Ireland Active | Leisure, Health and Fitness Association

AGM 29th August 2019

Activites Report 2018-2019

Ireland Active is the representative body for the leisure, health and fitness sector representing over 300 leisure centres, swimming pools, gyms, activity centres and education providers.

MORE PEOPLE, MORE ACTIVE, MORE OFTEN

IRELAND ACTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson : Barry Walsh, MD, Iconic Health Clubs
Treasurer : Joe Cosgrove, MD, Kingfisher Club
Secretary : Clodagh Kilmurray, CEO, Swan Leisure
Lorna Brady, CEO, SPORTSCO
Liam Cunningham, GM, Athlone RSC
Susan Grady, CEO, K Leisure
Michael Harrison, Head of Sport, WIT
Sarah Keane, CEO, Swim Ireland
Guy Thompson, GM, Castleknock Hotel
Siobhan Tighe, MD, Coral Leisure

IRELAND ACTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive : Conn McCluskey
Business Services Manager : Niamh Norton
REPs Registrar : Stephanie MacSweeney
Training & Programmes Officer : Cliodhna MacNamara
Marketing & Communications Officer: Miriam Queally
Office Administrator : Kelli Taite
Administration Assistant : Emer Daly

IRELAND ACTIVE PARTNERS

SPORT IRELAND
hi Healthy Ireland
cara sport • inclusion • ireland
SWIM IRELAND
Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet
europe active MORE PEOPLE | MORE ACTIVE | MORE OFTEN
reps ireland register of exercise professionals
IHRSA

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Introduction from Chairperson Barry Walsh

The past year has seen continued growth in Ireland Active in line with our Strategic Plan 2017-2020 as we, the Board, aim to deliver on the organisation's key objectives. Our inclusion on the National Sports Policy Sport Leadership Group, appointed by Minister Ross and Minister Griffin, indicates that our voice is being listened to at government level.

Financially the organisation has operated a surplus for a third year which is a positive step in growing our reserves and ensuring that Ireland Active is on a sound footing. This is particularly important given the uncertainty surrounding macroeconomic events such as Brexit. We have grown our staff in the office as a result of increased revenues which has allowed us in turn to increase our membership offering and support to our growing membership.

Our relationship with Sport Ireland has continued to grow positively and in 2019 we have been awarded core funding for the organisation for the next three years which is a significant investment in Ireland Active which we will work hard to deliver on and extend beyond 2022.

We received significant funding from Skillnet Ireland in 2019 to develop a Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet and we have been working with our members and training providers to grow the network. It is important that our members support the discounted training so that funding can continue beyond this year. We are grateful to Skillnet Ireland for the investment and support to date.

The National Quality Standard Award had a successful first year since the rebranding of the White Flag Awards, and we are now entering the second year of the audits and awards cycle. Over 100 facilities will take part this year which is an increase again from 2018.

Water Safety Ireland continued with their consultation around the regulation of the Aquatic Leisure Industry, requesting submissions from the public in July 2019. Ireland Active made a detailed submission requesting that any regulation should be proportionate and not impose significant costs on the sector, whilst of course achieving the intended outcome of improving the quality and safety of facilities. The National Quality Standard should form the basis of compliance with any regulation.

Our lobbying work has continued throughout the year. The retention of the 9% VAT rate was a major policy success for Ireland Active in 2018, coming on the back on sustained budget submissions to government since 2016. We will again make a submission on Budget 2020 in the coming weeks.

We hosted four regional meetings again this year with presentations from Graphite around new employment legislation and with a particular focus on the new National Quality Standard. The meetings are an essential tool for the organisation in keeping abreast of members queries and feedback each year.

Ireland Active attended a number of meetings on the newly published CEN European standards, appointed by the NSAI, and the standards were formally published in June 2019. The new standards place a voluntary standard at a European level for fitness centres for the first time, following on from the swimming pool standards that already exist.

In August, we are hosting our third Suppliers and Board dinner in advance of the Conference to network and gain feedback on what our partners would like to gain from the event and how to maximise their investment in the conference and awards evening.

We are currently preparing for our fourth National Fitness Day and this has been supported since its inception by Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland for which we are grateful. In addition, this year we will again run an outdoor fitness event with Dublin City Council and Dublin City Sport & Wellbeing Partnership as part of SportsFest to promote the sector to the public. Our member facilities will be running their own events and in schools we will run fun competitions. We are happy to be supported by our brand partner Fitbit this year again and hope this partnership will continue into the future.

Our Conference and NQS Awards remains the focal point of our learning and networking activities for the year. The event was well attended in 2018 at Druids Glen, feedback was positive and we will look to grow the event again this year at The Johnstown House Estate on the 8th November.

More detail on the nature and scale of our activities are set out on the pages that follow. I would however like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members and the staff in the office for the commitment they continue to show to Ireland Active. Thanks, are also due to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Department of Health, Skillnet Ireland and to Sport Ireland for their continued support.

On behalf of the Board I would also like to thank Ireland Actives suppliers and commercial partners and of course each of the members without whom there would be no Ireland Active.

Yours in leisure, health and fitness,
Barry Walsh,
Chairperson

Advocacy, Representation & Partnership

Pre- Budget Submission

In July and September 2018, we made submissions to government with five key asks-

- the retention of the 9% VAT rate for the leisure and sport sector and;
- the expansion of the VAT exemption on swimming lessons for children to other programmes and activities
- removal of the BIK on gym membership and extension of the once off gift for employees from €500 to €1,000
- capital investment in facilities on an annual basis

The submission was sent to every member of the Oireachtas in advance of the Budget and thankfully our asks were listened to with the retention of the 9% VAT rate and the Sports Capital programme being funded on an annual basis. The National Sports Policy allows for the exploration of tax initiatives for the sector.

Workplace Wellbeing Day, IBEC

The health and wellbeing of staff has become an enormous focus of business today and in March 2019 we partnered with IBEC on Workplace Wellbeing Day. Our members supported the initiative by offering free activities and passes as well as visiting workplaces on the day.

National Fitness Day

Ireland Active launched its third National Fitness Day in 2018 as part of the European Week of Sport and this was hosted successfully in over 100 facilities and 150 schools across Ireland on 27th September. Minister Catherine Byrne, Anna Geary and Adam Byrne were on hand to help launch the initiative which was supported by both Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Dublin City Council and our sponsors Fitbit.

Europe Active – LetsBeActive project

We received funding again from Europe Active to run the LetsBeActive project which saw a physical activity intervention in gyms aimed at getting inactive people active. The initiative launched during the European Week of Sport in September 2018 and will run until 2020.

Policy & Standards

National Sports Policy

July 2018 saw the launch of a new National Sports Policy and Ireland Active was recognised as being an important strategic partner throughout the document. Many of our key asks were adopted into the policy and we were appointed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport to the Sports Leadership Group mentioned in the policy. The SLG has met six times since December 2018 and Ireland Active is represented by our CEO on the group.

REPs Ireland

Vincent O'Flaherty finished up in his role as Registrar in July 2019 and Stephanie MacSweeney has taken over the role, having worked on REPs with Vincent for the past two years. The focus is now on growing the register and our members are benefitting from a reduced rate for registering members who take part in the NQS Award. We have audited 17 education providers over the past two years and have reached an agreement with ITEC for their graduates, as well as setting up a system for non-standard applications. The new website and registration system were launched in February 2019.

CEN European Fitness Facility Standards Group

Over the past year we have attended two meetings on the development of standards for fitness facilities in Europe as well as hosting mirror group meetings in Ireland with our members and the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). The Standards were published in June 2019 and thanks are due to our members who served on the mirror group.

Water Safety Ireland consultation on the regulation of swimming pools

The first consultation meeting was hosted in October 2018 and Ireland Active engaged closely with WSI across the past year to discuss any future regulation. A formal submission regarding regulation was made in July 2019 which we hope will form the basis of a future framework based on the National Quality Standard.

Get Ireland Swimming- Swim Ireland

We have been working with Swim Ireland for the past two years on the Get Ireland Swimming programme which is funded by Healthy Ireland. A number of our member pools run a funded schools swimming initiative which has enabled over 3,000 children to swim. We look forward to working in close partnership with Swim Ireland in the coming years to further develop the programme.

Services & Events

Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting service has continued to grow over the past year with the introduction of legislation ensuring that every person working with children or vulnerable adults are being vetted. We have carried out over 3,000 vets in the past year which has placed additional resource requirements on the office. The National Vetting Bureau has recently begun audits on users of the service which will place an emphasis on applicants to clarify their roles needing to be vetted.

Regional Meetings

In March, we hosted four regional meetings which allowed us to meet our members and have discussion and feedback on Ireland Active activities and services. The focus this year was on the National Quality Standard (for leisure, health and fitness) with updated criteria to include the new legislation. We also had presentations from Graphite on new employment legislation and Get Ireland Swimming regarding a new Action Plan.

Suppliers Forum and Dinner

As part of our lead up to the conference this year at The Johnstown Estate we again invited our supplier members to view the conference space and outline their preferences for the exhibition this year. This was followed by a dinner with Board members and staff.

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference was held in November 2018 at Druids Glen and attracted over 200 delegates attending to hear speakers from the world of sport, health and fitness. Discussion and debate as well as learnings were taken away by delegates and feedback was generally positive and allowed us to build for 2019.

National Quality Standard Awards Dinner

The annual gala dinner attracted almost 300 people from across the leisure and fitness industry to celebrate their achievements in raising standards in the sector. The Awards were hosted by Anna Geary and were well enjoyed.

Leisure, Health and Fitness Skillnet

We secured Skillnet funding for 2019 for developing training in the sector and we have hosted a number of training events since its launch in April 2019. A formal launch was hosted in June 2019 with Michael Fennelly as guest speaker. We are grateful to our funders Skillnet Ireland for their support in developing the network for our members and Karl Dunne is engaged as Skillnet Manager to work with members to meet their training needs.

Industry Training

Ireland Active has delivered a number of Pool Plant and Safeguarding training courses across the past year and is working on updating its syllabus for the pool plant courses for 2020.

Organisational Excellence

Governance Code

The Board of Directors have been working through the requirements of the Governance Code towards full compliance by 2020. We have updated our Constitution to allow for term limits, independent directors and gender balance on the Board.

Attendance of Board Directors at Board meetings since AGM 2018

Board Director	11th Oct 2018	13th Dec 2018	6th Feb 2019	26th Mar 2019	20th May 2019	Total attendance
Barry Walsh	1	1	1	1	1	5
Clodagh Kilmurray	1	1	1	1	1	5
Guy Thompson	1	1	1	1	1	5
Joe Cosgrove	1	1	1	1	1	5
Liam Cunningham	1	1	1	-	1	4
Lorna Brady	1	-	1	1	1	4
Michael Harrison	-	1	1	1	-	3
Sarah Keane	-	-	1	1	-	2
Siobhan Tighe	1	-	1	-	-	2
Susan Grady	1	1	1	1	1	5

Financial

The organisation has been working to diversify its income streams as well as building existing financial resources; in particular membership, training, REPs and the National Quality Standard. Significant funding has been received from Sport Ireland, the Healthy Ireland fund, Dublin City Council and Fitbit in 2018 and 2019 to allow us to develop National Fitness Day, partnerships and core operations. In addition, we have received funding from Healthy Ireland for the Get Ireland Swimming initiative with Swim Ireland. we received core funding from Sport Ireland in 2019 for the first time for which we are grateful and look forward to further developing our relationship with them. Skillnet Ireland have funded a Leisure, Health and Fitness Skillnet for 2019.

Office

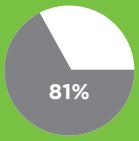
Ireland Active has an office space in Irish Sport HQ which is at the heart of the National Sports Campus and the hub of Irish Sport. We have 7 members of staff (5 full-time, 2 part-time) which are there to support our members and implement the Strategic objectives of the organisation. Niamh Norton will go on maternity leave in August and we wish her all the best in the coming months.

The Irish leisure, health and fitness sector in numbers

490,000 people participate in personal exercise in gyms and leisure centres each week, making it the most popular sport in Ireland.

300,000 additional adults swim in our member's pools each week.

33% of all club members are members of gyms or leisure centres, making it the most popular club membership in Ireland.



81% of gym members exercise regularly, compared to only **60% of other club members** meaning it is a proven forum to getting and keeping people active.

9,500 people are employed in the leisure and fitness sector across Ireland.

€450m is spent on health and fitness club memberships alone, contributing to a **€2.4billion** sport and physical activity sector in Ireland.

300 organisations
are members of Ireland Active.

100 organisations participating in the White Flag National Quality Standard.

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