



Rowing Ireland,
National Rowing Centre,
Farran Wood,
Ovens,
Co. Cork.

T: +353 21 743 4044
F: +353 21 743 4045
E: info@rowingireland.ie
W: www.rowingireland.ie

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Please note dates of workshops updated to allow for a break after Champs

Dear Secretary and Club Member,

In 2018, the Irish government published the country's first ever [National Sports Policy](#)¹ with its vision for the development of Irish Sport for the ten years from 2018 to 2027. In the policy document, the government committed to doubling funding for sport by 2027. However, this investment is based on a number of serious conditions being met, not least of which is the need to run all sports more professionally through National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and ultimately for all clubs to be also run in the same manner. Sports to be funded must particularly improve accountability, promote inclusion and emphasise excellent ethics including respect, integrity and safety.

This performance is being measured annually across all NGBs through the Sports Governance Code which Rowing Ireland signed up to in 2019 and was one of the first sports to do so. This Code is a blueprint for how sport should and indeed must be run. Signing up to the code requires the sport and everyone within it to perform to the highest standards of ethics and accountability.

The impact of the National Sports Policy and this additional funding has enabled Rowing Ireland clubs to invest in infrastructure and equipment at club level across the country and for us at international level where we have enjoyed huge success, most recently in Poznan. Today we are undoubtedly one of the leaders in Irish Sport for our programmes, increased participants and performers.

Sadly however, the board of Rowing Ireland discovered the standards to which we operate in other areas such as sports governance has not always met the same high levels or expectations. This was highlighted to us through findings from annual audits and in reports and investigations commissioned by the Board of Rowing Ireland to establish where we were versus governance requirements.

With the help of Sport Ireland who funded our work in this area, the Board was able to bring in Sarah O'Shea, a leading legally trained sports governance expert. She identified a number of areas that must improve and we are now committed to implementing her recommendations which Sport Ireland has also endorsed.

At the request of the Board of Rowing Ireland, Sport Ireland supported an investigation into allegations of areas where our sport was deficient such as: GDPR breaches; breaches of confidence; and the use of Rowing Ireland systems to share derogatory and offensive material. The investigations found all allegations to be a matter of record and have a sound basis. Rowing Ireland received legal advice, arising from that investigation, that it must update its policies and procedures to ensure best practice and standards from officers, members, staff and volunteers. The Board has also received further recommendations from other legal experts including the Chair of its Disciplinary Committee to overhaul its rules and create appropriate policies/procedures, bye-laws and improved structures for dealing with disciplinary or policy breaches.

As a result, Sport Ireland needs to see radically improved governance throughout the sport - from the Board through committees and clubs. It is of course essential that everyone in our rowing community on the island of

¹ In Northern Ireland, the [Power of Sport](#) is an equivalent document for the period 2021-2026

Ireland fully understands the need for such changes and that they join and support us on that journey of continuous improvement.

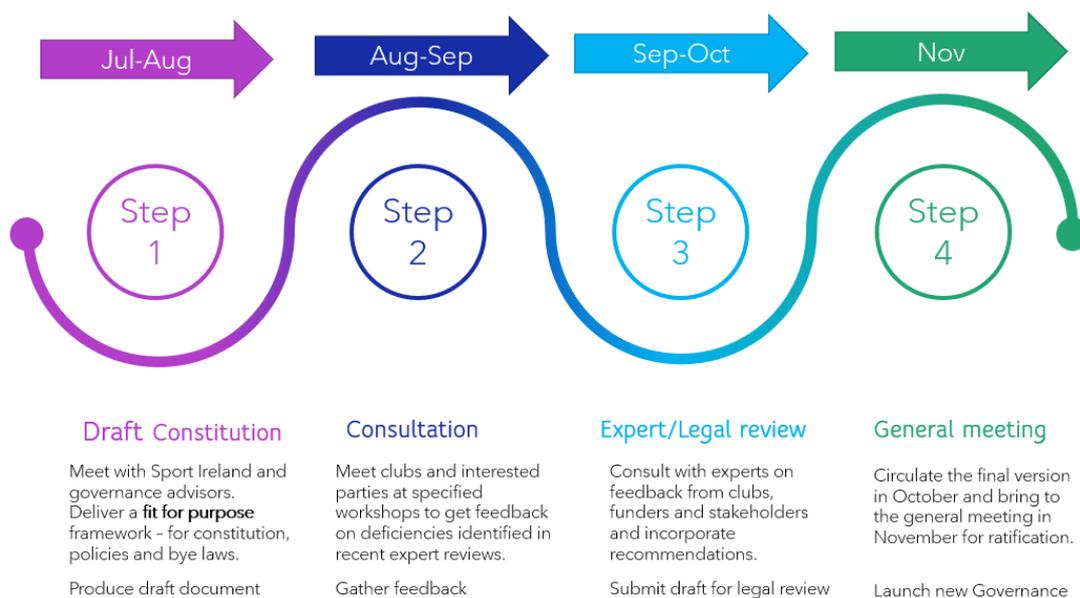
The following must first occur to bring our structures up to standard and allow us get back to focusing on rowing.

- The Constitution of Rowing Ireland a company limited by guarantee will be changed and improved.
- The articles of association of Rowing Ireland will be overhauled.
- Rowing Ireland will introduce or revise policies as required that relate to the following: safety, welfare and well being, board selection and composition, clubs, membership, events, meetings, voting, volunteering, umpiring, and disputes.
- Separate competition rules, bye laws and policies are required to support the Sports Governance Code.

Sport Ireland now requires Rowing Ireland to have our new rules and regulations implemented before the end of 2022.

In light of the complex journey we are on, the Board has nominated Martin Hogan (Athlone, Commercial and Lady Elizabeth) and our previous Governance lead, to be the Interim Chair of Rowing Ireland to help manage the critical relationships with Sport Ireland and its legal advisors until the next election. John McCarthy of Cork Boat Club has agreed to replace Martin as Chair of the Governance Sub-Committee, which has the critical task of delivering the changes. Martin and John have an extended rowing history from participation through to coaching and club administration as well as committee membership, trusteeship and officer positions in clubs and events. Both of them are committed to leaving the sport in a better place and are looking for your support to do the same. John and Martin are supported on the Governance Committee by Aoife Habenicht of Neptune, Carol Ann Smith of Old Collegians, Ciara Ni Cheilleachair of Offaly and Gordon Reid of Belfast. Sinéad Gordon, Director of Governance and Strategy at Sport Ireland and Aillil O'Reilly SC will also support the committee with its work.

ROWING IRELAND GOVERNANCE JOURNEY 2022



The Board and Governance Committee has agreed the timeline with Sport Ireland as set out above to fully revise the constitution, its rules and policies. In doing so, sufficient time was set aside to both consult with the clubs, necessary stakeholders, funders, and legal advisors, and, to incorporate the feedback from these consultations.

The Governance Committee is currently finalising Step 1 and hopes to have a draft constitution for circulation to clubs by mid- July. We will then host consultations with clubs where we can chat through the rationale for new proposals or listen to new ideas you may have for further improvements.

We look forward to seeing you all at one of the planned consultation workshops over the summer, which will be held as follows:

- Tuesday 30th August, 7pm, Neptune RC, Dublin
- Tuesday 6th September, 7pm, Shannon RC, Limerick
- Tuesday 13th September, 7pm, Cork Boat Club, Cork
- Tuesday 20th September, 7pm, Galway RC, Galway
- Tuesday 27th September, 7pm, Belfast BC, Belfast

There will be one final Zoom workshop on Tuesday 4th October at 7pm for any club which cannot attend in person or to clarify any points covered in one previously attended.

Finally, we are currently discussing with our auditors whether it may be necessary to approve our accounts prior to a general meeting where elections are held. In any case, we plan to hold a general meeting to ratify the new constitution and elect a new President and Secretary on Sunday 6th November. The Board is considering combining several elements into a "Rowing Congress" weekend on 5th and 6th November and for that reason we have not yet agreed a venue. We will be gathering feedback on suitable topics for this event which we could consider holding annually when we meet you before and at the roadshows.

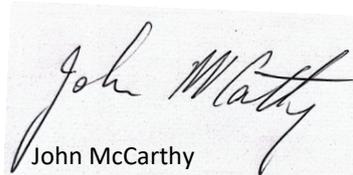
Rowing Ireland's Board and Sport Ireland remains committed to the on-going development and improvement of rowing, a sport which we all are passionate about. We are also committed to ensuring our sport meets the highest standards of governance in sport and that in going forward we create a safe, enjoyable environment where people act with integrity and treat each other with respect. We want to ensure that everyone connected with rowing in Ireland - our members, our athletes, our staff, and our volunteers - all feel that their voice is valued and heard not just during this consultation but throughout their membership career in the sport.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and opinions in person at the roadshows as our mission is to work with you all to ensure that we move rowing to best in class in terms of governance.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Hogan
Interim Chair, Rowing Ireland



John McCarthy
Chair, RI Governance Committee