



## Board Report to 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Delegate Meeting of Canoeing Ireland - 8<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Dear members

Welcome to the 55<sup>th</sup> ADM of Canoeing Ireland. The following is the Board Report for 2016.

### Board Operations

Following the last AGM in April 2015, the elected Board consisted of nine members:

- President: Paul Donnelly
- Four Executive members: Colm Healey, Pat McAlhinney and Wesley Bourke (all elected in 2015) and Jenny Kilbride (elected in 2014)
- Leinster Representative: Adrian Shanahan, Connaught/Ulster Representative: Chris Corr (both elected in 2014) and Munster Representative: Colm Slevin (all elected in 2015).
- Olympic High Performance Representative: Ike Jacob (elected in 2014)

The Executive agreed to the appointment of Pat McAlhinney as Hon Secretary and of Colm Healy as Hon Treasurer.

At the first Board meeting, co-options were made to fill the remaining positions of:

- Recreational Representative: Charlene Cronin
- Non-Olympic High Performance Representative: Sean McIntyre and
- Dublin Representative: Alan Mulligan

From May to July, considerable Board time was taken up in finalising an outstanding corporate issue to the detriment of developmental Board work. Similarly, from September, a great deal of Board time was taken up in the drawing up of the job specification, the recruitment process and the selection process for the new CEO position which was advertised in October, interviews held in December and a selection made in January.

In October, Jenny Kilbride resigned from the Board and in January, Board members Alan Mulligan, Colm Slevin, Colm Healey, Wesley Bourke, Chris Corr, Pat McAlhinney and Charlene Cronin resigned. Following these resignations, Ike Jacob was appointed as A/Hon Secretary, Adrian Shanahan was appointed as A/Hon Treasurer and co-options were made to the Board of Evan Roberts (Munster Rep), Keith Bickford (Recreational Rep) and Colm Slevin (Executive member).

The disruption to strategic and developmental Board work as a result of the concentration for much of 2015 and the early part of 2016 on corporate matters, combined with the

resignations and co-options at Board level in 2015/16 has been a considerable challenge to overcome and has resulted in a Board complement of seven members since February 2016. A decision was taken to leave an 18-month gap between ADMs as provided in our Memorandum and Articles of Association in order to progress important work which had not been possible to get underway/completed due to the earlier disruption.

A total of 18 Board meetings have been held since the last ADM together with many other informal meetings / workshops of Board members and I would like to acknowledge the tremendous work carried out by members of the Board over that time.

### Situation analysis

Canoeing Ireland has for the past six/seven years encountered a series of serious corporate upheavals which have resulted in an enormous amount of disruption and diversion from strategic developmental work and organisational effectiveness with a corresponding loss of confidence in the organisation on the part of our membership and on the part of Sport Ireland on whom we rely heavily for support and funding. The end result of this slide in corporate reputation is a disconnected membership base and a significant overall reduction in funding support from S.I. over this period as shown below.

The Board's key objective since January has been to chart a positive way forward for the organisation and put in place the policies and structures which will enable measurable progress to be made and I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Sport Ireland in putting a number of consultants at our disposal to assist with this.

### Governance

Advances in governance has been an important priority and considerable progress has been made in the following areas:

1. Strategic Direction: Our last Strategic Plan expired in 2009 and it is now being brought up to date with the publication this week of our Draft Strategic Plan – *2020 Vision for Canoeing* – covering the period 2017-2020, which will be open for consultation with the membership until mid-November, with the aim of final adoption by the Board in December.
2. Constitution and Rules: A comprehensive review and update of our existing Memorandum and Articles of Association has been undertaken with consultancy support from Sport Ireland and the proposed documents are before this ADM for adoption. These will bring us into line with new company law and also lay out in very clear terms how we conduct our business.
3. Policies and Procedures: A review is underway of our suite of corporate policy and procedure documents and the following have been updated in the past 18 months:
  - a. Complaints and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
  - b. Canoeing Ireland Provider Registration Policy and Procedures
  - c. Standing Orders for Board and Executive
  - d. Code of Ethics and Conduct for Board members

Work is underway on the following new / updated policies and procedures:

- a. HR Handbook

- b. Performance Management Guidelines
- c. Volunteer Handbook
- d. Financial Control Policy
- e. Standard Operating Procedures Manual

A number of further policies require updating including

- a. PR & Marketing
- b. Communications
- c. Social Media)

The next step of this review is an audit by a Sports Law and Management consultant, with the support of Sport Ireland, of all remaining policies and the drawing up of a programme to review, coordinate and update these in a standardised format over the coming 12 months with a forward calendar for ongoing review.

### Discipline Committees and the Training and Development Unit

The removal of the chairs of these vitally important technical committees from the Board from June 2014 and their replacement with two Discipline Representatives (Olympic and non-Olympic) and four Regional Representatives, in the absence of any specification of their roles and how they should operate, has undoubtedly led to a level of disaffection and dissatisfaction with the new arrangements.

The proposed new Rules set out for the first time a role specification for these positions which gives guidance for office-holders against which their performance can be gauged. The Rules also provide job roles for all other Board members and provide for ongoing performance assessment of the Board as a whole as well as that of individual directors.

Terms of Reference for the technical committees have been drawn up in consultation with the chairs and should be ready for sign-off in the coming months together with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board and the committees setting out the mutual standards of communication and support that each party can expect and rely upon. This will strengthen the cooperation and working arrangements between these two key tiers of governance.

### Financial

The Draft Annual Accounts for 2015 are circulated with this report. The delay in issuing was due to the late discovery of a number of incorrect entries which took some time to resolve and this delay is very much regretted. These have now been fully rectified and the draft Accounts and Financial Statements for 2015 have been approved by the Board. A separate report will be issued to explain the principal year-on-year movements in the Accounts.

As an organisation heavily dependent on grant funding, the effect of the downward slide in corporate reputation is starkly demonstrated in the Table below which shows the reduced levels of funding support from S.I. in recent times. It must be an absolute priority for us to regain the trust of our stakeholders and reverse this trend.

Year	Core Grant		High Performance – Sprint / Slalom		Overall	
	€k	+/- %	€k	+/- %	€k	+/- %
2009	267.25		250		517.25	
2010	269.04	+15%	190	-24%	459.04	-11.3%
2011	254.51	-5%	129	-32%	383.51	-16.5%
2012	241.79	-5%	50	-61%	291.79	-23.9%
2013	218.04	-10%	50	+/-0%	268.04	-8.1%
2014	227.99	+5%	50	+/-0%	277.99	+3.7%
2015	205.19	-10%	50	+/-0%	255.19	-8.2%
2016	205.00	+/-0%	65	+30%	270	+5.8%
<b>2009-16</b>	<b>-62.25</b>	<b>-23%</b>	<b>-185</b>	<b>-74%</b>	<b>247.25</b>	<b>-47.8%</b>

## Membership

This currently stands at 3,528 an increase of 26% year-on-year which is largely due to the development of the on-line database and new participation initiatives such as Blueway 10K. The new online member management system allows members to have total control over their own membership subscriptions and information while simplifying the renewal process as well event entry and course registration.

It has to be acknowledged that member satisfaction with our organisation is not what it should be at present due to a range of factors. In the coming months, we will conduct a Member Survey to determine levels of satisfaction with a range of aspects of C.I. Board / Technical Cttee / office support and seek member input to identify gaps in service and areas of service which must be improved. The survey results will be published together with an action plan for improvements to address the issues raised.

A broadened member benefit scheme is currently being developed to increase the attractiveness of our membership offer and provide better service and value for money.

## Training and Development

The Canoeing Ireland award scheme continues to grow and develop. New awards have been added to the scheme including the development of new SUP and Paddle Surf awards. The Level 3 Open Canoe, Level 3 Sea Kayak and the Level 4 River instructorships have been approved by Coaching Ireland and added to the Adventure Sports Framework. A Level 5 Instructor assimilation was rolled out in early 2016 to chart a pathway for continued development and progression of the award scheme. The first Level 2 Coach Course was successfully piloted in late 2015 and early 2016 with 8 participants and the Level 1 Coach awards continue to be delivered nationally.

## Facilities

Blueway Trails: Significant work has been carried out in last three years in the development of a network of Blueway Trails across the country in cooperation with Waterways Ireland, local authorities and Sports Partnerships with trails in six locations established and work underway on another seven trails. Blueways are water trails or recommended routes that have been developed with launch points, camping spots and historical or other points of interest highlighted along the way opening up more developed paddling routes across the country.

Canoe Course projects: Following on from the success of the Sluice Canoe Course project, our Training and Development Manager Benny Cullen has been a leading force in the river development works on the Boyne in Trim in association with the OPW, the course in Clonmel which is just being completed and with further proposals being worked on in Cork, Kilkenny and Dublin. A very important feature of these developments is the key involvement of the OPW, local authorities and Sports Partnerships who see river developments as having great recreational and tourism value for their areas.

Lough Rynn: The canoe sprint and rowing course is nearing completion by Leitrim County Council and is a very important facility for sprinting and marathon in particular. Regrettably, the council have informed us that they are unable to commit to the commissioning, installation and ongoing maintenance of the sprint start bucket system which was purchased last year by CI. As the high initial and ongoing costs cannot be met from within our resources we have no choice but to sell them on.

### Domestic events

A significant programme of domestic competitive events is being run by clubs annually under the auspices of the various technical committees which represents a huge overall level of activity. In some cases, however, numbers competing at single-discipline events are either stagnant or falling and this is an area which the Board and management must work with the technical committees and clubs to address.

1. Multi-paddlesport events: A number of these such as Cranafest are thriving and are important opportunities for networking and cross-discipline participation.
2. Junior Paddlefest: Held in Hidden Valley, Co Wicklow, it is in its ninth year and is the largest Junior Kayaking Event in Europe which this year attracted 350 participants in the 6-18 age group. It has won *Outsider Event of the Year* several times. Thanks to the generous voluntary support of a network of instructors, coaches and trainees over the years. A volunteer crew of 120 ran the event this year and saw the number of junior coaches exceeding 50%. Canoeing Ireland supports the event as an important incubator for development of junior paddling across all disciplines
3. Club Championships: Now in its third year, the Club Championships was held in Cloondara, County Longford where the newly developed Camlin Loop is located. The event was run with the support of Waterways Ireland and Longford County Council. Just under 200 people registered for events over the weekend, which included competitions in Slalom, Sprint, Freestyle, Wild Water Racing, Polo, Surf and Marathon. The 2017 Club Championships are scheduled for Clonmel in April.
4. Blueway 10K: This initiative was based on a 12-week paddle training programme, running from May to August, culminating in a series of seven 10k events held on rivers, lakes and canals across the country on 20/8/16 for which over 650 people signed up. The event was delivered with the support of the *Coca Cola Thank You Fund*, the *European Week of Sport Get Wet initiative* and in partnership with Waterways Ireland. The aim was, no matter how novice or experienced participants were, they could improve their paddling skills, get fitter and get exposure to the beauty of Irelands Waterways. A video training programme was developed with input from Eoin Rheinisch, Neil Fleming and Jenny Egan to guide participants, instructors and coaches through weekly progressions in technical skills, physical fitness, mental preparation, tactics and nutrition. The event was very successful and well received by new participants and experienced paddlers alike.

## International Liffey Descent

Now in its 57<sup>th</sup> year, the Liffey, which now forms part of the ICF World Classic series of marathon races, is the premier canoe race on the Irish calendar and a firm favourite with marathon paddlers from around the world. A very strong international entry was attracted to this year's race including K2M World Champions Hank McGregor (also K1M WC) and Jasper Mocke from S. Africa. The race was held in very good flood conditions, with Irish paddlers taking the major honours in K2M Senior: Mads Brandt Pedersen / Peter Egan; K1M Senior: Tom Brennan and K1W Senior: Jenny Egan.

## International participation

Unfortunately, the Rio Olympics was the first time since 1972 that we have not qualified either a slalom or sprint athlete for the Olympic Games. With our small number of elite paddlers in these disciplines, we have over the years punched seriously above our weight at this level and undoubtedly the ever more difficult qualification criteria represent a significant hurdle given our lack of top-level domestic facilities and our relatively low level of resources. Between now and the end of the year we will be developing our Olympic HP Strategy for the Tokyo cycle and beyond, in association with Sport Ireland.

At the debut of Sprint into the Paralympic programme we were extremely well represented by Patrick O'Leary in the KL3 category where he showed terrific form in his advancement to the Final, taking 6<sup>th</sup> place. Very well done by Patrick and his coach/manager Neil Fleming.

Teams were fielded in a range of World and European Championships at both senior and U23/junior level and at other World Cup and international events in all disciplines and some very good results were achieved, many of these at U23/junior level which bodes well for the future. Great credit is due to the athletes, coaches, team support staff, clubs and families for the dedication and effort required to get to this level and achieve good performances with limited resources.

Some significant highlights from the year are:

- a. *Sprint*: Patrick O'Leary KL3 – 6<sup>th</sup> in Rio Paralympics; Jenny Egan K1W 5,000m – Bronze medal at European Championships – Gold and Silver medal wins at World Cup races; Michael Fitzsimon K1M 1,000m 4<sup>th</sup> in European Olympic Qualifier (missing Rio qualification by one place) – 4<sup>th</sup> in U23 World Championships
- b. *Marathon*: Jenny Egan K1W 8<sup>th</sup>; Barry Watkins K1M 10<sup>th</sup> in World Championships
- c. *Slalom*: Liam Jegou C1M – 9<sup>th</sup> in U23 World Championships – 7<sup>th</sup> in U23 European Championships - Semi-finalist in four World Cup races finishing 17<sup>th</sup> of the 103 competitors in his first senior season.
- d. *Wildwater Racing*: Odhrán McNally 8<sup>th</sup> in K1M sprint final at Wildwater World Championships
- e. *Paddle Surf*: Ciaran McDyre – Gold medallist in Surf Kayak and Guillaume Desprez – 5<sup>th</sup> in Wave Ski at European Championships
- f. *Polo*: Senior Men and U21 Women (first time since 2007) teams competed in World Championships in Italy.
- g. *Freestyle*: David McClure and Barry Loughnane reached quarter finals in Senior Men's Kayak in the European Championships

We also need to acknowledge the tireless, behind-the-scenes work which is carried out by volunteer coaches and officials who run their programmes of training and squad sessions to prepare their athletes for international competition and to all athletes who worked so hard to gain places on teams.

## Other significant developments

1. *New Website and on-line membership system*: Significant work has been completed on these two important systems in the past year. The development of the online event-entry system is in an advanced stage of testing with linkage to the membership database which will be a significant benefit to competitors and event organisers. This system was rolled out for the Liffey Descent entries this year.
2. *Grant Thornton Report*: This was commissioned by the Board in May 2014 to carry out a review relating to the level of *Sports Capital Grant 2010* funding received from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the level of actual expenditure incurred and to validate the capital items recorded in the books and records of the Irish Canoe Union, and subsequently shown in the financial statements.  
The initial report took over a year to complete and a further protracted period followed during which negotiations took place on the cost to Canoeing Ireland which was initially estimated at €2,860, was invoiced at €14,268 and was finally settled at €12,300, all VAT inclusive. The Board had no option but to pay this final sum due to the open-ended contractual arrangement originally entered into.  
The report concluded that *“Grant Thornton is satisfied that all funding received by ICU under the 2010 Special Allocation / Sports High Performance Programme in the sum of €60,000 was fully expended by ICU by the end of 2011 and that all grant funding had been received (albeit in two tranches – June 2011 and December 2011) for the purchase and acquisition of high performance equipment”*.  
The report contained eight recommendations, relating to the strengthening of policies and procedures for grant applications; a protocol for timely agreement, signing, dating and storage of meeting minutes; covering of significant purchases of equipment and services by means of signed contract with set terms and conditions including price and delivery time-scale; clear procurement / tendering processes for different bands of purchases; and consideration of training for management, staff and volunteers at Board and Technical Committee level as necessary. All of the recommendations have been accepted by the Board and are being implemented. The DTTS have also accepted the report and released funding which had been suspended pending its receipt.
3. *Registered Provider Agreement*: At the initiative of the TDU, this scheme has been developed to offer official NGB registration and recognition to individuals, businesses or clubs who meet Canoeing Ireland codes of practice and who offer canoeing activities and courses within a commercial framework. The process will help to ensure a consistent brand and quality across all paddlesport activities around Ireland. Under the scheme, we will support course providers with advertising, marketing, branding and promotion and will represent the them to other national stakeholders such as Sport Ireland, Department

of Transport Tourism and Sport, Waterways Ireland, local LEADER companies, County Councils, youth groups and schools.

Canoeing Ireland will carry out a desk-based quality assurance assessment of every registered provider, assessing qualifications, experience, insurance, standard operating procedures, risk assessments, equipment and tax compliance and carry out an annual programme of visits to monitor standards. This will ensure a top-quality representation of canoeing in Ireland while creating a strong brand and identity for Canoeing Ireland Approved Providers. This process will also assist in our transition to the statutory regulation of adventure sports due to be implemented by the Department of Sport, Tourism and Sport in the near future.

#### 4. Euro Paddle Pass Conference

Canoeing Ireland is hosting the *2016 Euro Paddle Pass Conference* and workshops in Dublin on 15/16<sup>th</sup> October. EPP is a project involving seven National Canoeing Federations in Europe including Canoeing Ireland. The project aim is to create a common system of paddle sport competency awards across Europe. The programme includes Level 3 assessments in four disciplines, River Kayak, Sea Kayak, Open Canoe and Flatwater; Level 3 Flatwater session to deliver this award in Ireland to be observed by our coaches and discipline committees and possibly a Level 4 Sea Skills Assessment if suitable conditions are present. A SUP assimilation is also planned. This is a very prestigious event to attract to Ireland and is a measure of our high standing within the EPP organization.

Although we undoubtedly have had our problems as a National Governing Body in recent years, there are a huge number of talented and dedicated volunteers who put in an enormous amount of time and effort into developing and running our sport in all its manifestations and at all levels and the Board wish to acknowledge their valuable contribution. We also acknowledge the important contribution which our staff make to the running of our sport.

There is much to be done to sustain progress and we wish the incoming Board members well in their endeavors.

Yours in sport

*Paul Donnelly*

Paul Donnelly  
President  
on behalf of the Board of Canoeing Ireland

4<sup>th</sup> October 2016