OnBoard session delivered by Scottish Trainer, Jane Campbell Morrison. Attendees also enjoyed the chance to get on the water, all be-it in cold and blustery weather.

Rules Roadshows

- Four events were delivered across EDYC, PSC, ABC, and BBC, with **133** attendees, reinforcing essential racing rules knowledge and encouraging official pathway engagement.

Volunteer recruitment and engagement – We're All In (WAI) Programme

The 'We're All In' Programme was established to impact our strategic aim of 'inspiring people to give their time.' We are consistently told by clubs and affiliates that they do not have enough volunteers to achieve their goals and that the current operation is in jeopardy due to the few volunteers who do the lion's share of the work. Five clubs were supported with funding, culminating in six volunteer recruitment and engagement events, engaging 150 volunteers.

One of the clubs running a We're All In event in 2024 was East Down Yacht Club;

//
It was a great feeling and worked well as an event, and was well supported by our exec... we could gauge new volunteer skills and they could learn about the roles... //

- Keith Carr, EDYC Commodore

//
We were very impressed, it was great to be shown around the club boats and learn about some of the attributes of the kit, we feel a part of it. //

- EDYC New member



Regional Training Day

Safeguarding

- Two Designated Safeguarding Children Officer & Safeguarding Awareness courses delivered
- 24 attendees trained in safeguarding — essential to club safety and standards

RYANI Annual Awards 2024

- Held with **100** attendees
- **22** nominations from six clubs, +12 young sailor nominations
- **108** individuals invited to be recognised across the sailing community

Winners were:

- **Male Junior Sailor of The Year** - Luke Simpson
- **Female Junior Sailor of The Year** - Emily Macafee
- **Male Youth Sailor of The Year** - Tom Coulter
- **Female Youth Sailor of The Year** - Erin McIlwaine
- **Volunteer of The Year** - Ellie Young /Marty Ansfield
- **Young Volunteer of The Year** - Isabel Nixon /Emily Dixon
- **Club Race Coach of The Year** - Joseph Karazum
- **Instructor of The Year** - Luke McIlwaine
- **Chair's Award** - County Antrim Volunteers /Billy Kohner/Gordon Kane
- **Club Project of The Year** - East Down Yacht Club
- **Race Official of The Year** - County Antrim Yacht Club Ladies Race Official Team

Watch footage of the 2024 Annual Awards [here](#).

The Numbers

30

People recognised through the RYA NI Annual Awards

150

Volunteers engaged through the We're All In programme

133

Attendees across four Rules Roadshow events

46

People benefited from the Regional Training Day

18

New DI/SI's qualified

3

Race Coach Level 2 courses delivered

1st

Wingsurfing Instructor course delivered in NI

1st

Race Coach Level 3 course in NI delivered

Maximise Athlete Potential

Youth Performance Programme – NI Sailing Team

The most notable progress within our performance programmes is the launch and integration of the NI Sailing Team.

This replaces the Youth Performance Programme and helps to create an increased sense of belonging for the sailors and pride from the NI Sailing communities as set out in the Navigating the Future strategy. We hope it also provides greater opportunities to attract sponsorship and run new programmes under this banner. A new NI Sailing Team [website](#) has also been created alongside this rebrand that will give us more capacity to celebrate and empower sailors.

10 Topper and **13** ILCA sailors were selected for the 24/25 NI Sailing Team. The programme continues to provide scheduled coaching across six weekends a year over the winter months and this year included supported fitness sessions and testing. For the first time, **8** RS Feva sailors were selected to be in the NI Squad, while still running open training to support the wider fleet growth.

In the 24/25 year there were nine sailors included in Irish squads that included:

Junior

- Emily MaCafee in Irish Topper Squad

Transition/Youth

- Zoe Whitford, Daniel Palmer, Bobby Driscoll in ILCA 6 Academy
- Tom Coulter in ILCA 7 Standard Development Programme
- Charlotte Eadie, Erin McIlwaine and Ellen Barbour in the 49er FX Development Programme Event Results

Sailor Funding

The amount of funding secured for NI sailors from various pots of funding has decreased this year, mainly due to a reduction in SNI allocations as other sports were prioritised in an Olympic year.

RYANI Athlete Funding

- £10,000 across 5 sailors

Sport NI Athlete Awards

- £8,750 awarded across four Sailors, this was down from £17,500 in 23/24 and is likely to be reflective of 2024 being an Olympic year, with NI sailors not being in a position to compete at Paris 2024.

Mary Peter's Trust

- £5,750 awarded across 6 Sailors

**Total Sailor
Funding:
£24,500**

Event Results

It has been fantastic to witness some great results from NI Sailing Team sailors at home and abroad. Some of the standout results are listed below.

- We had our first ISAF Youth Worlds Representative in years, with Bobby Driscoll selected to represent Ireland in Lake Garda (Youth Olympics)

Topper

- Five Sailors attended the Topper Worlds in Spain with Leo West-Hurst the top finisher in 4th place in the 4.2 class
- Adam Green 1st in all Irish (4.2 class)
- Leo West-Hurst 2nd in the majority of Irish events (4.2 class)

IRISH YOUTH NATIONALS 2024

No junior racing due to strong winds.

ILCA 6

- Bobby Driscoll - 1st overall
- Lewis Thompson - 3rd overall
- Zoe Whitford - 2nd girl (12th overall)
- Daniel Palmer - 8th overall

ILCA Irish Nationals

- Dan McGaughey - 1st overall: ILCA 7
- Tom Coulter - 3rd overall: ILCA 7
- Bobby Driscoll - 2nd overall: ILCA 6
- Zoe Whitford - 3rd girl: ILCA 6
- Joseph Robinson - 2nd overall: ILCA 4
- Emily MaCafee - 2nd girl: ILCA 4

Tom Coulter competed in Under 21 European Championships and Under 21 World Championships gaining valuable experience at an elite level.

RS Feva

- Emily & Annabel Ridout
- 1st Irish Nationals
- Jessica Dadley-Young & Sally Nixon
- 3rd Irish Nationals

29er

- Hannah Dadley-Young
- 1st Irish Nationals

49er FX

- Erin McIlwaine & Charlotte Eadie
- 1st Portugal Grand Prix
- Erin McIlwaine & Ellen Barbour
- 11th Kiel Week
- 19th Under 21 World Championships

Valencia New Year Training Camp

From the 27th of December until the 3rd of January, RYA NI Performance Manager, Andrew Baker took five sailors to Sail Coach base Valencia to join with Wales and Scotland and other sailing nations to form an international training camp, that included other NI sailors already on camp with Irish Sailing. The camp was a great success and something that will continue to be built upon into the future.



Tom Coulter in action



Celtic Cup

Celtic Cup

The 2025 Celtic Cup was hosted by Northern Ireland at Killyleagh Outdoor Education Centre. The event is a nations sailing trophy between Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales and each nation puts forward their six best Topper and ILCA 6 sailors to compete against each other.

Although the overall points difference between Northern Ireland and their Scottish and Welsh counterparts was very small, the weekend finished with a Northern Irish clean sweep after team victories in the Topper and ILCA 6 class.

Watch footage of the event [here](#).

Celtic Cup Overall results 2025 - Killyleagh

ILCA6 - based on top 4 in each home country

Home Country	Points
Northern Ireland	15
Wales	24
Scotland	39

Topper 5.3 - based on top 6 in each home country

Home Country	Points
Northern Ireland	47
Scotland	57
Wales	67

Overall Points - Topper 5.3 and ILCA6 combined

Position	Home Country	Points
1 st	Northern Ireland	62
2 nd	Wales	91
3 rd	Scotland	96

Youth Championships 2024

Strangford Lough YC Hosted the 2024 RYANI Youth Championships with 126 competitors on the day. Thanks go to SLYC for hosting the event and to all the volunteers giving their time to make the day such as success. Watch footage of the event [here](#).

2024 SLYC

Class/Gender	Male	Female
REGATTA	16	12
Feva	9	11
Optimist	3	5
Topper	18	9
Topper 4.2	8	1
Junior	54	38
ILCA 4	6	13
ILCA 6	14	3
ILCA 7	5	0
29er	1	1
Youth	26	17
Overall	80	55

Results

Regatta Fleet

Rafa Cobain was the overall winner, winning two of the three races sailed.

Optimist

Position	Winner
3 rd	Penny Doig
2 nd	Anna Williams
1 st	Ollie Gunderson

Topper 4.2

Position	Winner
3 rd Boy	Charlie Haslett
2 nd Boy	Tomás A'Choistealbha
1 st Boy	Leo West-Hurst
1 st Girl	Emma West-Hurst
Overall	Leo West-Hurst

Mackey Opticians Topper 5.3 Fleet

Position	Winner
3 rd Boy	Matthew Holden
2 nd Boy	Adam Green
1 st Boy	Calum Pollard
3 rd Girl	Zoe West-Hurst
2 nd Girl	Alex Eadie
1 st Girl	Polly Robinson
Overall	Calum Pollard

RS FEVA

Position	Winner
3 rd	Jessica Dadley – Young & Sally Nixon
2 nd	Charlie Stocking & Alannah Kelly
1 st	Emily & Annabel Ridout

ILCA 4

Position	Winner
3 rd Boy	Rory Brennan - Hobbs
2 nd Boy	Hugo Boyd
1 st Boy	Freddie Doig
3 rd Girl	Siún Ní Choistealbha
2 nd Girl	Isabel Nixon
1 st Girl	Emily McCafee
Overall	Emily McCafee

Print Library ILCA 6

Position	Winner
3 rd Boy	Charlie Keating
2 nd Boy	Boddy Driscoll
1 st Boy	Daniel Palmer
3 rd Girl	Sophia Cahill
2 nd Girl	Autumn Halliday
1 st Girl	Zoe Whitford
Overall	Daniel Palmer

 **JOHNMINNIS YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS**

NI SAILING TEAM RYA

ILCA 7 Fleet

Position	Winner
3 rd	Joshua McGregor
2 nd	Lewis Thompson
1 st	Tom Coulter

Ridgeway 29er and Ulster Championships

Overall Winner	Jakub Ozarek & Abbie Stocking
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Schools Cup and Club Shield

Ballyholme Yacht Club won the Club Shield and Sullivan Upper School in Holywood won the Schools Cup.

A full breakdown of all the results can be found [here](#).

Performance challenges

Costs incurred when transitioning, maintaining independent campaigns and inclusion within National Squads can become prohibitive for sailors and their families.

Time commitments continue to be a challenge as many sailors have multiple sports and other extracurricular activities.

The Numbers

36

Sailors were part of the NI Sailing Team

£24.5k

Funding distributed to support sailors

126

Competitors took part in the RYA NI Youth Championships

1st

Place for NI in the Celtic Cup

7

Sailors selected for the Irish Sailing Programmes



Youth Championships



Irish Youth Nationals



Improve Diversity

Female Membership

RYA Northern Ireland's goal to reach 3,633 female members (10% growth) across the region has been successfully achieved.

Through the continued efforts of the Women on Water (WoW) programmes and the commitment of clubs delivering tailored initiatives to meet the needs of their members, female participation has grown significantly. Female membership now stands at 40.3% (3,896 members)—a strong reflection of the progress made.

However, this is just the beginning. We remain committed to building on this momentum and continuing to grow female involvement in boating across Northern Ireland.

W&G Pulse Survey

This survey gathered responses from 40 individuals identifying as female across a range of age groups and sailing backgrounds. The purpose was to evaluate perceptions and changes since the 2023 Women & Girls (W&G) research, focusing on participation, inclusion, and development opportunities in sailing clubs and programmes.

Key Findings

Awareness and Impact of the 2023 W&G Report:

40%

Agreed or strongly agreed that their club had implemented recommendations from the W&G's research project.

63%

Said they have seen positive change in the opportunities for women and girls in sailing through RYA NI.

65%

Said they feel as though they have seen positive change in the coverage of W&G's in the sport on RYA NI social media channels.

70%

Said they have seen some or significant change in celebrating female role models.

50%

Said they have seen some or significant change in the profile and publicity of women and girls in sailing.

There were a number of suggestions that came from those completing the survey that including to continue promoting the W&G's report through digital channels and club meetings, support participation pathways by tailoring programmes by skill level and offer flexible formats, highlight stories of women leaders and male allies.

WOW Programme

The Women on Water (WOW) programme continues to be an integral part of many clubs' seasonal planning. It's fantastic to see the programme being embraced and made available by clubs, offering opportunities for women of all experience levels—from complete beginners to seasoned sailors—to get involved.

This season, six clubs ran WOW programmes, with four receiving support through Active Clubs grants. These grants helped create opportunities for **93** women to participate across various water-based activities. One club noted:

//

The WOW programme is a fabulous opportunity to get ladies on the water and discover the different possibilities—whether it's dinghy sailing, keelboat, paddle boarding, or powerboating. Having a welcoming and relaxed group of women helps build confidence to try something new while forming lasting friendships. //

Women on Water Development Programme

Following a strong expression of interest the Water on Water programme expanded to include a new initiative: the Women on Water Development Programme. This programme was designed to build the skills and boost the confidence of newly recruited female sailing members.

In 2025, four separate programmes were delivered across four clubs: Ballyholme Yacht Club, Donaghadee Sailing Club, Royal Ulster Yacht Club, and East Down Yacht Club. In total, 92 participants took part and benefitted from this focused development opportunity.

East Down Yacht Club ran their WOW Development Programme in March, just ahead of the 2025 sailing season. The event was a huge success, with 11 members getting out on the water and building their sailing abilities in a supportive and encouraging environment.

//

I took up sailing aged 50, having thought this sport was inaccessible as an adult, and would be too expensive. I was wrong about the perceived barriers, and I have instead been introduced to wonderful group of people at EDYC who have helped me slowly develop skills and confidence. //



WoW at BYC



WoW Cake

WOW Festival

The 2024 WOW Festival at Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club was a huge success. The club delivered a fantastic day getting 44 participants out on the water.

As usual it was a mixture of new participants to the sport and regular sailors all wanting the same – to get out on the water, meet new friends and have fun! This was certainly achieved with positive feedback and RNIYC pulled out all the stops when they brought out a WoW cake.



It was a SUPER event, well organised, inclusive and instructive – plus you ordered the weather I met wonderful women there too, & will hopefully be trying other courses with some of them going forward. //

Sailability

We continued to support the fantastic work of the 3 Sailability Clubs in Northern Ireland.

Two Sailability programmes were supported through the Active Clubs grants providing sailing opportunities for 55 participants. RYA NI Sailability Coordinator, Ken Curry, continued to travel to all three Sailability clubs to support their development.

Two Sailability forums occurred over 2024 with 20 attendees joining to discuss priorities, challenges and partnership working. We will continue these successful forums allowing clubs to network and provide support for each other.

Disability membership makes up 5.3% of NI overall membership. To record the most accurate representation we need clubs to understand their current membership make up and to report in the membership census. We have 28% of clubs reporting members with a disability.

Sailability Open

The inaugural Sailability open in 2024 proved a huge success. Belfast Lough Sailability, Foyle Sailability and Lough Erne Sailability each ran a Sailability open with 84 participant experiences in total: Lough Erne Yacht Club – 30, Belfast Lough Sailability – 26, Foyle Sailability – 28.

The numbers

44

People took part in the WOW Festival

40+

People took part in the Sailability Open series

92

W&G's engaged through 4 WOW Development programmes

30%

increase in Disability club membership

11%

increase in W&G's club membership

70%

of people said they have seen positive change in celebrating female role models in NI



Wow Festival



Re-imagined Pathways

Female Focus Camp

The Female Focus Camp was held on the 27th and 28th April 2024 engaging 23 girls between the ages of 12 and 21.

Attendees heard from athletes and coaches who showcased the journey of the Olympic pathway, and the importance of training, competing outside their club, trying different boats and having the knowledge of 'what it takes' to pursue the performance pathway. The female only space allowed for conversations led by coaches about managing female health and menstrual cycles in the sport with over 50% of participants going away more confident in their knowledge of managing their menstrual cycle when training and competing.

The weekend led to many of the female sailors going away motivated and enthused about the opportunities in sailing where we see a high drop out rate between the ages of 14 and 18.



The weekend made me feel so inspired to continue in the sport and to persevere throughout all my sailing training and racing. //

Team Racing

Several Team Racing sessions were held early in the 2024 season, engaging over 40 new participants across three locations. The sessions had extremely positive feedback with 100% of participants saying they would recommend Team Racing to others. Unfortunately, the challenges with access to boats and club capacity to run an additional element to their programme meant a decision was made to pause the delivery of Team Racing activity and we will monitor this as an area of development in the future.

Transition days

Transition Days were brought in to support the drop out we experience as junior sailors move into youth classes and youth into senior. Sailors' abilities, size and weight all come into account when changing class and many drift away from the sport if they don't find the right boat or partner to sail with.

These sessions were designed to showcase the recommended classes in NI, allowing participants to try out boats and meet new boat owners and class association reps. Many have now moved into these classes and/or sail with others following these experience days, linking them into the wider NI Sailing Community. Two transition days were held with 35 attendees, 22 of which were female.

OnBoard

In 2024 RYANI had ten OnBoard providers delivering activity to young people. Three OnBoard providers received funding from the Active Clubs grants including the introduction of a school's programme. Overall, OnBoard achieved over 150 new participant opportunities & 470 regular participant opportunities.

The OnBoard Development Day ran alongside the Regional Training Day and Jane Campbell-Morrison came across the water to share their Onboard knowledge both on and off the water.

The numbers

21

W&G's benefitted from the Female Focus Camp

150

New participants through the Onboard programme

1st

Time the Team Racing programme has been delivered in NI

8

Feva sailors included as part of the NI Sailing Team



Onboard at SSC



Active Clubs programme at KYC

Celebrate the Sport

When the Navigating the Future strategy was launched, we committed to celebrating and raising the profile of the people and places doing amazing things in the sport. In February 2025 the NI Sailing Team website was launched, allowing us to showcase NI Sailors progress and achievements.

There are weekly stories being posted and initial traction on the website has been promising with over **1000** visits in the first couple of weeks. The site also creates a platform to help us attract corporate partners in the future.

We continue to highlight great stories and case studies from across the sport in NI, some examples are included below.

- Ruairi Kennedy [video](#)
- Sophie Killiner [video](#)
- Tom Coulter [case study](#)

Social media performance improved throughout the year:

Facebook

(Stats relating to April 1st 2024 - 31st March 2025 vs previous period)

- Reach increased by **104%**
- Visits to the page increased by **40%**
- There was a **4%** increase in new followers

Instagram

(Stats relating to April 1st 2024 - 31st March 2025 vs previous period)

- Reach increased by **321%**
- Visits to the page increased by **125%**
- There were **161** new followers to the page

LinkedIn

(Based on an audit carried out studying February 2024-February 2025).

- During this period, our LinkedIn profile saw **118** new followers. The page's following continues to rise and now sits at **278** and is an area of targeted growth moving forwards

New methods of communication were developed for communicating to the NI Sailing Community with the formation of WhatsApp groups. A Commodore and Key Volunteer Chat has **50** members and the NI Sailing community chat has **83** members.

50th Anniversary Dinner

We celebrated 50 years of RYA Northern Ireland in October 2024 with nearly 150 people from across the sailing community and beyond at the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office. Representatives from clubs across Northern Ireland were in attendance, alongside individuals that played a part in shaping the organisation and sport over the past 50 years. This included past Chairs of RYA NI, Olympians and Paralympians and current athletes on the NI Sailing Team. Representatives from ten table sponsors were also present and we thank them for their support in making the event happen. The event was a fantastic celebration looking at the past, present and future of the sport.

NI Sailing Hall of Fame

At the 50th Anniversary Dinner, the latest inductees to the Northern Ireland Sailing Hall of Fame were announced and included Mike Hendra, Bob Harper, Ron Hutchison, Brian Black and Peter Kennedy.

- [Mike Hendra](#)
- [Bob Harper](#)
- [Ron Hutchison](#)
- [Brian Black](#)
- [Peter Kennedy](#)

Other notable achievements:

- [Robin Gray](#) was awarded the RYA Emeritus Award
- We launched the [Individual Grant Scheme](#) in January 2025
- Emma McKnight and Daniel Corbet were selected for the [Griffin Project](#)
- Oisin McClelland competes in the [44 Cup](#)
- Ballyholme Yacht Club hosted the ILCA 6 Europeans in July 2024
- Bobby Driscoll won the [Open Bahía de Altea regatta](#)



50th Anniversary Dinner



50th Anniversary Dinner



Bob Harper MBE

Connect and Empower

RYA Connected

The **RYA Connected** events are extremely important for our affiliates to network and learn from each other. In 24/25, 22 Connected events were held ranging from Sailability forums, Conferences and online workshops. Overall, we had 258 attendees from 78% of NI clubs.

The RYA NI Connected Conference kick started the Connected events, and we were delighted to have 36 attendees from 17 clubs. The theme of the conference was “**Creating a safe and welcoming environment for all**”. RYA Head of Regions Gareth Brookes & Programmes Manager Michelle Gent came from RYA HQ to deliver workshops on Safety Management systems & volunteering.

Talks from clubs across NI on the WOW Programme, youth sailors & the OnBoard programme, Junior Committees and an insight into East Downs Yacht club #weareEDYC initiative. Thanks to Ballyholme Yacht Club, Donaghadee Sailing Club, East Down Yacht Club, Strangford Sailing Club for sharing their stories.

“Lots of new ideas but it helped us realise our current areas of good practice – barriers to progress and points we can improve easily”

Following the re-introduction of the **Commodore-Vice Commodore evening** in 2023, this was held again in 2024 continuing the theme of Governance. NICVA delivered a workshop on Good Governance and the RYA affiliation process and RYA Compliance Toolkit were also discussed.

RYA Club Affiliation

Since 2024, RYA have been asking all new and existing affiliates to let us know who they are delivering activity for and the policies and procedures they have in place to support this as part of the new club affiliation process. As a result of this information, RYA have been able to evolve a programme of support for our affiliates and their volunteers.

Currently, 27% have either fully or partially completed the affiliation process. We have a target of 40% of clubs completing this by the end of 25/26.

Membership Census

In 2024 the census reported 9670 club members, with overall RYA NI club membership (including University clubs and Charity clubs) standing at 9838 a 0.9% growth. With the cost-of-living crisis, this increase is a positive outlook with more joiners in 2024 than 2023. Whilst we always strive to grow our sport it is just as important to retain current members and with a churn rate of 8.1% (significantly better than the UK average of 12.2%), this shows clubs are doing a lot right.



Active Club Grants

In 24/25 we widened the scope for the Active Club grant programmes to include membership retention and several clubs applied for race training, skills development, OnBoard and WOW programmes for their own members. The following programmes were supported through an Active Clubs grant.



CSBC

Club	Programme	Number of participants
East Down Yacht Club	Junior Race Training	38
Ballyronan Boat Club	Women on Water	16
Belfast Lough Sailability	Discover Sailability	41
Newcastle Yacht Club	Junior & Adult Training	20
Strangford Sailing Club	Junior & Adult Training, WOW	40
Killyleagh Yacht Club	OnBoard	34
Belfast Lough Sailability	Sailability	15
Ballyholme Yacht Club	WOW	46
Portaferry Sailing Club	Junior Sessions	24
Cushendall Sailing and Boating Club	Junior coaching sessions	19
Carrickfergus Sailing Club	Junior Race Training	17
Carrickfergus Sailing Club	OnBoard	
Carrickfergus Sailing Club	WOW	14
Lough Neagh Sailing Club	Keelboating - Adults	18



Flare disposal day

Lobby and Advocate

We continue to look at how we can elevate the voice of sailing and boating and that of our members. There have been two significant developments in this area over the past 12 months.

- Following a significant amount of work alongside Stephen Dunne MLA and PSNI, a flare disposal day was organised in June 2024 where an unprecedented 4000 flares were disposed of across three locations: Bangor Marina, Portrush Marina and Lough Erne Yacht Club.
- We have also seen the launch of the Clean Water Sports Alliance NI. The Clean Water Sports Alliance was launched in England in April 2024 and alongside the NI Sports Forum, we have been meeting with several other water sport National Governing Bodies to look at how we best lobby for clean water in NI. The RYA NI have been one of the leading organisations in establishing this and led the work of the Alliance in presenting this to the All-Parliamentary Group for Sport and at the official launch of the CWSA NI in Stormont in front of Minister's and MLAs across various parties.

The C&E Committee continues to operate well, with a new Chair coming into place from January 2025. Isabel Hood took over from Roy Totten who had Chaired the C&E Committee for close to ten years, we thank Roy for his dedicated service to this role and thank and welcome Isabel for coming forward as the new Chair. We also had two members of the C&E Committee coming on board, with Sam Purdon and Kieron Black. Jackie Patton stepped down from the Committee and we thank her for her continued support.

Strengthen Governance

24-25 saw a significant moment for RYA NI, with a move to charitable status officially signed off by the Charity Commission NI in February 2025. Thank you to our affiliated bodies for supporting an article change to satisfy the requirements of the Charity Commission NI.

Other notable developments in this area included:

- Sign off of the new Safeguarding Implementation Plan for RYA NI alongside CPSU.
- RYA taking on the role of Safeguarding Case Management Lead, which has helped to streamline and improve communication with members when managing safeguarding cases.
- A Board Appraisal took place to understand where improvements and progress can be made in Board operations and engagement.
- A Governance and Risk Committee was established with Gavin Nelson in place as Committee Chair. This Committee will be responsible for the organisation's risk register, policies, the transition to charitable status and the structure of the organisations sub committees.
- We continue to publish quarterly organisational updates from the CEO and Chair that share key Board decisions and topics of discussion.
- A club governance workshop was held at the Commodore and Vice Commodore evening.
- The Performance Manager and UK Anti-Doping Lead has worked alongside RYA colleagues to review the annual delivery plan and attended annual UKAD training.



UKAD
Protecting Sport

Attract Funding

Firstly, a thank you to all those partners that have supported us over the 12 months of this report, with a special thank you to our main funders Sport NI, The National Lottery and RYA. Some highlights in this area include:

- Secured just over £118,000 over three years for a disability project, that includes funding for a full time paid Sailability Officer role.
- Secured over £6000 from ten partners in sponsorship towards the RYA NI 50th Anniversary Dinner.
- Maintained level of SNI funding at £274,000.
- Secured a **three-year partnership** with Accountancy firm, RBCA, for sponsorship of the Women on Water programme.
- Secured a **three-year partnership** with Estate Agents, John Minnis, for sponsorship of the RYA NI Youth Championships.
- Developed **marketing packs** that we can send to potential partners/sponsors to invest in RYA NI/NI Sailing Team programmes.
- Raised £3000 from a raffle at the 50th Anniversary Dinner which supported the launch of an Individual Grant Scheme to support people from disadvantaged groups to start, continue or progress in sailing.





Financial Summary

Included in the annual report is a financial summary, the accounts have not yet been audited so a detailed financial breakdown had not been provided in this document but will be shared with the papers for the RYA NI AGM in November 2025.

Figure 1 is a breakdown of RYA NI income and Figure 2 is a breakdown of RYA NI expenditure.

Figure 1. **Income**

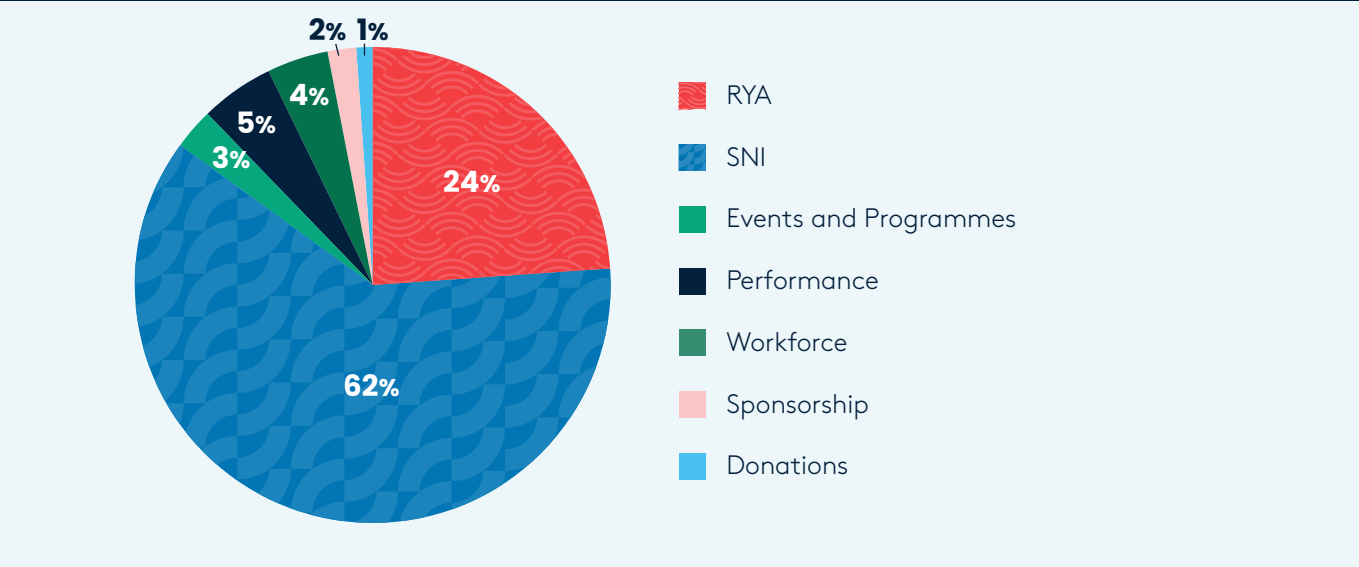
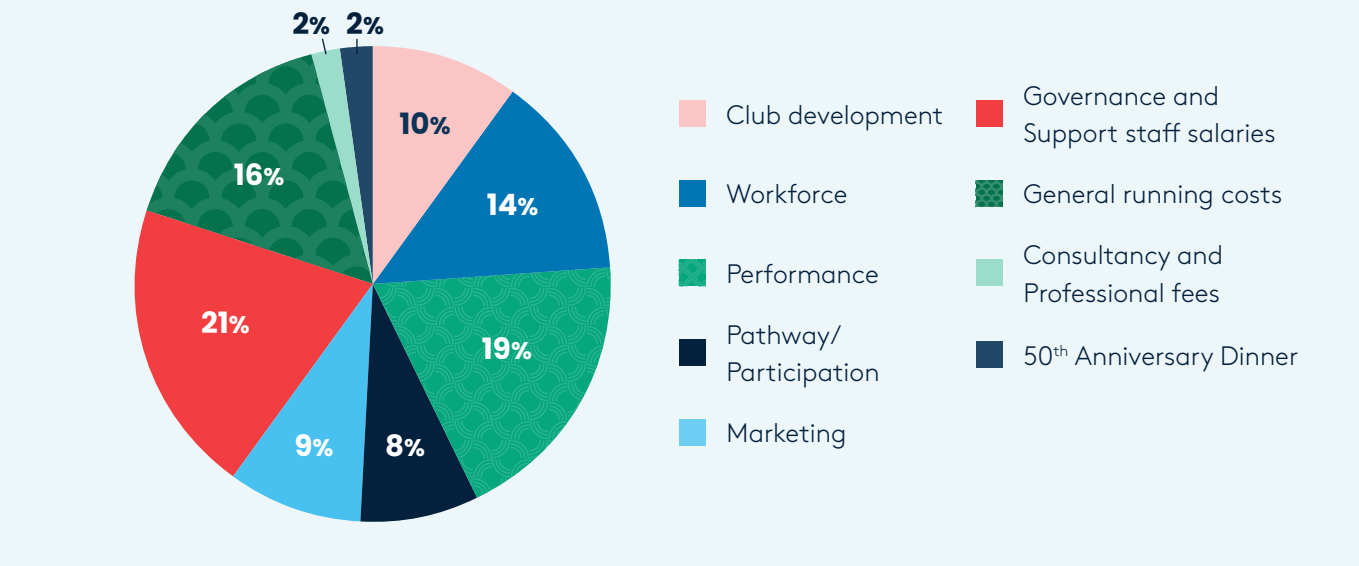


Figure 2. **Expenditure**





Thank you

With thanks to the following Board,
Staff and Committee members:

Board Members

Chair Susan McKnight

**Vice Chair / Chair of Business Development
Committee** Gavin Watson

**Treasurer and Chair of Finance
Committee** Linda MacHugh

Safeguarding & EDI Lead Jill Heron

Development Committee Chair Liz Baker

Performance Committee Chair Colin Leonard

Independent Director Owen Waters

**Independent Director and Chair of Governance
and Risk Committee** Gavin Nelson

Staff

Current

CEO Greg Yarnall

Performance Manager Andrew (Hammy) Baker

Development Manager Lisa McCaffrey

Workforce Development Officer Mary Martin

**Marketing and Communications
Executive** Peter Gilmore

Racing Officer Roger Craig

Development Officer Jessica Penney

Admin Assistant Michelle Hill

Previous staff members in 2024–25

Executive Assistant Gayle Logan

Pathways Officer Kate Broderick

Finance Committee

Chair Linda MacHugh, David Williams
Susan McKnight, Gavin Watson

Business Development

Chair Gavin Watson, Gavin Nelson
Owen Waters

EDI

Chair Jill Heron, Drew Smiley, Fiona Hicks, Ken Curry

Cruising and Environment

Chair Isabel Hood (Roy Totten held until Nov 24)
David Williams, Jackie Patton, Isabel Hood, Julian
Morgan, Kieron Black, Sam Purdon

Development Committee

Chair Liz Baker, Richard Robinson, Mark Mackey, James
Ogg, Kaitlyn Eadie, Sophie Killiner, Roger Woodward,
Paul Prentice, Heather Lawther

Performance

Chair Colin Leonard, Lucy Kane, Simon McIlwaine,
Liam Glynn Jane Kearney

Volunteer roles with the RYA NI

Sailability Lead Ken Curry

**Regional Race Management
Coordinator** Robin Gray

Regional Rules Advisor Denis Todd

Staffing

We have seen some staff changes over the past twelve months with Gayle Lavery (nee Logan), moving on to pastures new after over 12 years dedicated service to the organisation. Kate Broderick (nee Pounder) moved on to an exciting role at Ballyholme Yacht Club as their Watersports Manager.

Thank you to Gayle and Kate for your fantastic work across sailing and boating, you will both be missed. We have welcomed three new staff to the team towards the end of the 24-25 year, with Roger Craig starting as Racing Officer (17.5 hrs per week), Jessica Penney as Development Officer (17.5 hrs per week) and Michelle Hill as Admin Assistant (15 hrs per week, 6 month contract until April).



Susan McKnight Chair



Greg Yarnall CEO



Thank you to our partners and sponsors this year

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Northern Ireland

 Mary Peters Trust

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LOTTERY**

RBCA

 **JOHNMINNIS**

**MERVYN
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 **ICARUS**

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