



**Becoming a supporter of  
Autism on the Water**

Autism on the Water was founded in 2016 by Murray MacDonald, an autistic man who learned to sail as a child and found it to be very helpful to his development.

Since then, AOTW has acquired four yachts:

- Confidence, a Colvic Victor 34, which is commercially coded for ten passengers;
- Positivity, an Achilles 24, which can be safely sailed single-handed and takes three passengers;
- Acceptance, another Achilles 24, which recently joined the fleet; and
- Autism on the Water, a Oyster 26, which can be raced 5-up.



The purpose of the charity is to provide sailing and boating opportunities to people of all ages who are affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United Kingdom and to raise awareness both of the disorder and what autistic people are capable of achieving.

To date, the charity has provided sailing and boating opportunities to over 500 people with autism, as well as their families and carers.

The charity has also been represented at over twenty different regattas across the UK.

Murray MacDonald is an award-winning sailor and the founder of AOTW. He:

- won the Feeder Race from Oban to Craobh at West Highland Week 2019 as helm, as the first boat across the line 40 minutes ahead of the next boat on the water;
- helmed Scallywag, a 100-ft maxi yacht in Antigua Sailing Week hitting a top speed of 23.5 kts;
- finished fourth across the finish line out of 100 boats at West Highland Week 2018 as helm;
- took four race wins in a row at the 2019 707 Sprints as helm;
- helmed single-handed from Kip to Tarbert then through the Crinan Canal and onto Oban in 2019;
- helmed single-handed on Positivity from Craobh Haven via the Crinan Canal to Kip and Rhu in 2023;
- helmed in one of the biggest yacht races in the UK, the Round the Island Race with 1200 yachts in 2022, hitting a top speed of 18.5 kts;
- took part in the 2023 Round Mull Race as a charity fundraiser, winning the best corrected time from Tobermory to Oban;
- will be representing GBR in the Inclusive Sailing World Championships in Rostock, Germany in 2023; and
- became a recipient of an RYA Scotland Impact Award for contributions to the sailing community.



# What is Autism on the Water?

Autism on the Water has put on several events to serve autistic people and their families across Scotland, particularly on the Firths of Forth and Clyde, as well as further afield, such as on the Crinan Canal and in Lossiemouth.

After much success in Scotland, and with the support of some very generous sponsors, we were able to branch out in 2022 to the south coast of England and we have now successfully opened a South Coast Branch of the charity to serve communities on the Isle of Wight and the English south coast.



Autism on the Water's primary purpose is to provide autistic people in the UK with the opportunity to try out sailing and boating and we have thus far done this in the following ways:

- **Open Days** – These are events held at Yacht Clubs or Marinas, where we bring together multiple boats – generally both those owned by the charity and those which have been generously loaned to the charity for the day – and provide lots of families with the chance to experience a trip out on the water. These events are typically attended by 50-100 people, all of whom get the chance to get out on the water.
- **School trips** – This is where the AOTW team meet a school group – often the Special Educational Needs Unit of a secondary school – at a body of water that can be easily accessed from their school to take the class (in 1-3 batches, depending on class size) out on a boat to experience the water.
- **One-on-one family sessions** – An incredibly popular new addition to our roster are the one-on-one family trips on our Achilles 24. Here, three members of the same family get the opportunity to experience the water without the distraction of any other guests in the evening mid-week.
- **New Sailor Squad** – 2023 saw the beginning of AOTW providing a greater level of training and experience for young adults with autism who are ready to move on from experiencing the water and trying out sailing to getting stuck in and learning how to race a yacht.



As well as providing sailing and boating opportunities to autistic people, AOTW also seeks to raise awareness and a major part of this is participation in regattas under the AOTW banner. Autism on the Water has been represented at regattas throughout Scotland, as well as in the north of England and on the Isle of Wight, including being one of the two chosen charities for Cowes Classic Week two years running – in 2022 and 2023.

# What has Autism on the Water achieved so far?

It takes a lot of money to keep the wheels turning at Autism on the Water. To reach new people in new places, we need to spend money on:

- transport to the location for our trusted volunteers and boats
- accommodation at the location for the volunteers
- fuel for the boats
- boat maintenance and insurance costs
- boat hire costs in the event that our own boats are insufficient or simply too far away
- food for our volunteers and guests
- berthing costs



If we can find more funding, we will be able to reach more communities and it is our hope that one day Autism on the Water will be able to provide autistic people with sailing opportunities throughout the British Isles.

Part of enabling this to happen means strengthening the administrative foundation of the charity so that the processes involved in putting on our events are streamlined and more cost-effective in the long run. To do this, we would like to:

- refurbish the office space that has kindly been offered to the charity on a free lease in Roseneath, near our primary base in Helensburgh, so that Autism on the Water can operate from a physical location;
- pay some of our administrative volunteers to enable them to give more of their time to the charity to enable them to build up a larger network of donors, sponsors and volunteers;
- establish stronger roots at our south coast branch by acquiring at least one boat to be kept for use in that region.

The charity would also like to be able to offer a wider range of services in the future, such as:

- expanding the training aspect of the charity that has been explored through the New Sailors program, to allow more of our guests to take part in regattas and yacht racing;
- offering indoor sailing at swimming pools to enable people to access sailing in the winter;
- offering overnight stays on Confidence so that families can go on short holidays with AOTW;



- providing a boat-building program so that a group of young autistic people can learn how to construct their own boat as a team;
- expanding our work with motor boats in locations like the Solent and Loch Lomond, where this kind of boat would be more suitable to the waters;
- attending the Inclusive Sailing Worlds in Rostock.

We dream big but it is up to you whether we can make any of our dreams a reality!

# What could Autism on the Water do with your help?

There are three primary ways that you can help Autism on the Water to do its work: donations, sponsorship and volunteering.

To become a donor, you can do any of the following:

- visit [www.autismonthewater.co.uk/donate](http://www.autismonthewater.co.uk/donate) and click through to the PayPal link to donate;
- send a cheque to Clyde Offices 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, West George Street, Glasgow, G2 1BP;
- meet Murray MacDonald in person and make a donation by card; or
- contact [aotwofficial0@gmail.com](mailto:aotwofficial0@gmail.com) for the bank account details to make a SEPA transfer.

To become a sponsor, please contact [aotwofficial0@gmail.com](mailto:aotwofficial0@gmail.com) to express your interest. Sponsors benefit from a range of different benefits in return for their financial contributions to the charity, or contributions in kind. Depending on the amount given, these include:

- tagging on all our social media posts and pages;
- printing sponsor logos on our boats and/or flying flags with sponsor logos on our boats at events and regattas;
- public acknowledgement of the sponsorship in press about the charity; and
- invitations to corporate events.

To become a volunteer, please contact [kirstyaotw1@gmail.com](mailto:kirstyaotw1@gmail.com). We need people for all sorts of roles in all sorts of locations, such as:

- qualified skippers to sail boats at events;
- experienced crew members both to help at charity open days and events and to compete as regular racing crew under the AOTW banner;
- people with experience and expertise in autism to help guests feel at ease at events;
- administrative assistants who can help to organise events or even become a manager of a regional branch later on; and
- general enthusiastic volunteers who are happy to get stuck in and marshal guests.



To become a volunteer, you will need to sign a contract, commit to our safeguarding and health and safety policies and go through a PVG check if you will be working with our guests.

Once all of the paperwork is complete, you will be added to our volunteer mailing list and you will receive an email any time we have an event coming up that we would like your help with. You can feel free to commit to as much or little as you like, as long as you do your best to stick to your commitment.

# How can you become a supporter of AOTW?

**You can find out more about Autism on the Water at:**

**[www.autismonthewater.co.uk](http://www.autismonthewater.co.uk)**

**and**

**[www.facebook.com/AutismontheWater](https://www.facebook.com/AutismontheWater)**

**You can also contact the charity at the following email addresses:**

**For South Coast/Isle of Wight matters:  
Sophie at [sophieaotwsouth@gmail.com](mailto:sophieaotwsouth@gmail.com)**

**For volunteer matters:**

**Kirsty at [kirstyaotw1@gmail.com](mailto:kirstyaotw1@gmail.com)**

**For all other matters:**

**Murray at [aotwofficial0@gmail.com](mailto:aotwofficial0@gmail.com)**

**The charity's postal address is:**

**Clyde Offices 2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

**West George Street**

**Glasgow**

**G2 1BP**

**Contacting  
Autism on the Water**