



Commodore's Report 2025

It's been a good year for Chanonry Sailing Club with plenty of sunny weather and lots of water sports activity to enjoy. We continue to provide low-cost access to the water sports for our members and the wider public from across the Highland.

We hope you enjoy the review of 2024 - 25.

Membership

Our membership numbers are slightly down on last year, but numbers are still very healthy and show a strong interest in water sports at the club.

	2025	2024
Family	101	110
Individual	68	73
Junior*	18	15
Student	2	3
Senior family	26	16
Senior individual	34	53
Club	1	1
Honorary	8	8
Life	1	1
Total	258	279

*The number of junior members is around 45 including those in family memberships

Sailing Report

The 2025 season began with increased participation in both Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening races, highlighted by growth in the Solo and Streaker fleets. Unfortunately, poor weather prevented the Ness Cup from taking place, but alternative dates have been set for next year to mitigate similar issues.

Friday evening sessions experienced inconsistent turnout and occasional cancellations due to safety cover concerns. On the open circuit, Solo fleet members represented the club well: Charlie Brecknell secured victory at the Solo Scottish Championships and, alongside Jon Bailey and Roddy Henry, helped Chanonry win the Top Club Trophy at the windy National Championships in North Berwick.

The Musto Skiff Traveller saw limited club representation this year due to scheduling conflicts, but plans are in place for its return as part of the Club

Regatta next year. The Chanonry Regatta welcomed visiting boats and was marked by challenging light winds, with Jon Bailey winning the slow handicap.

We extend our gratitude to all volunteers for their ongoing support, crucial to the success of club events. Looking ahead, Chanonry will host the Solo and Streaker Scottish Championships in June, a prestigious occasion for the club. The Sailing Team aims to boost promotion using Facebook and encourages members to volunteer, whether on the water or by welcoming visitors. We look forward to upholding Chanonry's tradition of excellent racing and hospitality in 2026.

Sailing sub-committee

RYA Recognised Training Centre (RTC) Report

Introduction

Following a change in RTC management at the last AGM, the training team continued with a similar programme as previous years. Formal RYA sailing and power boating courses were provided for beginners of all ages, while informal sessions included "Dolphins" for juniors and "Improvers" for all. Additional offerings included a Club Safety Officer course for Assistant Safety Officers and a women-only sailing taster. Two sailing instructors attended a free CPD day at Findhorn Watersports. The RYA inspection in July found no issues.

Formal Training

This year, we issued 34 RYA certificates: 15 Junior Dinghy Stages, 8 Adult Dinghy Stages, and 11 Power Boat Level 2. Despite windy conditions during July's junior weeks, the sailors made excellent progress. Advanced juniors benefited from the Quest's features, learning techniques like trapezing and spinnaker use. The Quests also allowed less experienced sailors to participate safely in challenging weather. Some training was affected by excessive winds, with adult beginners completing their course after rescheduled sessions.

Strong interest in PBL2 courses led to 11 new power boat drivers now available to assist with safety duties for club sailing and events.

Informal Training

Attendance for Dolphins and Improvers dropped slightly compared to last year, though interest increased towards season's end as new sailors joined. These sessions help newcomers build skills, sail with peers, and experience different boats in various conditions. The Quests remained popular among both adults and juniors for trying out new sailing techniques.

Instructors

We have 14 RYA-qualified club members who volunteer as sailing and powerboating instructors for the RTC. Their support is essential to our training program. Special thanks to Chris Taylor (Chief Instructor Dinghy) and Mike Wilson (Chief Instructor Power).

Parental Help

Junior training depends on extra adult help. This year, we invited parents of junior sailors to train as safety boat crew, assisting instructors on the water. Some earned their PBL2 certification, while others were already qualified, providing crucial support for Dolphins and Junior Week. We also appreciated parents who helped launch and recover boats and supervised post-session clean-up. Thank you to everyone who contributed—your help is invaluable.

Club Boats

Some of our dinghies are beginning to show their age, especially the Topazes, but Richard Jenner has kept them running with timely repairs. Mike Wilson has maintained the RIBs, replacing both trailers this year due to corrosion and age.

The year ahead

The 2026 programme will be like this year, offering RYA beginner sailing, junior and adult courses, powerboat instruction, as well as informal training and safety boat skills sessions.

I will step down as RTC Principal at the 2025 AGM due to family reasons. Rob Bashford, an experienced sailor and instructor with previous RYA RTC leadership, will succeed me. He joins a strong training team who will support him in his new role.

Marisa Astill-Brown, RTC Principal

Moorings and Cruiser Report

Following a steady decline in mooring holders at the club over the last decade members began to consider Inverness Marina as an alternative to club mooring. Principal concerns were rising unit costs of moorings and craning due to diminishing numbers; physicality of mooring maintenance among a shrinking number of mooring holders; and the increasing numbers of extreme weather events.

By August several owners confirmed that they were in the process of, or had, already secured a marina berth. As a result, the craneage of boats in October was cancelled as it was not financially viable for remaining boats.

With no mooring income in 2026 the decision was taken not to have a diver inspection and to remove risers at the end of the season. No dive or crane operations are planned for 2026 and no moorings will be available.

This situation is unlikely to be reversible unless a new cohort of cruiser owners step up to take on moorings maintenance.

In 2026 the Club Board will need to decide if or when moorings are to be decommissioned. The moorings reserve has £6,000 available for decommissioning.

It's sad to see cruisers disappearing from the club after around 70 years of active participation. There will be an impact on future of cruising activities at the Club, including the cruiser race event(s) traditionally hosted by the Club.

Unfortunately, the situation reflects what is happening elsewhere in the country

where cruisers are disappearing from sailing clubs due to a combination of high costs, changing demographics, and evolving lifestyle preferences. We hope that we don't lose the skills and knowledge of our cruiser members and that they will continue to enjoy other activities and contribute to the club.

Open Water Swimming Report

2025 has been a busy and challenging one for our swimmers who helped organise the very successful Victorian Fun Day including our first ever swimming event.

The club swimmers took on a very active role organising and planning the day and learnt a lot about how to run a successful and safe event and now have skills and knowledge to take forward to the next one! This event was a great way to bring together members from swimming, rowing and sailing with small subgroups taking on roles and responsibilities to ensure the day went 'swimmingly'.

The event showcased to the wider community our safe bathing area with clubhouse and changing facilities.

Allison Elder, Open Water Swimming Lead

Coastal Rowing Report

Coastal rowing continues to be a very popular activity at the club with several rowing sessions taking place every week, summer and winter.

Encouraged by the new beach cleaning hub at the clubhouse we have been taking the opportunity to land on various beaches to do a litter pick. In 30 minutes or so we often pick over 10kg of litter, mostly plastics.

In May, we ventured over to Portsoy to take part in the 5 Harbours and an Island Row. We joined 20 other St Ayles Skiffs rowing from Portsoy to Findochty, visiting the harbours in between and changing crews as required. It was a great day meeting the wider skiffie family, and something we are keen to repeat.

Sandra Hogg, Coastal Rowing Lead

Events

Burns Supper

In January we held our annual Burns Supper which has become a highlight of our social calendar. Great food and entertainment, and a few drams! Thanks to all that made it happen.

The annual Grenville's Sail/Paddle/Row Swim to Rosemarkie was, as always, a great day out and saw around 40 members sail or row round the point for a

lovely lunch at the Beach Café. Many thanks to Helen Robinson for her continued support for this event.

The Great Victorian Swimming and Boating Extravaganza

In August we celebrated 140 years of activity at the harbour with a Victorian themed rowing, sailing and swimming event - recreating similar events held at the harbour as early as 1885. The weather was kind, and we had a great turnout with over 150 people attending and 60 people taking part in dinghy, cruiser and coastal rowing taster sessions. There was great food, onshore activities and period costume. However, the highlight was our first open water swimming event, with 20 people swimming a short course around the bay. This was a great learning experience for the club organisers that can be taken forward to future events.

Marine Litter and Invasive Species

In February, Matt from the Moray Firth Coastal Partnership (MFCP) delivered a talk on marine pollution, the threats, causes and impacts. It included information on the invasive Slipper Limpets that have been just discovered around the harbour and on the shore towards Avoch and what can be done to record these. The talk was followed by a community litter pick and slipper limpet search. We didn't find any limpets on this occasion but learnt how to identify and report them.

In collaboration with the MFCP the Club now hosts a community beach cleaning hub. It's always open and contains bags, pickers and gloves for anyone wanting to do a beach clean.

Waves and Tides

Graham Bull delivered his popular talk Making Waves - an introduction to (local) tides, wind and weather. It was much appreciated by members, particularly those new to the club and waters.

Partnerships

High Life Highland

In June the club welcomed staff of the High Life Highland Sport Development Team to clubhouse for their team development day. We were able to provide onshore facilities plus tasters of coastal rowing, dinghy sailing, power boating and open water swimming. They had a great day and appreciated the time and effort of the club volunteers, and partners, who made this day possible. We were able to highlight what community water sports can offer and made relationships that should be beneficial to all.

1st Avoch Sea Scouts

The club continues its long-standing sponsorship of Avoch Sea Scouts who offer young people age 6 to 14 the opportunity to develop leadership, teamwork, and outdoor skills while engaging in activities such as sailing, kayaking, canoeing, and powerboating. This mutually beneficial arrangement gives the Sea Scouts a

base for water activities and use of club facilities. The club in return can utilise the Scout power boat fleet for club operations and training.

Development Plan

The board has continued to follow and develop its development plan, informed by surveys, Chanonry Conversations and focus groups. This year we continued to improve the clubroom by replacing failing strip lights with energy efficient down lights, and tatty curtains with roller blinds. Our rowing and swimming members did a great job of painting walls and windows and upcycling some of the furniture.

Having addressed many items in the development plan over the last couple of years (weather station, stair lift, Quest dinghies, clubroom improvements) the board turned its attention to two major and mission critical projects. These are the repair and improvement of the East slipway and renovation of the changing rooms. The Board has currently committed to invest in both projects to fully develop their scopes and determine indicative costs and timescales. Once complete, decisions will be taken to determine appropriate ways forwards.

Slipway improvements

The East slipway is a critical asset which is vital to the operation of all water sports at the club and for public access the water. It has been deteriorating for several years and now has reached the point where repairs and improvements are essential.

After an Invitation to Tender and partial funding from The North Highland Initiative, the club chose WH Harley as Technical Partner to survey the slipway and suggest improvements based on club feedback. Initial proposals include:

- Widening the slipway width from 2.6 metres to at least 3.6 metres to enable safer, more efficient use for a variety of vehicles, boats and trailers.
- Resurfacing the entire slipway to address surface spoilage and improve grip, thereby reducing accident risks.
- Introducing designated set down points (passing places) along the slipway to facilitate temporary holding of boats and equipment, ensuring continuous access.

The final output from the current assessment will determine the next stage of engagement with WD Harley to develop actual scope proposals and indicative costs. We will require external funding to deliver this project and potential funding opportunities are being explored.

Changing room refurbishment and improvement

Since 2020, all member and community surveys, discussions, and focus groups have consistently identified the changing rooms as the area most in need of improvement. The changing rooms are:

- Old and tired and in need of decoration and fixing.
- Cold and damp
- Have poor provision for Accessibility
- Create Privacy and Safeguarding challenges, particularly for Juniors

The club has engaged Olli Blair Architects to carry out RIBA work stages 1 to 3 with partial funding from the Ward Discretionary Fund. This work will include initial drawings, concept creation and cost estimating.

Again, external funding will be required to deliver this project and preliminary discussions with funders are taking place.

Volunteering

Chanonry Sailing Club continues to rely entirely on volunteers for leadership, management, and delivery of activities. Many thanks to everyone who supports the club in small or significant ways.

Our capital project plans will require major volunteering effort to make them happen. We'll continue to encourage members to share their skills and time to help develop and improve the club for the benefit of all.

Looking forward

Our two mission critical projects to improve the changing rooms and slipway will require major effort from the board and members to make them happen. We'll need to utilise the skills and energy of all our members while continuing to deliver great quality water sports.

I would like to thank all my fellow Board members for their time given to the management of the club. We can't function without them. This year I'd like to give special thanks to my fellow board members Marisa Astill-Brown and Mike Wilson who will be leaving the board at the AGM.

Marisa and Mike have both been on the board for several years and have held several roles. Marisa has been Secretary and recently took on the role as Training Principal. Mike has held various roles including a stint as Commodore and is on the Sailing sub-committee. The club is indebted to them but I'm sure they'll continue to make remarkable contributions to the club.

Sandra Hogg

Commodore

commodore@chanonry.org.uk

