

# Annual Report 2023



**SWIM  
IRELAND**

**Many swimmers. Many strokes. One island.**

**Morning workouts, evening dips, chats with the  
regulars.**

**The deck, the beach, the baths.**

**Cheering for your son, your daughter, your old  
friend.**

**Nearly there, keep going!**

**Open water. No end of it. Coast to coast.**

**Cold water. High elbows. Close ties.**

**Whatever your stroke.**

**You are one. Of many.**

**On an island of swimmers.**

**SWIM  
IRELAND**

An island  
of swimmers

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# Organisation Purpose and Principal Activities

Swim Ireland is the National Governing Body of Swimming, Diving, Water Polo and Artistic Swimming on the island of Ireland. Our role, as set out by Sport Ireland, is to administer the competitive element of our sports and to encourage participation. Our vision is to create “an island of swimmers.” We define swimming as “a form of physical activity in the water that people engage in whether for social connections, exercise, health and physical activity, challenge, mental wellbeing, skill development, competition, fun, or many of these reasons combined.”

On a day-to-day basis we:

- Provide programmes to encourage participation in the aquatics.
- Organise and administer the sports of Swimming, Diving, Water Polo and Artistic Swimming in Ireland including training and deployment of coaches.
- Organise representative level sport.
- Provide sporting opportunities and pathways leading from local sport to National and International competition.
- Provide accredited aquatic qualifications.
- Deliver on the aquatic actions and strategic objectives set by the Irish Government in the National Physical Activity Plan and National Sports Policy, one of which is identified as to ‘Get Ireland Swimming’.

We have developed a very clear set of values and behaviours which guide all of our activity, and which are embedded within our performance management systems.

These are:

**Values & Behaviours**

**S**

**Skills, Professionalism & Knowledge**

We harness our skills, knowledge, and experience in an always professional manner, to allow us to continually grow and develop Swim Ireland.

**W**

**Wellbeing & Inclusivity**

We aim to be inclusive and welcoming in our sport, seeking to empower everyone to participate in a safe and enjoyable environment, where everyone is treated with the same level of respect, equality and importance.

**I**

**Integrity & Excellence in Governance**

We see governance as the central pillar to a successful, high performing organisation whereby honesty and transparency is key.

**M**

**My Passion, Our Vision!**

We are purposeful, driven and passionate in the pursuit of our vision and the delivery of our objectives and services across the organisation.

**Teamwork & Collaboration**

We work together and empower each other with a clarity of purpose and vision in all of our working relationships to achieve optimal success. In all we do.

**SWIM IRELAND**



**SWIM  
IRELAND**

An island  
of swimmers



# Our Strategy

The Swim Ireland 2022-2026 Strategic Plan aims to shape a culture that encourages, supports, and empowers people in Ireland to actively enjoy swimming and the aquatics both indoor and outdoor. The Plan focuses on the areas that our organisation can impact to achieve our overall vision of ‘An island of swimmers’. We believe that a vital measure of success is the increase in opportunities for people to swim, regardless of their age, background, or location. Swimming is a life skill and a gateway to many other sports. We aim to support our core membership base and clubs with solutions that help address their needs, grow the sport across the disciplines and deliver high performance targets. In realising our vision, we focus on the ‘3 Ps’ People, Places and Programmes. People, meaning our athletes, volunteers, coaches, teachers, and staff; Places, meaning the facilities and open water spaces where swimming happens; and programmes, meaning the opportunities that we provide across all abilities from the casual dipper to the Olympic hopeful.

**FOCUS AREA 1**  
National Infrastructure for the Aquatics

**FOCUS AREA 2**  
Community and Participation

**FOCUS AREA 3**  
Clubs and Regions

**FOCUS AREA 4**  
Performance

**FOCUS AREA 5**  
Organisation Excellence

The Strategy is supported by an Annual Operational Plan, approved, and monitored by Sport Ireland and the Board of Swim Ireland. Included in this report is an overview of our 2023 performance.

Our organisation is best seen within the context of our Departments which are set out in the table below.

# Our Departments

## Clubs, Regions, and Competitions

- Providing a safe and secure environment to the young people involved in our sport and ensuring that the voice of young people is heard at all levels.
- Providing support to our clubs, regions and disciplines enabling them in turn to deliver a high-quality experience to our grassroots membership.

## Education & Community

- Delivering education in the form of courses and continued professional development to our own workforce of Swim Coaches and Teachers and within the Leisure Industry.
- Driving participation in our sport at a community level, with an emphasis on hard-to-reach groups who are a particular focus of National Sports Policy including: women & girls, people with a disability, older adults, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Swim Ireland Participation Department is responsible for the delivery of non-club events and programmes.

## Performance

- The Performance Department is responsible for the highest performing athletes (and the coaches and clubs working with/for them) in Ireland up to and including the Olympic Games - in both swimming and diving. The department oversees the Regional Squad programmes in all four provinces as well as the National Squad Programmes and Performance Pathway levels. It is also responsible for the selection of all National Teams at junior, youth, and senior levels on an annual basis.

## Corporate

- Growing our financial base, improving the profile of the aquatics through marketing and promotion, contributing to the shaping of relevant National policies, stakeholder relationships, staff training and development, ensuring our organisation is operating to best practice governance.

We are in the process of reviewing our departmental structures in line with our strategic priorities and will implement some changes for 2024 to better align our staffing resources these priorities.





# Executive Summary

2023 has been a fantastic year, with our strategy implementation moving into a second year. The work being done to deliver on our strategy objectives is phenomenal, and huge recognition must be given to our staff, our regions, committees and all the volunteers. This report sets out our main activity for 2023 under the five pillars of our Strategy and includes some noteworthy highlights.

In April, we were awarded the National Governing Body of the Year Award at the Federation of Irish Sport 'Sport Industry Awards' – a real testament to the work that goes on across the organisation from everyone involved.

Swim Ireland clubs and members have continued to rebuild and grow. We have seen a significant amount of turnover of volunteers, so the Clubs and Competitions department have worked hard in supporting and providing guidance to clubs to rebuild their knowledge base. Our Club Support Officers continue to engage with clubs daily and in 2023 provided club visits and ran a programme of club support initiatives ranging from club workshops, forums and seminars which were well attended. We continue to offer opportunities for our Special, Leisure and Associate members and we are pleased to see membership numbers on the increase.

The 2023 season was a great success with a great number of athletes taking part in all National Competitions. We continue to work on improving our events and where applicable we try and implement suggestions from the community. Throughout the year, we continued to seek stakeholder engagement to support the review and structure of competitions across all disciplines, and we will work hard to continue to drive the standards.

In February, we hosted our first ever Swimindustry Conference and Awards with over 120 attendees. Our Swim Ireland Aquatics Academy has been established and is ready to launch and for the first time in four years, we held a Tutor Conference, with a record attendance of 52 Tutors. In addition, we played a significant role in the organising of LEN European Aquatics' first Learn to Swim Conference in Latvia in November 2023.

In 2023, we had 180 registered Club Children's Officers, with 505 attendances to the CCO Forums over the year. A great testament to the dedication shown by CCOs to their role.

In August 2023 the Sport Ireland National Aquatic Centre played host to the inaugural LEN European U23 Swimming Championships featuring around 400 of the best emerging talents from 42 nations battling it out for 37 gold medals across three days of competition. The last time Swim Ireland hosted a LEN European competition was the LEN European Short Course Swimming Championships in 2003, the same year the Sport Ireland National Aquatic Centre opened. Many of the swimmers on the Irish team were not even born on that occasion! Mona McSharry walked away with a hat-trick of gold medals across the Breaststroke events. Ellen Walshe won two gold and a silver while Daniel Wiffen won gold and two silver medals, also winning best male performance. Closing the meet, in a stunning display across three days from the whole team and never been done before, Ireland topped the final medal table at the LEN U23 European Swimming Championships.



# Executive Summary

In December, Daniel Wiffen became Ireland's first ever World Aquatics World Record holder at the European Short Course Championships in Romania. Daniel also became Ireland's first gold medallist at the event, winning three in total in the 400m, 800m and 1500m Freestyle. Ellen Walshe added to the tally with Bronze in the 400m Individual Medley.

Elsewhere on the European and World stage, our team achieved medals and records at the World Para Swimming Championships, World Masters Championships, European Juniors, and Commonwealth Youth Games. In addition, the Ireland Ladies National Water Polo Team won the Home Nations Championships for the first time with the Men Silver Medallists. All divers made finals in Olympic events at the European Games.

As we build up to the 2024 Paris Olympics, we had strong performances at the 2023 World Aquatics Championships (50m), which included a European Swimming Record achieved by Daniel Wiffen. From a pathway perspective, we delivered the published National Performance Transition Programme and National Performance Pathway Programme in 2023, supporting athletes and home programme coaches via onshore and offshore camps and competitions, as well as home programme visits and the Identified Coach Development Programme.

In relation to swimming participation, we delivered over 90 community programmes across both indoor and outdoor and our Pop-Up Pool for hard-to-reach target groups. Swim for a Mile made a return after COVID raising significant funds for Children's Health Foundation.

The Pop-Up Pool continues to be a key activator for swimming participation with strong social benefit with a total of nearly 17,000 swimming opportunities provided to communities throughout 2023.

We continue to operate with best practice governance remaining at the forefront of everything we do, and we remain compliant with the Governance Code and are driving continuous improvement in our culture. We had the launch of the Athlete Commission for Swimming & Diving. And we were only the second NGB to achieve the Active Disability Ireland Xcessible Silver Award.

We had the completion of our an Environmental Social & Governance Strategy (ESG), which will be implemented in 2024, which is supported by our Diversity, Equality, Inclusion & Belonging Action Plan. We also facilitated our Women in Sport programmes including our Women in Sport Leadership Course. We continue to have strong representation at both World and European Level, through several of our senior staff.

Throughout 2023 Swim Ireland participated in the Working Group tasked by Government to develop the National Swimming Strategy, and we now await Government sign off and publication. Throughout these discussions we advocated for additional resource allocation for swimming infrastructure and were pleased to see the expansion of the criteria of the Sports Capital Grant to include swimming pools for the first time. We also developed an Eco-Pools Report, providing guidance to pool operators on existing and cutting-edge technologies and a 'Swimming Facility Planning Model', which is a data model being developed through Dormant Accounts funding, will help us identify the gaps in provision on a national basis and we think it will be a very useful tool to assist local authority decision making. Both documents will be published shortly. We have also advocated for consideration of outdoor swimming in the context of Local Sports Plans in our engagements with LSPs and Local Authorities. Lastly, we developed new partnerships with Local Authorities to co-fund Get Ireland Swimming Officers, with three officers now across the country in Dublin City, Cavan and Fingal and expect to have a fourth officer in place in 2024.

2024 has already given us much to celebrate and as we head into the Olympic Games in Paris we have a lot to be excited about. Before that, a home Olympic Trials at the Sport Ireland National Aquatic Centre beckons in May.

We also look forward to further developing our retention plans, with artistic swimming being a key feature to develop. The Government Large Scale Sports Infrastructure Fund launching soon will be really important in terms of swimming pool infrastructure, and we have lots of exciting opportunities in the community space as we build on our goal of Ireland being an 'Island of Swimmers'.

# Chairperson Report

Peter Conway



I am honoured to have been at the helm of a great organisation for 5 years and it is with sadness but immense pride that I write my final Annual Report as I retire from my role, having served the maximum term allowed under our Constitution.

Swim Ireland is an organisation that is consistently evolving and growing and in many ways 2023 crystallised that growth and is a fitting year for me to depart from my role. We are awaiting the imminent publication of a National Swimming Strategy, something that we have long advocated for and helped to shape. I congratulate the Ministers and Officials in the Department of Sport who have recognised the importance of swimming as a life skill as well as a sport and look forward to the publication and implementation of the strategy.

At our most recent Strategic Away Day in November 2023 the Board reflected on the progress of our current Strategy which had evolved from previous strategies to place equal focus on the competitive aspects of the sport and the life skill that is Swimming. The inclusion of an Infrastructure Pillar for the first time was particularly important and is an area where we have made great progress, particularly so in the innovation space with our Pop-Up Pools.

This Annual Report sets out in detail the wide range of activity across the organisation throughout 2023. My most difficult job as Chairperson is to pick out highlights as there is so much to be proud of.

There is little doubt that hosting the inaugural U23 European Swimming Championship was one of the standout memories of the year. Topping the medal table coupled with our other results on the international stage, including Daniel Wiffen's Short Course World Record, first ever World Championships Gold Medal, most successful ever Commonwealth Youth Games for Northern Ireland, and 3 Olympic Qualifiers a year out from the Games we are now seeing the

consistent performances in the moments that matter that we have been striving for. I would like to thank Sport Ireland, Sport NI, and the Olympic Federation of Ireland (OFI) for their investment and belief in our performance programme.

The manner of our hosting the inaugural LEN European U23 Swimming Championships in Dublin was, for me, the measure of where we are as an organisation. Our core SWIM values were evident across all aspects of the event. Staff and volunteers worked together to deliver a seamless event that was highly praised at the top echelons of European Aquatics. Our professionalism is clearly recognised, and we have a significant presence on the European and World stages in decision making roles. Our CEO is a member of the World and European Governing Body Boards, and we have 3 members of staff and 1 volunteer in key committee positions. Two of our staff members were central to the organisation of the first ever European Learn to Swim Conference held by LEN European Aquatics.

Domestically, seeing our core membership numbers recovering to pre-Covid levels and to have been able to support training and development of new volunteers with the help of resilience funding was particularly important to the Board. We are delighted to see our disciplines showing good signs of recovery and realising some significant achievements. Our Water Polo Women's team won the Four Nations Championship for the first time. Our Master's Swimmers brought home two medals from World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan and our Divers made finals in all Olympic events at the European Games in Poland. Our Open Water Pathway is developing, and we now have swimmers competing at international level and almost 1,000 swimmers took part in participation events.

## Chairperson Report cont'd

### Peter Conway

At a participation level, we provided over 17,000 swimming opportunities through our Pop-Up Pools with hundreds of adults and children being provided with the opportunity to swim in areas where there was previously no access to water. Whilst not without challenges, due to the temporary nature of the Pop-up Pool structure and industry wide staffing shortages, the Pop-Up Pools continue to deliver significant social value and are particularly helpful in establishing the demand for a more permanent structure. Establishing a case for building new infrastructure, is a particularly important strategic focus for us. We have developed good relationships within the Local Authority sector through our engagements with them on the Pop-Up Pools and are working with multiple councils to prepare for the opening of the Large-Scale Infrastructure Fund in 2024. With support from Sport Ireland Innovation Funding, we developed a Swimming Facility Planning Model, a data model which will support planners by providing objective information on gaps in swimming infrastructure throughout the country. We successfully made the case for renovation of swimming pools to be included in the Sports Capital Grant and await the announcement of these grants in early 2024.

Also, on the infrastructure side, we made an agreement with Dublin City Council to take over the running of Sean MacDermott Street Swimming Pool for a three-year period. This is a new departure for us but important in terms of our strategic focus on National Infrastructure for the Aquatics.

Particularly close to my heart is our increasing focus on inclusion. Our strategic vision is to create 'An Island of Swimmers' of all genders, diversities, and abilities. The range of supports and programmes that we have put in place through Dormant Accounts, Women in Sport and Healthy Ireland funding is phenomenal. I am particularly proud that we were awarded the Active Disability Ireland Xcessible Silver Award in 2023 and have in place an ambitious DEIB Action Plan which is monitored by the Board.

Governance remains a top priority for our Board and Executive. An uncompromising and unapologetic adherence to safeguarding and governance best practice are hallmarks of this organisation. I look forward to one of my final acts as Chairperson which will be putting my signature to the 3-year recommitment to the Governance Code, the second such time that I have done so since we adopted the Code in 2018.

Whilst self-praise could be said to be no praise our achievements are being recognised externally. We achieved the accolade of 'NGB of the Year' at the Sports Industry Awards and I would like to thank the Federation of Irish Sport for this recognition and all our staff and volunteers whose work was deservedly recognised through this Award.

As I approach my final AGM I would to thank my family, in particular my wife Noelle, for all their support in giving me the space to concentrate on this great organisation. I have had the privilege of working with a dedicated and hard-working executive team led by a visionary CEO in Sarah Keane, with a passionate and committed Board and with volunteers the length and breadth of the land who make our sport happen. I would like to thank each and every one of you for another great year but also for the last 7 years. It has been my privilege to serve you.

**Peter Conway**  
**Chairperson**

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# CEO Report

## Sarah Keane



I write this as I return from the World Championships in Doha where Daniel Wiffen has just become a double World Champion for Ireland. I was privileged to attend for several days in my role as a Bureau Member of World Aquatics.

There is more to swimming and the aquatics than high performance, however, this is something so special that it must be called out. What an incredible achievement by Daniel and his team which has put Irish Swimming and Daniel himself on the front of every news outlet in Ireland (and many abroad). I also congratulate other strong performances at the Worlds. Indeed, following on from a very successful 2023 on the World stage and indeed the European stage here in Ireland when we hosted the U23 European Championships, we have much to be excited about with the Olympic Games in Paris only months away now.

But while all of this is happening the less visible side of the business that is Swim Ireland continues. We have had lengthy policy development in 2023 and we are very grateful to our clubs and community for their guidance and support through 1000's of responses to our surveys. We issued new policies on 'National eligibility', and Diversity, Inclusion, Equity & Belonging with our Sustainability and Transgender policies due to launch shortly. We have worked closely with the Department of Sport on the development of the first ever National Swimming Strategy for the country which we understand will be launched during the first half of 2024. We continue to ensure that we are working to best practice in the area of Governance and remain committed to compliance with the Sporting Code of Governance.

We have just recently launched our Safeguarding report for last season which I hope you will find useful and informative. It's important that all of our Club Children's Officers (CCO) engage with our monthly CCO Forums and we thank them for their work in undertaking these important roles.

We are finding that we are dealing with quite a lot of matters that require support in our clubs at present and we want everyone to know that we are here to help. In the interests of transparency, I refer to the serious matter that involved one of our coaches that was up in front of the courts towards the back end of last year. We commend those involved in the reporting of the matter and reiterate our aim to educate and create awareness so that matters are reported, procedures followed and that we offer appropriate support for those involved.

We are currently overhauling our internal staff structures to ensure that we are aligned to the priorities of the Swim Ireland Strategy 2022-2026 and I commend our staff for the flexibility they have shown. We are conscious that the generous resilience funding from the Government allocated by Sport Ireland during and after Covid 19 is no longer available which also means we must ensure that despite the increasing costs around us, that our organisation is set up to continue to thrive whilst at the same time being prudent in how we do so.

This will not stop us from being innovative, and we continue to push forwards with moving our Pop-up Pools around the country and bringing swimming to people who have had so little opportunity prior to participate in the past. We are aware that these pools take up a lot of resourcing and in order to manage this prudently we are unlikely to operate all pools at the same time going forwards. We are delighted to have available to us now our first Pop Up Pool from Fluidra who we worked with on the design of the pool itself. We will also continue with our many programmes designed to bring swimming to areas and cohorts of the population who have had neither opportunity nor bespoke supports in order to be able to participate fully. Amongst this we recognise different groups who may have more specific needs.

## CEO Report cont'd

We know that our clubs are working hard to support their members and indeed to be as inclusive as possible. We are very grateful to have the number of volunteers that we have within the Irish Aquatics community, yet we know a lot of the work rests primarily on relatively few shoulders. We are currently reviewing our club support programme and how we engage with our membership to see what we can do better and what further supports we can bring. We have made many changes to our national competition programme in particular over the last number of years, based on the feedback from our community and we will continue to engage in this regard. Competition is a very important element for our members and ensuring that we have well run competitions and appropriate opportunities for all is something we continue to work on. We have excellent officials involved in the running of our competitions throughout the country to whom we are very grateful. We are conscious that inflation has led to increasing costs for us in running competitions and for clubs and members in attending and participating in same and this is considered in our decision making. A lot of members provide extra support and guidance to us in the form of working on Regional and National Committees and I would like to thank all of those involved for this additional commitment and support. We are very conscious the aquatics is made up of different disciplines and areas and we have been especially focused on moving forward more of our disciplines last year and as we move forwards including Water Polo, and Open Water in particular. This will continue into 2024 which will also see increased emphasis on our Masters & Artistic Swimming.

We have been overhauling certain aspects of our education operations for a while now, focusing on efficient, responsive and supportive customer service together with improved technology and additional opportunities, especially on the continued professional development side. We have completely changed our programme around licensing of teachers and coaches based on feedback received from this cohort in advance. We recognise that we are still on a journey in relation to our education qualifications and delivery however we are excited by the opportunities ahead to continue to bring new education opportunities to our community. We know that our sport doesn't operate without our coaches and thank them for their commitment and dedication. We also recognise the life skill that is swimming and we know that there is a shortage of swimming teachers in particular at present and are eager to continue to offer training and education opportunities to many more.

In his report, our Chairman focuses in on the great work that has been undertaken over the last while relating to the Infrastructure pillar of our strategy. For me, this is a particularly transformational area of our work and whilst significant results may be more for the medium to long term it is something that we need to put efforts into in the here and now. We don't have enough infrastructure for swimming and the aquatics available to us in this country and much of what is available is old stock which requires updating. We must work closely in conjunction with local and national government, facility operators and owners, our clubs, and the community in general to seek to impact on this crucial issue.

As I finish, I would like to commend the Swim Ireland Board led by Chairman Peter Conway. They are a strong, incredibly competent and committed group of individuals who take their role as the custodians of Irish Aquatics very seriously and I thank them for their time, their expertise, and their support. In particular I would like to thank Peter for his dedication and guidance to me and the organisation as he steps down from the board having completed a tenure of 7 years on the Board, 5 as the Chairman. Peter will be missed from the Board having done a fantastic job as Chair of the organisation however he will continue to play other roles within the organisation, and we are very grateful to him for all that he has done and continues to do. I am also very grateful for the amazing group of Swim Ireland staff that I work with day in day out who serve Irish Aquatics with integrity and to the best of their ability.

Swim Ireland was awarded National Governing body of the year in 2023, an achievement of which we are notably proud, and we will continue in 2024 and beyond to seek to carry out our brief to the best of our ability. We want to bring Swimming and the Aquatics to as many people in Ireland as possible and importantly to we want to support our clubs, and members in their efforts, aims and endeavours.

**Sarah Keane**  
CEO

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# Our Governance Structure

Swim Ireland is the trading name for the Irish Amateur Swimming Association, Company Limited by Guarantee. We are a 32-county body, recognised at a National level by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media through Sport Ireland and in Northern Ireland by Sport Northern Ireland and by the Olympic Federation of Ireland. We are recognised at World level by World Aquatics, and at European level by LEN European Aquatics.

We are fully compliant with the Governance Code for Sport, overseen by Sport Ireland. A Board appointed Governance Committee, whose members includes an external appointee, monitors our ongoing compliance with the Code.

The constituent documents of the Company are the Memorandum and Articles of Association (M&A) which deals primarily with the functioning of Swim Ireland as a legal entity (i.e., as a company). The Company M&A supplemented by a range of policy and procedural documents underpins the working of the Board. A Board Terms of Reference and Schedule of Matters Reserved for the Board provides a clear division of responsibilities between the CEO and the Board. There are policies in place for dealing with conflicts of interest and of loyalty. A Rule Book deals with the more general operational aspects of the organisation. Copies of all the governing documents, our Public Statement of Compliance with the Governance Code, and our Strategic Plan 2022-2026, are available on the Swim Ireland website:

<https://www.swimireland.ie/about/policies>







## Board of Directors

The organisation is overseen by an 11 strong voluntary Board of Directors, elected annually at our Annual General Meeting (AGM). We have an experienced Board made up of individuals with diverse skills and experiences, ensuring a comprehensive approach to decision making. Our Constitution requires a minimum 60/40 gender balance, and the current split is 55/45. Except for the Chairperson, the term of office for a director is 2 years, with a maximum of 2 consecutive terms allowed before a director must step aside for a minimum of 2 years. The Chairperson's term is for 3 years, with a maximum two consecutive terms allowed. A director who has served consecutive 4 years on the Board may serve a single term as Chairperson. As vacancies arise, the Board will review its collective skill set and gender balance and will set out the skill set that, in its view, the Director should hold. A skill set audit is conducted periodically and the last such audit was undertaken in January 2024. 9 of the Directors must be members of Swim Ireland. Individuals become members by affiliating through Clubs, of which there are 162 throughout the country.

Table 1 below is an overview of the current Board, detailing their roles, skills, and length of term in office.



## Role of Board

The role of the Board is clearly detailed in the Company M&A and the Board Terms of Reference, but in brief, the role of the Board is to provide strategic direction and oversight. Responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Company rests with the Chief Executive Officer. Voluntary committees, supported by Staff are responsible for some operational aspects of the delivery of our sport. All committees operate to Terms of Reference approved by the Board and report to the Board through the Executive.

The Board undergoes an Annual Training and Induction Programme following on from the AGM and before the first meeting of the incoming Board, in addition to undertaking an annual evaluation of performance. The last such evaluation was undertaken between December 2023 and January 2024.

## Meetings of Board

Meetings take place approximately every six weeks with all Board papers issued at least five days in advance, allowing Director's time to prepare for the meeting. The CEO attends meetings of the Board but is not a Director of the Company. The Company Secretary is a member of staff but is not a Director of the Company and attends meetings at the request of the Board, taking the Minutes of Board meetings.

The President of Swim Ireland, elected annually on a rotating basis from the four Provinces, represents the organisation at ceremonial occasions and attends Board meetings in an ex-officio capacity and is not a director. Joe Gavaghan, Leinster Region was ratified as President at the AGM in 2023. Members of the Executive Team of Swim Ireland and other external consultants are invited to attend meetings of the Board to deliver updates from time to time.

Please refer to table two for record of attendance.

## Board Work Plan

At the start of the year the Board approves the Annual Budget and Operational Plan and reviews the key areas of risk and the operational key performance indicators (KPIs) that it wishes to monitor. Finance is a standing agenda item for the Board and review of the Risk Register and Business Goals KPI review takes place quarterly. Additionally, the Board will undertake a deep dive into areas of strategic importance over the course of the year. The Board issues a points of note information document to all members and staff following each meeting and engages with external stakeholders through meetings and attendance at events.

Please refer to table three for board discussions and decision chart.

## Table 1: Board Biographies and Experience

Table 1 below is an overview of the current Board, detailing their roles, skills, and length of term in office.

Board Member	Specific Role	Duration on Board	Skills/Qualifications
Peter Conway	Chairperson	Ratified as an Ordinary Director at the 2017 AGM and subsequently as Chairperson at the 2019 AGM for a three-year term. Subsequently re-appointed at the 2022 AGM for a two-year term.	Project Manager. Swim Coach at Aer Lingus Masters Swim Club. Open Water and Masters Swimmer.
Sorcha Ní Chléirigh	Board Secretary	Ratified at the 2020 AGM for a two-year term of office. Subsequently reappointed and at the 2022 AGM for a second two-year term.	Professional background in Marketing and current role is Head of Marketing-Spirits Portfolio at Diageo
Joan Hynes	Treasurer	Ratified at the 2021 AGM for a two-year term of office. Subsequently reappointed at the 2023 AGM for a second two-year term.	Head of Finance & Grants, Science Foundation Ireland. Fellow of the Chartered Accounts Ireland
Helen Desmond	Board Director Munster Region Nominee	Ratified as a Director at the 2021 AGM. Subsequently reappointed at the 2023 AGM for a second two-year term.	Member of Dolphin SC Cork since 2001 & former Secretary. National Referee Graduate of the WIS Leadership Programme
Jo McCormack	Board Director Connacht Region Nominee	Ratified at the 2021 AGM. Subsequently reappointed at the 2023 AGM for a second two-year term.	Professional background in healthcare, currently Clinical Lead in Midland Hub. Committee member of Longford SC: Longford's Community Games County Manager for past 5 years
Aidan McLaughlin	Board Director (Independent)	Ratified at the 2020 AGM for a two-year term of office. Subsequently reappointed at the 2022 AGM for a second two-year term.	Communications professional with expertise in technology, crisis management and corporate reputation. Currently Global Director of Branded Content and Storytelling in INDEED
Mark Brennan	Board Director (Independent)	Ratified at the 2022 AGM for a two-year term of office.	Senior Marketing and Business leader whose current role is Head of Marketing with Allianz Ireland
Mary Haughney	Ordinary Director Skills Based	Ratified at the 2023 AGM for a two-year term of office.	Senior Official working at International Level, experienced Administrator, member of the Board of Credit Union, former Swim Ireland President and graduate of the Swim Ireland Women in Sport Leadership Programme
William Irwin	Board Director Leinster Region Nominee	Ratified at the 2023 AGM for a two-year term of office.	Business Executive and member of Aer Lingus Masters Swimming Club
Cathal Marley	Board Director Ordinary Director Skills Based	Ratified at the 2022 AGM for a two-year term of office.	Highly experienced senior level business executive who previously served as Chairperson of Gas Networks Ireland and Irish Water. Currently Group CEO of Ervia
Mark Wilson	Board Director Ulster Region Nominee	Ratified at the 2023 AGM for a two-year term of office.	Business Executive and senior Swimming Official.

# Director's Record of Attendance

Table 2 below is a record of attendances from the 2023 AGM to March 2024

Name/Date	Induction for new directors	2023					2024		
	16/5	23/5	4/6	19/9	24/10	28/11	23/1	27/2	26/3
Directors	Virtual	In Person	Virtual	In Person	Virtual	In Person	Virtual	Virtual	In Person
Peter Conway, Chairperson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sorcha Ní Chléirigh, Secretary		✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Joan Hynes, Treasurer		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Helen Desmond		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Jo McCormack		✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Aidan McLaughlin		✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Mark Brennan		✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Mary Haughney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
William Irwin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Cathal Marley		✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mark Wilson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
In Attendance									
Joe Gavaghan, Swim Ireland President	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Sarah Keane, CEO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mary McMorrow, Company Secretary		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# Board of Directors substantive Discussions and Decision AGM 2023 - AGM 2024

Table 3: Board Substantive Discussions and Decisions from AGM 2023-AGM 2024

Business Plan & Finance Monitoring	Strategic Focus	Reports	HR Matters
Finance update at every meeting, including Management Accounts by Department	Strategic Away Day to focus on strategic planning to end of this strategic cycle	Update from the Athlete's Commission (Swimming & Diving) and approval of the Strategic direction of the Commission	Approval of revised organisational restructure to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan
Quarterly review of Risk Register	Approval of the Education Strategy to 2026	Review of the Performance Plan for Swimming and Diving 2021-2024	Review and approval of CEO Performance Goals and Remuneration
Quarterly progress reports on 2023 Business Plan KPIs	Review of progress on the National Infrastructure Strategic Pillar	Update on the Regional Pathway Programme	Update from the HR & Remuneration Committee
Approval of the 2024 Business Plan and Budget	Review of the High-Performance Strategy to 2024	Update on the DEIB Action Plan	Approval of the nomination of the CEO to World and European Aquatic Board positions
Approval of the 2024 Risk Register	Review of the Draft National Swimming Strategy	Update on the 22-23 Safeguarding Report and review of Club compliance	<b>Governance Focus</b>
Approval of the bid to host the inaugural European Aquatics U23 Swimming Championship & the 2024 Congress	Review of DEIB Action Plan	Update from the National Water Polo Committee	Review of Governance Code for Sport compliance record and signing of the Annual Statement of compliance and 3-year recommitment to the Code
Report from the Internal Audit Committee on the internal controls	Review of the Diving Performance Programme and Pathway	Update on National Competitions	Review and approval of the 2023 Financial Statements
Review and approval of Grant Applications and reviews including: Core Grant, HP Grant, Dormant Accounts and Healthy Ireland	Review of Communications Plan for 2024	Update on the Regional Pathway Programme	Approval of arrangements for the AGM and of 4 Motions to be put forward for consideration by the Membership

# Regions and National Committee Structure

Regional Executives manage the affairs of its Region in accordance with an agreed national plan for the Company and the specific needs of that Region, including the development of aquatics at all levels within the Region. Their structure and responsibilities are set out in the Swim Ireland M&A. National Committees or Working Groups are appointed by the Board of Swim Ireland to provide an additional level of oversight and/or expertise in areas such as governance, finance, and risk. The principal oversight committees are Internal Audit, HR & Remuneration, and Governance Committees. All these Committees include a member of the Board of Directors.

Additionally, some of the day-to-day operations of the sport at a national level is undertaken by Committees. All Committees/Executives are made up of volunteers supported by a member of staff who acts as liaison to the Committee.

The Swim Ireland M&A specifies how National Committees are appointed and individual Terms of Reference describe its function. The Terms of Reference can be viewed on the [Swim Ireland website](#). Terms of Office begin at the conclusion of the Swim Ireland AGM and run until the conclusion of the AGM two years later (2 year terms), or as otherwise specified. Individuals may serve a maximum term of office of 6 consecutive years before having to step aside from a committee. Committees report to the Board through the offices of the CEO or, in the case of oversight committees, through a formal written report directly to the Board.

**Table 4: 2023 Regions and Committees Updates**

Name	2023 Regions and Committee Updates
Connacht Region	<p>The Connacht Region Management Committee (CRMC) met 11 times through 2023.</p> <p>The main highlights in 2023 identified by the committee were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A major upside in number of members in clubs.</li> <li>• The level of professionalism at all our Regional Galas, We have strived to make our region more efficient and professional, especially around our competitions and the running of same</li> <li>• The commitment to organise the Annual Competition Calendar on time and the early booking of the pools. This was a huge achievement.</li> <li>• The commitment of the voluntary Regional and Sub Committees</li> <li>• The increase in Trained Officials, we would like to thank them for their time and willingness to take up the mantle. It has been well noted the high number of our Connacht Officials present at national competitions.</li> <li>• The amazing work and commitment of our dedicated Pathway Development Coach for the region</li> <li>• Patricia Cleary Athlone SC recognised for her massive contribution to swimming Nationally and within our region. Patricia was inducted into the Swim Ireland Hall of Fame.</li> <li>• Marion English Castlebar SC Head coach received volunteer of the year for her contribution to swimming as a coach and Connacht committee member.</li> <li>• Ken Doherty Ballina SC who received the Swim Ireland official of the year award for outstanding contributions as an official at regional, national, and international level.</li> </ul> <p>The main challenges in 2023 within the Region were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging volunteers from our region, clubs, and members</li> <li>• Lack of access to some facilities for clubs through the year</li> <li>• Retention of senior athletes</li> </ul>

## Leinster Region

The Leinster Region Management Committee has been diligently steering the course of regional sports and galas, adapting to challenges, and negotiating with resilience. In the past year, the committee met virtually on five occasions, addressing crucial business matters, and implementing changes.

Committee Updates include:

- A new treasurer was co-opted in May, fortifying the financial leadership.
- The secretary role remained unfilled, posing an ongoing challenge.
- Following this year's RAC (7th Feb) a new Chair and Secretary have been appointed which will add capacity to the work of the committee.
- Ongoing negotiations with NAC in 2023 and restructured costs saw the removal of timing responsibility from the contact, streamlining operational efficiency. A new contact for the next 4 years will be signed off by June 24.

Gala Calendar and Negotiations:

- The 2023/24 gala calendar was finalised in July, a testament to the dedication of the competitions committee.
- Future challenges persist in adapting to current structures, requiring ongoing evaluation.
- Subsidized costs for clubs and the introduction of a second timing system showcase the committee's commitment to enhancing event experiences.
- Addressing concerns about phone usage, particularly in the context of Child Protection Officer (CPO) issues, remains an ongoing focus.

Challenges and Future Considerations:

- Challenges in competition logistics, Future Challengers, volunteer shortages, and officials' scarcity remain focal points.
- Addressing significant price hikes in pool hire costs and managing warm-up/cool-down lane availability are ongoing concerns.
- Adapting to Swim Ireland's age group changes presents logistical and financial challenges, urging a rethink of the competition structure for the Leinster region.

Financial Support Initiatives:

- Leinster swimming introduced financial support for clubs hiring the timing system, promoting broader accessibility.
- A second timing system, funded by sports capital grants, is set to enhance efficiency and will be operational in the coming weeks.
- Plans are underway to host the older timing system in South Leinster, making it more feasible for clubs to access and benefit from.

In conclusion for 2023, the Leinster Region Management Committee navigated a complex landscape, displaying resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to the well-being and development of Leinster swimmers. The challenges outlined highlight areas for collective effort and strategic planning as the committee continues to guide the region through the dynamic world of sports and competitions.

## Munster Region

After a busy 2022 return to swimming the Munster Exec/Pathway and Competitions committees have been working hard for 2023/2024 seasons. All 25 junior, 10 masters and 2 teaching clubs regionally, with just under 4,000 members, reaffiliated with Swim Ireland. With Some of the work completed and what is currently planned is outlined below.

Highlights from 2023 include:

- A new Swim Munster website was launched.
- 2023/24 Swim Munster Calendar published on the website.
- New Competition Handbook Sep 2023 issued & will be an annual feature.
- Pool practical's organised in UL for Level 1 & 2 Officials.
- Munster Minor & Senior Schools are now in Short Course season (will be reviewed for 2024/2025 season).
- Munster School entries are now by Hytek & JotForm.
- Introduced card payment option.
- The latest versions of HY-TEK Meet Manager & Team Manager licences purchased.
- Meet Mobile is now available for all Aspiring & Championship Meets.
- 2 Munster Coaches sent to LEN Conference on Swim Munster Bursary.
- 8 new Probationary Officials supporting competitions within the region.
- Swim Festival 2023 - first time held, well received and first Regional Skins Competition at this.
- Investment in Swim Munster Branding - Backdrops, Pull Up signs & Back Stroke Flags.
- Swim Munster Coaching Conference Sep/Oct - well organised & attended.
- Joint Regional Development Training Camp with Connacht at Halloween 2023. Halloween 2024 already booked.

Planning for 2024 includes:

- Further investment in timing equipment and Gala IT services.
- Munster Entries Resource: The proposal is that this will be a part-time paid position from early 2024.
- Dedicated regional office space in UL.
- Plan to re-purpose the old UL timing system into mobile regional timing systems.
- Upgrade (FOC) the current Munster Hy-Tek licences to include Regional Data Access for all Munster members.
- Build a dedicated Munster Wi-Fi network in UL for Meet Mobile.
- Build on the improvements made to date on the distribution of Gala information via Meet Mobile and other platforms.
- Collaboration on digital equipment used by NCL.



## Ulster Region

2023 has emerged as a landmark year for Swim Ulster due to remarkable achievements and significant growth in our competitive sports and broader participation. This year has been marked by unparalleled successes in competitive swimming, highlighted by performances at international championships. The organisation's commitment is further exemplified by its robust talent identification programs and comprehensive support for athletes and aquatic clubs, reinforcing its devotion to cultivating excellence in aquatic sports. This strategic approach not only showcases Swim Ulster's emphasis on competitive swimming but also underscores its role in fostering a thriving and inclusive environment for aquatic talent development. Additionally, the open water and water polo programs have continued to flourish in numbers and popularity, reflecting Swim Ulster's diverse and dynamic approach to all sports, and contributing to the overall growth. Swim Ulster thank Sport N.I for their continued support, belief, and commitment in the pursuit of aquatic excellence.

## Competitive Swimming Key Achievements

- Daniel Wiffen's 800m Short Course World Record & 3x European Short Course Gold Medals stand out as a highlight, as well as his European Record in the LC World Championships 800m Freestyle final.
- Bethany Firth's gold and silver medals at the World Para Championships.
- Ellie McCartney's bronze in the European Juniors 200m breaststroke.
- Daniel Wiffen and Mona McSharry pre-qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympics.
- Daniel Wiffen 2x Gold, 1x Silver & Mona McSharry 3x Gold at European U23 Championships in Dublin.
- 7 medals at the Youth Commonwealth Games-2x Gold & 1x Bronze Ellie McCartney, 1x Gold & 1x Silver Grace Davison and 1x Silver & 1x Bronze for Brandon Biss, marking the most successful Youth Games Swimming campaign for Team NI to date.
- £25,000 from the Sport N.I Athlete award supported 5 of our athletes.

## Growth in Competitive Swimming

- 2023 marked a significant year for the growth in competitive swimming within Swim Ulster, with remarkable achievements and increased participation at all levels in 2021-2022 we had 14,500 entries, in 2022-23 17,500 entries.
- The organisation's approach to nurturing competitive swimming aims not only at achieving immediate success but also at sustaining long-term development and interest in the sport.



Name	2023 Regions and Committee Updates
Ulster Region	<p>Water Polo's Continued Success and Expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water polo saw an increase in participation and enthusiasm across various age groups and skill levels at Academy level and Development Squad level.</li> </ul> <p>National Centre Ulster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swim Ulster's commitment to providing access to high-quality training facilities and coaching, coupled with its emphasis on fostering a competitive yet supportive environment, played a key role in the growth and success of our competitive swimming.</li> <li>The National Centre Ulster continues to grow and prosper since its 2021 inception, with Full time athletes winning 1x European Junior Championships Medal, 3x Youth Commonwealth Games medals and in touch athletes winning 2x Youth Commonwealth Games medals &amp; 2x World Para Championship medals across the 2023 season.</li> </ul> <p>Club Support Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swim Ulster continued to deliver specialised workshops to individual clubs, focusing on Resolving Conflict, Committee Training, and Roles &amp; Responsibilities.</li> </ul>
Child Welfare Committee	<p>The objectives of the Committee in 2023 were to advise on policy and compile suggested changes, support the CCO Forums, review the Terms of Reference, advise on APP, SG1 refresher and YP code of conduct, and competitions. The Committee meets three times with the last meeting taking place in October.</p>



Name	2023 Regions and Committee Updates
Selection Panel	<p>The role of the panel is to select/nominate athletes to teams (swimming, open water swimming and diving) to represent Ireland and Northern Ireland at several international events. The objective of the Committee in 2023 was to ratify National Team Selections/Nominations, with the last meeting held in October.</p>
Disciplinary and Complaints Committee	<p>The Swim Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Committee has the following responsibilities:</p> <p>Act as the appellate body to decisions of the club or regional complaints and disciplinary Committee decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act in the first instance for First Instance Matters</li> <li>• Hear complaints and disciplinary actions in the First instance at club/region level where an application has been made to Swim Ireland by any party and consent is given by the Complaints &amp; Disciplinary Officer of Swim Ireland to such an expedited hearing.</li> </ul> <p>Through the year, the Committee reviewed and adjudicated on matters referred to it by the Complaints &amp; Disciplinary Officer in accordance with Swim Ireland Complaints &amp; Disciplinary Rules and Procedures.</p>
Masters Committee	<p>The objectives of the Committee in 2023 were to support the roll out of the Club and National Masters Competitions, the online workshop programme, and support athletes representing Ireland at European &amp; World Masters Championships. The Committee met five times with the last meeting held in October. The Committee are looking to enhance our offering to the Masters Community in 2024 and will liaise with key stakeholders in the coming months following the recent Masters Member Survey to action items mentioned.</p>
Performance Advisory Group	<p>The main objective of the Performance Advisory Group for 2023 was to advise on matters relating to National Competitions and the Competition Calendar (including consideration times and schedule of events). The Performance Advisory Group met twice this year with consistent email consultation throughout the year. The last meeting was held in September with the next meeting date to be finalised.</p>
HR & Remuneration Committee	<p>The role of the HR &amp; Remuneration Committee is to determine and agree, in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board, the framework or broad policy for the remuneration of the Company's Chief Executive Officer and in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer for other members of staff; and to approve the HR strategy and oversee its implementation. The main objective of the Committee in 2023 was to review staff remuneration and the Terms of Reference. The Committee met on 3 occasions and the Chairperson of the Committee, Orla McCarthy attended a meeting of the Board on 26 March to present a report.</p>
Audit Committee	<p>The Committee met in December in advance of the year end with the annual audit for consideration and discuss internal control, as well as key risks facing the company in 2024. The Committee also met to discuss the 2023 estimated forecast to year end and 2024 draft Budget and funding update.</p>
Nominations Committee	<p>The Committee conducts the nomination and selection process for identifying candidates for the vacancies of Chairperson and two independent directors arising on the Board of Swim Ireland. The Committee convened in December 2023 and will present its recommendations at the AGM on 23 April 2024</p>

Name	2023 Regions and Committee Updates
National Water Polo Committee	<p>The main objectives/focus areas for the Committee in 2023 were the continued roll out of the National Development Plan with a key focus on the digitalisation of league/cup administration. The main challenge for the NWPC is recruiting officials (referees and table officials) and a loss of key personnel and volunteers within the community following Covid-19. The NWPC will focus their attention in 2024 to bringing their Development Plan in line with the Swim Ireland Strategic plan and they will begin to succession plan for 2025 where many of the committee will have completed their full 6-year term.</p>
Performance Management Group	<p>The Performance Management Group provide scrutiny over the cyclical Performance strategy, as well as providing ideas and/or solutions as required. The focus of the Performance Management Group in 2023 was to advice board for the NPD. The group met twice this year with the last meeting held in November 2023.</p>
Commercial Committee	<p>The main objective for the Commercial Committee in 2023 is to identify sponsorship opportunities and pricing for our streaming service. The Committee were liaised with as needed in terms of getting their input when required e.g., pricing our streaming service. The Committee met twice this year.</p>
Communications Committee	<p>The role of the Committee is to support the direction, development and oversee the implementation of the Swim Ireland communications strategy and relevant policy and procedures for the organisation. The Committee also offer support and guidance in relation to the communication of matters of significant or reputational importance to the Company. The main objectives/focus areas for the Committee in 2023 were the implementation of the Communications Framework and CP Matter Management. The committee met once this year with the last meeting held in January. While no formal meetings have taken place throughout the year, the Committee has been in regular contact on several matters across the year.</p>
Governance Committee	<p>The main objective/focus areas for the Committee is to monitor compliance with Code of Governance, to set Governance Goals for the organisation each year and to both support and monitor implementation of those goals; to review and update the Terms of Reference of all Standing Committees as required; to undertake an annual review of organisational policies and update as required, to review and approve new organisational policies and other relevant documents and make recommendations to the Board on their adoption. The Committee meets quarterly. The Chairperson (Independent) of the Committee, John McShane, attended a meeting of the Board on 26 March 2024 to present a report on behalf of the Committee. The Board formally approved the signing of the Annual Compliance Statement following this presentation.</p>
Swimming Technical Committee	<p>The role of the Group is to take decisions in relation to the strategic construct and organisation of National &amp; Regional Swimming and Diving Competitions, considering the recommendations of the Performance Senior Leadership Team and the Performance Advisory Group. The main objectives/focus areas for the Committee in 2023 were to review the National Competition Structure, review the Eligibility Policy for National Meets. The Committee met frequently through the year. The last meeting was held in November.</p>

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# Anti-Doping Report 2023

Swim Ireland, in conjunction with World Aquatics, WADA and Sport Ireland is committed to ensuring the integrity of sport through its anti-doping programme, which seeks to protect the health of its athletes and facilitate them to pursue their performance goals in a fair and equitable manner. It is important that Swim Ireland and its membership continue efforts to ensure that sport is fair and clean for all, from grassroots to high performance.

2023 saw athletes released of all COVID restrictions allowing them to undertake full training and competition programmes. The Swim Ireland Anti-Doping programme returned to in person education workshops for squad athletes, while also maintaining the requirement for athletes to complete the Sport Ireland Anti-Doping eLearning module. These were delivered and supported by Swim Ireland accredited anti-doping tutors Amanda Ní Ghabhann and Aisling McKeever.

The anti-doping programme itself continued to expand with the first Dried Blood Spots (DBS) samples taken by Sport Ireland. DBS is an innovative testing method that collects just a few drops of blood from an athlete's fingertip or upper arm. It is an additional testing method to the normal urine and venous blood sampling and is approved by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The Swim Ireland Education Department created and launched a new anti-doping CPD module, which has allowed us to expand the programme across Swimming, Diving, Water polo and Masters disciplines, which interested parties can avail of. We are also seeking to upskill additional anti-doping tutors to support the development of the programme.

## 2023 Anti-Doping Statistics

Total number of tests for all sports carried out by the Sport Ireland Anti-Doping Unit	Over 1,800 samples collected in 2023
Number of tests for swimming/diving carried out by the Sport Ireland Anti-Doping Unit	In Competition - 32 Out of Competition - 47 Blood Tests - 41 DBS - 5 Total - 125
Number of Irish swimmers/divers on the Sport Ireland Registered Testing Pool	14
Number of Irish swimmers/divers on the World Aquatics Registered Testing Pool	3



# WORLD AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS FUKUOKA 2023

# 2023 Operational Plan Review

Table 5 Operational Tracker below, sets out the high-level goals identified by our Board at the start of the year and commentary on how we performed. The goals are set out under the 5 Strategic Focus Areas

Table 5: Operational Tracker

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar: Clubs, Regions, and Competition</b></p>	<p>Support our clubs and membership base to develop and grow our numbers beyond pre Covid levels.</p>	<p>Swim Ireland clubs and members continued to show their professionalism and hard work as they continue to rebuild and grow their clubs. We have seen a significant amount of turnover of volunteers, so a key focus for the department in 2023 has been supporting and providing guidance to clubs as they work hard to rebuild their knowledge base. The Support Officers continue to engage with clubs daily and undertake club visits to offer the much-needed support and guidance.</p> <p>Once again, we ran a programme of club support initiatives throughout the year, ranging from club workshops, forums and seminars which were well attended.</p> <p>Through these various workshops, phone calls and club visits, we have had direct contact with approximately 120 clubs throughout the year.</p> <p>We continue to offer opportunities for our Special, Leisure and Associate members and it is very promising to see our membership numbers rising back towards 20000.</p>
	<p>Put in place club frameworks to provide clarity on their purpose &amp; drive continual improvement in standards.</p>	<p>A key part of the work we are committed to is developing and supporting our clubs and members to ensure they have the framework to set the standards within their clubs and regions. The Support Officers and Pathway Coaches work closely with our committees and coaches to provide on the ground support and help them plan and develop for the future.</p> <p>In 2023, we worked to develop new templates and policies for clubs to adopt and implement, ensuring they are user friendly and easily implemented. We strive to help clubs become more inclusive and accessible and work with external bodies to understand best practice.</p>





Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar: Clubs, Regions, and Competition</b></p>	<p>Ensure there are fit for purpose competition and events to support aquatic disciplines and member needs.</p>	<p>In general, the 2023 season was a great success with a great number of athletes taking part in all National Competitions. On top of delivering the Swim Ireland National Calendar of events we were hugely delighted with the success of the European U23 Championships and the work the staff and volunteers undertook to make it a truly memorable event.</p> <p>We continue to work on improving our events and look for feedback after all National Competitions. Where applicable we try and implement suggestions from the community.</p> <p>We continued to seek stakeholder engagement throughout the season and held coaches meeting at all National Competitions. These meetings provided a great opportunity to discuss plans and ideas with the community and we were very pleased with the attendance and interaction. We will continue these meetings into 2024.</p> <p>We continue to support the review the structure of competitions across all disciplines and work hard to drive the standards across all areas.</p> <p><b>Key Highlights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of a very successful U23 European Swimming Championships</li> <li>• Over 4000 entries across our national swimming events.</li> <li>• Very successful delivery of National Water Polo Home Nations Championship</li> <li>• Developed and continued strong links with several key bodies and supported the delivery of competitions for Special Olympics, National Rehab Centre, Irish Down Syndrome Sporting Association, Loretto School</li> <li>• Delivered a successful Irish Open Diving event for 63 athletes, with teams across 7 countries.</li> <li>• Successful Celtic Masters event</li> </ul>



Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar: Clubs, Regions, and Competition</b></p>	<p>Develop and grow Water Polo</p>	<p>It has been a very active year for Water Polo considering the significant challenges it continues to face from Covid-19 and the loss of key personnel within the club setting. Swim Ireland continues to work closely with and support the hard-working National Committee, as well as the army of volunteers in the day to day and strategic operations of the sport.</p> <p>One of the highlights of the year was hosting the Home Nations Tournament in Dublin with our Senior National Women’s Team finishing as outright winners of the competition.</p> <p>In addition to this four of our National Teams competed at European Aquatics Competitions which was a big step forward for the sport and goes a long way in developing new positive relationships with our European Governing Body as well as advancing the growth and development of the sport.</p> <p><b>Some of the other main highlights include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiated with the pool providers in Ulster to run full-size pitch matches for several Div. 1 Men and Women’s league matches in the 50-metre pool (first time in history of the sport).</li> <li>• Development and introduction of a National Squad Pathway.</li> <li>• Introduction of a Financial Assistance Programme for all national team members.</li> <li>• Roll out of digital match sheets and online game statistics which will improve efficiency and ease of submission/checking of match sheets for all.</li> <li>• Introduction of a wireless communication system for officials to enable our referees to communicate quickly and directly to improve the efficiency of our games.</li> <li>• Introduction of all female officials’ team at our junior national cup competitions.</li> <li>• Improved governance and operating procedures across the work of the national committee.</li> </ul>
	<p>Develop and grow Masters Swimming</p>	<p>Our Staff continue to work closely with and support the Masters Committee across many different areas of the day-to-day operation of the sport.</p> <p>We are delighted to be back to the pre-covid activity within our master’s clubs and have seen a significant increase in activity and engagement in 2023 with a full offering of race meets across the country at club and national level.</p> <p>Throughout the year we supported several successful Masters galas and clubs were delighted with the attendance and delivery of the Celtic Masters as well as the National Limerick Long Course gala.</p> <p>The Masters Online Strength &amp; Conditioning Classes finished in December 2023 with a total of 48 participants across the 8-week course.</p> <p>In August, 17 swimmers participated in the 2023 World Masters Aquatics Championships in Fukuoka, Japan. Ireland returned home with a total of four medals, 2 silver and 2 bronze along with 23 top 10 finishes.</p> <p>Twelve swimmers participated in the European Masters Short Course Championships in Madeira in November 2023 as the highlight of the calendar. It was a hugely successful event whereby Ireland came home with a total of 7 medals, 3 gold, 1 silver and 3 bronze.</p>



Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar: Clubs, Regions, and Competition</b></p>	<p>Develop and grow Open Water</p>	<p>Open Water Swimming continues to increase in popularity around the country and we once again saw some hugely successful events delivered across the regions by our clubs.</p> <p>As part of our retention and discipline work, we have started work in developing a formal pathway for swimmers to progress from the pool to the open water. We look forward to this being implemented in 2024. The delivery of open water events continued in 2023 with the successful delivery of the National 5k and 10k taking place in Lough Lene. We work on hard on growing our expertise and knowledge in this area and have started developing further resources and workshops to support our community to deliver successful safe events into the future. We continue to grow our open water event and participation programmes around the country</p> <p>Open Water Programmes - 3,084 Open Water Events - 817</p>
<p><b>Pillar: National Infrastructure for the Aquatics</b></p>	<p>Work with Government to develop and roll out a National Swimming Strategy</p>	<p>Throughout much of 2023 we participated in the Working Group tasked by Government to develop the National Swimming Strategy. The Working Group finished drafting the Policy in August 2023 and we now await Government sign off and publication which is expected in Q1 2024.</p>
<p>Pilot the Pop-Up Pool concept with a view to having Pop Up pools all over the country.</p>	<p>Pilot the Pop-Up Pool concept with a view to having Pop Up pools all over the country.</p>	<p>We first developed the Pop-Up Pool concept to address lack of access to swimming facilities in certain parts of the country. The first pool was launched in Donabate in 2022 and since then, with much welcome Government support, we have purchased two additional pools. Locations that have benefitted from the pools include Blessington, Co. Wicklow; Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo; Oldcastle, Co. Meath; Leixlip, Co. Kildare; and Cootehill, Co. Cavan. Throughout 2023 we delivered 17,000 swimming opportunities in the Pools. The social benefit from the pools has been enormous, however operationally they are challenging for us to run, and we will need to consider if we can run more than one pool in 2024.</p>
<p>Build an expertise in innovation in swimming pools and share our expertise with local authorities and pool operators</p>	<p>Build an expertise in innovation in swimming pools and share our expertise with local authorities and pool operators</p>	<p>With ever increasing energy costs significantly impacting pool operators we focused on identifying solutions to minimise costs. We published our Eco-Pools Report providing guidance to pool operators on existing and cutting-edge technologies. We also received funding from Sport Ireland under the Dormant Accounts Innovation Stream to develop a data model that will provide objective data to planners on swimming pool provision within a given location. The 'Swimming Facility Planning Model' will help us identify the gaps in provision on a national basis and we think it will be a very useful tool to assist local authority decision making.</p>

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<b>Pillar: National Infrastructure for the Aquatics</b>	Support safe, accessible outdoor swimming spots	<p>As referenced above, we have been working with Government throughout the year on developing a National Swimming Strategy. One of the focus areas of the Working Group has been on outdoor swimming and our expectation for increased focus and support for outdoor swimming.</p> <p>We have also advocated for consideration of outdoor swimming in the context of Local Sports Plans in our engagements with LSPs and Local Authorities.</p>
	Work with key stakeholders to ensure there are plans and programmes in place to encourage participation with adequate resources to deliver these initiatives	<p>We recognise the importance of locally driven programmes and have continued to forge our relationships with LSPs, Local Authorities and Community Groups. In 2023 we developed two new partnerships with Local Authorities to co-fund Get Ireland Swimming Officers. We now have Officers in Dublin City, Cavan and Fingal and expect to have a fourth officer in place in early 2024. We are seeing significant benefits from having a locally based swimming officers who are able to engage with groups on the ground in order to deliver programmes to segments of the population that are typically hard-to-reach.</p>
<b>Pillar: Community and Participation</b>	Further develop the Swim Ireland learn to swim programme	<p>2023 saw the development of the Swim Ireland Aquatics Academy, which is a rebranding of our Learn to Swim Programme.</p> <p>The Swim Ireland Aquatics Academy will empower and inspire children to challenge themselves on their own personal journey of learning to swim.</p> <p>The curriculum encompasses a range of teaching methodologies with a real focus on repetitive, accurate and quality practice with elements of guided discovery.</p> <p>The programme is delivered through structured play, ensuring the lessons are well planned with clear learning outcomes whilst engaging children in fun and relevant activities. Swim Ireland currently have 8 partners which facilitate the Swim Ireland Aquatics Academy.</p>
	Drive 100,000 participation opportunities through programmes and events with a particular focus and emphasis on community & hard to reach groups, wider levels of inclusion and diversity of both participant and teacher/helper..	<p>A key priority for Swim Ireland is to reach those parts of the population which don't swim or have access to a swimming pool. Throughout 2023, we worked on providing opportunities for hard-to-reach groups, delivering over 90 community based programmes, under Dormant Accounts and Healthy Ireland funding. Those which we worked with for programme delivery included National Learning Network, Irish Wheelchair Association, Sporting Pride, Vision Sports Ireland, and Foróige.</p> <p>In our Pop-Up Pools throughout the year, we have received massive support from Local Sports Partnerships, County Councils and local communities; from financial support, to the set up cost, to secure sites, and on site services, to promoting the programmes to local schools and community groups. We have worked with a total of 30 schools, and 50 community groups across 5 counties in 2023, including many primary schools, and secondary schools, as well as some special needs schools, migrant groups, traveller groups, adult, and children disability groups and many more. We have also worked with a number of other National Governing Bodies like Triathlon Ireland, registered charities, and the Irish Wheelchair Association on organising events and programmes in the Pop-Up Pool.</p>

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar:</b> Performance</p>	<p>Ensure we have a sustainable Performance programme delivering success on the international stage.</p>	<p>As we build up to the 2024 Paris Olympics, we are encouraged by the performances at the 2023 World Aquatics Championships (50m), which included a European Swimming Record achieved by an Irish swimmer. It was also encouraging to note that Ireland had athletes competing in 15 of the 16 sessions at this event, narrowly missing three medals with 4th, 4th and 5th positions.</p> <p>We already have three athletes qualified for the Games in four events and we anticipate that we will be invited to compete in at least two Olympic relays come June 2024. At both European Junior and Commonwealth Junior levels we won a significant number of medals, and we should also recall our highly successful outing at the inaugural European Aquatics Under 23 Championships where Ireland topped the medal table.</p> <p>In the short course pool, we delivered some excellent results at the 2023 European Aquatics Championships (25m) where we captured our first ever World Swimming Record. Along with four medals, we also had a higher number of athletes progress through the rounds than ever before.</p> <p>Across the course of the year, 21 Irish Senior and 12 Irish Junior swimming records were broken. Our three Performance divers continued to maintain a commendable National Team presence at European and World level. The 2023 EOC European Games proved to be our most successful European diving event to date, with all three athletes qualifying for Finals at this event. Very soon afterwards, the same team travelled to the 2023 World Aquatics Championships where one athlete qualified for a Semi Final, finishing a mere 8 points away the Final and what would have been an Olympic quota spot for Ireland.</p> <p>We also delivered a successful Irish Open Diving Championships, with 150 divers attending from nine clubs, covering five different nations.</p> <p>Across the course of the year, 2 Irish Senior and 1 Irish Junior diving records were broken.</p>
	<p>Ensure we have a sustainable Performance Pathway enabling enhanced Performance targets in future cycles.</p>	<p>We delivered the published National Performance Transition Programme and National Performance Pathway Programme in 2023, supporting athletes and home programme coaches via onshore and offshore camps and competitions, as well as home programme visits and the Identified Coach Development Programme. At Regional Development Pathway level, we supported circa 300 athletes and their coaches as part of this Programme, whilst also supporting over 250 athletes with access to supplementary training on a weekly basis. We delivered 11 Skills Camps in August 2023 for 250 athletes, as well as delivering 18 clinics for coaches working with age group athletes. Alongside this, the Performance team facilitated collaborative working with several clubs which has enhanced their daily training environments.</p>

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p data-bbox="76 1249 308 1375"><b>Pillar:</b> Organisational Excellence</p>	<p data-bbox="360 741 576 981">Continue to drive best practice standards and fit for purpose organisation strategies and policies.</p>	<p data-bbox="663 159 1353 188">Development of ESG Strategy and Sustainability Strategy</p> <p data-bbox="663 237 1490 479">Throughout 2023, Swim Ireland worked on the development of our ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance Strategy) in conjunction with our partner for strategy delivery Perform Green. This strategy seeks to formalise our commitment to sustainability and set out a strategy to provide direction for the organisation on our journey to becoming a leading sport organisation in sustainability. The strategy is due to be launched in Q1 2024.</p> <p data-bbox="663 553 1490 725">Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Action Plan: This plan reflects the changing demographics of Ireland and seeks to harness the opportunity of the growing demand of Swimming and other Aquatic disciplines, ensuring a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment and culture.</p> <p data-bbox="663 775 1465 835">Some key actions delivered as part of the DEIB Action Plan in 2023 were:</p> <ul data-bbox="679 884 1501 1720" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced diversity of representation was consistently demonstrated across our social media posts and inclusive initiatives/campaigns (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)</li> <li>• A new DEIB ‘Aquatics for All’ webpage was developed, containing our inclusion statement, information and resources, and a new Club map with supports and information available for those with a disability.</li> <li>• The Terms of Reference and Composition were agreed for both a DEIB Operations and Strategic Committee</li> <li>• Swim Ireland achieved the Active Disability Ireland (ADI) Xcessible Silver Award.</li> <li>• A new Deaf Friendly Swimming CPD was initiated in conjunction with Deaf Sports Ireland and Chime.</li> <li>• The Leadership for Life Aquatics Programme was initiated in conjunction with Foróige.</li> <li>• 37 clubs have signed up to the Active Disability Ireland charter, up from 22 in 2022.</li> <li>• In addition to the Deaf Friendly Swimming CPD, the Swim Ireland Education team have developed new teacher qualifications under special education needs and disabilities. These are Level 1 Assistant SEND Swimming Teacher, Level 2 SEND Swimming Teacher and Level 2 Swimming Teacher (SEND module) for individuals with a Level 2 Swimming Teacher qualification.</li> </ul>

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar:</b> Organisational Excellence</p>	<p>Continue to drive best practice standards and fit for purpose organisation strategies and policies.</p>	<p>Transgender Policy</p> <p>Swim Ireland has undertaken a considerable amount of work in the past twelve months to create our Transgender and Non-Binary Participation and Competition Policy. The policy relates to Swimming, including Open Water and Masters Swimming, and Diving, with a separate policy for Water Polo to be released in due course. To draft the policy, throughout 2023 we initiated a comprehensive consultation process internally through the Swim Ireland Board, Staff, National Committee members and Working Groups, and externally with transgender and LGBTQ+ individuals and representative organisations, and International Governing Bodies of Sport. An online consultation session was also facilitated, and survey issued to Swim Ireland affiliated membership, with over 1,200 responses received. The Policy will be launched in Q1 2024, and will be implemented for the 2024/25 season, which commences in September 2024.</p>





Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<b>Pillar:</b> <b>Organisational Excellence</b>	<p>Be considered a leader in the international aquatic world</p>	<p>The first-ever European Aquatics Learn to Swim Conference was hosted in Jurmala, Latvia in November. The two-day conference brought together close to 200 delegates from 28 nations, including Olympians, academics, and experts from across the aquatic community. In addition to having a strong contribution in organising the Conference, Swim Ireland were well represented by Director of Operations Mary McMorrow and Head of Education Aisling McKeever. Both attended as members of the European Aquatics Learn to Swim Commission, with Aisling McKeever presenting the new European Learn to Swim Framework, while Mary McMorrow delivered an engaging presentation on the pop-up pool innovations in Ireland, which stimulated great interest amongst the audience.</p> <p>Swim Ireland continues to have a strong presence at European and World Level, through our involvement in European Aquatics and World Aquatics. The following Swim Ireland staff and board members currently sit on World and European Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO, Sarah Keane: Member of the World Aquatics and European Aquatics Bureaus and Chair of the European Aquatics Diversity and Inclusion Commission</li> <li>• Director of Operations and Company Secretary, Mary McMorrow Co-Chair of the European Aquatics Learn to Swim Commission.</li> <li>• Head of Education, Aisling McKeever: Member of the European Aquatics Learn to Swim Working group- developing a European wide learn to swim framework.</li> <li>• National Performance Director, Jon Rudd: President of the World Coaches Association and Chair of the European Aquatics Coaching and Education Commission</li> <li>• Former Board Director and current official, Gary Stoops: Member of the European Aquatics Technical Swimming Committee</li> </ul>
	<p>Grow the commercial income base to enable re-investment into our sport</p>	<p>We have a Commercial Committee tasked with developing and overseeing the implementation of the commercial strategy and policy for the organisation. The Committee meets regularly either virtually or in person and throughout 2023 the Committee was liaised with as needed in terms of getting their input when required e.g., pricing our streaming service.</p>

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar:</b> Organisational Excellence</p>	<p>Ensure we are values driven in how we operate and develop our people (professional and volunteer force).</p>	<p>As part of our drive to maintain a stable, strong, well- run organisation based on best practice principles in governance / athlete first/ safeguarding / financial management / commercial and an empowering and effective culture with engaged staff, 2023 saw the organisation invest time in staff development by creating an inhouse management development programme. We have always noted that without our highly competent and expert staff, our organisation would be unable to translate our strategic focus into day-to-day operational delivery. Our staff are vital to the smooth operation of our organisation and their effectiveness significantly impacts results. We recognise the talent within our organisation and as such, we provided an opportunity to empower staff to develop professionally and to influence the decision-making process at the top via this programme.</p> <p>The programme was developed to assist colleagues to develop knowledge and skills as leaders, considering various aspects of operational and strategic management. There was considerable investment of time from senior leaders in the organisation and guest speakers. The incumbents from this group have been/are instrumental in rolling out the strategy roadshows to the regions. They all noted it as a great opportunity for professional development and the value add for the organisation has been that Swim Ireland has really benefited from having wider perspectives on strategic discussions as well as being able to assess and develop our talent from within.</p>
	<p>Plan our resources and financial structures to support the delivery of our ambitions</p>	<p>The 2023 Financial Statements show an €18k loss (€30k loss generated by two of the three southern regions who have sufficient reserves forward to support this loss). Swim Ireland/Water Polo show a €12k profit which was achievable due to the year-end ‘Core Top Up’ Grant of €75k awarded late December 2023, as always, we remain thankful to Sport Ireland for their continued support. 2023 was the last year of the Sport Ireland COVID-19 Resilience Funding. 2024 Budget shows a €110k deficit and work continues in relation to financial planning for 2024 and onwards to seek to reduce this budgeted level of deficit and to work towards a breakeven position for 2025. Work continues in relation to a staff restructure which is being considered with a view to reduce costs, alongside offering development opportunities for staff. As always, we continue to seek to grow ourself-generated income where possible and for 2024, we will put forward a motion to our membership to seek to increase our membership fees to support rising costs.</p>
	<p>Through advocacy and education continue to develop linkages, support, and influence across the leisure industry</p>	<p>In February 2023 Swim Ireland Education delivered the first annual Swimming Teachers conference and awards. Over 120 attended the conference which brought swimming teachers from across the country together for a day of learning and networking. The Swimindustry Awards recognized the best of the industry, including learn to swim partner, swimming teacher, inclusive programme, and educator of the year.</p>

Focus Area	KPIs and Key Actions	How we did in 2023
<p><b>Pillar:</b> Organisational Excellence</p>		<p>We continued to support Skillnet Leisure, Health and Fitness courses be delivered, through Ireland Active, with 25% discount available to Ireland Active members. Towards the end of 2023, Swim Ireland and Sport Ireland Coaching reached agreement on the delivery of the Certificate in Coach Development, which will replace the current Swim Ireland Tutor course. This will be launched later in 2024.</p>
	<p>Promote the life skill, the sport, and the people of swimming to help deliver our vision</p>	<p>In relation to our communications, much of 2023 was focused on embedding our Communications Framework with our staff.</p> <p>The Framework clearly identifies our different audiences and focuses on our key messages, and channels of communication to promote swimming, the life-skill, the people, and our vision.</p> <p>The Swim Ireland website was completely revamped with a focus on imagery and video, making it more accessible and easier to navigate for first time visitors looking for information on swimming and participation.</p>
	<p>Promote a Career in Aquatics as a professional pathway for individuals</p>	<p>In 2023, the Education team worked on creating a new Register of Aquatic Professionals (RAP) replacing the traditional Coach/ Teacher Licensing, to commence early in 2024. RAP recognises the professional nature of the qualifications gained by Swim Ireland coaches and teachers, along with the ongoing development through CPD and maintaining of the Vetting/ Access NI and Safeguarding requirements. Coaches and Teachers can opt-in to being publicly featured on the Register of Aquatic Professionals on Swim Ireland website, to support employment and other engagement opportunities.</p> <p>In relation to programmes, in November 2023, in conjunction with Foroige, Megan Swan, our Get Fingal Swimming Officer, and Christine Russell, our Get Dublin City Swimming Officer, undertook facilitator training for a new Leadership for Life Aquatics Programme to be delivered for participants between the 16-18 age groups in the from the Inner-City Dublin Area. The programme aimed to deliver life and leadership skills to develop a pathway to a career in aquatics and leisure, empowering the participants to success in the industry. The programme is now underway with participants receiving a certified Level 1 Swim Teacher and Lifeguard, gain a Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action (NFQ Level 6) and develop leadership skills such as planning, decision-making, and problem-solving.</p>



# The Future Outlook

One of the key areas we are looking at in 2024, is facilities and infrastructure. This is off the back of the success of the Pop-Up Pools and engaging with County Councils as a result. 2024 is an important year for the future of infrastructure as the Large-Scale Infrastructure Fund will be opening. Swim Ireland have been working with multiple councils for quite some time now to help them prepare and supplement applications for swimming pool development.

Our commitment to the best practice governance remains at the forefront of everything we do. We are required to re-commit to the Governance Code every three years and 2024 will be our second time around to recommit. We will run a series of Strategy led -in person regional workshops in March 2024, and run a Safeguarding Conference later in 2024. Additionally, we are also looking at the makeup of our Board and considering a motion to increase the athlete voice at the Board table at the AGM following consultation through our committees and the Swim Ireland Athletes Commission. We will also have a new Chairperson of the Board, with Peter Conway having reached his maximum term as Chairperson. Once again, we wish to thank Peter for his hard work and commitment throughout his term, firstly as a Board Director and as Chairperson.

The development of the Register for Aquatic Professionals was significant for the Education team in 2023. This is now launched, and the team are working very hard on driving this forward. There will be a coaches' conference later in the year and the team will continue work hard on new CPDs, digitalising how Education is developed. The Aquatics Academy was also recently launched and is a rebranding of the Learn to Swim Programme, centred around all Aquatic sport. A key objective will be to drive forward the Learn to Swim Programmes across the country in 2024.

Open Water Development is also a key priority in 2024 and we are working with many coaches and clubs around the country as it is a real growth area. The team are now looking at how we can grow and develop the discipline further and move more swimmers from the club environment into Open Water and looking at developing more events. We are also looking to enhance our community and participation programmes around the country and looking at how we can get more people into swimming, and how do we retain and grow our participant cohort even further. We have a new department which is now Education and Community, and the team is working on driving the community programmes forward.

In terms of the Competition Pathway this year a new review committee will be established which will be made up of members from the regions. The main objective will be to conduct an extensive review of the current pathway at Regional and National Level, with a proposal to set that pathway for the next four years. This will be reviewed every year, but it will give clubs and regions a bit more clarity and an easier way to plan into the future. We also have the Olympic Games this year in Paris which we are really excited about and look forward to following the recent success in Doha at the World Championships.

Despite this we continue to face challenges. We must recognise that we are operating in a difficult economic environment. Much of our costs have risen, including accommodation and insurance and that has a huge impact on competition costs. We have been somewhat cushioned by much welcomed resilience funding in the last few years, and this has given us an opportunity to get back on our feet after COVID, but without resilience funding going forward, we need to generate additional income. While we must remain cognisant of rising costs, our focus whilst supporting the development of our disciplines and support for our clubs is to ensure long term sustainability through additional revenue streams.



