

Canoeing Ireland

Strategic Plan

2021-2023





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Foreword

Welcome to the Canoeing Ireland Strategic Plan 2021-2023. This new strategy has been developed by and for our community and will guide our organisation until 2023.

The plan encompasses paddlesports in all its forms and sets out the priority areas for investment and resourcing through 2021-2023. It outlines ambitious targets, which we have set in place from grassroots to elite level, with targets designed to positively impact participation and performance across all sectors.

Our four strategic priorities and twelve high level goals provide a clear and succinct direction for the advancement of paddlesport and are aligned with the National Sports Policy, Sport Ireland Strategic Plan and the needs and desires of our members. Ambitious objectives are intended to foster connectedness that guide progression towards building a stronger network of clubs that will support athletes, volunteers and coaches at all levels.

Most importantly, this plan is the product of an extensive consultation process and many months of information gathering, dialogue, analysis and careful thought by all involved.

It is designed to position Canoeing Ireland as a sectoral leader in sustainable growth and actioned development. The vision and mission recognise the collective responsibility and embedded role of all stakeholders in supporting the successful implementation and delivery of this plan. We commend everyone who contributed to its development, ensuring that this plan is owned and supported by all of our stakeholders. In building this blueprint for the future, we remained true to what we heard and always endeavoured to reflect and align with the voice of our members.

The Board of Canoeing Ireland approved this plan on 22nd December 2020. The document is intended as a working framework to ensure the long-term sustainability of paddlesports in Ireland. The plan will be continually reviewed by the Board and will be used as a basis to create annual goals and work plans for the Board, committees and staff. We are committed to receiving your ongoing input and feedback as we embark on this journey together.



Brian Ogilvie

President



Moira Aston

CEO



Introduction



Key Challenges

Building the Brand

As a non-mainstream sport, it is important that we build a strong national brand that our members can identify with and be proud of.

Creating Pathways

Developing sustainable pathways for discipline progression, which are integrated into the fabric of our clubs.

Club Development

A thriving network of clubs provides a strong foundation at grass roots level in every sport. Supporting and resourcing the development of clubs will enhance our capabilities in a diverse range of activities spanning beginner to elite level.

Balanced Growth

As we grow, we must continue to focus on equality, inclusion and gender balance. By working to remove barriers, we have an opportunity to create a space within the sport for all abilities, ages and ethnicities. We must strive to action our commitment to achieve gender balance from the Boardroom through to grass roots.

Agility

The pace of growth, development and organisational change has increased across the sporting sector in recent years. To be ahead of this curve we need to be nimble and innovative. A review of organisational structures with a view to optimising communications, alignment and capabilities is required.



**Performance over
Strategic Plan
2017 – 2020**

Performance over Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

Canoeing Ireland, over the past four years, has undergone a significant adjustment to stabilise and develop a robust pathway for the future.

Together, we have accomplished many of our strategic and operational goals. This deliberate focus has resulted in strengthening the overall sustainability of the organisation. We have implemented a fit-for purpose governance structure, eliminated the financial deficit and introduced an appropriate management structure and staffing level.

We have successfully introduced a range of actions, which are positively affecting our strategic direction. These include:

- *the facilitation and implementation of new initiatives that support the development of clubs*
- *exploring new opportunities for partnerships that promote and develop paddlesports where mutual and synergistic objectives exist*

- *putting supports, processes and policies in place that will expedite athlete performance and progression in all disciplines*

Our achievements under the Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 have given us a strong sense of accomplishment. The Board has focused on fostering positive change through transparent and measured actions. We have been attentive to how we are performing as a National Governing Body and have directed resources to ensure that strategic goals were achieved in adherence with regulatory and legal requirements. The foundational work undertaken during the 2017 – 2020 plan specifically in relation to communication, finance, governance and partnerships has created a strong starting point for the Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023.

Notable Achievements (inter alia)

- *Strong increase in membership*
- *Appointment of a High Performance Director and the establishment of a High Performance Unit with oversight of a new High Performance strategy*
- *Memorandum of Understanding with Educational and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)*
- *Implementation of new initiatives to support club development including new online club portal and upgraded member's database, revised insurance terms and review of the awards scheme*
- *Qualification of two athletes for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games*
- *Stabilisation of finances with an increase in revenue and improved expenditure oversight*
- *Establishment of an Audit & Risk committee and implementation of Risk Appetite statement*
- *The Bridge the Gap women in sport programme*
- *Staged introduction of appropriate management and staffing levels*
- *Investment in facilities and equipment*



About our Strategy

About our Strategy

The Canoeing Ireland Strategic Plan 2021 – 2023 is a result of in-depth engagement and consultation with our paddling community, stakeholders and International partners.

Endeavouring to define Canoeing Ireland's vision, values and mission, the initial stages of this plan focused on information gathering and inclusive dialogue with our members, clubs and disciplines in addition to other relevant parties. The outcomes of this conversation have established key strategic priorities that have provided a succinct and clear direction for the organisation with a unity of purpose for our members.

Our strategy is informed by our membership, Sport Ireland, the Olympic Federation of Ireland and our international affiliates. It is aligned with the National Sports Policy 2018-2027.

Our strategy consists of 4 Strategic Priorities, each of which include a number of high level goals and key actions focusing on Sustainable Development, Strengthening Leadership, Enhancing Experience and Athlete Progression.



Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

Inspiring and enabling participation and performance in Paddlesports for all

Mission

Canoeing Ireland, develops, promotes and governs recreational and competitive paddlesports in Ireland for everyone. This is achieved through a network of members and partners which enables and supports participation while providing pathways to performance.

Values

Excellence, Inclusivity, Inspiration, Integrity, Respect and Passion.

Strategic Priorities - Overview

The four strategic priorities of Sustainable Development, Strengthening Leadership, Enhancing Experience and Athlete Progression underpin our Strategic plan framework. These priorities will align with resourced initiatives to ensure their successful implementation for delivery of key actions. Balancing a 'business as usual' approach with an ambitious plan for growth and development will require flexibility, support and a unity of purpose throughout the organisation. Successful implementation of the plan will strengthen areas of vulnerability within the organisation and create a strong platform for future growth.





Strategic Priorities

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is the built-in capacity for endurance over time. We are determined to engage in activities, which will achieve our mid-term goals while providing a platform for continued growth and development. Supporting and recruiting our volunteers; building a sustainable funding model; developing fit for purpose facilities and establishing programmes that encourage participation for life for the entire community will ensure that our activities endure beyond the life of this plan.

Goal 1: Building our Community of Paddlers

A strong sense of community is an essential building block for the growth and development of our sport. Our history, culture and values exist within this community. As we grow and develop, we should strive to maintain our connection with the values on which our sport was built.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Attract new members to Canoeing Ireland	Membership will grow to 5,000
Increase growth and positivity while inspiring continued engagement and communication	Membership satisfaction levels will have increased
Encourage and promote regular participation in safe and fun paddlesports as a mainstream fitness activity	Profile and awareness of paddling will be higher in mainstream and social media channels Increase in the levels of member engagement with Canoeing Ireland
Continue investment in facilities, infrastructure, and human resources	Needs assessment and operational plan implementation for investment requirements
Foster an awareness of the natural environment and protection through information campaigns and positive action	Improved awareness amongst members of environmental issues and best practice Integrated environmental awareness into training courses

Goal 2: Enhancing Club Advancement

Empowering clubs with the capabilities and resources to ensure their future growth and development will enhance the experience, longevity, enjoyment and safety of all club members and volunteers.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Embed clubs as the heart of our organisation	Recognising that clubs are the focal point and incubators for long-term sustainable development
Increase the number of clubs Nationally	Increase the number of active clubs by 20%
Increase club support nationally	Implement a successful dedicated club support and development programme in place
Encourage networked collaboration amongst clubs so that an inter-club support system is in place to facilitate growth and development	<p>Regional family multi-activity events across the country that are family orientated. Reintroduce annual club championships</p> <p>Regular inter-club meetings</p> <p>Quarterly online discussion forum for club officers</p> <p>Construction of an information portal and support structure for clubs for support grant and funding applications</p>
Increase the number of club instructors	<p>Offer revalidation opportunities for inactive club instructors</p> <p>New leader qualifications available and coaching awards available to every club</p> <p>Implement a successful teen retention programme</p>
Create support systems and programmes to retain teenagers in the sport	<p>Increase in number of youth members and youth participation in competition</p> <p>Reduce the age limit for Level 2/3 Instructors to 16 with restrictions</p>

Goal 3: Strengthening Collaborations

Our future strength depends on effective collaboration, sharing and partnerships. We will create the opportunities for communication and community building both nationally and with our international partner organisations.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Champion, lead and nurture partnerships for the delivery of programmes and integration into communities	Develop strategic partnerships necessary to develop programmes, provide support structures and access to resources
Collaborate with national and international organisations to progress strategic and value-led opportunities.	Increase in the number of positions held on International committees and Boards



Strengthening Leadership

Effective leadership is about providing direction, inspiring confidence, driving change and building a dynamic community. Good governance complements effective leadership.

Goal 4: Providing Good Governance

Good governance will protect and support our organisation through resourcing, collaborating and empowering decision making.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Become recognised as a professional and thriving organisation, operating at the highest standards of governance, equity, transparency and accountability	Canoeing Ireland will be synonymous with excellence in governance and leadership at Board and committee level by operating to the highest standards of compliance with the Governance Code
Provide succession planning for all key roles within the organisation	Sustaining effective training and retaining knowledge and experience while maintaining a pipeline of volunteers
Ensure consistency in contracts and rules and service level agreements	Regular and structured review of all organisational processes
Provide and encourage dynamic, inspirational leadership for our sport at all levels	Increased diversity and balanced representation at all levels



Goal 5: Safeguarding Financial Integrity

Financial Integrity is a key responsibility of any organisation. Managing available finances and fiscal activity in alignment with strategic goals is at the heart of financial integrity and will continue to be an area of focus for the Board and management of Canoeing Ireland during the course of this strategy.

The suitability and robustness of the internal control system and financial procedures are approved by the Board and managed by the Chief Executive Officer. These include financial management processes, governance and risk management procedures, oversight of the operations of the internal audit function while liaising as appropriate with external auditors.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Grow our financial base through strategic and prudent financial planning and management	Transparent financial and budgetary reporting models
Diversification of new income streams	Securing sponsorship agreements and other non-core funding Increasing Membership income by 20%

Goal 6: Embedding a Culture of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Inclusivity is a reflection of our behaviours, standards and ethics. We are committed to working towards creating a culture of equity and inclusivity by exploring and improving access, attitude, choice, partnerships, communication and opportunities. Consistency of approach and language will move us from simply valuing inclusion to a position of normalising inclusion in our day-to-day activities, particularly for under-represented groups.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Recognise the value of participation at all levels and to promote the sport in all its forms to everyone	Improved accessibility and equivalence by reducing barriers to entry to paddlesports
Recognition of the inalienable rights, dignity and equality of every member	Balanced participation approach across gender, ability and ethnicity

Enhancing Experience

The opportunity exists to enhance the paddling participant experience. We can achieve this by removing barriers to entry, creating stronger links to clubs and increasing connectedness to other paddlers. As a true sport for life, the health benefits of paddlesports extend beyond general fitness - it positively impacts wellbeing and good mental health. Our aspiration is to inspire people to develop and maintain a passion for paddling in a safe, supported and connected community.

Goal 7: Expanding Engagement & Reach

Inclusivity and positive engagement within the paddling community will strengthen our capacity to support each other and welcome new members to the paddling family.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Foster a nationwide accessible, supportive, enthusiastic and inclusive community of paddlers	Greater opportunity for all paddlers to try out different disciplines with qualified instruction and support
Grow youth team participation and fun activities through engagement with schools and third level	Introduction of funded innovative supports, programmes and events
Unify all paddle sport disciplines	Establishing linkages to leverage cross-disciplinary activity
Expand reach to other water users and bodies	New information and support online platform for all water users



Goal 8: Delivering Connectedness

Our growth is supported by maximising our stakeholder relationships, impactful reach and meaningful communication. In the fast-moving world of online engagement, we need to remain agile and innovative so that our brand is synonymous with enjoyment, wellbeing, fitness, performance and community.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Improve the profile and visibility of paddlesports	Continue to develop a consistent marketing and branding strategy
Implement new digital resources to support, promote and inform paddlers	Become the go-to resource for paddling in Ireland
Disseminate news, activities and successes to members sending a louder message	Targeted information with clear and concise messaging. Regular promotion and publication of Flowstate
Streamline web-portal interaction for all members and clubs	User-friendly state of the art website, database and administration process

Goal 9: Fostering a Culture of Safety

We have a reasonable duty, to provide our members and the wider paddling community with the competence necessary to engage in safe activity on the water. This duty also extends to our younger or more vulnerable members.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Heighten the awareness of safety requirements	<p>Normalisation and monitoring of risk Assessments</p> <p>An effective Instructor registration system</p> <p>Access to safety courses and on-line training</p>
Promote child safety & protection	Reduce Garda Vetting revalidation requirement to 3 years

Athlete Progression

Pathways are key to progression. Varied pathways that inspire both recreational paddlers and performance athletes to stay with the sport will be a key priority over the course of this strategic plan. We will provide accessible and attainable progression routes for our members to continue their enjoyment of paddling for life

Goal 10: Humanising Education & Training

Education and training is a key operational and strategic area for the growth and development of our sport. Creating pathways to support members and clubs to enhance participant's experience, improve retention and facilitate enjoyment throughout their paddling journey is an integral part of our strategic objectives.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Provide clear progression paths from Level 1 to Level 5 in all disciplines for paddlers, instructors, coaches, administrators	<p>Increased number of skills awards and coaching certificates awarded</p> <p>Relaunch recreational training</p> <p>Subsidised workshops /skills training/instructor training for clubs</p>
Support Club Leaders with provision of guidelines and training	<p>Create inter-disciplinary coaching programmes and networks</p> <p>Development and provision of a Mentoring scheme</p>
Provide sharing and dissemination of best practice	<p>Creation of an online platform</p>
Provide clear progression paths from Level 1 to Level 5 in all disciplines for paddlers, instructors, coaches, administrators	<p>Increased number of skills awards and coaching certificates awarded</p> <p>Relaunch recreational training</p> <p>Subsidised workshops /skills training/instructor training for clubs</p>

Goal 11: Competing at our Best

We have a proud tradition of competing and achieving against the best in the world across all disciplines. We are responsible for ensuring that appropriate levels of support are afforded to our international athletes.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Improve and align pathways to performance and International success	Create and support performance pathways for all athletes
Provide an environment that supports athletes to perform to their best through the full implementation of the High Performance Strategy “Paris 2024 & Beyond”	Review governing documents and structure so that the performance strategy is appropriately supported
Establish a National Centre for paddlesport Performance	Development of a National Centre for paddlesports

Goal 12: Embedding Events for Inclusivity

We will continue to build and strengthen our portfolio of events to embed inclusivity while identifying and removing barriers. We will provide a culture that encourages and enables active participation.

Key Actions	How we will Measure progress
Develop exciting high-profile events for general participation	Number of new events where members actively engage
Run events that cater for the different skills levels of participation	Reintroduction of an annual club championship
Canoeing Ireland hosts international events	Escalation in the number of mass participation events each year



**Canoeing Ireland
in 2028**

Canoeing Ireland in 2028

Beyond the lifetime of this strategic plan, our ambition for 2028 is that Canoeing Ireland will:

Be a financially stable organisation synonymous with integrity, governance, inclusion and innovation

Represent a diverse and inclusive demographic where paddlesports will be the first sport of choice for many

Resource our performance system with world leading practices, technology and people to deliver International success

Have a robust network of supported and sustainable clubs

Have built strong and mutually beneficial collaborations with organisations who share our vision

Be a leading National Governing Body in the promotion of physical activity and well-being of Ireland's citizens



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All our clubs and members who contributed to this plan

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Canoeing
Ireland

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