

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH SAILING ASSOCIATION



I AM VERY PLEASED to introduce the Association's first Strategic Plan. For the first fifty-two years of our existence we have operated on the basis of responding to the perceived needs and demands of Irish sailors. The sport and the organisation have now grown to a degree which makes it imperative that we have a clear statement of what our objectives are and how they are to be achieved. This Plan sets out those objectives and our goals through to 2003.

The launch of the Plan concludes an extensive consultation and research process which was commenced nearly three years ago. Brady Shipman Martin were commissioned then by the ISA to prepare an analysis of the current status of the sport. The Marine Institute simultaneously prepared a report for the Government which provided information on the number of people participating, as well as on the level of interest amongst the population in becoming involved in the sport. The Association itself has since embarked on a consultation process with Clubs, Recognised Teaching Establishments (RTEs), special interest groups and individual members, including our current Olympic squad.

Ireland has unparalleled advantages as a location to go sailing. Its long coastline, abundance of inland waterways, relatively low level of commercial traffic, temperate climate, beautiful scenery and proximity to both Europe and to the United States are its physical assets. There are 49,500 people currently sailing on a regular basis with a further 66,000 people declaring an interest in becoming involved in watersports if facilities were improved. The membership of ISA affiliated clubs stands at 16,000. The major challenges facing the Association are: the promotion of the sport and the benefits of participating as a member of an ISA affiliated club; the development of the facilities required to allow access to the water; and the provision of excellent services to clubs, teaching establishments and individual sailors.

There are major changes happening in Irish sport. The ISA is committed to being part of implementing the initiatives by the new Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, the Irish Sports Council and the National Coaching and Training Centre. The ISA is also a proud member of the Olympic Council of Ireland and will continue to ensure that our sailors represent Ireland at the highest levels of international competition including Olympic and International Sailing Federation Championships. Sailing is one of the few sports to have brought Olympic success to Ireland and this Plan aims to ensure that our athletes continue to reach the pinnacle of competitive success. We also recognise however that competition is but one element of our sport and we propose to ensure that the needs and interests of our non-racing members are also served and represented.

The ISA will focus on four main strategic areas between now and 2003:

1. Strengthening the foundations
2. Increasing participation at all levels
3. Improving performance at national and international level
4. Implementating the Strategic Plan

The Draft Plan was considered in April at the 1998 AGM and unanimously approved by the membership. In order to maximise the return on the time and input of the volunteers whose contribution to the sport is essential and to increase the efficiency of the organisation structure it is proposed to reshape it with a reduction in the number of standing committees. A Board of Directors will take control of the running of the Association and each of the

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Directors will take personal responsibility for a strategic operational area. Briefs for the re-vamped committees have already been completed and detailed standing orders are being prepared. The Board of Directors and Committees will be supported by the current professional staff including the Secretary General, managers and secretarial staff and it is proposed to strengthen the staff by employing two further personnel to assist in developing the sport.

It is proposed to continue to call on the input of the numerous volunteers, whose contribution has been crucial to the success of the ISA, in the revised structure by placing greater emphasis on work groups. By basing these groups within specific regional areas of the country it is also hoped to facilitate the participation of a greater number of people in the formulation and implementation of ISA policy.

The advice of the National Coaching and Training Centre and the encouragement and support provided by the Sports Council have been of great assistance in the completion of this Plan. I would like to thank everyone who gave so generously of their time to its preparation, particularly to the members of the Steering Group who have overseen its drafting - Paddy Maguire (Chairman), John Crebbin and Clayton Love Minor. I would also like to thank Paddy Boyd, Secretary General of the Association, who has been closely involved with the entire review and planning process and also the other members of the ISA staff. Our thanks must also go to Morgan Buckley of ASL whose knowledge of sports management and quick grasp of the intricacies of our sport made his contribution to the planning process invaluable. The financial contribution of the Irish Sports Council and of Church & General, Cork Dry Gin and Heineken is much appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

The wealth of our natural resources, the lifetime of recreational involvement which sailing offers and the commitment of the people organising it around the country provide a strong base to grow the sport. This Plan will ensure that it reaches its full potential.

NEIL MURPHY  
PRESIDENT OF THE ISA  
NOVEMBER 1998