

Paper 4
Confidential Draft Document
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ICU Board Meeting 28/04/2010

Irish Canoe Union Strategic Planning Process
Strategic Planning Workshop Outcomes

1. Introduction
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5. Conclusions

Introduction

The following is an outline of the format, discussions and outcomes of the Irish Canoe Union's Management Board strategic planning day facilitated by Humphrey Murphy from ILC. This planning day was undertaken as part of a strategic planning sequence of activities which also included a members questionnaire and a development plan draft.

The following individuals were in attendance at the meeting

Name	Board Position
Eamon Devoy	President
Karl Dunne	Hon. Secretary
Cormac Cassidy	ICU Executive Member
Shane Lynch	Freestyle
Tadhg MacIntyre	Canoe Slalom
Martin McCarthy	Wild Water Racing
Caoimhe Ní Chuinn	Canoe Polo
Michael Scanlon	Chief Executive
Conor Ryan	Training Officer
Benny Cullen	ICU Development Officer

Apologies were received from the remaining 6 Board members who were unable to attend, two members of staff were present at the workshop.

Workshop Format

In advance of the meeting, ILC's Humphrey Murphy spoke by phone with most of the Board members in order to identify the key strategic issues which were to be discussed on the day. Two meetings with Michael Scanlon the CEO of the Irish Canoe Union, also took place. In the first meeting the ICU's expectations regarding the workshop were outlined and in the subsequent meeting an outline of ILC's proposed approach was presented.

On the basis of these various discussions the following format and approach for the workshop was decided.

- Discussion Based: while provision was made for breakaway workshops it was understood that the most effective approach would be to invite a flowing round table discussions between those present rather than separate small workshops.
- Issue Clarification Focus: identifying and prioritising the key issues was deemed to be a priority step in determining a resolution process.
- Suggestion Driven: given the limitations on people's time ILC understood that bringing suggestions for discussion would be a more efficient way of operating the workshop. To this end a presentation which was issue based and which identified solution routes was provided.
- Issue Focused: through discussions with Board members we identified the following issues as central to the ICU's strategic development process:
 - Canoe Union responsibilities and Sport Context: The sport of canoeing is complex given its variety of disciplines and participant motivators. The span of Canoe Union responsibilities required clarification.
 - Board responsibilities and structures: there was a concern that the Board was operating increasingly in an operational manner and an overspill of responsibilities between the Board and the Executive. The extent to which the Board understood and had formalised its individual and collective responsibilities required clarification.
 - Strategic Phases: identifying key performance indicators, their development stage and their priority is required, in order to clarify the strategic objectives of the ICU.
 - Athlete Development Pipeline: we noted a concern that there was a disproportionately low level of competition canoeists evolving through the training and club system.
 - Resources: a resource deficit was identified in particular amongst the sports competitive disciplines.
 - Research: in order to clarify the challenges and opportunities facing the ICU and identify their solutions, objective data is required. The nature of this data and how it was to be sourced required clarification.
 - Communications: The internal and external "message" of the Canoe Union is to be updated.
 - Regions: how and when should the ICU expand canoeing opportunities within the regions.

Issues

The following are the core issues discussed during the Strategic planning workshop.

Canoe Union Responsibilities & Sport Context

The sport of canoeing is complex given its variety of disciplines and participant motivators. The span of Canoe Union responsibilities required clarification. The following is an outline of the Canoe Union's span of responsibilities.

Canoe Union Remit							
Training	Agencies	Individual	Advocacy	Recreation	Competition	High Performance	Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Instructor Scheme ◆ Coaching Scheme ◆ Direct training ◆ Indirect training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ National ◆ International 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Members ◆ Non Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lobby ◆ Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Junior ◆ Schools ◆ Women ◆ Sea Kayak ◆ Sit on Top ◆ Canoe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Polo ◆ Slalom ◆ Sprint ◆ Freestyle ◆ Marathon ◆ Wildwater ◆ Surf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sprint ◆ Slalom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Standards ◆ Awareness

Issue

What are the responsibilities of the Canoe Union?

Discussion

All present recognised that the Canoe Union has a complex and diverse remit. Canoeing is both a competitive sport as well as a recreation activity. Hence the Canoe Union has a duplicate training system for its recreational and competitive participants and volunteers within which there are also a number of discrete team and individual disciplines.

The nature of canoeing is such that participation while mainly comprising youth and young adults also includes a significant adult and older adult contingent.

Canoeing is an adventure sport and as such involves the management of inherent risk as against the accidental risk encountered in non adventure sports.

It was noted that the ICU has stewardship for canoeing in Ireland and as a consequence its responsibilities extend across all elements of the sport and activity as well as to members and non member participants.

Outcomes

Those attending agreed that:

- Canoeing is a complex activity and competitive sport with a significant range of sub disciplines.
- The ICU's stewardship remit includes members and non members and all of the recreational and competitive disciplines of the sport.

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- The complex remit of the Canoe Union results in the management of a range of operational issues which place a strain on the resources of the ICU executive and disrupt the Board's strategic focus / responsibilities.

Board Responsibilities & Structures

There was a concern that the Board was operating in an operational rather than a strategic manner and that there is an overspill of responsibilities and oversight between the Board and the Executive.

Issue

- Identifying the responsibilities of the Board and its members.
- Identifying worthwhile Board structure changes

Discussion

The discussion centred around the individual and collective responsibility of the Board and the need to avoid being subsumed by operational and sectional interests. The lack of an alternative forum for the competitive disciplines and the flux of Board membership due to different discipline AGM dates, were identified as contributing to the difficulty of the Board maintaining a strategic perspective.

An outline of the Carver model of Board Governance was introduced, whereby the focus of the Board was identified as being "ends" rather than "means" based.

The makeup of the Board was discussed and in particular the leaking of the individual discipline's operational interests into the strategic role of the Board. The reason why Board meetings became discussion venues for the operational issues of the disciplines was suggested as being due to the lack of an alternative forum for these discussions. In addition the scarcity of resources was resulting in representatives using communication opportunities with the Board and members of the Executive to "make their case". This not only diverts the Board from its strategic role but also places undue pressure on the Executive to respond directly to the interests the disciplines.

With reference to the British Canoe Union and Australian Canoeing Board Structures, ILC suggested a restructuring of the Board. This was discussed and amended, as per the following diagram.

By providing two representatives from the competitive disciplines onto the Board (as against the current structure of a representative for each of the seven disciplines), and the presence of a representative from the High Performance Unit, there would be a significant competition presence on the Board while avoiding the overflow of individual discipline operational issues. For this restructuring to work however, each discipline needs to have an effective communications route to the Board through individual operational plans.

It was also pointed out that the working committee approach is underutilised by the Board and that such an approach could relieve pressure on the Board and the Executive.

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Chair						
Treasurer	Secretary	Clubs	High Performance	Recreation	Competition x 2	Co Opt
			Sprint Slalom	Training Unit Junior Schools Women Sea Kayak Sit on Top Canoe	Technical Committee ♦ Polo ♦ Slalom ♦ Sprint ♦ Freestyle ♦ Marathon ♦ Wildwater ♦ Surf	Flagship Special Event

Outcomes

- Board member tenures need to be revisited with the intention to extend this beyond one year.
- The current practise of Board member substitutes must be re-examined.
- The Board recognises that its primary role is to identify clear, reasonable objectives while the purpose of the Executive is to deliver on these objectives within ethical and prudent means.
- The responsibility of Board members needs to be clarified through an induction process.

Future Actions

A review of the Boards operations and structures is required in order to identify if and where changes should take place.

Strategic Phases

Issues

- Clarifying the different performance indicators across the sport and activity of canoeing.
- Identifying the stage of development of each indicator
- Prioritising actions for the different performance indicators.

Discussion

As part of a wider ranging discussion on strategic planning and the sequencing of strategic activity, ILC posed the question as to how the ICU will identify clear objectives or end results. This discussion revolved around the importance of Key Performance Indicators in both setting realistic targets and the importance of objective research and in particular baseline participation data.

The ICU vision strap line of “Start Stay and Succeed” was presented by ILC as a phasing sequence for the development and management of canoeing. In order to identify the current development phase of canoeing in Ireland, the broad recreation and competitive elements needed to be dissected into key performance indicators. Using this approach it was identified that some of these performance indicators are at the start stage while others are at the succeed stage. For example the recreation “Award Scheme” was identified as being at the Succeed stage while the “Number of Competitions” was identified as being at the Start stage for some disciplines.

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The following diagram was presented and discussed as a potential way for the different performance indicators to be identified and their development stage located.

	Start Phase 1	Stay Phase 2	Succeed Phase 3
Recreation KPI	Participant Numbers Participant Diversity Regional Diversity Discipline Choice Award Scheme Number Instructors Number Clubs / Category Number events Other?		
Competition KPI	Participant Numbers Participant Diversity Discipline Choice Coach Structure Number Coaches Number Clubs Number Competitions Competitive Achievements Other		

It was noted that while there was a generic growth and success across most of the recreation elements, the rate of development across the sports disciplines varied from discipline to discipline.

An additional category of the "Canoe Union KPI" was identified as the location for overarching performance indicators such as communications, research and so on.

Outcomes

- It was agreed that a more considered series of key performance indicators were required and that these would then be prioritised over the lifetime of the strategy.
- The lack of baseline data limits the clarity of the performance indicators however this issue should diminish with the subsequent emergence of a research data.

Future Actions

- Clarification of relevant KPI is required across the Recreation and ICU elements.
- Each discipline might use the suggested Competition and other KPI's as the basis for their operational plans.
- These performance Indicators must be prioritised and hence these ranked indicators might also direct the research priorities.

Athlete Development Pipeline

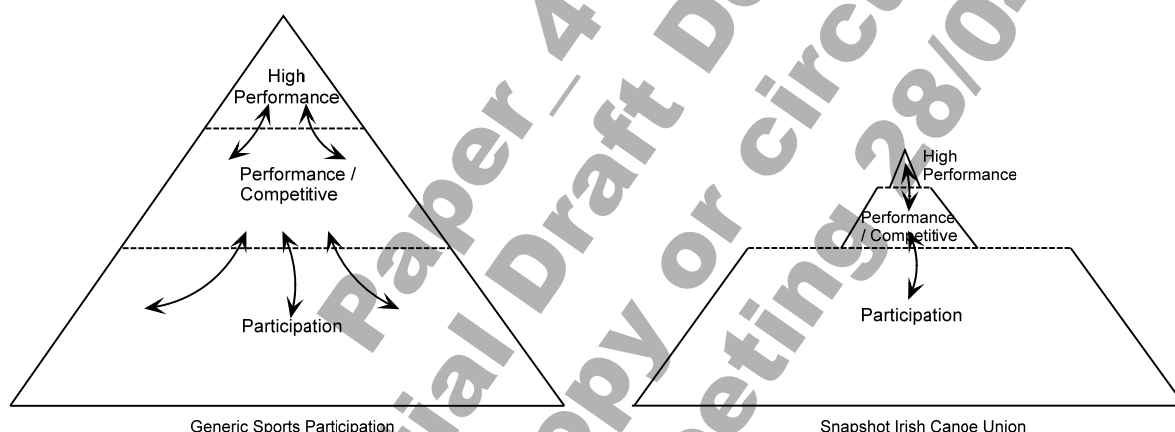
Issue

There is a disproportionately low level of competitive canoeists evolving from the training and club system.

Discussion

The discussion was based around the sports triangle model as outlined overleaf. ILC presented an understanding of the current canoeing “triangle” which was accepted as being conceptually correct. The discussion ranged around the causes of the disproportionately low participation rates at a competitive level.

A wide ranging discussion followed which centred around issues of where barriers to growth in competitive / performance canoeing exist and the first steps required to resolve this. Contributors at the meeting understood that



Outcomes

- Additional pathways into competition are required for recreation participants.
- Traditional gateways into competitive canoeing have diminished due to the decline in school based competitive canoeing and clubs.
- While creating pathways and direct gateways into competitive canoeing was a priority, generating additional participants for the sport and in particular those more likely to transition into competitive canoeing, is also required.
- There is a possibility that the Elite “triangle” could be inverted if sufficient pathways are not in place from competitive canoeing.
- Retention rates for competitive canoeists appears to be longer then that of recreational canoeists.
- High level expedition canoeing is part of the performance and high performance canoeing paradigm.
- The retention of recreational canoeists would be assisted if they migrate to competitive canoeing.
- There is significant churn within recreational canoeing.
- The movement of members between recreational and competitive canoeing does not appear to have any negative consequences for canoeing in general.
- The Liffey Centre has a role to play in channelling participants towards clubs and the competitive disciplines.

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- In the same way that there is a very vibrant recreational canoeing culture, a similar competitive culture is required.
- Only a proportion of recreational canoeists are interested in competitive disciplines.
- Additional communication resources will assist in increasing the awareness of and participation rates in competitive canoeing.

Future Actions

- Competitive disciplines need to identify an appropriate development plan.
- A research programme is required in order to identify:
 - The retention rates in all canoeing activities.
 - A competitive profile that will assist in targeting and enticing recreational canoeists into a competitive discipline.
- Some form of club support is needed in order to drive competitive participation.
- Competitive clubs need to pull recreation participants into their disciplines such as last years "Paddlefest".

Resource Deficit

Issue

There appears to be a resource deficit in particular amongst the sport's competitive disciplines.

Discussion

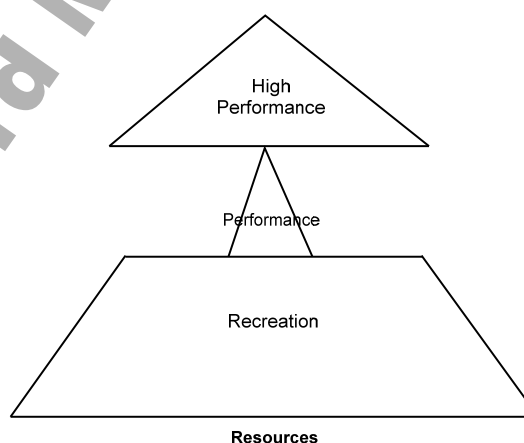
The development of recreational canoeing in Ireland has been successful. A comprehensive and effective "Awards Scheme" is in place, a number of discrete recreation disciplines have evolved and a strong albeit somewhat regional canoeing recreation culture has emerged.

In the previous discussion it was evident that competitive canoeing has not grown at the same rate and in some cases has declined significantly on historic participation levels. A resource deficit for competitive canoeing was perceived as one of the contributing factors to this decline in competitive canoeing.

The resource diagram was accepted as being conceptually accurate in representing the resources of the recreational and performance canoeing elements in Ireland.

It was noted that while a disproportionate volume of resources are typically required for High Performance athletes, the Performance element was under resourced.

It was also noted by ILC that any transfer of resources from recreation into performance activities could lead to a decline in the quality of recreation participation and overall participation numbers.

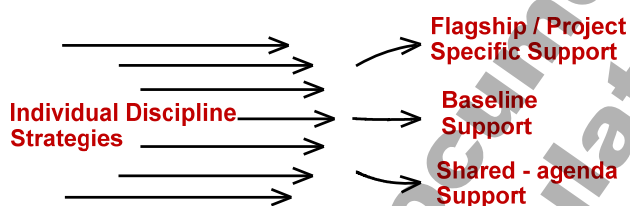


ILC also proposed a three layer system of support across the disciplines, with an operational or development plan from each discipline as being central to this resourcing model.

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The three layers of resourcing proposed were:

- Base Line Support whereby a relatively low level of resources are allocated to all disciplines.
- Activity focused Shared Agenda Support whereby activities with a multidiscipline benefit are resourced.
- Flagship resources whereby the Board of the ICU allocate additional funding to the discipline with the most sustainable operational plan.



There is also a potential for some of the current High Performance resources to be trickled down to Performance athletes in areas such as nutrition, sports psychology and physiology training or testing protocols.

A development officer was suggested as a valuable resource for discipline development. The exact role of such a position however requires clarification as to whether it should be for coach development, cub development or as a mechanism to assist in the delivery of the different disciplines development plans.

Outcomes

- The ICU has a responsibility to provide some resources for the competitive disciplines, however each discipline will also have to generate a significant proportion of their own resources.
- Resources might be most effectively allocated in response to operational plans generated by each discipline.
- Additional support for a specific discipline is more likely to lead to growth rather than just generic support across all disciplines.
- It was noted that a competitive flagship type funding process, might encourage multi discipline development strategies.
- The perception was that it is the role of the Board to respond to the operational plans of each discipline rather than to lead or develop strategies for each discipline.

Future Actions

- Consideration is required in order to identify how Performance resources might be expanded under the three headings of:
 1. Identify additional resources sources.
 2. Generate surplus from current resources.
 3. Absorb from current resources without cannibalising participation activities.
- Different types of competitive discipline support resources are required and in particular a decision regarding the concept and method of a flagship support for a specific discipline.
- Identify opportunities whereby High Performance activities might be shared with other performance athletes.
- The role of a competition development member of staff requires clarification.

Research

Issue

In order to clarify the challenges and opportunities facing the ICU and identify their solutions, objective data is required. The nature of this data and how it was to be sourced requires clarification.

Discussion

The discussion centred around the need for additional baseline data regarding the membership of the ICU and the typical activities and retention periods of these members. With this information specific performance indicators can be established and strategic objectives generated. Subsequent baseline comparisons of this data will then indicate the effectiveness of the Union's actions.

There was however concern that a too wide ranging research objective would place a resource strain on the executive of the ICU both at the data gathering and data interpretation stage.

Outcomes

Additional information is required in order to establish relevant baseline data which can be used to identify relevant performance indicators and set strategic objectives.

Future Actions

An ongoing manageable research process is require in order to:

- Identify relevant research areas
- Gather and analyse data
- Identify baselines as a reference for future the effectiveness of future actions.

Communications

Issue

The internal and external "message" of the Canoe Union requires clarification.

Discussion

The various earlier discussions identified promotion as being part of their solutions. For example effective pathways into competition canoeing for recreational canoeists is assisted by greater awareness of already existing competition canoeing opportunities.

The issue of a single corporate identify was briefly discussed with reference to the range of individual discipline logos and communication styles.

An expanded role for the ICU website was identified as a potential action as was an ezine and other relevant web based formats. A members log in area and the capacity to join the ICU on line were also suggested as possible future features on the site.

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The British Canoe Union's annual members booklet and their policy regarding the visibility of women in the sport, was identified as a reference for an future ICU communications policy.

The Vision statement of the ICU was also discussed and examples of other Governing Bodies vision statements were provided. This discussion centred around the role of the Vision statement as an internal and an external signal of intent and the extent to which the statement should be descriptive of future actions or a simple call to action.

Future Actions

- An ICU communications plan is required, this plan to include a website use strategy.
- A future vision statement for the ICU should provide a clear and simple call to action.

Regions

Issues

How and when should the ICU expand canoeing opportunities within the regions.

Discussion

While there is a strong canoeing presence in different regions (particularly for recreational canoeing), there are some areas in the country with limited canoeing opportunities. The key issue discussed was whether the focus should be on expanding canoeing in the poorly served regions or first developing models of best practise at current clubs and then expanding the club base. Examples were given of effective clubs on the East Coast from which models of best practise might be generated.

Outcomes

1. Clarification is first needed as to best practise for club development and operation.
2. Regional clubs should then be supported using a best practise model
3. New clubs developed in the regions as appropriate.

Future Actions

- A club development policy and time line is required.

Additional Issues

The following are the additional issues raised during the workshop.

Schools development

A number of schools traditionally involved in canoeing and in particular competitive canoeing, no longer provide a canoeing program as part of their sports activities. The reason for this varies however the skill and safety requirements for the sport of canoeing and the pressure on teachers time are likely to be the main causes.

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The inclusion of canoeing in the Physical Education curriculum at primary and secondary level (similar to that of orienteering), was suggested as one development approach.

Scout Groups

Scouts are a traditional route into canoeing however this is declining. It was suggested that the paring of schools and scout groups together might assist both in continuing to provide canoeing.

Conclusions

While the Irish Canoe Union's (ICU) next strategic plan will have a significant proportion of continuity, a number of key new challenges will require resolution. These key challenges were identified during the workshop and routes towards their resolution suggested.

The key challenges for the ICU are:

- Clarity of the Board's role and operations.
- The focused development of competitive canoeing
- Securing appropriate resources to enable change.

Prioritising future actions in response to these challenges is now required.

The key future actions identified during the workshop are:

- A review of the Boards operations and structures is required in order to identify if and where changes should take place.
- Clarification of relevant performance indicators are required across the Recreation and broader ICU development strands.
- Each competitive discipline needs to identify the relevant performance indicators for their operational plans.
- These performance Indicators must be prioritised and direct the research priorities.
- Competitive disciplines need to identify and follow through on a development plan for their discipline.
- A research programme is required in order to identify:
 - The retention rates in all canoeing activities.
 - A competitive profile that would assist in targeting and enticing recreational canoeists into a competitive discipline.
- Some form of club support is needed in order to drive competitive participation.
- Competitive clubs must also "pull" recreation participants into their disciplines and last years "Paddlefest" was identified as one of the mechanisms for this.
- Consideration is required in order to identify how Performance resources might be expanded under the three headings of:
 1. Identify additional resources sources.
 2. Generate surplus from current resources.
 3. Absorb from current resources without cannibalising participation activities.

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- Different types of competitive discipline support resources are required and in particular a decision regarding the concept and method of a flagship support for a specific discipline.
- Identify opportunities whereby High Performance activities might be shared with other performance athletes.
- The role of a Competition development member of staff, requires clarification.
- An ICU communications plan is required, this plan to include a website use strategy.
- A future vision statement for the ICU should provide a clear and simple statement of intent.
- A club development policy and time line is required.

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