



Review of
Strategic Plan
2013 – 2016



The Swim Ireland Strategy for the years 2013 – 2016 has now reached its conclusion. It is important to reflect on what has been achieved over the course of the strategic cycle and the following is a detailed progress report based on the five strategic goals contained in the Strategic Plan.

Executive Summary

The 2013 – 2016 Strategic Plan, entitled 'From Walking to Running' was considered a strong statement of ambition and intent informed by the experiences and needs of our members, stakeholders and staff. The Plan identified the key issues that the organisation needed to focus on and identified five strategic goal areas for delivery. This review takes each goal area and reviews progress in detail. The key issues identified in 2012 as focus areas were:

- Moving from an organisation that is associated with competitive swimming to one that is also seen as promoting and providing expertise in the lifelong sport of swimming
- Increasing the support to clubs and grass roots
- Engagement with the commercial/private sector in order to bring additional resources from outside into the sport
- Developing the organisation to build a strong brand within the industry of swimming in Ireland and beyond

Goal 1- To provide visible, direct and practical support on the ground to regions and clubs, develop and grow the disciplines, promote a pathway to cater for all abilities and levels of interest within the sport and raise the profile of the sport

Over the life of the plan we have made significant progress in this goal area. In reviewing the goal we will look at progress under four different areas club, promotion of swimming, communication and development.

Club

The appointment of regionally based Support Officers has provided all clubs with a direct line into Swim Ireland and offers on the ground real time support. This has allowed clubs and especially committees to build strong and close working relationships with their Support Officer. A close link with the Swim Ulster Development Officer ensures there is a national approach when delivering support and initiatives for clubs. For the purposes of this review, references to Support Officers should be taken to include the Swim Ulster Development Officer.

The Support Officers have been the catalyst for delivery of this goal area and the many initiatives and programmes that have been introduced have been in response to the needs identified by Clubs. Through the Support Officers, clubs had a real input into the re-design of Swim Ireland Clubmark which is a national accreditation scheme promoting higher standards of welfare, equity, coaching and management.

Over the course of the Strategic Plan many practical supports have been put in place including;

- Annual Calendar of regional workshops for clubs and volunteers which have included:
 - Club governance days providing training in the club management including financial management
 - Clubmark training days – providing support and guidance through the Clubmark programme
 - Chair/Secretary Forums – training and workshops for Club Secretaries and Chairpersons
 - Complaints & Disciplinary Workshops – dedicated workshops providing guidance on dealing with complaints for clubs
 - Club Children’s Officers (CCO) Forums providing updated information and policies, creating a network of support for CCOs and giving them direct access to our National Children’s Officer (NCO)
 - Social Media Workshops
 - Anti-Bullying and Mental Health Workshops
 - Parent Support Programmes



Guides for parents

- Support at Club, Regional & National competitions. The Regional Support Officers work closely with the Regional Executives in the provision of any operational support required in the running of competitions in addition to

being present at many events to 'meet and greet' clubs. In addition Swim Ireland office based administration staff have, over the course of this Strategic Plan become had a visible presence at national competitions and other events such as Swim for a Mile

- All Committees are supported by a dedicated Swim Ireland liaison who provides practical day to day support as required
- The integration of water polo into Swim Ireland and the employment of staff working in this area have provided much needed support to the sport.
- Through the Support Officers we have generally had more engagement than traditionally with the clubs primarily associated with open sea swimming. This would benefit further by having a staff member with an expertise in this area and with time to dedicate to supporting it. The recent appointment of the Participation Officer will further support engagement in this area.

Promotion of swimming

Over the course of the Strategic Plan we have sought to shift from an organisation that is associated mainly with competitive swimming to one that is also seen as promoting and providing expertise in the lifelong sport of swimming. Very little had been progressed in this area prior to the introduction of this strategy and we feel that we have made solid progress over the course of this plan through a number of initiatives including;

- The introduction of a programme of participation focused events which are increasing in popularity and scope year on year including;
 - Swim For a Mile Pool – now in its 4th year with 10,000 people signed up to the training programme to date and over 4,000 participants having swum in the Mile Challenge – the vast majority of whom were not club members



We did it!!!!

- Swim for a Mile Open Water (now in year 3), run in conjunction with the National 5k and 10K Open Water Championships
- Swim for a Mile Corporate Team Relay Challenge – piloted in 2016 during the downtime of the Irish Open Championships the event had entries from 21 teams including RTE, Google, Department of Health,
- We introduced a FUN Christmas Gala in 2016 to introduce young children aged 8-12 to fun competition. Over 300 children took part in the event at the National Aquatic Centre.
- The introduction of the Club Youth Awards recognising young people's achievements outside of competition; this helps build the connection for young people between their lives in and out of sport. In the first year of the Award (2016) we issued 296 Awards
- We engaged in a real way with the young people in our sport and the result was the development of a Young People's Strategy 2015-2017 which has the voice of young people at its core and were successful in an application for Erasmus+ Funding which is allowing us to implement a range of initiatives including The Club Captains in Youth Sport Project, designed to develop and enrich the skills of young people in the role of a club captain
- We have created a number of new membership categories aimed at encouraging more people into our sport through participation methods rather than the traditional competitive club route. These categories include;
 - Special Membership – a non-club membership which allows members to compete in a limited number of events without having to join a club and was intended as a gateway to encourage participants particularly in open water and masters swimming
 - Joint membership with Triathlon Ireland – this has been particularly successful with over 500 new members joined since the initiative was launched in late 2016
 - Learn to Swim Membership – introduced at the AGM in 2016, this category is an important platform for us to engage with swimmers from when they first begin to learn to swim and will be a key focus area in the coming years
- We have engaged in a meaningful way with government on the wider sport and physical activity agenda. We have worked to have our voice heard at the highest level of government through the development of relationships and our contributions to consultations on policy.
- We succeeded in having 'Get Ireland Swimming' included as a goal area of the National Physical Activity Plan. This has given us potential to access additional funding into the future and is an important outcome for us.
- In 2015 we succeeded in an application for funding under the Dormant Accounts Grant Scheme and were able to access €150k investment for a

range of initiatives aimed at getting children in disadvantaged areas swimming

- Over the course of the Strategic Plan we have developed strong relationships with many Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs), particularly through the Swim for a Mile initiative and presented a case study at a Sport Ireland/LSP Conference of one of our SFAM events as an example of what can be achieved with a successful partnership between Club, LSP and NGB

We feel we have made great strides in relation to this goal and with the appointment of a new Participation Officer in 2017, made possible by funding provided through the Dormant Funds Grant Scheme, this is very much a priority agenda for us which we will look to further expand with a number of new initiatives planned for 2017 and beyond.

Communication

Over the course of this strategic cycle one of our aims has been to have Swim Ireland and those associated with us recognised as a positive brand by the Irish public. It is probably fair to say that this aim was driven by the reality that coverage over the previous cycle was dominated by performance results and negative stories. We have worked hard in recent years to shine a light on the great work that is undertaken by our athletes, staff and volunteers and feel that we have been very successful in changing the narrative evidenced by:

- The development of a very successful media partnership when we launched our Swim for a Mile with the Irish Times and Today FM. The initiative continues to be championed by recognised journalists including Conor Pope and Matt Cooper and has generated a lot of positive publicity across print and radio.
- We have worked over the course of the cycle to develop relationships within the media and have established Swim Ireland as the go-to body, not only for aquatic related activity but also across other areas. Our CEO for example, was sought out by media outlets for commentary on government announcements in relation to gender quotas in sporting bodies.
- We ran a very successful media campaign around our Olympic athletes, producing our own content around them. With 4 athletes qualified we had fantastic coverage in the lead up and across the Games. Some highlights from the year include:
 - Podcasts with each of the athletes were used across our social media channels and had over 2,000 listens
 - Fiona Doyle and Oliver Dingley featured in the Electric Ireland Campaign
 - Fiona Doyle featured on RTE's "Road to Rio".

- Oliver Dingley's 3M Springboard Final was the busiest/biggest Twitter engagement we have ever had.
- Our social media audience grew by 70% in 2016 (up 389% over two years) and we now have 18,000 Facebook Followers, 7,500 Twitter and 2,000 Instagram (only launched in 2016).
- We now have PR and Social Media at all National and International competitions across the year.
- We ran our most successful Awards Night ever acknowledging the contribution of our athletes and volunteers. Over 250 people attended the event at the spectacular Titanic Centre in Belfast.
- We have created a selection of segmented email newsletters and we can now guarantee that we are in contact with each of our members several times a month
- We were shortlisted for the NGB of the Year at the National Sports Industry Awards, a recognition from our peers of the work that we are doing

The work that has been done throughout the course of this Strategic Cycle is an important foundation for the future. Important projects that are currently under development are brand development and new website.



Ollie's biggest fan

Development

One of our specific goals for this cycle was to put in place development plans for Water Polo and Diving, sports that are more clearly supported to be part of the Swim Ireland family. Significant progress has been made in these areas.

Diving has undergone huge changes. As part of a four year Diving Development Plan Swim Ireland have a structured performance programme in place headed up by a National Coach and a whole new diving programme is now in operation in the National Aquatic Centre and a development programme is in place in Bangor. Diving also had great success in Rio 2016 with a top 8 finish and our first Olympic diver in 68 years.

With the integration of water polo into Swim Ireland closer relationships are being made with the appointment of a Water Polo Officer to support the operational activities of the sport. In 2015 a 4 year Development Plan was launched and a National Development Manager has recently been appointed to grow the sport at club and national level. We successfully applied for funding to support the training of Officials for the sport and to over the course of the strategic cycle we have trained

Table Officials Training	Candidates
Galway	25
Dublin	15
Referees Training	Candidates
Officials	12
Tutor Training Course	Candidates
Tutor Training	2
Water Polo Coaching Clinic	Candidates
Dublin	36
Water Polo Coaching Conference	Candidates
Income	15
Level 2	Candidates
Dublin	6
Club Helper	Candidates
Level 0 - Club Helper Galway	16
Level 0 Club Helper Kells	12
Level 1 Courses	Candidates
Level 1 Course Dublin	11
Level 1 Course Galway	15
Level 1 Course Bangor	12

We have already referenced the Clubmark programme in the context of providing practical support to Clubs. A key element of the programme relates to development planning and Support Officers offer practical advice and guidance to clubs in relation to this. The Regional Accreditation Programme has been replaced by closer working relationships and discussions on business planning and unified goals between Swim Ireland and the Regions. Swim Ireland staff work closely with the Regional bodies to provide guidance in regards to governance and best practice, in particular in regard to policies, procedures and the development of regional strategic plans.

Equally support has been provided to allow greater emphasis and promotion of Masters swimming. A dedicated liaison person works closely with the Masters Committee to support the work they are trying to achieve through their Development Plan. Swim Ireland further support this through funding and the provision of pool time for galas and clinics. The Support Officers work closely with the Masters clubs around governance and to ensure they feel better connected to Swim Ireland. We have also been able to provide links into our Masters clubs through participation initiatives such as SFAM and this is something which could be further developed over the coming years.

Open Water swimming is one of the areas that we feel needs to be further developed. Primary focus to date has been largely on building relationships and identifying what support is required. The Support Officers have built relationships with clubs and provide support around affiliation and governance. The creation of the Special Membership and joint Triathlon Membership categories have contributed to an increase in the numbers participating in open water events. A specific goal of the next strategy needs to be an Open Water Development Plan.

Schools' swimming has been integrated into the main swimming regions over the course of the strategic cycle. The Regions now lead in the running of the qualifying competitions for the Irish Schools Championships. The role of Swim Ireland to date has been focussed primarily around running competitions (Irish Minor Schools, Schools Inter-pro & Senior Schools Relay). Consideration needs to be given to the long term development of school swimming over the course of the next strategic cycle.

Goal Area 2 - To improve coach standards across the board, continue to deliver high quality qualifications, continued professional development and licensing programmes, promote the Swim Ireland Child Learn to Swim programme and further develop the competitive programme

As a National Governing Body, Swim Ireland has a key role to play in aquatics education and training. If our sport is to develop and grow we must consistently focus on the basics, ensuring that our programmes are fit for purpose, that they are delivered in a consistent and professional manner and that our workforce has access to high quality continued professional development opportunities. Over the course of the strategy we set a number of workforce and programme related goals including;

- Swim Ireland programmes continue to be developed and recognised as the best in class
- Swim Ireland is the leading organisation in the provision of national standard qualifications and support programmes for teachers and coaches
- Delivery of a specific coach support programme annually
- Meet licensing programme in place for all meets including Regions & Clubs



The three wise men

- All Clubs operating with at least 1 Level 2 licensed swimming teacher or coach
- Greater awareness of Swim Ireland Child Learn to Swim programme and an increase of a minimum of 50% in the number of facilities operating the programme

In reviewing our progress against these goals we feel that we have delivered on our primary goals but have also recognised that we must constantly work to develop our education programmes and delivery methods. We identified that some of our qualifications, for example the Learn to Swim Programme needed to be reviewed and updated and have concentrated on this development work towards the latter end of the cycle. We have also recognised the growing importance of e-learning and the final year of the cycle has been focused on developing our capabilities in this area. We see this as an important focus area of our education programmes for the coming cycle. Key progress areas include:

Programmes, CPD & Licensing

Licensing

Throughout the life of the strategic plan the requirements for all Swim Ireland teachers and coaches to hold a license has been delivered in a strategic manner. This has been done in partnership between the Education and Membership departments. Firstly all clubs were informed of the new requirements and were encouraged to become licensed. This was done over a number of years to give coaches and teachers time to meet the requirements. We have now made licensing mandatory for Swim Ireland Club teaching and coaching staff and currently have licensed 1482 Teachers and Coaches. This means that these individuals meet our requirements with regard to qualification, vetting, safeguarding and Continued Professional Development (CPD).

Programmes

We have continuously developed our programmes and qualifications over the course of the strategic cycle. At the end of 2015 we introduced updated Level 1 and 2 Teaching Aquatics and Coaching Swimming that was mapped against the QCF framework – ensuring the qualifications were up to date and reflected the needs of teachers and coaches whilst being accredited to a recognised framework in the UK. The end of 2016 saw the initial planning for the Level 2 Teaching Aquatics qualification to be mapped to the QQI framework of Ireland, showing our recognition that having our qualifications on a framework in Ireland is a necessity.

The introduction of stringent Coaching Ireland regulations has ensured that our training and education opportunities are routinely verified and assessed against the highest standards for coach education in Ireland. We are the only NGB to have our own Tutor Development programme recognised and accredited by Coaching Ireland and our Lead Tutors who deliver the programme are often involved in discussions with Coaching Ireland on how to improve and develop this further.



Team of Official's at Short Course Championships

Over the course of the strategic cycle we have continually focused on training and development of our work force. Our Education Department currently delivers over 50 courses annually and in 2016 we trained 450 candidates as Teachers and Coaches across the Aquatic Disciplines of Swimming, Water Polo and Diving at various levels of qualification. We also trained eight new Teacher/Coach Tutors and for the first time in the organisation's history we have trained tutors in all disciplines. We have also employed our first Water Polo National Development Officer who has started delivering coach education through CPD's, clinics and club visits.

An additional focus throughout the cycle has been the education of our officials. We designed and implemented the water polo official pathway and have delivered our first official referee education through table officials and referee courses. We have run 2 national swimming officials schools and in 2016 alone qualified 13 technical swimming officials including 6 national starters, 6 national judges and 1 referee.

QQI

We have worked very hard over the strategic cycle with Irish Water Safety to try to reach agreement on a joint national standard for swimming teaching. We ran two pilot programmes over the course of two years. Unfortunately we feel that we have reached an impasse and will now pursue QQI Status for our own qualification. We undertook a project in the last quarter of 2016 to map out what this would entail which was then approved by the Board as part of our 2017 objectives.

Learn to Swim

We identified over the course of the strategic cycle that we needed to re-develop our Child Learn to Swim Programme. We finalised the course content towards

the end of the cycle and it is currently being introduced to facilities across Ireland. The programme links directly into Long Term Athlete Development and encourages participation for fitness as well as entry into competitive swimming. Progress from the Learn to Swim programme into the disciplines of water polo, diving and synchronized swimming is being developed to sit within the programme. A key element of the newly developed programme is the ongoing support and education that will be offered to facilities who take it up.

Calendar

We have worked over the course of the strategic cycle to deliver an annual education calendar which includes an extensive programme of activities for our workforce. For the first time in 2016 we developed and published a yearlong calendar for the 2016-17 seasons and will continue to develop this over the course of the next strategic cycle. The calendar incorporated Level 1 and Level 2 Courses, CPD, Team Manager, Officials and Safeguarding courses, improving access to this information for our members and allowing coaches and teachers a clearer view of opportunities for development. This has in turn, improved the accessibility to these courses, allowing teachers and coaches to plan schedules and increasing attendance. We are actively working with our new website developers to streamline the process of course administration, an area that we have identified that needs some investment.

The production of an annual calendar of events has also assisted us in identifying gaps in the regions in regard to course delivery and to be proactive with regard to deliver of courses. We have undertaken research that indicated that only 25% of candidates who complete a Level 1 Qualification go on to complete Level 2. Cost and duration of attendance at Level 2 were cited as the main constraints for candidates. We are currently developing online learning modules with a view to delivering some elements of the courses online, thereby reducing the cost without compromising the quality.

Coach Development

During this Strategy we have had as a focus the Continued Professional Development of our sports leaders and have placed additional emphasis on coach specific education. We introduced a range of initiatives such as;

- Opening up modules of our Level 3 Courses as CPD opportunities
- Coach Development Series
- Coach Specific Conferences
- Joint conference in conjunction with Triathlon and Cycling Ireland directed at coaching young people.
- Two very successful coaching conferences in conjunction - American Swim Coaches Association (ASCA), covering all disciplines
- Women's Coaching Forum

- Three Water Polo Coaching Clinics
- CPD points have also been awarded for attendance at national stroke clinics and sessions run by performance coaches across the country, as well as “in-house” CPD run within clubs and international coaching conferences

We set a specific target for Level 3 Coaching, targeting an additional 20 swimming coaches to achieve this level of qualification by 2016. We have exceeded our target in this area and currently have 103 Level 3 Coaches, 35 of whom gained their qualification through our newly developed (over the course of the cycle) Swim Ireland Level 3 programme. The programme, made up of units of learning with mentorship from Lead Tutors and other Level 3 coaches, has developed and evolved with experts in their fields travelling to Ireland to deliver elements of the course. This has allowed our new Level 3 coaches to gain experience and knowledge in areas of coaching which have proven success in other European countries.

The application procedure for the course also ensured candidates who were applying to attend the course were working with the appropriate level of swimmers and would therefore benefit from attending the course.

Online Learning

As referenced above we are in the process of developing online education through the Moodle Platform with a view to offering online CPD opportunities to our workforce, the first of which will be launched in early 2017. The Moodle Platform was purchased and developed from a generic platform to one that is bespoke to Swim Ireland, with the initial phase of development underway in 2016 for an online catalogue of CPD. A suite of CPDs will be ready for release in the first half of 2017. The platform uses software to guide the user through the CPD, ensuring it is modern, interactive and checks for learning. The technology is cutting edge and is unlike anything offered from other NGBs.

Goal 3. To win a medal at World/Olympic level, qualify 6 swimmers on the FINA A Standard and achieve performances at the 2016 Olympics and deliver continued medal and final success at European level

We set ambitious targets for ourselves to deliver on the World/Olympic Stage over the course of the strategy and achieved mixed results.

These included;

- **4 Swimmers qualified in 2015 for the 2016 Olympic Games and a further 2 athletes qualified in 2016** - This goal was established on the basis of the qualification routes taken by athletes for London 2012. It was identified that to meet the ‘fitness to compete’ element of Swim Ireland’s

Games selection process, athletes would better placed having secured qualification the year prior to the Games. We fell short on this target area qualifying 1 swimmer in 2015 and 2 swimmers and a diver in 2016

- **At least one Finalist at the 2015 World Championships** - This goal was not achieved and was established as an indicator towards the possibility of reaching a final at the Olympic Games. Ireland's top world ranked swimmer (Shane Ryan) was not eligible to compete at the World Championships at this time, however semi-finals were not earned from other high ranked competitor who attended the event and we had 17th and 20th place finishes
- **Medals or finalists at every European meet between 2013 and 2016 inclusive** - The results achieved in this goal area were:
 - 2013: European Youth Olympic Festival 5th, 8th place / European Junior Championships 7th place
 - 2014: European Senior Championships 7th place / European Junior Championships 7th, 8th place
 - 2015: European Youth Olympic Festival 4 Silver 1 Bronze / European Games 6th place
 - 2016: European Junior Championships 2 Silver 1 Bronze / European Senior Championships 8th, 4th, 7th place
- **3 Irish based Coaches producing swimmers who qualify for the 2016 Games** - This goal was established based on specific athletes, and was dependent on their continued progression during the 4 years to Rio. Whilst a target of 3 coaches was always very ambitious, major hindrances to achieving this target included an absence of an elite coach mentorship programme, the goal was a product of an athlete's individual performances and not the system, a relatively small pyramid of coaches from grassroots to elite level putting pressure of few coaches to deliver.



Some of the initiatives that we introduced over the course of this plan have contributed to our learnings and development around performance swimming and have contributed to our understanding that we need to these include:

National Squad structure

Over the course of this cycle the National Squads Programme grew significantly in membership, from year 1 at 70 members to year 4 at 105 members. This growth was further enhanced with the year on year improvement in qualification standards across the three Squads (Youth, Junior, and Senior).

In year 2 (Sept 2014), an 'Olympic Focus Squad' was established, which aimed to further support potential Rio Olympians. In year 3 (Sept '15), an 'Emerging Talent Squad' was established, which comprised of swimmers from both the Youth and Junior National Squads who were identified as performing 2 years ahead of the standard performance development curve (i.e. a 14 year old producing times that are considered world class for a 16 year old).

In terms of contact time with members of the National Squad, in year 1 it ranged between 8-12 days and gradually decreased throughout the cycle. Reasons surrounding this decrease included;

- The financial requirement in operating the Olympic Focus Squad was significant, specifically relating to direct investment, training camps, and international competitions. This in turn limited what was available to the National Squad.
- The staffing resources available to support the Programme were limited as a result of commitments to the Olympic Focus Squad and Emerging Talent Squad. This placed a greater demand on volunteer coaches and team managers to support and develop the National Squad.

By year 4 it was acknowledged that the National Squads Programme had evolved to become a standalone Talent Identification System. Athletes were identified and tracked by the National Programme. Separate to those athletes who were selected for one of the two 'special project' Squads however, support was limited.



MEN'S 100M BREASTSTROKE		
RESULT - HEAT 2		
1	SUI YANNICK KAESER	1:00.71
2	VEN CARLOS CLAVERIE	1:01.13
3	SWE ERIK PERSSON	1:01.20
4	IRL NICHOLAS QUINN	1:01.29
5	SYR AZAD ALBARZI	1:02.22
6	FIN MATTI MATTSSON	1:02.45
7	PAN EDGAR CRESPO	1:02.78
8	BAH DUSTIN TYNES	1:03.71

Snapshot from Rio

Performance Centres

Within the lifetime of this plan four Performance Centres operated throughout the country:

Connacht Performance Centre	Kingfisher, NUI Galway
Ulster Performance Centre	Bangor Aurora, Co. Down
UL Sport Performance Centre	University Arena, Limerick
NAC Performance Centre	National Aquatic Centre, Dublin

The Connacht Performance Centre operated as a part-time Centre. At the conclusion of the Rio cycle (August 2016) the Centre ceased its operation. The Head Coach of the Centre was also employed as the Head Coach of a local club, where the majority of Centre swimmers were also members. A smaller number of athletes were based in other regionally located programmes. The management of the Centres' closure proved challenging within the swimming community in the Connacht Region.

The Ulster Performance Centre was a full time Centre, however membership was primarily utilised on a part-time basis. The lack of members committing to the Centre full-time was attributed to the Centre's peripheral location in Northern Ireland and resistance from the coaching community to facilitate their swimmers in leaving the club's daily training environment. As a result, the Centre ceased its operation post the Irish Summer Open Championships in July 2016. The management of the Centres' closure was relatively seamless and widely accepted within the swimming community in Northern Ireland.

The UL Sport Performance Centre has been in operation since 2007. Membership to the Centre has increased significantly since 2013 and a robust development pathway from club to elite was established during this cycle. With the exception of an international open water swimmer, the Centre struggled to deliver world-class results this cycle. Investment from Swim Ireland in this Centre, whilst significant, has been backed by a relatively healthy income from the running of camps for club level athletes.

At the conclusion of the Rio cycle, it was acknowledged that UL Sport Performance Centre had evolved to become a hub for developing young athletes and retaining those in university who had not yet reached their full potential.

Mentor and train coaches

Informal one-to-one mentorship opportunities were delivered by the National Performance Director to club and Swim Ireland employed coaches. This informal nature of mentorship aligned to the management style adopted by the Performance Director. This gave individual coaches a high quality learning experience, but the lack of consistency in engagement resulted in some cases

where coaches felt disconnected and we have identified the need to establish a more formal mentorship programme

Build towards 2020 – structure supporting youth and junior development

As referenced in the National Squads Structure, a strong youth and junior group was identified through the Emerging Talent Squad. This was supported by the well-established National Youth and Junior Squads. 15-18 swimmers were selected for the Emerging Talent Squad in 2015. The measure for selection was performance based only. These athletes were identified as having the potential to final and/or medal in Tokyo and beyond.

Open Water and Relay strategy

The Open Water Programme remained focused towards one athlete, and invested heavily in supporting this individual to qualify for Rio. This investment included; carding, coaching, training camps, international competitions, full access to support services, and the direct involvement of the National Performance Director. Two junior athletes were provided opportunities to compete at international open water events, but results from these events were not successful (Did Not Finish or bottom of field) and did not warrant further support from Swim Ireland.

Whilst a relay strategy was not formalised, appropriate opportunities for Irish swimmers to compete together as a quartet were facilitated. Specifically, at the European Championships in May 2016, a men's 4x100 MTR competed and reached the final. One of the central reasons for an absence in Strategy was cited as a lack of depth within a number of individual events, however as referenced in the Rio Review, this is an area where success for Ireland can be achieved.

Links with educational institutions

Links have been most successfully enhanced at the University of Limerick, and credit is largely due to the Performance Centre Head Coach in his efforts to forge these links. Scholarships are reserved annually for swimmers within the Programme attending university there.

NUI Galway continued to engage with and accommodate performance swimmers, and a number of scholarships were awarded to swimmers throughout the Rio Cycle.

We have identified this as a priority area for the next strategic cycle.

Link between Regional and National Programmes

This link was largely informal, and regions were for the most part encouraged to operate independently in the driving of their performance programmes, with guidance provided by the Performance Director when sought. The Performance Committee which was in operation during the Rio cycle had two representatives

from each region providing an opportunity to develop the link between regional and national programmes. We would feel that the programme would benefit from a more structured approach linking regional and national programmes and this will be a focus of the new strategy.

4. To develop a commercial revenue, increase the market share of Swim Ireland programmes within the industry, connect commercially with the recreational swimmer and increase self-generated (non-grant or membership fees) revenue to 46% of overall turnover

Commercial Appeal

We engaged a Commercial Director early in the strategic cycle and very quickly identified that our goals in relation to the development of commercial revenue were dependent on our ability to create a compelling picture of our sport in order to support the attraction of commercial partners. We have worked strategically over the course of this cycle to become 'sponsor ready' in the following ways.

- We identified early in the Rio Olympic cycle that we needed to provide support to our athletes in presenting a positive image to the media and put this in place. Our athletes were in high demand over the period in the run up to the Olympic Games from both print and TV/Radio outlets and contributed enormously to the profile of our sport. Throughout the Olympic year our Social Media audience has grown by over 174% with a total following of 33,650 across Facebook, Twitter and other channels.
- Our CEO is developing a strong profile in the media and presents a very positive image for our sport.
- Outside of the performance side of our sport we have successfully used participation initiatives such as Swimforamile, in particular through our print media partners the Irish Times to create a positive picture of our sport. The most compelling attraction to potential sponsors is the 230,000 recreational swimmers in Ireland, most of who are not members of Swim Ireland.
- We know from discussions with potential sponsors that the ability to engage with the casual swimmer is a very attractive proposition to them and having passed the 10,000 mark of swimmers who have signed up for the SFAM training programme in 2016, we are very proud of this but also feel that we need additional resources to develop the initiative to its full potential. We have engaged an event management company to partner with us for 2017 and are confident of growing the event to the extent that it would be attractive to a commercial partner. We have also leveraged

SFAM to engage with the commercial sector through initiatives such as Corporate SFAM Relay challenge which was initiated in 2016.

- Get Ireland Swimming as a goal area of the National Physical Activity Plan as referenced earlier opens up opportunities for us to access funding and gave us a platform for accessing €150k additional investment from Sport Ireland under the Dormant Accounts Grant Scheme
- Changes to our governance structure to allow for the appointment of two independent, skills based directors opened the door for the appointment of directors with commercial experience. This has introduced a new dynamic and is opening doors for us in the commercial world.
- We have recently appointed a Commercial Committee, composed of individuals with a strong commercial expertise and are confident that we will attract a major commercial partner in the short to medium term. In the interim we enjoy good relations with our current sponsors Arena and Gourmet Fuel.

Revenue Generation

In 2015 and throughout 2016 we began to focus on this goal area and appointed an Operations Manager whose focus is on driving efficiencies and revenues across the organisation.

- In 2016 we realised an additional income of €35k from merchandise sales. We now have a merchandising presence at all of our national competitions and will develop this area further in the future.
- Throughout the course of the strategic cycle we have undertaken significant development work from a technical perspective with regard to education course materials across all disciplines in addition to managing the day to day operations of education. In late 2016 we made a key strategic appointment through the employment of a Business Development Manager for Education whose focus is on driving efficiencies and revenues within the department
- We referenced our online learning development earlier and see the development of online and blended learning opportunities as having the potential to allow us to grow our market share deliver courses without compromising the quality of our education
- In late 2016 we increased our Meet entry fees to bring them more in line with industry standard (we are however still considerable lower than our nearest neighbours)
- We are currently looking at a range of revenue generation options including the introduction of charges which are common in other NGBs and Federations such as Meet Licencing fee for Regional and Club Licences and charges for annual accreditation/coach passes

Goal 5. To establish Swim Ireland as the established voice of the aquatic industry and providing strong leadership to the sport

We know that at the start of this strategic cycle many outside of the aquatics had a limited understanding of the unique challenges of our sport operating as it does within an industry in which our clubs must often compete on a commercial footing for limited pool time. We worked in a strategic manner over the course of the cycle to establish relationships at the highest levels of government to become a strong voice in lobbying for and affecting change where needed. We did this by;

- Committing resources to attend consultations and briefings
- Making detailed submissions on policy
- Meeting with Ministers, Department Officials and other key stakeholders
- Our CEO served on Boards that were considered strategically important to us and to sport in general including the Boards of Ireland Active, Federation of Irish Sports, Olympic Council of Ireland and Dublin City Council

Some notable successes arising from this strategy include;

- Having 'Get Ireland Swimming' included as one of the goal areas in the National Physical Activity Plan
- Being awarded the maximum amount of investment (€150k) from the Dormant Funds Initiative
- Engagement with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in regard to National Sports Policy
- Engaging with Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) in the roll out of SFAM and other initiatives
- Engagement with the Department of Health in relation to Healthy Ireland
- Being invited to consult with Belfast City Council in relation to the aquatics strand of the Leisure Transformation Programme Investment
- Our CEO is now the President of the Olympic Council of Ireland

We have also worked hard to lead the way in terms of our governance structure. We were the first sporting NGB to adopt the voluntary code of governance and we are highly regarded as an industry leader for our governance practices and our safeguarding policies. This is particularly noticeable in recent months. When announcements were made recently by government in relation to gender quotas and making the code of governance mandatory for sporting organisations, our CEO was the 'go to' person for media outlets for commentary on the initiatives.

Swim Ireland continues to be a leading authority on safeguarding in sport including vetting, child protection training and working with and for young people through participatory workshops.

We have always enjoyed a good relationship with Sport Ireland and have built on this over the course of the strategic cycle through developing links at every level with our key stakeholders. We now have established relationships with key people in bodies such as Sport Ireland, Dublin City Council, Department of Health, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport, National Sports Campus, Ireland Active, Olympic Council of Ireland and many of the Local Sports Partnerships.

Conclusion

The Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016 was an ambitious one and challenged both staff and volunteers on many fronts to deliver at the highest levels. In reviewing progress we can be justifiably proud of our achievements under the five strategic goal areas. Inevitably there are some areas in which we have not achieved what we initially set out to do. We had for example identified the need to engage with the insurance industry to act as an industry regulator /licensing body. This is a target that we did not achieve as we made a decision over the course of the cycle to prioritise on other areas of the plan and will be revisited over the course of the next strategy. We had mixed results at the highest level of our sport but have laid a solid foundation for developing our young swimmers and are now focused on putting in place a system to support their development to Toyoko and beyond. We were always going to be challenged by the very stretching targets that we set for ourselves and feel however that we have moved our sport forward on many fronts.

We have succeeded in our ambition to provide additional support to our clubs on the ground and the introduction of regionally based support was a particularly successful initiative. We are confident that we have built a strong governance framework to deliver on our plans for the future. Our voice is being heard and our message is strong and is reaching out beyond our traditional membership.

Our vision 'to inspire and empower people in Ireland of all ages and abilities to participate in our sport and to embrace a healthy lifestyle' is being heard