Ireland Active | Leisure, Health and Fitness Association

AGM 13th October 2023

Activities Report 2022-23

Ireland Active is the representative body for the leisure, health and fitness sector representing 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: Tina Dowling CEO, The Watershed

Secretary Clodagh Kilmurray, CEO, Swan Leisure

Liam Cunningham, GM, Athlone RSC
Michael Lennon Westpost Woods Hotel
John Windle, Manager, UPMC Institute for Health
Lorna Brady, CEO, SPORTSCO
Siobhan Tighe, MD, Coral Leisure
Scott Walker, Independent, IT, Strategy and Governance
Brendan Loughnane, Independent, Communications and Public Affairs

IRELAND ACTIVE STAFF

Chief Executive: Karl Dunne
Member Service Manager Michael Atkinson
Projects & Events Officer: Tiffany Heary
REPs Ireland: Calum Bain
Leisure, Health & Fitness Skillnet: Alma Osmic
Garda Vetting & Accounts: Helen Beattie
Marketing and Communications Officer: Conor Neacy

IRELAND ACTIVE PARTNERS

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Introduction from Chairperson

Joe Cosgrove

Introduction
2022 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 2022 with the inclusion of Swimming pools for the first time ever 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.

Industry Standards
Over 90 organisations 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; the National Fitness Day Partner project which was again a great success.

Programmes
Our Conference and National Quality Standard Awards remains the focal point of our learning and networking activities for the year, our conference and awards were held in November 2022 at the Slieve Russell Hotel. It was great to get back to a full conference and awards night and I was delighted to welcome Sport Ireland CEO Dr Una May to give the opening address at our awards.

Finance
Due to the financial prudence and increased revenue streams we continue to grow our reserves of the company as seen on the 2022 financial statements. That said, 2022 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 for the commitment they continue to show to Ireland Active.

After serving 12 years on the board of Ireland Active, My time on the board has come to and end. I would like to thank all the board members I have worked with over the last 12 years for their commitment and efforts in developing Ireland Active and in promoting the industry in Ireland. We have come a long way since I was first elected and know that the board and team will continue to grow the organisation ensuring the leisure health and fitness industry is represented and Ireland Active's influence grows.

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.

Joe Cosgrove

Chairperson, Ireland Active

Advocacy, Representation & Partnership

Swimming Pool Grant

Ireland Actives ongoing advocacy has been very successful with a number of positive government allocations to the sector.
Ireland Active was appointed by Sport Ireland to administer €3.2 million in swimming pool grants to the sector, 280 swimming pools were supported in this round of funding.
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 is developing the new national swimming strategy.

Pre-Budget Submission

We made a number of submissions for supports 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 2024. The Pre-Budget asks for 2024 are as follows:

1. Targeted measures of energy subsidy supports to ensure the viability of Sports facilities
2. Overhaul of The Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme (TBESS)
3. Tax-driven incentives for personal exercise
4. Reduction of VAT rate for participation in Personal Exercise and Swimming
5. Inclusion of Fitness Professionals /Swim Teachers /Lifeguards in flat-rate uniform expense allowances

We continue to work with a number of government departments to achieve positive benefits for members.

National Fitness Day

Ireland Active hosted the eighth annual National Fitness Day on the 28th September 2023 as part of the European Week of Sport. This year's edition was hosted successfully, with over 60 facilities and schools across Ireland registering their activities for the day itself. The theme of this year's National Fitness Day was 'All Ages Active', with the goal of encouraging people from all age groups to exercise on the day.

The event was launched on the 4th of September, with Ireland Active CEO Karl Dunne, as well as National Fitness Day ambassadors Catherina McKiernan and Aoife O'Rourke in attendance. The event was a great success, with photos / footage from the event shared on the Ireland Active social media channels.

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 with now over 1000 registered members and some exciting advancements to operations.
REPs Ireland looks forward to welcoming new education providers on board and continuing to work with our current providers to raise industry standards.
The REPs Ireland Strategic Plan which runs until 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.

Services & Events

Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting service has continued to grow this year. The number of applications has risen again with just under three thousand applications being processed.

Annual Conference

The annual Conference was held on the 25th November 2022, in the Slieve Russel Hotel, Co. Cavan. With a great line up of speakers and panellist the high light of the conference was the keynote from Ray Goggins. We will be hosting our annual conference in the Lyrath Hotel & Estate on the 17th November 2023 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 over 70 organisations taking part. We commend these facilities' commitment and dedication to achieving such high standards. The Ireland Active National Quality Standard Awards ceremony for 2022 was held as part of the annual Conference on the 27th November 2022. It was hosted by Rob Hartnett in the Slieve Russell Hotel. 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 Lyrath Estate on the 17th November 2022.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 2023-2025 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. The LHF Skillnet Steering group which is a sub-committee of the Board have met 3 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 2022 – 2023.

Organisational Excellence

Governance Code

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

Attendance of Board Directors at Board meetings since AGM 2022

Board Director	Dec 2022	Jan 2023	March 2023	May 2023	July 2023	Sept 2023	Total attendance (out of 6) – 50% required
Joe Cosgrove	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Tina Dowling	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Clodagh Kilmurray	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Liam Cunningham	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
John Windle	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Lorna Brady	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Brian King	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Siobhan Tighe	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
Scott Walker	1	0	0	1	1	1	4
Brendan Loughnane (resigned Jul 23)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Michael Lennon	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

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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 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.

HR and Renumeration Committee

The HR and Renumeration Committee met 4 times over the past year to review and make recommendations to the board on the HR review and the process. The committee includes Joe Cosgrove, Tina Doweling, Clodagh Kilmurray, and Scott Walker.

Nominations Committee

The Nominations Committee. The Committee is chaired by Scott Walker (Independent Director). Members include Joe Cosgrove (IA Chair), Clodagh Kilmurray, and Tina Dowling.

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: 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.

Leisure Health and Fitness Skillnet Steering Group:

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

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 2022 - 2023 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 2022. Our overall financial position is set out in detail in the audited accounts presented to the AGM.

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