



PENTLAND CANOE CLUB

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

23 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025



"Promoting participation in paddlesport in the Thurso, West Caithness and North Sutherland area"



DETAILS & CONTACT INFORMATION

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CHARITY TRUSTEES

The Club has 15 Trustees. Thirteen were appointed at the Charity's formation on 23 April 2024, with the remaining elected during the Annual Members Meeting held on 23 November 2024. All Trustees serve a three-year term, supporting the Club's governance, strategic direction and operations..

At the Annual Members Meeting held on 23 November 2024, members approved a move to a staggered rotation system of the initial Trustees. This change was to ensure continuity, support succession planning, and maintain a balanced mix of experience and fresh perspectives within the Trustee group.

The during the reporting period were:

- Gary Youngson (Chair) (Until 2026)
- Ken Nicol (Secretary) * (Until 2027)
- Gary Stronach (Treasurer) (Until 2025)
- *Chris Parkinson* *Resigned 23 November 2024*
- David Anderson** (Until 2027)
- David Shand (Until 2026)
- Eilidh Stronach (Until 2025)
- Emily Kearl (Until 2026)
- Emma Summers * (Until 2027)
- Iain Baikie (Until 2025)
- John Speirs * (Until 2027)
- Leanne Deighan** (Until 2027)
- Nancy Speirs * (Until 2027)
- Silvia Bonati (Until 2025)
- Tracy Mackay** (Until 2027)
- Yvonne Pollard (Until 2026)

* Reelected from 1 January 2025

** Elected from 1 January 2025

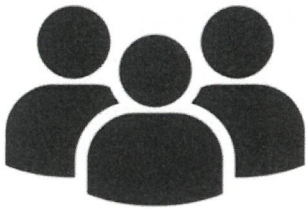
OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Club's purposes are to promote the advancement of public participation in paddlesport in the Thurso, West Caithness and North Sutherland area. The key aims and activities are:

- to provide training and coaching; and paddling trips
- to provide opportunities for Members to try different aspects of paddlesport activities;
- to support club Members to gain paddlesport awards, this may include applying for financial assistance to other organisations;
- to provide information about paddlesport.
- work with other organisations to promote paddlesports and other related activities such as environmental awareness; access and water safety;
- financially assisting Members to attend courses and / or purchase equipment
- to run competitions and events



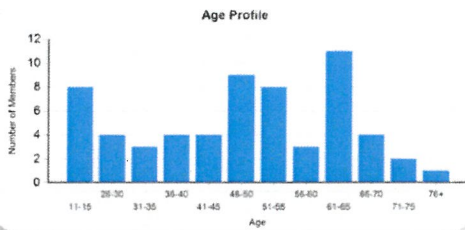
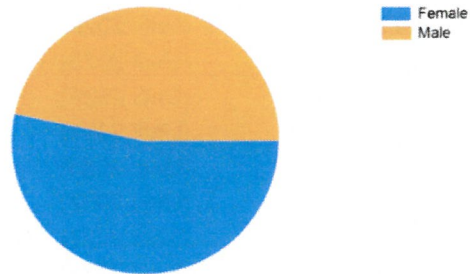
2024 MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW



Membership: **68**

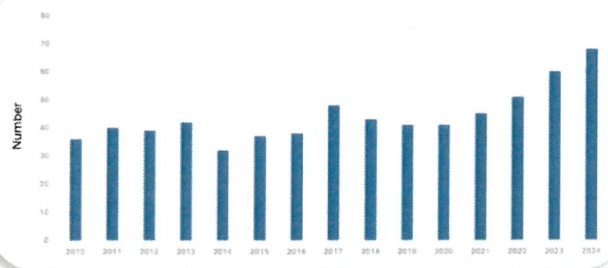
Gender Distribution

Female: **51%**



Average Age: **47**

Average Membership
(2010 – 2024):
41





THE CHAIR'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF CLUB ACTIVITIES

This has been another busy and rewarding year for the Club. Despite facing one of the wettest Summers in recent years. Our sessions remained well attended, and the enthusiasm of our members continues to be the driving force behind our success.

Governance

The Club successfully transitioned into a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This was approved on 23 April 2024. A part of the Constitution was revised and a new Operating Procedure (Governance & Management). Special thanks to Silvia Bonati for leading this process, with support from Ken Nicol.

At the Annual Members Meeting held November 2024, some minor changes to the Constitution were made. OSCR was informed of these.

Key Club documentation is available on the Club website.

40th Anniversary Celebrations

2024 marked the Club's 40th Anniversary, and the Club celebrated with a series of memorable events including the Freswick Castle Paddle & Barbecue, held in July. The Club also welcomed members from Caithness Kayak Club and East Sutherland Canoe Club to the event. Three paddling groups paddled out from the castle and returned for a barbecue.

During the event Ken Nicol was presented with an award to mark his 40 years as Club Secretary. Grateful thanks to Murray Watts for hosting and to Ben Macgregor and Nancy Speirs for coordinating.

Our anniversary was featured in the local press and the Scottish Paddler magazine, with thanks to Emily Kearn for her contributions.



Membership

Membership remains strong at around 60 members, with a healthy balance of male and female paddlers. During the year the Club welcomed several new members, and it's encouraging to see continued interest in paddlesport and the Club.



Training & Development

Training and development of paddlers remains at the centre of the Club's activities. During the year these included:

- **2024 Club Volunteer Conference.** Organised by Paddle Scotland, this was well attended by our Club volunteers. The event offers valuable opportunities to connect with professional coaches, develop skills and meet other paddlers.
- **2024 Summer evening Training Sessions:** This was our second full year at Scrabster beach. This continues to work well. Despite some unfavourable weather, which resulted in some evenings being cancelled. However, in general, the sessions were well attended. The Club records our thanks to the Scrabster Harbour Trust for their continued assistance during the sessions.
- **2024 Joint Club evening training sessions:** Led by Iain Baikie and Gary Youngson, with support from Gerald Urquhart and John Speirs, have helped paddlers progress toward Sea Kayak and Leadership Awards.
- **2024/25 Winter Pool Sessions:** The Club's winter pool training sessions were well attended and provided a warm, safe environment for paddlers to maintain and develop their skills. The Club is grateful to Highlife Highland and Thurso Leisure Centre for their continued support.
- **2024/25 River training Sessions:** Despite the low water levels, some Club members did manage to get onto the river.
- **British Canoeing Awarding Body (BCAB) courses:**
 - Iain Baikie, Gerald Urquhart and Gary Youngson on achieving their Level 3 Sea Coach Award. Congratulations to them.
 - Two navigation planning courses had been delivered during the winter month
 - The Foundation Module: Swimming Pools & Paddlesport
 - There are some members working towards their Sea Kayak Leader Award.
 - The Club always welcome new coaches and leaders—please speak to us if you're interested.
- **Future Plans:** Plans are underway to launch a Tuesday evening session dedicated to female paddlers aiming to develop skills toward awards or coaching roles.





Paddling Activities

Day and Weekend trips took place throughout the year. During the summer months, there were paddling adventures to Gairloch, the Summer Isles, the Rabbit Islands and trips along the North and East coasts. During the winter months, there were trips on the River Thurso and on local lochs.

Each of these events offered stunning venues for members to enjoy.



Club Stores

The Club currently maintains four storage containers, which received seasonal upkeep during the year, including the application of preservative coatings toward the end of summer. Sincere thanks to all members who contributed their time and effort to this essential maintenance.



Club Equipment

A significant development this year was the acquisition of a portable Automated External Defibrillator (AED), made possible with support from Caithness Sports Council. This compact, life-saving device will accompany us on trips and represents a vital enhancement to our safety provisions.

The Club is pleased to see several members invest in their own sea kayaks, reflecting a strong commitment to the sport. Looking ahead, the Club plans to expand its fleet with the purchase of additional boats in the coming year.



Honorary Membership



At the 2024 Annual Members Meeting, Mike Lambert, a former GB Under-23 Sprint paddler, was awarded Honorary Membership to the Club. That year, he completed a solo kayak circumnavigation of mainland UK in 58 days, becoming the second-fastest person to do so. His journey was delayed by a 7-day storm-bound stay in Thurso, during which he connected with the Club and supported local events. Throughout the remainder of his expedition and beyond, Mike actively promoted the Club and the warm welcome he received in Caithness. He returned in September to express his gratitude.

Major Incident Exercise

During the Summer, the Club took part in a multi-agency emergency exercise simulating a helicopter crash involving multiple casualties. The scenario included participation from RNLI, Coastguard, Scottish Ambulance Service, and Police Scotland. Club kayakers were “rescued” and assessed for injuries and hypothermia as part of the coordinated response.

One key learning from the exercise was that the lifeboat does not carry a portable Automated External Defibrillator (AED), underscoring the value of our recent AED purchase—a vital addition to our safety equipment.

We extend sincere thanks to our volunteer casualties who took part in the exercise, all of whom emerged unscathed. A follow-up exercise with RNLI is scheduled for the coming season to continue strengthening our emergency response capabilities.



Community Activities

The Club continued to be involved in supporting the local Caithness community. Activities included:



- **Beach Cleans:** Beach cleans were carried out at Helmsdale and Huna, led by Nancy and John Speirs in collaboration with Caithness Beach Cleans.
An amazing amount of rubbish was removed for the beaches. From the Huna alone 1005 kg of waste was lifted. Comprising of 42 tyres, 19 broken creels, and 13 sacks of bits of old rope, plastic, and bits and pieces.
These efforts were also highlighted in the *Scottish Paddler* magazine. Thank you to all volunteers who contributed to this important work to look after our coastlines.
- **Watersports Day:** Despite cooler weather than last year, the Club supported a Watersports Day with the Pentland Firth Yacht Club and others. This was successful. Thanks to Silvia Bonati and her team of volunteers for organising this popular "come and try" event for the community.
- **Come & Try Sessions:** The Club organised introductory kayaking session for local Scout groups at the Thurso Leisure Centre pool. These sessions provided a safe and supportive environment for young people to experience paddlesport. Many showed impressive enthusiasm and picked up skills quickly. We hope this positive introduction encourages them to pursue the sport further in the future.
- **Caithness International Science Festival:** Club members supported the Caithness International Science Festival with an engaging display and offering hands-on experiences. Throughout the day, the team answered questions about the sport and invited attendees to sit in or on a variety of boats, helping to spark interest and curiosity in paddlesport.
- **Armed Forces Day:** The Club was pleased to support the Thurso Branch of the Royal British Legion during Armed Forces Day. The Club, joined by Mike Lambert in representing our paddlesport community. The event provided a valuable opportunity to engage with the public, raise awareness of the Club's activities, and contribute to the day's success. Members also assisted with the popular duck race, adding to the community spirit of the occasion.



Paddle Scotland

Paddle Scotland (formerly the Scottish Canoe Association) has introduced new Standard for The Club successfully met all deployment requirements for key volunteers by the end of 2024. Many members completed essential training, with thanks to Silvia Bonati for her efforts in encouraging participation. The Club extends its appreciation to all who contributed.

Emma Summers and Nancy Speirs continue to represent the Club on the Paddle Scotland Access & Environmental Group. Their work focuses on promoting environmental awareness among paddlers across Scotland, including efforts to prevent the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS). They will maintain this involvement at the 2025 Paddle Scotland Club Volunteers Conference.

In December 2024, Ken Nicol was elected as a Director on the Board of Paddle Scotland.

Acknowledgements

In closing, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to our Board, volunteers, helpers, coaches, and leaders. Your dedication and commitment are the foundation of our Club's continued success. We look forward to another safe, active, and inspiring year ahead.

Gary Youngson
Chair
Pentland Canoe Club





2024/2025 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

As part of the Club's transition into a Charity, the Funds held in the previous entity, £23473.52, were transferred to the Charity.

A summary of Income / Expenditure for the reporting period (23 April 2024 - 31 March 2025) is presented in Table 1. This excludes the funds transferred from previous entity.

Table 1: Summary on Income and Expenditure for the Reporting Period

Income	£ 5720.16
Expenditure	<u>£ 4180.47</u>
Surplus / [Deficit]	£ 1539.69

At 31 March 2025, the Club's total funds amounted to **£25,013.21**. These funds are distributed across three designated Funds, as illustrated in Figure 1.

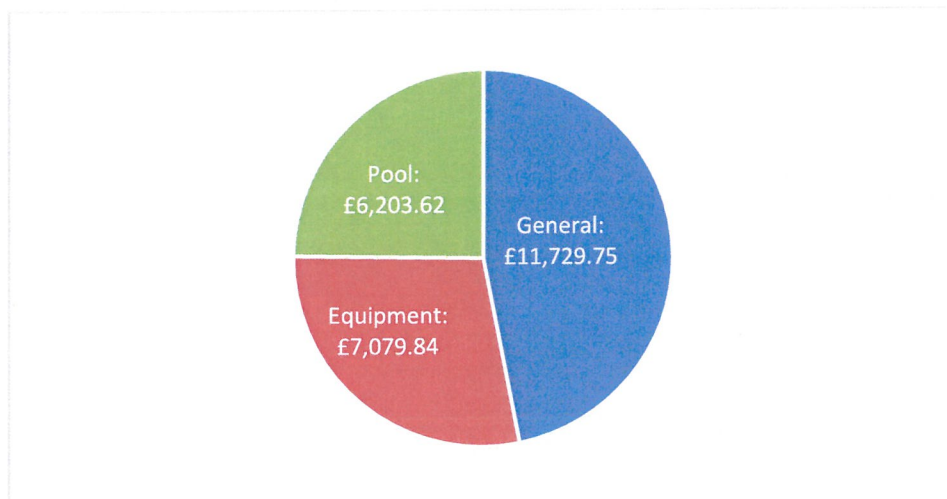


Figure 1: Fund Values at 31 March 2025

- **General:** Income into this fund is mainly from subscription fees. The fund is used to cover the general running expenses of the Club. These include memberships to organisations such as Paddle Scotland; insurance and storage maintenance.
- **Equipment [Restricted¹]:** Income from the members use of equipment is allocated to this fund. The fund is used to assist in purchasing new equipment or maintenance costs for current equipment.

¹ These funds are classified as "Restricted" for operational purposes. The Board retains the discretion to reallocate them toward other initiatives that align with the Club's objectives.



- **Pool [Restricted²]:** Income into this fund is generated from the winter swimming pool sessions. The fund is used to offset the costs of purchasing equipment solely for swimming pool training or the running costs of these sessions.

Annual Report Signed on behalf of the Trustees,

Signature: 

Name: Gary Youngson

Position: Chair

Date: 29 September 2025

² These funds are classified as "Restricted" for operational purposes. The Board retains the discretion to reallocate them toward other initiatives that align with the Club's objectives.