



# CANOEING IRELAND **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## 2024-2027

**Canoeing**  
Ireland







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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



We've had a great few years at Canoeing Ireland. Now is the time to consolidate all we've achieved and think long and hard about the future.

Thanks to everyone who replied with their thoughts about our Strategy for the next four years. We had a record number of responses which shows how engaged our members are with the development of our sport.

We will continue to strengthen our governance and leadership. Great progress has been made collectively in the last year in our governance structures, but more needs to be done to make them fit with the dynamic and progressive organisation we've become.

We're working hard to keep you in the loop with all that's going on. With this in mind we'll continue to develop new ways to reach you through a mix of technology and in person meetings during next year.

We're building capacity by developing new facilities and infrastructure constantly around the country to ensure we can bring paddle sports to all.

Great strides have been made in participation and inclusion with the Bridge the Gap and PaddleAble Programmes. We strive to be more inclusive across more disciplines and more venues.

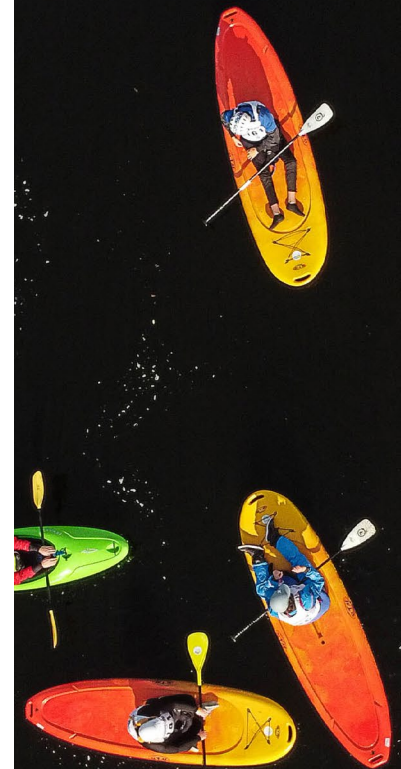
The fact that we have qualified 3 athletes for the Olympics in Paris in 2024 is phenomenal. We need to build on this success with more opportunities for athletes and potential athletes to develop and shine.

Finally, our sport lives and breathes in the natural environment, let's do all we can both individually and collectively to protect and sustain the inland and coastal environments which give us such joy.

As always, our wonderful team of volunteers continue to make great things happen on the ground. A huge thank you to everyone who gives so generously of your time to help our sport to grow and flourish. We all do it because we love helping others and are passionate about the sport, but we also do it because we care.

I look forward to seeing lots of you on the river over the next few years.

**LYNDA BYRNE  
PRESIDENT**





# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Canoeing Ireland's strategic plan 2021-2023 outlined ambitious objectives to propel the organisation forward, sustain growth, maintain our excellent governance record and support our clubs and members. As we reach the end of this strategic period, it's important to measure our performance against the goals set and evaluate our effectiveness in achieving our targets.

## 1. PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP GROWTH.

One of our primary objectives was to foster increased participation and membership growth. Together we have made significant progress in this area through community engagement initiatives, the development of beginner friendly programmes and increased visibility of paddle sport in Ireland. We have attracted and continue to support a diverse range of participants to our sport. This will remain a priority for us throughout the term of our new strategy.

## 2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITY DEVELOPMENT.

The strategic plan emphasised the need for infrastructure and facility development to enhance our accessibility nationwide. We have made good strides in this area by collaborating with clubs, communities and other stakeholders to secure funding for facility upgrades. This is a long-term goal and sometimes progresses more slowly than we would like, but we remain steadfast in our commitment to improved infrastructure for the benefit, retention and recruitment of members.

## 3. TRAINING & EDUCATION.

Our commitment in this area is evident in the constant review and upgrading of our Awards Scheme, the new Coaching Pathway and the associated programmes such as For the Love of It. Offering opportunities to develop and improve skills and knowledge at all levels from beginner to advanced fosters our community of responsible and skilled paddlers.

## 4. COMPETITIVE SUCCESS AND INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION.

We set ourselves a target to strengthen our competitive success and international representation in our strategic plan 2021-2023 and the results speak for themselves. Athletes across all disciplines have achieved notable success on the international stage. We have invested in coaching, athlete support, junior development and talent identification and we will continue to expand this support mechanism into the future.

## 5. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.

This is a perpetual challenge for all sporting bodies. We have navigated this terrain successfully through attracting increased grant funding and support, however, if we want to continue to grow and increase our reach nationally, we will need to attract new funding options over the course of our new plan.

It is fair to say that we have demonstrated resilience, adaptability and commitment to growth and development over the past three years. While challenges undoubtedly persist, the strategic plan 2021-2023 served as a reliable compass, guiding us towards success. As we embark on the next strategic period, the achievements of 2021-2023 provide a solid foundation for continued success.

MOIRA ASTON  
CEO



## CLUBS & MEMBERSHIPS

**+24**

New clubs since 1st January 2021

**132%**

Increase in Junior membership since 2021

**45%**

Increase in membership since 2021

**35% → 40%**

Increase in female membership 2021 - 2023

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

**Teen Connect**

**550**

Teenage participants in Teen Connect 2021 - 2023



**2500**

Women connected with Bridge The Gap Programmes



**HER PADDLE JOURNEY**

**1500**

Women participated in HER Paddle Journey



**45.6k**

Total views on PaddleAble Ambassador videos

## COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

**60%**

Increase in Social Media engagement 2021-2023

**26%**

Increase in Social Media followers 2021-2023

**18,652**

Average annual Newsletter views

## GOVERNANCE

**56%**

Increase in revenue from 2021 to 2023

**45:55**

Gender Balance on Board

**1st**

Female Elected President elected 2021

**New Constitution**

2023

## FACILITIES & EVENTS

**30+**

Events hosted / supported since 2021

**284**

Participants across 12 counties

**14**

projects across 11 counties



## TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



### Sea Kayak

Awards developed

**132%**

Increase in Junior membership since 2021



### Good To Go

Award launched

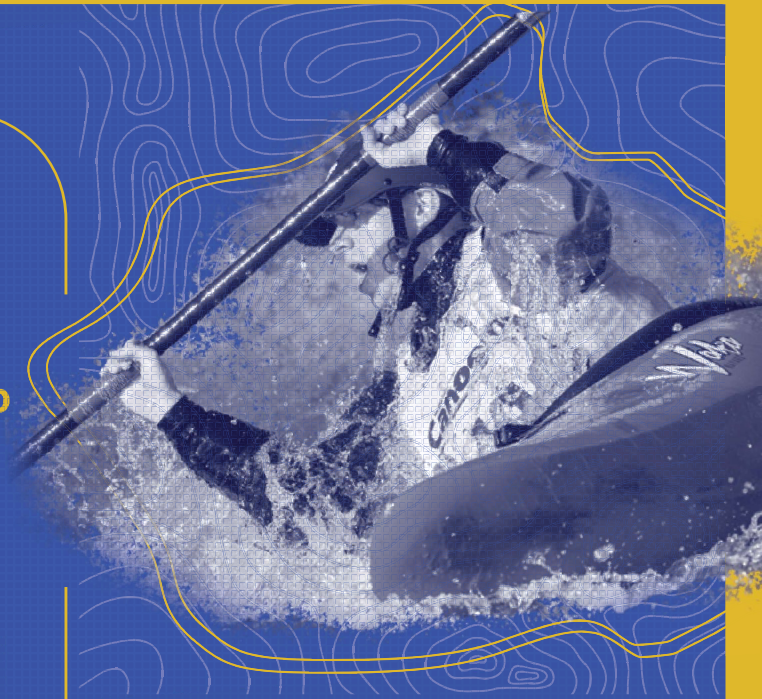


**3108**

Certificates awarded since 2021



Instructors Qualified since 2021



## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



**3**

Olympic Qualifiers



### International Women's Symposium

with over 100 participants from across 35 countries



GetIrelandPaddling.ie created



### 3rd Level

Supports rolled out



### Xcessible Bronze Award

Achieved the Active Disability Ireland Xcessible Bronze Award



### Sprint Futures/ Slalom Academy

Groups Established



### Competition Pathway Strategy

Development underway



### NRH

National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) Collaboration



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027







# MISSION, VISION & VALUES





# MISSION



*To inspire, empower and unite individuals through the transformative power of sport. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusivity, integrity, respect and innovation in all aspects of our sport. We are committed to providing opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to experience the joy of paddling, ensuring the sustainability of our sport while preserving our natural environment.*

# VISION



*Inspiring and enabling participation and performance in paddle sports for all.*



# VALUES



## INCLUSION

- We are committed to making paddle sports accessible to all and believe that there is a paddle for everyone.
- We celebrate and value individual uniqueness by actively listening, understanding, and offering opportunities and solutions that meet and integrate diverse needs.
- We cultivate welcoming, safe, and supportive environments where everyone feels respected and has a sense of belonging.
- We actively engage with diverse communities and welcome all regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, or ability.

## INTEGRITY

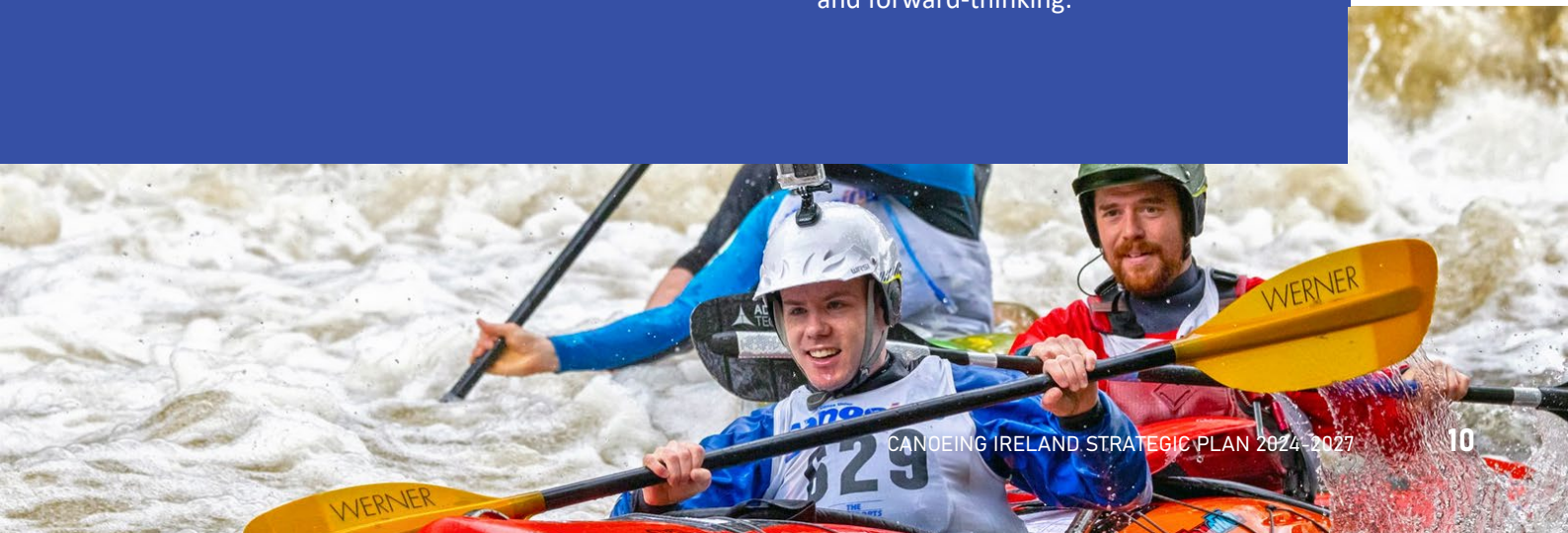
- All our actions, decisions and interactions are underpinned with honesty, respect, and accountability.
- We consistently benchmark the organisation against best practice nationally and internationally.
- We demonstrate an unwavering commitment to fair play, transparency and ethical behaviour through our governance and decision-making.
- We consistently demonstrate our values through our actions.

## RESPECT

- We nurture a culture of respect in our sport.
- We honour our responsible stewardship of natural resources through our communications, actions, and partnerships.
- We are considerate of others on and off the water.
- We foster an environment where everyone feels safe and valued.

## INNOVATION

- We explore new ideas and embrace creative problem-solving.
- We develop world leading programmes for positive social change.
- We are committed to maximising our unique cultural and geographical resources and valuable partnerships.
- We will seek out and implement innovative practices to ensure that Canoeing Ireland remains dynamic and forward-thinking.





# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES





# OVERVIEW OF PRIORITIES

## PRIORITY 1

### GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

Strengthen the composition of the board and committees by ensuring diversity in terms of skills, experience, regional representation and gender balance.

## PRIORITY 2

### MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Expand the profile of paddle sports and create a strong connection to, and feeling of belonging within the community.

## PRIORITY 3

### INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES

Develop facilities and infrastructure for paddlers, be acknowledged as a leader in the promotion of safe paddle sports, and create a network of Paddle Places where all paddlers can access our inland waterway and coastal entry points.

## PRIORITY 4

### PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION

Diversify our membership, increase inclusion, promote volunteerism and provide relevant and progressive training.

## PRIORITY 5

### COMPETITION PATHWAY & ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

Provide our athletes with holistic, challenging, evidence informed, quality coaching and opportunities to develop.

## PRIORITY 6

### SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY & ACCESS

Protect our environment, nurture club communities and ensure access to paddle places.

**PRIORITY 1**  
GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP



**GOAL 1**

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY

**Action 1.** Carry out an annual board assessments to identify and address gaps in expertise.

**Action 2.** Strengthen the bond between the board & principal committees through an agreed communication and development strategy.

**Action 3.** Continue to strengthen our safeguarding practices with the implementation of our Safeguarding Strategy.

**GOAL 2**

FOSTER ETHICAL & INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

**Action 4.** Implement inclusive development programmes, workshops and mentorship opportunities for current and emerging leaders within the community.

**Action 5.** Review the current code of conduct for leaders and members to ensure that it is in line with the new Sport Ireland Code of Conduct.

**GOAL 3**

FINANCIAL STABILITY & ORGANISATIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

**Action 6.** Nurture and develop current and new relationships with partner organisations.

**Action 7.** Continually review and update our risk register to identify and categorise all current and new risks.

**Action 8.** Create and maintain a well-structured budget and financial plan.





# PRIORITY 2

## MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

### GOAL 4

BRING PADDLE SPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

**Action 9.** Promote the regular participation in paddle sports as a means of physical activity beneficial for our wellbeing.

**Action 10.** Increase the visibility of paddle sports in the media by developing a wider network within mainstream media.

**Action 11.** Cooperate further with existing stakeholders and their networks to increase the external reach of Canoeing Ireland.

**Action 12.** Increase the visibility of Canoeing Ireland Athletes, Teams and members.

**Action 13.** Enhance club and discipline communication and marketing capabilities.

### GOAL 5

CONNECT WITH THE COMMUNITY

**Action 14.** Expand current feedback mechanisms to include surveys twice a year and annual member forums to gather feedback from members.

**Action 15.** Increase dialogue with current and prospective members by investigating new channels and methods of communication.

**Action 16.** Strengthen digital engagement and connection with members.

**Action 17.** Expand and enhance our communication with non-member participants in paddle sports.

### GOAL 6

EXPANDING AND BROADENING SOURCES OF REVENUE

**Action 18.** Publicise the story of Canoeing Ireland’s successful growth & development to attract new funding sources.

**Action 19.** Explore new commercial revenue opportunities.

### GOAL 7

OPTIMISE DIGITAL RESOURCES

**Action 20.** Modernise the club and events map on the Canoeing Ireland website.

**Action 21.** Continue development of all digital platforms to enhance the functionality and accessibility of our online resources.

# PRIORITY 3

## INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES



### GOAL 8

DEVELOP A CANOEING IRELAND FACILITIES STRATEGY

**Action 22.** Establish a Facilities and Infrastructure Working Group.

**Action 23.** Survey Clubs, Discipline Committees and Affiliated Providers on Facility needs and accessibility.

**Action 24.** Publish facilities strategy by end of 2024 with annual objectives.

### GOAL 9

BE RECOGNISED AS A LEAD NATIONAL ADVISER ON WATERWAY INFRASTRUCTURE AND WATER SAFETY

**Action 25.** Build on existing strategic partnerships to ensure that we are aware of, and ready to act on development opportunities.

**Action 26.** Provide leadership on safety through innovative national and local initiatives with other water sport and water safety organisations.

**Action 27.** Generate innovative digital resources informing on safe engagement with paddle sports.

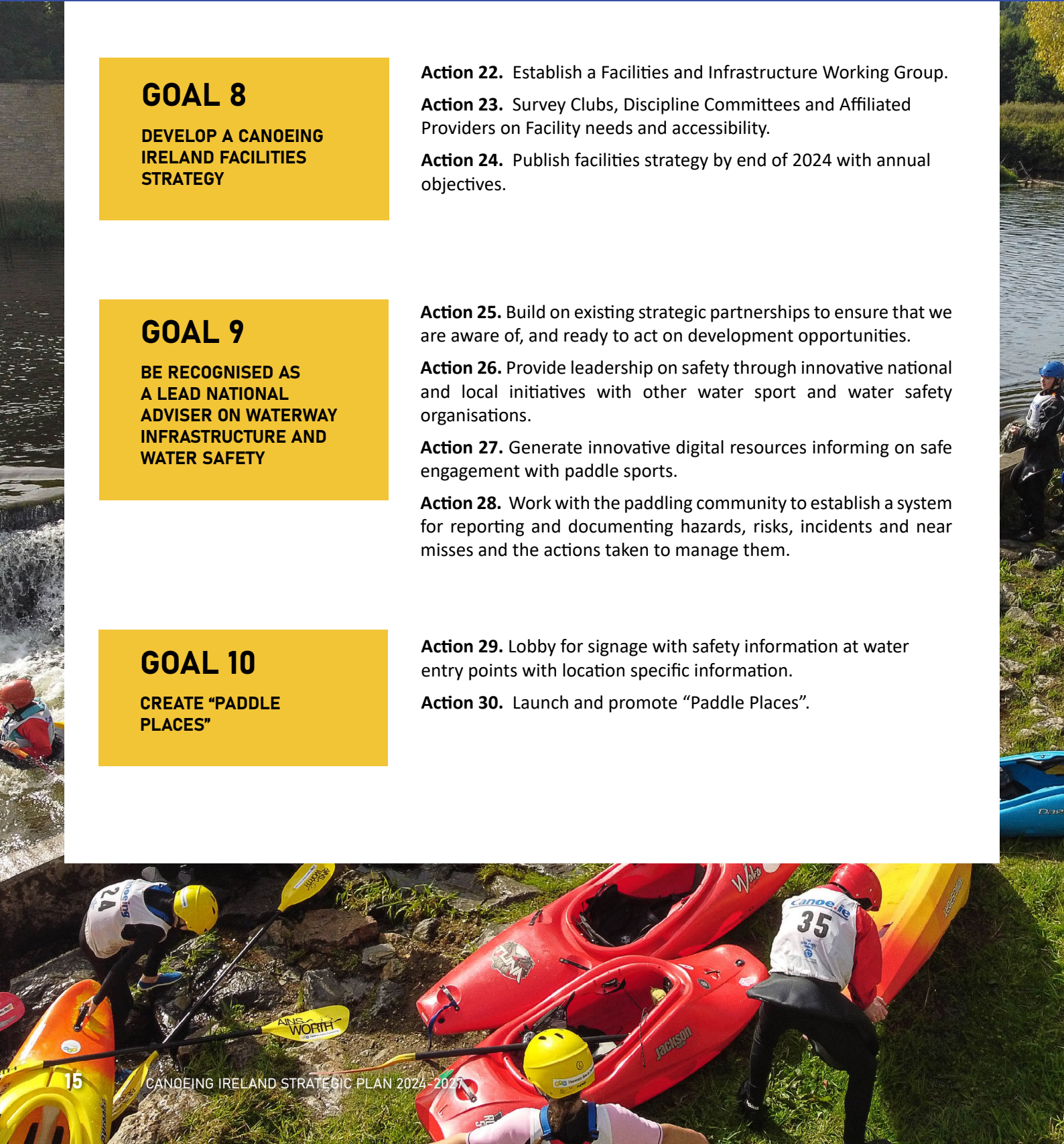
**Action 28.** Work with the paddling community to establish a system for reporting and documenting hazards, risks, incidents and near misses and the actions taken to manage them.

### GOAL 10

CREATE "PADDLE PLACES"

**Action 29.** Lobby for signage with safety information at water entry points with location specific information.

**Action 30.** Launch and promote "Paddle Places".







# PRIORITY 4

## PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION

### GOAL 11

DIVERSIFY MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNITY.

**Action 31.** Broaden our understanding of member demographics, preferences, and needs through an expanded and refined data collection strategy.

**Action 32.** Identify strategies and pathways for inclusion of those under-represented in our membership.

**Action 33.** Offer training opportunities to create greater diversity within paddle sports.

### GOAL 12

GROW PARTICIPATION & MEMBERSHIP

**Action 34.** Work with our wider stakeholder network to increase the number of paddle sports opportunities nationwide.

**Action 35.** Strengthen collaborations with other adventure sport and water sport NGBs by aligning our objectives and highlighting interdependence.

### GOAL 13

SUPPORT VOLUNTEERING

**Action 36.** Promote volunteer culture and practice in the paddling community by highlighting the value of volunteering on long term community growth.

**Action 37.** Recognise and reward volunteers by adapting and increasing training and education opportunities.

**Action 38.** Work with clubs on development plans for sustainable volunteer growth.

### GOAL 14

ENSURE THAT TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROGRESSIVE AND RELEVANT

**Action 39.** Review and update Canoeing Ireland’s suite of courses and awards to ensure that it remains relevant and progressive.

**Action 40.** Provide training opportunities which complement the Award Scheme.

**Action 41.** Increase the provision of Instructor, Coach and Skills training courses to our membership, ensuring that they are scheduled to meet with demand.

# PRIORITY 5

## COMPETITION PATHWAY AND ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT



### GOAL 15

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES  
TO DEVELOP

**Action 42.** Create and publish a dynamic annual events calendar by January of each year, ensuring a balance of regional, national, and international competitions and training camps.

### GOAL 16

PROVIDE QUALITY  
COACHING

**Action 43.** Develop and launch a comprehensive coaching curriculum focusing on person-centred learning strategies.

### GOAL 17

PROVIDE APPROPRIATE  
CHALLENGE

**Action 44.** Incorporate the challenge point framework into athlete assessments and develop tailored training programs that adjust according to an athlete's current stage of development.

### GOAL 18

ADOPT A HOLISTIC  
APPROACH

**Action 45.** Host workshops for coaches, instructors and athletes, covering topics such as mental health, social skills training, and life skills integration into athletic development.

### GOAL 19

BE EVIDENCE INFORMED

**Action 46.** Initiate a yearly seminar of the latest research literature to update coaches and stakeholders on best practices in coach education and athlete development.



# PRIORITY 6

## SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY & ACCESS



### GOAL 20

#### DEVELOP OUR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

**Action 47.** Become a signatory to the United Nations Sports for Climate Action Framework.

**Action 48.** Become a signatory to the United Nations Environment Programme the Sport for Nature Framework.

**Action 49.** Integrate environmental education into all Canoeing Ireland Awards.

### GOAL 21

#### SUSTAINING FUTURE GROWTH

**Action 50.** Work to attract new and retain existing members.

**Action 51.** Continue investment in access infrastructure and Human Resources.

**Action 52.** Promote greater interclub collaboration and Community Partnerships.

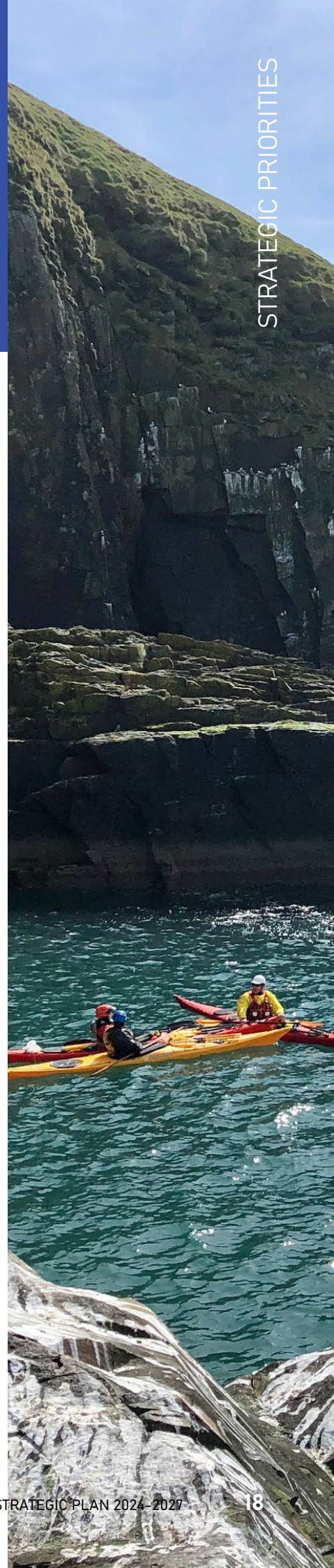
### GOAL 22

#### ADVOCATE FOR ACCESS

**Action 53.** Advocate for improved access to river/coastal entry points.

**Action 54:** Develop an online reporting tool for clubs and members to record infrastructural and environmental access issues they may experience.

**Action 55.** Establish relationships with national, regional and county agencies and outdoor networks to facilitate access to funding and increase dialogue over access issues.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## STRATEGIC PLAN WORKING GROUP

Lynda Byrne, John Murray, Marcus McInerney, James O'Connor, Ronan Shaw, Susan Honan, Moira Aston, Jon Mackey, Ciarán Maguire, Samuel Curtis, Emer Carton, Hannah Craig.

## BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Lynda Byrne, John Murray, Marcus McInerney, James O'Connor, Ronan Shaw, Susan Honan, Aisling Hoey, Heather Wilson, Eoin Brereton, Brendan Quinn, Colette Lawlor.

## CANOEING IRELAND

Moira Aston, Ciarán Maguire, Emer Carton, Jon Mackey, Samuel Curtis, Jon Simmons, Sheena Carroll, Steve Fahy, Keith Fitz-Hugh, Oisín Farrell, Aileen Denton, Graham Clarke.

## STAKEHOLDERS

Sport Ireland, Active Disability Ireland, Special Olympics Ireland, Leave No Trace, Education and Training Boards Ireland, Outdoor Education Training Centres, Canoe Association of Northern Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Federation of Irish Sport, Fáilte Ireland, International Canoe Federation, European Canoe Association, Local Sport Partnerships, Olympic Federation of Ireland, RNLI, Water Safety Ireland, Canoeing Ireland Members, Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

## CLUBS AND MEMBERS

All our clubs and members who contributed to this plan.

## DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Samuel Curtis and Aileen Denton.

## PHOTOS

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