



**Ireland
Active**

**Leisure, Health
and Fitness
Association**

AGM 8th October 2021

Activities Report 2020-2021

Ireland Active is the representative body for the leisure, health and fitness sector representing over 350 leisure centres, swimming pools, gyms, activity centres and education providers.

TO LEAD, PROMOTE AND UNITE THE IRISH LEISURE, HEALTH AND FITNESS SECTOR

IRELAND ACTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson: Joe Cosgrove, MD, Kingfisher Club

Treasurer: Clodagh Kilmurray, CEO, Swan Leisure

Secretary: Liam Cunningham, GM, Athlone RSC

Brendan Loughnane, Independent, Communications and Public Affairs

Guy Thompson, GM, Castleknock Hotel

John Windle, Manager, UPMC Institute for Health

Lorna Brady, CEO, SPORTSCO

Tina Dowling CEO, The Watershed

Kilkenny Michael Harrison, Head of Sport, WIT

Siobhan Tighe, MD, Coral Leisure

Scott Walker, Independent, IT, Strategy and Governance

IRELAND ACTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive: Karl Dunne

Business Services Manager: Niamh Norton

REPs Ireland Registrar: Stephanie MacSweeney

Member Services Manager/Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet Manager: Clíodhna MacNamara

REPs Ireland Administrator: Cian O'Shea

Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet Administrator: Alma Osmic

Garda Vetting & Accounts: Marta Viskovic

Marketing and Communications Officer: Laragh MacDermott

IRELAND ACTIVE PARTNERS





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Introduction from Chairperson

Joe Cosgrove

Nobody could have anticipated the changes that would have occurred in the industry over the past year. 2020 saw the biggest challenge to the sector and indeed the country since the recession a decade ago and presented Ireland Active with an opportunity to support our members through this difficult time and prove the value of an industry body which speaks as one voice and comes together to represent our interests.

We would not have been able to support our members without the ongoing support from Government and from Sport Ireland and Skillnet Ireland who have provided support for the office and our members through training and programmes across the past year. Both partners committed to a three-year investment in Ireland Active in recent years which shows confidence in our work and that of our members, and we want to acknowledge and thank them for their continued support. The LHF Skillnet provided fully funded training during the COVID-19 crisis which allowed our members to re-open safely and to upskill during periods of closure/restrictions.

The Department of Sport, both Minister Martin and Minister Chambers and their officials in the Department, have been supportive in our efforts to deliver on government policy and gain supports for the sector. During the progression of the pandemic the Department included Ireland Active in regular discussions and meetings with Ministers and officials to put across the challenges in the industry which has been very helpful. Again, we want to acknowledge and thank them for their support.

Our lobbying work has continued throughout the year. The retention of the 9% VAT rate in



Budget 2021 was positive, and so was some of the measures in the July Stimulus and Budget 2021 were called for by Ireland Active, including: the extension of the wage subsidy scheme, improved restart grants, low-cost loans, commercial rates exemption, swimming pool grants and standard VAT rate reduction. However more work will need to be done in 2022 to gain more supports for the sector and we will be working to that end with Sport Ireland and the Dept.

One of the positive outcomes from the recent pandemic has been an increased engagement between Ireland Active and our members through webinars and training, and this is something which we will continue.

Our CEO since 2016, Conn McCluskey, resigned from his position in December 2020 and the Board undertook an extensive recruitment process which resulted in the appointment of Karl Dunne as the new CEO, taking up the position in February 2021. Sarah O'Shea provided Interim CEO cover and we thank her for her calm and reassuring assistance during the transition period. We want to take this opportunity to wish Conn all the best in the future, following his significant contribution to Ireland Active over the past five years, and we look forward to working with Karl as he leads the Ireland Active team into the future.

I would 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 Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Sport Ireland, Skillnet Ireland, Europe Active, IHRSa and our partners in Swim Ireland for their continued support.

On behalf of the Board, I would also like to pay a special thanks to Guy Thomson who retires from the board today for his many years of service to Ireland Active. Guy has been on the board for the past 13 years, having stayed on an additional year at the request of the board. He has made a great contribution to Ireland Active and has always been a fantastic supporter and contributor to board meetings and events over his term on the board. He's been a great representative for the hotel industry and Ireland Active and we will genuinely miss him.

A final word of thanks to Ireland Active's suppliers and commercial partners and of course each of the members who have supported us in recent times and to ensure that there continues to be a strong industry body.

Yours in fitness,
Joe Cosgrove
Chairperson

Advocacy, Representation & Partnership

Pre-Budget Submission & COVID-19 Stimulus

In 2020 we made a number of submissions for support for the sector and were successful in our asks around the wage subsidy scheme, commercial rates, restart grants, swimming pool grants, low-cost loans, warehoused tax and reduced standard VAT rates.

Our submissions were sent to every member of the Oireachtas. The National Sports Policy allows for the exploration of tax initiatives for the sector and Budget 2022 presents another opportunity to put forward our asks for the industry.

National Fitness Day

Ireland Active launched its fifth National Fitness Day in 2020 as part of the European Week of Sport and this was hosted successfully in over 100 facilities and 150 schools across Ireland on 24th September 2020. Minister Jack Chambers TD, Minister Frank Feighan TD, John Tracey, Sene Naoupu and Aidan O'Mahony were on hand to help launch the initiative which was supported by both Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland.

Europe Active- National Fitness Day partner project

The second year of the Europe Active National Fitness Day project is underway. There is ongoing support being given to our partners in North Macedonia at their annual seminar as well as regular meetings with other partner countries.

Policy & Standards

National Sports Policy

The actions contained in the policy were agreed by the Sport Leadership Group, of which Ireland Active is a member. The National Sports Policy provides the policy context in which sport and physical activity will operate over the next 10 years. Ireland Active strongly endorses the National Sports Policy and, as the recognised association for the leisure, health and fitness industry, will have a lead role in some of the key operational and strategic challenges contained within the Policy.

REPs Ireland

REPs Ireland has seen continued growth over the past year with now over 900 registered members and some exciting advancements to operations. A new website and registration system launched in January providing users and website visitors ease of access to information. This user-friendly site and system have considerably improved the function of the register and administration services.

In March a second annual Education Provider Forum was held. Providing REPs Ireland approved providers an opportunity to network, share knowledge and experiences in dealing with Covid-19 as well as organisational updates.

A full-time administrator, Cian O'Shea was appointed to assist Stephanie Mac Sweeney (Registrar) and this has greatly supported the register growth in the last number of months.

REPs Ireland have also developed a strategic plan which will run from 2021-2024, this strategy has set out objectives for the organisation going forward. Partnerships with stakeholders have further developed over the last year with stronger links being formed and more regular communication taking place. There is also an increased number of education providers seeking accreditation and CPD approval.

Finally, REPs Ireland have hosted and have further plans to host a number of member webinars with the help of our kind sponsors the National Dairy Council.

CEN European Fitness Facility Standards Group

As part of the European standards development work, Ireland Active have fed into a new European 'Technical Specification' for dealing with infectious outbreaks which has been developed in response to Covid-19. The specification named; *Guidelines for the safe operation of fitness centres during an infectious outbreak* is currently in review for publication.

As well as this Ireland Active have contributed to the development of the European Standard for; *Requirements for centre amenities and operation - Part 2: Requirements for supervision and staff*. This standard is also under enquiry ballot for publication in the near future. Ireland Active will continue to work with the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI), National Mirror Committee and CEN Standards Group to contribute to standard development for the sector.

Services & Events

Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting service has continued to grow over the past number of years. However, as expected there was a decrease in 2020 given the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of applications being processed in 2021 are on the rise again with facilities reopening. It was expected that mandatory re-vetting would be introduced, however this has been delayed for the foreseeable due to Covid-19.

Member Meetings

Member webinars were a constant over the past 12 months. These virtual sessions allowed us to reach out to members and to create new ways of networking. We will continue to deliver these webinars and meetings with members over the coming months to support the membership base.

Annual Conference

Due to Government guidelines, we were unable to host our Annual Conference in 2020. We will be hosting our Conference on the 19th November 2021 at the Castleknock Hotel in line with Government guidelines. We look forward to being able to meet with our members once again where we can continue to share knowledge, discuss and debate the many topics affecting the industry.

National Quality Standard Awards Dinner

The National Quality Standard Award had a successful year with over 74 organisations taking part. However, this was a decline in numbers compared to previous years due to the challenges associated with the pandemic. We commend these 74 facilities' commitment and dedication to achieving such high standards during an extremely difficult time. The Ireland Active National Quality Standard Awards ceremony for 2020 was held virtually and hosted by Oisín Langan which included a short Q&A with reigning Irish featherweight professional boxing champion Eric Donovan. The ceremony was a celebration of the work of facilities across the year in raising standards. It is important that NQS grows over the coming years and we ask all members to take part and maintain high standards in the industry going forward.

Leisure, Health and Fitness (LHF) Skillnet

We secured funding for 2020-2022 for developing training in the sector and we have hosted a number of training events to support members in development and to prepare for re-opening throughout the Covid-19 period. We are grateful to our funders Skillnet Ireland for their support in developing the network for our members, Clíodhna MacNamara has taken over as the LHF Skillnet manager. Alma Osmic has taken over as the LHF Skillnet administrator. The LHF Skillnet Steering group which is a sub-committee of the Board have met 5 times over the past year to develop training plans and funding applications.

Industry Training

Ireland Active has continued to deliver Pool Plant and Safeguarding training courses online throughout 2020-2021. The progress on the updated syllabus for the Pool Plant course has been slow but the aim is that it would be completed by the end of 2021.

Organisational Excellence

Governance Code

The Board of Directors have been working through the requirements of the Governance Code towards full compliance at the end of 2021. The Board are currently working with Board Match Ireland on the final part of the governance code and will be completed by year end.

Attendance of Board Directors at Board meetings since AGM 2020

Board Director	6 th Oct 2020	16 th Oct 2020	9 th Nov 2020	3 rd Dec 2020	26 th Jan 2021	25 th Feb 2021	23 rd Mar 2021	27 th April 2021	14 th May 2021	22 nd June 2021	9 th Sept 2021	Total attendance (out of 11) – 50% required
Brendan Loughnane	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	6
Scott Walker	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Siobhan Tighe	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	6
Michael Harrison	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	10
Clodagh Kilmurray	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	9
Lorna Brady	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Liam Cunningham	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	10
Joe Cosgrove	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
Guy Thompson	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	8
Tina Dowling	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11
John Windle	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10

Organisational Excellence

We would like to thank those that have contributed their time to our committees over the past year and welcome new members from our membership, from which we will seek to introduce new representatives over the coming year.

Audit & Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee met three times over the past year and we thank the independent Chairperson Dermot Gaynor for his time and expertise during this time. Other members include Ed Wyeth, Independent (Accountant) and Joe Cosgrove. The Committee was established to ensure compliance with the Governance Code and to ensure that proper checks and balances are in place for financial and organisational risk.

Governance Committee

The Committee is in place to ensure we are progressing on the Governance Code journey and complying with our constitutional and legal requirements. The Committee is chaired by Sarah O'Connor (Independent, governance and legal expertise) and includes Siobhan Tighe, Joe Cosgrove, Guy Thompson.

HR and Remuneration Committee

The HR and Remuneration Committee met 4 times over the past year to review and make recommendations to the Board on the HR review and the process and appointment of the CEO. The Committee includes Joe Cosgrove, Clodagh Kilmurray, Liam Cunningham, Guy Thompson and Scott Walker.

Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee did not require to meet this year. The Committee is chaired by Clodagh Kilmurray and members include Joe Cosgrove (IA Chair), Sarah O'Connor (Independent) and Scott Walker (Independent Director).

Standards Committee

The Committee met twice in the past year and considered the National Quality Standard in the context of COVID-19 and how the process would work in 2021. The Committee is comprised of Michael Harrison (Chair, REPs Ireland Council), Barry Walsh, Joe Cosgrove and Iain Foulger.

Commercial and Conference Committee

The Committee has met twice in the past year and considers venues, budget and format for the conference and awards each year. The Committee are comprised of Barry Walsh, Susan Grady, Lorna Brady and Joe Cosgrove.

REPs Ireland Council

The REPs Ireland Council is comprised of representatives from the education sector, facility operators, exercise professionals and nominees from Sport Ireland and the HSE. The Council has met 5 times in the past year and is comprised of:

- ✓ Chairperson & Ireland Active Representative: Michael Harrison, Waterford IT
- ✓ Health: Shirley O'Shea, HSE
- ✓ Education: Niamh Foley, Athlone IT
- ✓ Education: Teresa Richardson, IT Tralee
- ✓ Education: Maeve Clegg, Crumlin College
- ✓ Sport: Michael McGeehin, Sport Ireland
- ✓ Leisure: Gavin Finn, Swan Leisure
- ✓ Leisure: Brian King, Kingfisher Group
- ✓ Leisure: Ciaran Murtagh, Coral Leisure Group
- ✓ Leisure: Celine Szpara, GymPlus Group
- ✓ REPs Member: Joe O'Connor, Exercise Professional
- ✓ REPs Member: Graham Byrne, Exercise Professional
- ✓ REPs Member: Rory O'Connor, Exercise Professional

Sub-committees have also been established in the following areas: Education, Membership, Health and Exercise with representatives from the Council on each.

Financial

The organisation has been working to diversify its income streams as well as building existing financial resources, in particular membership, training, REPs Ireland and the National Quality Standard. Significant funding has been received from Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland to develop National Fitness Day, partnerships and core operations. In addition, we received core funding from Sport Ireland in 2019-2021 for which we are grateful and look forward to further developing our relationship with them. Skillnet Ireland have funded the Leisure, Health and Fitness Skillnet for 2020-2022. Our overall financial position is summarised below and is set out in detail in the audited accounts presented to the AGM.

Financial Summary	2020 €	2019 €
Turnover	3,175,689	689,067
Administrative expenses	(3,117,742)	(649,586)
Operating profit	57,947	39,481
Tax on profit	(7,111)	(4608)
Profit for the financial year	50,836	34873
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	<u>57,644</u>	<u>22,771</u>
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year	108,480	57,644

Office

Ireland Active has office space in Irish Sport HQ which is at the heart of the National Sports Campus and the hub of Irish Sport. We have 8 members of staff which are there to support our members and implement the strategic objectives of the organisation. All members of staff have been working from home over the past eighteen months but will soon start back in our new offices in Irish Sport HQ, we thank Sport Ireland for facilitating this.



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