Ireland Active | Leisure, Health and Fitness Association

AGM 27th August 2020

Activites Report 2019-2020

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.

MORE PEOPLE, MORE ACTIVE, MORE OFTEN

IRELAND ACTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson : Joe Cosgrove, MD, Kingfisher Club
Treasurer : Clodagh Kilmurray, CEO, Swan Leisure
Secretary : Liam Cunningham, GM, Athlone RSC
Lorna Brady, CEO, SPORTSCO
Susan Grady, CEO, K Leisure
Michael Harrison, Head of Sport, WIT
Brendan Loughnane, Independent, Communications and Public Affairs
Guy Thompson, GM, Castleknock Hotel
Siobhan Tighe, MD, Coral Leisure
Scott Walker, Independent, IT, Strategy and Governance
Barry Walsh, MD, Iconic Health Clubs

IRELAND ACTIVE STAFF

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

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 has seen the biggest challenge to the sector and indeed the country since the recession a decade ago and presents 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 in particular 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 which shows confidence in our work and that of our members. The LHF Skillnet has provided fully funded training for our members during the COVID-19 crisis which has allowed our members to re-open safely.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the new Department of Media, Culture, Heritage, Arts, Sport and the Gaeltacht, its Ministers and officials, have also been supportive in our efforts to influence government policy and gain supports for the sector. During the progression of the pandemic the Department included Ireland Active in regular discussions with the Ministers and officials to put across the challenges in the industry which was very helpful.

Due to the financial prudence of the company over the past number of years in building our reserves, Ireland Active have been well placed to face the challenge of COVID-19. That said, 2020 will be a challenge for the organisation, and government, partner and member support will be vital to our continued operation over the coming year. With Brexit still on the horizon there is no doubt that 2021 will present new challenges.

The National Quality Standard Award had a successful year with over 100 organisations taking part however 2020 will be a challenge with a drop in participants due to the pandemic. We will encourage as many members to continue to take part and maintain high standards in the industry.

The regulation of the aquatic leisure industry consultation through Water Safety Ireland has stalled somewhat due to the change in government, however we have continued work with WSI and Swim Ireland on the update to the Swimming Pool Safety Guidelines which we hope to issue in 2020.

Our lobbying work has continued throughout the year. The retention of the 9% VAT rate in Budget 2020 was positive, and some of the measures in the July Stimulus were called for by Ireland Active including the extension of the wage subsidy scheme, improved grants, low cost loans, rates exemption, swimming pool grants and VAT rate reduction. However more work will need to be done in advance of the October budget to gain more supports for the sector and we will be working to that end over the coming weeks. 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 look to continue across the year. As the current situation clarifies we hope we will be returning to attending physical events in the future.

Ireland Active have continued to contribute to international affairs and hosted a successful international conference with IHRSA in October 2019. Over 500 delegates attended the event in the Burlington which was a fantastic event for the organisation to host. We have continued to contribute to the CEN European standards group, appointed by the NSAI, and a new set of standards should be published before the end of 2020. The standards place a voluntary standard at a European level for fitness centres in addition to the swimming pool standards.

We are currently preparing for our fifth National Fitness Day and this has been supported since its inception by Sport Ireland and Healthy Ireland for which we are grateful. We hope that our member facilities will continue to run their own events to provide a marketing focus in September to support the industry. Our Conference and NQS Awards remains the focal point of our learning and networking activities for the year. The event was well attended in 2019 at Johnstown House Estate and we are awaiting government guidance on indoor events before deciding on the format of this year's event. 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 and to Sport Ireland and our partners in Swim Ireland for their continued support.

I would like to extend special thanks to retiring Board members Susan Grady and Barry Walsh who have contributed enormously to the success of Ireland Active and their legacy is evident in the organisation today. I hope to carry forward their work along with the Board members in developing the organisation for our members in the coming year ahead as we develop a new Strategic Plan.

On behalf of the Board I would also like to thank Ireland Active's suppliers and commercial partners and of course each of the members who have supported us in recent times and 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 2019 we made submissions to government with our key asks around retention of the 9% VAT rate and capital investment. 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 2021 in October presents another opportunity to put forward our asks for the industry.

National Fitness Day

Ireland Active launched its fourth National Fitness Day in 2019 as part of the European Week of Sport and this was hosted successfully in over 100 facilities and 150 schools across Ireland on 26th September. Minister Catherine Byrne, Anna Geary and Aidan O'Mahony were on hand to help launch the initiative which was supported by both Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Dublin City Council and Fitbit.

Europe Active- LetsBeActive project

We received funding from Europe Active to run a 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.

Europe Active- National Fitness Day partner project

We received funding from Europe Active to provide support to other countries looking to develop a National Fitness Day and we are delighted to be working with North Macedonia on the project for the coming two years.

Get Ireland Swimming

Our partnership with Swim Ireland has continued again this year with our work on the GIS schools swimming programme, which gives children who may not have the opportunity to attend swimming access a 10-week programme of lessons. Miriam Queally in our office has worked on the programme and supported the work of Swim Ireland.

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, and which should be published in 2020 as the new government comes into place.

REPs Ireland

The register has continued to grow over the past year with over 800 members now registered and we aim to grow this further this year. We now have two staff members, Stephanie MacSweeney (Registrar) and Emer Daly (Administrator) dedicated to working on REPs which has supported the work. A number of seminars and webinars have been held with members and we will seek to grow this offering again in the coming year. We have increased the number of education providers approved and have a partnership with PD Approval for CPD which allows short courses to be approved.

CEN European Fitness Facility Standards Group

Over the past year we have attended 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). New standards are due to be published later this year and thanks are due to our members who served on the mirror group.

Services & Events

Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting service has continued to grow over the past year and 2020 will likely see the introduction of a mandatory re-vetting after 3 years. We have carried out over 3,000 vets in the past year however this will reduce in 2020 due to the closure of facilities during the pandemic. We wish to thank Kelli Taite for her work over the past year and wish her well in her future career.

Member Meetings

We have hosted bi-weekly meetings with members during the pandemic and these virtual sessions have allowed us to reach more members than ever over the past 6 months. We will look to continue to grow our webinars over the coming year.

Annual Conference

The Annual Conference was held in November 2019 at Johnstown House 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 2020.

National Quality Standard Awards Dinner

The annual gala dinner attracted over 300 people from across the leisure, health and fitness industry to celebrate their achievements in raising standards in the sector. The Awards were attended by Minister Damien English and hosted by Anna Geary and were a celebration of the work of facilities across the year in raising standards.

Leisure, Health and Fitness Skillnet

We secured Skillnet 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 in 2020. We are grateful to our funders Skillnet Ireland for their support in developing the network for our members, Cliodhna MacNamara who administers the scheme for Ireland Active and Karl Dunne who is engaged as Skillnet Manager to work with members to meet their training needs. The LHF Skillnet Steering Group, which is a sub committee of the Board, met monthly over the past year to develop training plans and funding applications.

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 in 2020.

Organisational Excellence

Governance Code

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

In 2020 we appointed two independent Directors following a public recruitment process and are delighted to welcome Scott Walker and Brendan Loughnane onto the Board for the coming 3 years.

AGM 2020 will see two long serving directors retiring, Susan Grady and Barry Walsh, and their contribution to the Board has been enormous, having both served as Chair in their time on the Board. We welcome the new members to the Board and look forward to working with them over the coming years.

Attendance of Board Directors at Board meetings since AGM 2019

Board Director	Oct 24	Dec 4	Jan 30	Mar 19	Mar 30	Apr 14	Apr 28	May 12	May 26	June 10	June 24	July 14	Aug 13	Total attendance (50% required)
Lorna Brady	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	12/13
Joe Cosgrove	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12/13
Liam Cunningham	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	10/13
Susan Grady	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	11/13
Michael Harrison	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	11/13
Clodagh Kilmurray	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	11/13
Brendan Loughnane*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	0	1	3/5
Guy Thompson	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	10/13
Siobhan Tighe	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	8/13
Scott Walker*	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11/11
Barry Walsh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	12/13

*Scott Walker was appointed in January 2020 and Brendan Loughnane was appointed in May 2020, both as independent directors.

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 4 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 held two meetings during the year and 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 and Conn McCluskey.

Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee met twice over the past year to consider independent director appointments and nominations to the Board for the AGM. 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 2020. 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 council is comprised of representatives from education providers, facilities, the register and nominees from Sport Ireland and the HSE. The council met 4 times in the past year and is comprised of Michael Harrison (Chair, Ireland Active representative), Niamh Foley, Maeve Clegg, Teresa Richardson, Gavin Finn, Joe O'Connor, Claire McIntosh, Michael McGeehin (Sport Ireland) and Shirley O'Shea (HSE). The education sub-committee also met during the year. New members will be added to the council in 2020 to improve representation from member facilities and the register.

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 have received funding from Healthy Ireland for the Get Ireland Swimming initiative with Swim Ireland. 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	2019 €	2018 €
Turnover	**689,067**	*413,279*
Administrative expenses	**(649,586)**	*(411,211)*
Operating profit	**39,481**	*2,068*
Tax on profit	**(4,608)**	*(284)*
Profit for the financial year	**34,873**	*1,784*
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	**22,771** **22,771**	*20,987* *20,987*
Profit for the financial year	**34,873**	*1,784*
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year	**57,644**	*22,771*

Office

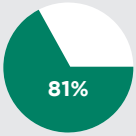
Ireland Active has an office space in Irish Sport HQ which is at the heart of the National Sports Campus and the hub of Irish Sport. We have 6 members of staff (4 full-time, 2 part-time) which are there to support our members and implement the Strategic objectives of the organisation. We will move to larger offices in 2020 to suit our growing staff and we thank Sport Ireland for facilitating this.

The Irish leisure, health and fitness sector in numbers

555,000 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.

12,000 people are employed in the leisure and fitness sector across Ireland.

€500m is spent on health and fitness club memberships alone, contributing to a **€2.4billion** sport and physical activity sector in Ireland.

350 organisations
are members of Ireland Active.

100 organisations participating in the National Quality Standard.

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