Ireland Active | Leisure, Health and Fitness Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

ACTIVITIES REPORT 2023-24

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

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JACK CHAMBERS

Minister of Finance

“I strongly believe that physical activity is essential to supporting the health and mental well-being of all our citizens, young and old. I believe there is merit in examining how the tax system can help achieve greater participation in sport and fitness activities, including through gyms. Over the course of the next year, my officials will continue this work with a view to developing proposals for consideration in advance of next year’s budget."

-Jack Chambers 2025 Budget Speech to Dáil Éireann

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IRELAND ACTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson: John Windle, UPMC Institute for Health
Treasurer: Tina Dowling, The Watershed
Secretary: Clodagh Kilmurray, Swan Leisure

Liam Cunningham, GM, Athlone RSC
Michael Lennon, Westport Woods Hotel
Lorna Brady, SPORTSCO
Siobhan Tighe, Coral Leisure
Brian King, University Limerick
Kevin Doyle, Westpark
Scott Walker, Independent, IT, Strategyand Governance
Cathal Lee, Independent, Communications and Public Affairs

IRELAND ACTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive: Karl Dunne
Member Service Manager: Michael Atkinson
Projects & Events Officer: Deirdre Marley
National Standards Manager & REPs Registrar: Alan Malone
Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet & Ireland Active Administrator: Alma Osmic
Garda Vetting & Accounts: Ann Keating
Marketing & Communications Officer: Val Sizychas
Accounts Administrator: Calum Bain

IRELAND ACTIVE PARTNERS

SPÓRT ÉIREANN SPORT IRELAND
hi Healthy Ireland
Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet
reps ireland register of exercise professionals
Skillnet IRELAND
SWIM IRELAND
europe active MORE PEOPLE | MORE ACTIVE | MORE OFTEN
active disability ireland
IHRSA

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INTRODUCTION FROM CHAIRPERSON

JOHN WINDLE

IRELAND ACTIVE
CHAIRPERSON

Introduction

2023 saw further challenges to the sector with the energy crisis hitting our industry particularly hard. Ireland Active continued 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 do this without the ongoing support from Sport Ireland and Skillnet Ireland who have provided support for our members all these partners committed considerable investment in Ireland Active which shows the confidence and trust they have in our work and that of our members.

Advocacy

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, its Ministers, and officials, have also been supportive in our efforts to deliver on government policy and gain supports for the sector. Our advocacy work continued throughout 2023 with Ministers Martin and Byrne including swimming pools in Phase III of the Sports Energy Support Scheme which will further benefit members. Ireland Active on behalf of the industry undertook a large advocacy piece of work this year in lobbying government for a personal tax credit via revenues the Med1 form. We commissioned a REDC poll which was able to show government on a county-by-county basis how popular such a scheme would be with both regular and non-users for fitness /Swim facilities.

Minister Chambers committed in his budget speech to work on a scheme that will allow taxation to drive participation in personal exercise and swimming.

Industry Standards

Over 103 facilities are taking part in the National Quality Standard Awards this year. It is important that more facilities undertake the NQS and commit to maintain high standards in the industry.

Ireland Active have continued to contribute to international affairs and we have continued to represent Ireland on the CEN European standards group, appointed by the NSAI, the standards place a voluntary standard at a European level for fitness centres in addition to the swimming pool standards.

We operated one European project supported by Europe Active as part of the European week of Sport National Fitness Day/ Be Active Day Partner project which was again a great success.

Finance

Due to the financial prudence and increased revenue streams we continue to grow our reserves of the company as seen on the 2023 financial statements. That said, 2023 has had its challenges for the organisation, continued government, partner and member support is vital to our continued operation.

Governance

As part of the continued work on governance, Ireland Active has reviewed and assessed its Sport Ireland compliance record and is satisfied that arrangements and structures are in place that are designed to secure the organisation's compliance with the Governance Code for Sport.

Conclusion

More detail on the nature and scale of our activities are set out in the financial statements. I would however like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members and the staff in the office under the leadership of our CEO Karl Dunne for the commitment they continue to show to Ireland Active.

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 to ensure that there continues to be a strong industry body.

John Windle
Chairperson, Ireland Active

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ADVOCACY, REPRESENTATION & PARTNERSHIP

Swimming Pool Grant

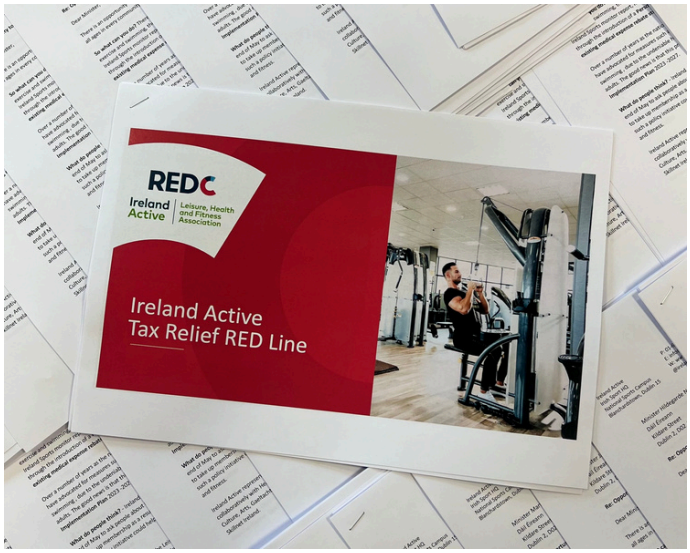
Ireland Actives ongoing advocacy has been highly successful with a number of positive government allocations to the sector. Ireland Active was appointed by Sport Ireland to administer €5 million in swimming pool grants to the sector.

Swimming pools for the first time ever were included in the Sports Capital programme. Ministers Martin and Byrne included swimming pools in Phase III of the Sports Energy Support Scheme which will further benefit members.

Ireland Active sit on the Dept of Sport National Swimming Strategy Working group which launched the first ever national swimming strategy.

Pre-Budget Submission

Ireland Active on behalf of the industry under took a large advocacy piece of work this year in lobbying government for a personal tax credit via revenues the Med1 form. We commissioned a REDC poll which was able to show government on a county by county basis how popular such a scheme would be with both regular and non users for fitness /Swim facilities.



Minister Chambers committed in his budget speech to work on a scheme that will allow taxation to drive participation in personal exercise and swimming.

While the Tax Credit Relief for Gym and Swimming Pool Memberships wasn't included in Budget 2025, Ireland Active welcomes Minister Jack Chambers' commitment to exploring how the tax system can increase fitness participation.

Minister Chambers said:
"I strongly believe that physical activity is essential to supporting the health and mental well-being of all our citizens, young and old. I believe there is merit in examining how the tax system can help achieve greater participation in sport and fitness activities, including through gyms. Over the course of the next year, my officials will continue this work with a view to developing proposals for consideration in advance of next year's budget."

National Fitness Day

Ireland Active hosted the ninth annual National Fitness Day on the 23rd of September 2024 as part of the European Week of Sport. This year's edition was hosted successfully, with over 100 facilities and schools across Ireland registering their activities for the day itself. The theme of this year's National Fitness Day was accessibility and sustainability in fitness.

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POLICY & STANDARDS

National Sports Policy

Ireland Active sits on the Sport Leadership Group which is chaired by the Minister for sport and physical education 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, continue to have a lead role in the key operational and strategic challenges contained within the Policy.

REPs Ireland

REPs Ireland has maintained continued growth over the past year.

REPs Ireland looks forward to welcoming new education providers on board and continuing to collaborate with our current providers to raise industry standards.
The REPs Ireland Strategic Plan which runs until the end of 2024, has set out objectives for the organisation going forward. Partnerships with stakeholders have further developed over the last year with stronger links being formed. There is also an increased number of education providers seeking accreditation and CPD approval.

Finally, REPs Ireland have continued to host member webinars 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

Ireland Active continue to contribute 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.

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SERVICES & EVENTS

Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting service has continued to grow this year. The number of applications continues to grow. Ireland Active will launch an online vetting portal in the coming months which will eliminate the manual/paper-based aspect of the vetting process

Annual Conference

The annual Conference was held in November 2023, in the Lyrath Estate Hotel. With a great line up of speakers and panellist the high light of the conference was the keynotes from Gary Keegan and Liam Sheedy. We will be hosting our annual conference in the Killashee House Hotel on the 1st of November 2024 and 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 93 organisations taking part.

We commend these facilities' commitment and dedication to achieving such high standards. The Ireland Active National Quality Standard Awards ceremony for 2023 was held as part of the annual Conference on the 17th of November 2023. It was a great opportunity to recognise and commend members for all their work over the last number of years. We look forward to hosting the NQS Awards Dinner in the Kilashee house hotel on the 1st of November 2024.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.

Finance Leisure, Health, and Fitness (LHF) Skillnet

We continue in our funding cycle 2023-2025 with our partner Skillnet Ireland whose support allows for developing training in the sector and we have hosted a record number of training events to support members and their staff. We are grateful to our funders Skillnet Ireland for their support in developing the network which allows the upskilling of our members.

Industry Training

Ireland Active has continued to deliver Pool Plant and Safeguarding training courses for our members throughout 2023.

2024 Ireland Active Conference & NQS Awards

Ireland Active National Quality Standard Leisure, Health and Fitness Award

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ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Governance Code

Ireland Active are fully complanate with the Sport Ireland Governance Code.

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.

Board Of Directors

The board of Directors met eight times in the year The purpose of the Board is to direct Ireland Active's affairs. The Board decide upon the policy of Ireland Active and the direction it may take. the essential functions of the Board as follows:

- define the values and objectives of Ireland Active
- establish policies and plans to achieve those objectives
- approve the annual budget and final accounts
- establish and oversee a framework of delegation and system of control
- be responsible for all decisions with significant financial or other risk or which raise issues of principle
- monitor the organisations performance against agreed indices
- satisfy itself that Ireland Active's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards and propriety

John Windle (Chairperson), Clodagh Kilmurray (Secretary), Tina Dowling (Treasurer), Liam Cunningham (Vice Chairperson), Lorna Brady, Brian King, Siobhan Tighe, Kevin Doyle, Michael Lennon, Scott Walker Independent Director, Cathal Lee – Independent Director

Audit & Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee met twice 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 John Windle Chair and Tina Dowling Honorary Treasurer. 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.

Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee. Scott Walker (Independent Director) chairs the Committee. Members include John Windle (IA Chair), Clodagh Kilmurray, and Tina Dowling.

Leisure Health and Fitness Skillnet Steering Group

The LHF Steering met 3 times in the year The steering group is comprised of representatives from participating network member companies. It plays an essential role in providing strategic direction and network governance. The steering group ensure congruence between network provision and the strategic challenges /opportunities facing the sector, guide the network manager and provide a link between the contracting organisation and member companies. This helps ensure network activities focus on the delivery of skills that meet defined skills shortages in the sector.

Karl Dunne
Joe Cosgrove
Clodagh Kilmurray
Siobhan Tighe
Barry Walsh
Liam Cunningham
Lorna Brady

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ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Standards Committee

The Committee reviews the National Quality Standard in the context 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 Gavin Finn Swan Leisure
- Health: Shirley O'Shea, HSE
- Education: Niamh Foley, Athlone IT
- Education: Teresa Richardson, IT Tralee
- Education: Maeve Clegg, Crumlin College
- Sport: Michael McGeehan, Sport Ireland
- Leisure: John Windle, UPMC
- Leisure: Brian King, University of Limerick Sport
- 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.

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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 2023 - 2024 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 2023. Our overall financial position is set out in detail in the audited accounts presented to the AGM.

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND RETAINED EARNINGS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Note	2023 €	2022 €
Turnover		**855,482**	*4,066,702*
Administrative expenses		**(792,782)**	*(3,791,724)*
Operating profit	4	**62,700**	*274,978*
Tax on profit	7	**(6,902)**	*(34,455)*
Profit for the financial year		**55,798**	*240,523*
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year		**358,192**	*117,669*
Profit for the financial year		**55,798**	*240,523*
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year		**413,990**	*358,192*

There were no recognised gains and losses for 2023 or 2022 other than those included in the statement of income and retained earnings.

Ireland Active | Leisure, Health and Fitness Association

CONTACT US

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