

15th May 2020

Dear Members,

As you will be aware, both the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive recently released documentation in the form of 'roadmaps' outlining a proposed phasing back of restrictions related to COVID-19 and Irish society.

'Return to Water' Roadmap

In preparation for this, Swim Ireland had already established a 'Return to the Water' working group, had been examining available documentation from around the world on this topic, had made several submissions to Sport Ireland/the Government of Ireland and have been working closely with Ireland Active (the representative body for the leisure industry in the South). Following publication of the 'Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision-Making' by the Northern Ireland Executive, we will also consult with Sport Northern Ireland and relevant Northern Ireland governmental departments. We have been and continue to be a proactive member of the Four Nations Facility Re-Opening Working Group (alongside England, Scotland and Wales) and our own Facilities Working Group (which includes local authority and private sector representatives from both north and south of the border) has been extremely active during this time. Regular consultation has also taken place with both the RLSS and the RNLI, alongside that of the Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group (PWTAG), all of which has been extremely informative in the construction of this Roadmap.

There is no doubt that we still have much more to learn about COVID-19 and how life across the island of Ireland will pan out over the coming months. This situation is very fluid and continuously evolving. Having said that, we feel that now is the appropriate time to publish a first draft of the **Swim Ireland 'Return to Water' Roadmap** (the 'Roadmap') for our members to view and consider. This document is ever evolving and will be republished as necessary in line with both north and south governmental mandates and Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland updates.

The actions set out in the Roadmap aim to support our members and all aquatic participants, coaches, volunteers and supporters to return to the water in a safe and timely manner. Key to this is both an understanding and acceptance that the COVID-19 risk cannot be eliminated (although it can be mitigated against and minimised with the correct measures and communications) and the re-opening of facilities.

You will see in the Roadmap that we have sought to address the various areas and disciplines within our sport, and within each, what actions are appropriate during the relevant phases for each of these areas.

Phase 1

Sport Ireland has confirmed to us that it considers 'outdoor swimming' as an outdoor pursuit that falls under the Government of Ireland Roadmap definition for a return in Phase 1 (due to commence on 18th May).

They advise that we, as the National Governing body, should provide guidance to our clubs, affiliates and wider participants in relation to Phase 1. They have also stated that *"in general everyone is being advised to take a conservative view of the Phase 1 return as it is in everyone's interest that it is well observed and successful."*

We have also liaised with the HSE regarding the potential impact of COVID-19 on Open Water swimming, and tomorrow morning, we will release further and more detailed information on this area. We are also of the view that we can align our phasing with that alluded to within the Northern Ireland Executive's publication 'Coronavirus Executive Approach to Decision-Making' on 12th May 2020.

We continue to work with Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute in terms of a return to swimming and diving for our performance/potential Olympic athletes at the National Aquatic Centre in Dublin and Bangor Aurora (in the first instance). We are robustly pursuing an imminent return for this cohort but at this juncture, we do not have a definitive date for this to occur.

Next Steps

We are working closely with Ireland Active (who represent the leisure industry in the south) in relation to the framework within which swimming pools are likely to re-open and clarification is being sought on the re-opening

Swim Ireland 'Return to Water' Roadmap

of swimming pools and indoor sport in relation to phases three and four of the Government of Ireland Roadmap (whilst endeavouring to align this with the Northern Ireland Executive's equivalent). Consultation will also take place with relevant Northern Ireland governmental departments in a similar regard.

As part of this, we are preparing detailed information and recommendations in the form of a framework for a return of our clubs to their pools. However, we cannot emphasise enough that this will be completely dependent on the risk assessments related to the re-opening of pools and that the decisions and the circumstances of pool operators may vary widely in this regard. The sector is under incredible financial pressure and (based on current advices) it is understood that pools are unlikely to operate to more than 50% capacity on re-opening whilst still bearing 80-100% of the costs. This may well delay the re-opening of certain facilities, regardless of any governmental decrees north and/or south of the border.

We most definitely wish to see our community back in the water and we hope that the Roadmap issued today will give you hope and direction in this regard. However, we temper this by stating that the health and safety of our members is paramount and we urge a conservative and controlled return to the sport in line with all of recommended guidance and information that we will issue over the coming weeks and months. As already mentioned, we are currently working on detailed documentation and information including risk assessments, codes of behaviour, education webinars, and Q&As as part of our support package, all of which we will issue in due course. Initial webinars will take place as follows:

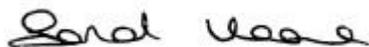
Wednesday 20th May 6pm (Committees) - [Virtual Webinar: Return to Water Q&A - Club Committee](#)

Thursday 21st May 6pm (Coaches) - [Virtual Webinar: Return to Water Q&A - Club Coaches](#)

Wednesday 27th May 11am (Committee and Coaches) - [Virtual Webinar: Return to Water Q&A - Club Committee and Coaches](#)

Please note that our Roadmap is not a legal document. It is not legal advice or intended as a substitute for any applicable government advice for clubs, members and/or users carrying out their own risk assessment of review. Readers should review this and all future information and ensure that they are following best practice relative to the environment in which they are operating. Close cooperation with the facility operator is absolutely key to this. We continue to monitor the situation very carefully and will issue further information to our clubs and members as this becomes available. Please continue to regularly check the Swim Ireland website for further updates and contact Swim Ireland if you have any urgent questions or concerns.

Please remain positive – we do see a return to the water/pool this summer but we also need to ensure that all public health measures are carefully considered, and for us all to be cognisant of the challenges facing our core partners, namely the pool operators and owners.



Sarah Keane

Swim Ireland CEO



Peter Conway

Swim Ireland Chairman